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**An Examination of the Roles and Work Activities of the Public
Relations Officer in Higher Education Using the Five-Factor
Dimension Model**

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Abstract

An Examination of the Roles and Work Activities of the Public Relations Officer in Higher Education Using the Five-Factor Dimension Model

This article offers an examination of the technical and managerial public relations roles and respective work activity among higher education public relations officers based on a hypothesized role typology model. It was through this study to address a gap in the literature, which is the degree to which higher education public relations officers are actually practicing public relations work dimensions as defined by the five-factor model developed by DeSanto, Moss and Newman (2005, 2007). This study further examined the extent to which the managerial and technical roles are related to the public relations officers' access to the president and type of institution in which the public relations officer works. This project used a quantitative survey research design for collecting and analyzing the research data obtained from the Senior Practitioner Survey instrument administered to 74 members of the Counselors to Higher Education section of the Public Relations Society of America. Descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis using structural equation modeling, Procrustes rotation, and independent sample *t* test inferential statistics were used to address the five research questions that guided this study.

The study's findings provided evidence, with caution, that senior public relations officers in higher education environments primarily assume a technician role, with marginal engagement of managerial role enactment, despite holding senior-level job titles. Also, the study reveals that regardless of institution type, a majority of senior public relations officers do not have direct access to the president of their respective higher education institutions.

Background

From the beginnings of the colonial period, higher education institutions have developed public relations units and college and university presidents have systematically appointed public relations officers to conduct formalized communication activities. However, the state of public relations in colleges and universities continues to be problematic. Central to the problem is a pervasive misunderstanding of the public relations officers' roles and corresponding work activities that may contribute to the well being of many higher education institutions (E.J. Anctil, 2003; Bagwell, 1997; Brigman & Hanson, 2000; Carr, 2009; Cavill, 2006; Cooper, 2007; Dhillion, 2001; Hale, 2001; Kummerfeldt,

1975; Lewison & Hawes, 2007; J. Ross & C. Halstead, 2001; Sickler, 2005; Stover, 2005; Warner, 1996).

It is logical to expect that presidents of these institutions should understand the roles and work activities of their chief public relations officers and that the chief public relations officers themselves understand their roles and work activities in advancing the institution's organizational goals. This suggests a huge problem considering that over 4,900 higher education institutions have public relations officers or similar administrators charged with carrying out public relations activities (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006), yet the literature suggests that the presidents nor the officers themselves fully understand the roles and work activities of public relations officers.

Over the past two decades, studies have been conducted in an attempt to address and provide clarity to this lack of understanding. The literature finds that two broad roles and their respective work activities consistently emerge in public relations: the technician who conducts tactical communication work activities and the manager who conducts strategic communication work activities (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, Toth, & Leuven, 2007). The technician role when assumed by public relations officers encompasses tactical tasks such as writing, editing, taking photographs, handling communication production, coordinating special events, and communicating with the media (Lattimore et al., 2007). With regard to the advancement of organizational goals, public relations officers who perform as technicians typically are not involved in organizational-level strategic decision-making because they are not included in the management or senior-level meetings (Broom & Dozier, 1986; Cutlip et al., 2006; Dozier & Broom, 1995;

Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). In contrast, public relations officers who assume the role of manager are typically part of organizational management and use strategic skills to assess the outcomes or impact of public relations activities. Activities such as scanning the environment, building coalitions, managing organizational and program issues, and serving as counsel to upper levels of administration for institutional policy decision-making are their primary focus (Cutlip et al., 2006). Specific to the technical role and the managerial roles, research of work activities among public relations officers suggests that those who execute both the technical role and the managerial role achieve higher status and respect among superiors and are more involved in organizational decision-making (Cutlip et al., 2006).

Literature Review

The misunderstanding of the roles of higher education public relations officers on the part of the institution's president was one of the problems that emerged from the review of the empirical studies in the literature. The literature of research suggests that when public relations officers were asked about their respective president's understanding of the public relations officer's roles, the majority of those surveyed felt that their president did not have a strong understanding of the public relations officer's roles and thus of potential contributions to the institution (Peyronel, 1998; J. E. Ross & C. P. Halstead, 2001c; Vithakamontri, 1991). In addition, from the review of the literature of practice, higher education public relations practitioners reveal that public relations officers themselves do not fully understand their roles (Dozier & Broom, 1995; Hale, 2001; Phair & King, 2001). One possibility of why this is the case is

the result of role conflict or role ambiguity with the emergence of higher education marketing, branding and advertising trends and strategies (Hale, 2001). In the review of the literature of practice, experts in the field argue that public relations officers cannot expect to achieve a “seat at the table” where they can influence stakeholder relationships unless they perform both roles. Public relations officers, especially, must execute the managerial role in such a way that top management will understand their value and demand it when making organizational decisions (Broom & Dozier, 1990; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

This literature review examined the role and status of public relations in universities and colleges. The history of public relations in the university was found to have left behind a legacy of undervaluation of public relations (E.J. Anctil, 2003; Bagwell, 1997; Brigman & Hanson, 2000; Carr, 2009; Cavill, 2006; Cooper, 2007; Dhillon, 2001; Hale, 2001; Kummerfeldt, 1975; Lewison & Hawes, 2007; J. Ross & C. Halstead, 2001; Sickler, 2005; Stover, 2005; Warner, 1996).

In an attempt to improve the level of professionalism of public relations, a number of theoretical models emerged from the review of literature designed to clarify the various roles that a professional public relations officer had to be involved in, in corporate and public sector public relations. From this discourse emerged not only the five-factor model of the roles of a public information officer, but also the distinction between managerial and technician aspects of public relations, and focused studies on elements of the models including strategic communication and decision-making (Allston, 2001; Echague, 2003;

Eder, 2007; Fassett & J.T., 2004; Grunig & Grunig, 2000; Kozolanka, 2006; Minch, 2005).

On the basis of this literature, a number of studies were conducted to determine if theory and practice is converging in university public relations. Classic studies of Peyronel and Turk continued to point out serious gaps in the literature, and the fact that by and large most public relations officers at universities continued to serve in second-level, technician-oriented roles without sufficient participation in strategic decision-making side-by-side with the college president. Though these dissertation studies have established a negative outcome and lent a degree of urgency as well as a tone of frustration to the literature of public relations on the university level--with Peyronel's decade-old negative findings continuing to weigh heavily on the literature--a number of additional, albeit often anecdotal studies, have begun to suggest that some public relations officers have reorganized college or university public relations into strategic communications within the context of institution-wide strategic decision-making (Allston, 2001; Bagwell, 1997; Brunner, 2005; Krotseng & Zaccai, 2001; Lowrie & H, 2006; Morley & Aynsley, 2007; Peyronel, 2001; Peyronel, 1998; Rindfliesh, 2003; Turk, 2000; Woodrow, 2004; Yi, 2005). At present, then, the literature on the gap between theory and practice in university public relations presents a mixed finding, where theory has emerged to restructure public relations, but best practice remains emergent.

The problem of research in the review of literature has revealed few studies on the roles or work activities of public relations officers in the higher education context. The problem of practice in the review of literature has

revealed that the strategic and technical roles and work activities of higher education public relations officers, which should be to promote and support the advancement and viability of the institution's mission and organizational goals, are largely misunderstood. One critical shortcoming of this literature, however, is the fact that no study to date has employed the five-factor model (DeSanto et al., 2007; Moss et al., 2005) that could provide much needed understanding of the roles and work activities of public relations officers in higher education settings.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine technical and managerial roles and work activities as identified in the five-factor model (2005, 2007). The model will be used to measure roles and work activities among a unique population of public relations officers who are employed in higher education institutions. This study further examines the extent to which the managerial and technical roles, as well as their corresponding dimensions of work activities, are related to the public relations officers' access to the president and type of institution in which the public relations officers work.

Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent does the data from a unique higher education public relations population fit the theoretical five-factor model?

RQ2: Based on the five-factor model, to what extent do higher education public relations officers assume the role of manager?

RQ3: Based on the five-factor model, to what extent do higher education public relations officers assume the role of technician?

RQ4: Will participants who have direct access to the president of the institution be more likely than participants who do not have direct access to engage in the four managerial dimensions as identified by the five-factor model?

RQ5: Will participants employed in institutions that are identified on the Carnegie Classification as Doctorate-granting Universities and Master's Colleges and Universities-institutions be more likely than those employed in Baccalaureate Colleges to demonstrate a high level of the four managerial dimensions?

Methods

Participants

The population for the study included 407 public relations officers at higher education institutions listed in the 2011 directory of the Counselors to Higher Education (CHE), a professional section of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). PRSA is the largest organization of public relations professionals in the world with 20,000 members. The CHE professional section of PRSA is of significance to this study in that no other organization includes a majority of members who are practicing public relations officers in higher education environments. The final sample included 396 cases of which 74 participants responded to the survey resulting in a 19% response rate.

Data Analysis

For purposes of this study, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) were preferred statistical approaches to addressing research questions about relationships among latent and observed

variables (DeCoster, 1998; Roberts, 1999; Schreiber et al., 2006). CFA is a confirmatory mode of data analysis that is a theory-testing procedure versus an exploratory factor analysis which is a theory-generating procedure (Roberts, 1999; Schreiber et al., 2006).

The five-factor model (DeSanto et al., 2007; Moss et al., 2005) is the identified theoretical model to be tested for this study. In research methodology, latent variables or factors are terms used to describe unobserved variables (Schreiber et al., 2006). SEM, in comparison to CFA, extends the possibility of relationships among the latent variables and encompasses two components: (a) a measurement model, essentially the CFA, and (b) a structural model (Schreiber et al., 2006). In this study the latent variables are the five dependent variables: key policy/strategy advisor, monitor and evaluator, trouble shooter/problem solver, issues management expert and communication technician. In this study, the observed variables were the responses to the Senior Practitioner Survey questions provided by the participants.

The relationships among the latent and observed variables in the study were hypothesized a priori. A CFA was conducted first for each of the latent variables before conducting overall analyses with all latent variables in the model. Once the structure was examined, an independent sample *t* test analysis of the independent variables of institution type and access to the president was conducted. Fit indices used to evaluate the model fit were Chi-square, Chi-square/df ratio, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), and the Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA).

Results

RQ1: To what extent does the data from a unique higher education public relations population fit the theoretical five-factor model?

Key Policy and Strategy Advisor Factor

The first factor tested for model fit was key policy and strategy advisor, described as one of the four managerial dimensions of the five-factor model. The key policy and strategy advisor is described as the public relations practitioner who has a strong relationship with senior management within their organizations and have an active part in the policy-making process (DeSanto et al., 2006). As shown in Table 1, the indicators for the key policy and strategy advisor variable are defined by ten observed variables from the Senior Practitioner Survey.

Table 1. Survey Indicators for Key Policy and Strategy Advisor Factor

Indicator	Survey item
Q2.1	I advise top administration/management on a regular basis about relevant business/communication issues & challenges.
Q2.2	I contribute regularly to top administration/management policy-making meetings.
Q2.3	I advise administration/management largely about how best to present its policies.
Q2.4	I advise administration/management about how major strategic decisions will be viewed by the media.
Q2.5	I advise administration/management on a variety of important stakeholder issues.
Q2.11	An important element of my job is planning PR strategies for key internal/external stakeholders.
Q2.12	I collaborate with other members of top administration/management when formulating our PR strategy.
Q2.13	I am directly involved in organizational decisions at board level.
Q2.14	I am responsible for implementing the organizations communications strategies.
Q2.15	I work closely with the President to ensure that the PR/communication implications of my strategic decisions are understood.

The analyses of the correlation of the key policy and strategy latent variable to the observed variables do not indicate an adequate fit of the construct to the data. The Chi-square is statistically significant at the .05 level and the ratio of the Chi-square to degrees of freedom exceeds 2. The RMSEA is high at .143 and above the .08 level. The CFI = .873 and is below the .95 level. The TLI = .837 and is below the .90 level. Based on these fit indices, the model was rejected.

Monitor and Evaluator Factor

The second factor tested for model fit was monitor and evaluator, described as one of the four managerial dimensions of the five-factor model. The dimension reflects managerial responsibility for “organizing, controlling, and monitoring... the work of setting targets with top management, operating within budget, monitoring performance against targets, preparing departmental reports...and negotiating for organizational resources and commissioning of external agencies” (DeSanto et al., 2006, p. 12). The indicators are defined by eight observed variables from the Senior Practitioner Survey as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Survey Indicators for Monitor and Evaluator Factor

Indicator	Survey item
Q2.25	I prepare regular reports about the operation of the communications functions for senior administration/management.
Q2.26	I am responsible for setting targets for the public relations function.
Q2.27	I work with senior management to determine appropriate targets/benchmarks for the PR/communication function.
Q2.28	I have to ensure that the PR/communication function operates within the agreed budgets.
Q2.29	I am responsible for commissioning external agencies to evaluate communication strategies.
Q2.30	I am responsible for monitoring the performance of the PR/communication function against targets.
Q2.31	Negotiating with other administrators/managers about resources & workloads for the pr department/functions is a central part of my job.
Q2.32	I negotiate with senior administration/management about the targets/goals for the PR/communication function.

The analyses of the correlation of the monitor and evaluator latent variable to the observed variables do not indicate an adequate fit of the construct to the data. The Chi-square is statistically significant at the .05 level and the ratio of the Chi-square to degrees of freedom exceeds 2. The RMSEA is high at .234 and above the .08 level. The CFI = .856 and is below the .95 level. The TLI = .711 and is below the .90 level. Based on these fit indices, the model was rejected.

Trouble Shooter/Problem Solver Factor

The third factor tested for model fit was trouble shooter/problem solver, described as one of the managerial dimensions of the five-factor model. The trouble shooter/problem solver dimension “represents practitioners’ responses to the way they treat internal or external challenges, threats and or crises confronting the organization...and are generally acknowledged to be the organization’s designated ‘fire-fighters’” (DeSanto et al., 2006, p.13). The indicators for the trouble shooter/problem solver variable are defined by four observed variables that are items from the Senior Practitioner Survey as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Survey Indicators for Trouble Shooter/Problem Solver Factor

Indicator	Survey item
Q2.17	My job often involves “fire-fighting” a range of internal/external issues.
Q2.20	Helping to resolve problems caused by others within the organization is one of my key responsibilities.
Q2.33	I represent the PR/communication function at meetings where policy that might affect the communication function’s role or resources is discussed.
Q2.34	My job involves exchanging information with others & negotiating over who controls certain information.

The analyses of the correlation of the trouble shooter/problem solver latent variable to the observed variables do indicate an adequate fit of the construct to the data. The Chi-square is not statistically significant at the .05 level and the ratio of the Chi-square to degrees of freedom does not exceed 2. The RMSEA is low at .000 and below the .08 level. The CFI = 1.000 and is above the .95 level. The TLI = 1.134 and is above the .90 level. Based on these fit indices, the model was accepted.

Issues Management Expert Factor

The fourth factor tested for model fit was issues management expert, described as one of the managerial dimensions of the five-factor model. The dimension “relates to the public relations practitioner’s role in diagnosing and responding to external threats from major or minor issues...and may be recognized as the organization’s external ‘eyes and ears’” (DeSanto et al., 2006, p. 12). As shown in Table 4, the indicators are defined by eight observed variables that are items from the Senior Practitioner Survey.

Table 4. Survey Indicators for Issues Management Expert Factor

Indicator	Survey item
Q2.6	I continually monitor external trends that might affect the organization.
Q2.7	I collect & analyze external intelligence relevant to my organization.
Q2.8	I recommend how the organization should respond to the threat from major trends/issues.
Q2.9	I am responsible for managing programs to address identified issues.
Q2.10	I help the organization manage issues arising from conflicts with external stakeholder groups.
Q2.16	I am responsible for dealing with any unexpected internal/external events that threaten the organization.
Q2.19	I am recognized as an expert at dealing with major/minor crisis affecting my organization.
Q2.35	An important element of my job involves liaising and negotiating with external stakeholders.

The analyses of the correlation of the issues management expert latent variable to the observed variables do not indicate an adequate fit of the construct to the data. The Chi-square is statistically significant at the .05 level and the ratio of the Chi-square to degrees of freedom exceeds 2. The RMSEA is high at .179 and above the .08 level. The CFI = .798 and is below the .95 level. The TLI = .636 and is below the .90 level. Based on these fit indices, the model was rejected.

Communication Technician Factor

The fifth factor tested for model fit was communication technician, described as the technical dimension of the five-factor model. Unlike the previous dimensions that fall into managerial ranks of an organization, the last dimension or factor—communication technician—“falls into the technical or craft side of practitioner activity...namely writing for the media and for newsletters, handling events and dealing with the media” (DeSanto et al., 2004, p. 191). The indicators for the communication technician variable are defined by five observed variables, as shown in Table 5, which are items from the Senior Practitioner Survey.

Table 5. Survey Indicators for Communication Technician Factor

Indicator	Survey item
Q2.22	My job often involves managing staff within my department to ensure they are doing their jobs effectively.
Q2.23	I am responsible for ensuring that the organization’s information & communications reporting systems are working effectively.
Q2.24	I have to deal personally with e-mail & other correspondence as part of my job.
Q2.36	I often handle the technical aspects of producing communication/public relations materials.
Q2.40	I oversee the visual/design materials for my organization.

The analyses of the correlation of the communication technician latent variable to the observed variables do indicate an adequate fit of the construct to

the data. The Chi-square = 6.625 and is not statistically significant at the .05 level. The ratio of the Chi-square to degrees of freedom = 5 and exceeds 2. The RMSEA = .067 and falls below the .08 level. The CFI = .000 and falls below the .95 level. The TLI = 13.186 and is above the .90 level. Based on these fit indices, the model was accepted.

Results for the Overall Five-Factor Model

Following the analysis of the fit indices for each factor of the model, an analysis of the overall model was performed. In the overall model, the Chi-square = 1125.65 and is statistically significant at the .05 level. The ratio of the Chi-square to degrees of freedom = 517 and exceeds 2. The RMSEA is high at .127 and above the .08 level. The CFI = .647 and is below the .95 level. The TLI = .594 and is below the .90 level. Based on these fit indices, the overall findings indicated a poor goodness of fit and the overall model was rejected.

Table 6 presents the results of the fit indices for each five-factor model construct and the overall five-factor model. The observed data are not an adequate goodness of fit for three of the constructs—key policy and strategy advisor, monitor and evaluator, and issues management expert—as well as not an adequate goodness of fit of the overall five-factor model. However, the observed data for two factors—trouble shooter/problem solver and communication technician—do indicate an adequate fit to the hypothesized model.

Table 6. Fit Indices Results for Five-Factor Model

Work Dimensions	χ^2	df	p	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
KPSA	87.249	35	.000	2.493	.873	.837	.143
ME	69.824	14	.000	4.987	.856	.711	.234
TSPS	.274	2	.872	1.37	1.00	1.134	.000
IM	66.659	20	.000	3.333	.798	.636	.179
CT	6.625	5	.250	1.325	.000	13.186	.067
Overall	1125.645	517	.000	2.177	.647	.594	.127

Note. Boldface indicates an adequate fit for each of the model factors to the observed data as indicated by the corresponding fit indices.

Reduced Model

The analysis of the fit indices for the reduced overall model that excluded the communication technician dimension does not indicate an adequate fit of the data to the alternative model. Table 7 compares the results of the reduced overall model to the overall model results. For the reduced overall model, the Chi-square is statistically significant at the .05 level and the ratio of the Chi-square to degrees of freedom exceeds 2. The RMSEA is high at .144 and above the .08 level. The CFI = .661 and is below the .95 level. The TLI = .602 and is below the .90 level. Based on these fit indices, the findings indicated a poor goodness of fit and the reduced overall model was rejected.

Table 7. Fit Indices Comparison for Reduced Overall and Overall Models

Models	χ^2	df	p	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Reduced Overall Model	929.781	371	.000	2.506	.661	.602	.144
Overall	1125.645	517	.000	2.177	.647	.594	.127

Procrustes Rotation

With the failure to achieve adequate fit using SEM CFA procedures for the five-factor model (DeSantos, 2005, 2007), a Procrustes rotation analysis was conducted to address RQ1. From the current data, the factor structure was identified by using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with a Varimax rotation. This structure was rotated to a binary target of 1s and 0s to specify the hypothesized factor loading. The use of a binary target was due to the unavailability of the original factor structure. For this study's baseline analyses (an exploratory factor structure with no previous loadings), a factor congruence coefficient value of $.70$ was used to guide the investigation (Costa & McCrae, personal communication, Oct 2001).

The factor congruence coefficients were as follows: key policy and strategy advisor = $.786$; trouble shooter/problem solver = $.776$; issues management expert = $.617$; communication technician = $.561$; and monitor and evaluator = $.605$. The overall congruence coefficient was $.693$ as shown in Table 8. Although the coefficients were above chance ($.50$), only the key policy and strategy advisor and trouble shooter/problem solver factors exceeded $.70$ congruence, that suggests close replication to the data structures of the original U.K. and U.S. studies. Many of the item congruence coefficients exceeded $.70$.

Table 8. Procrustes Rotation Factor Congruence Coefficients

Survey Items	KPSA	TSPS	IM	ME	CT	ITEMCONG
Q_1	.522	-.415	.410	-.010	.430	.564
Q_2	.142	.266	.788	-.206	-.452	.577
Q_3	.868	.083	.085	.059	.408	.841
Q_4	.879	.211	-.025	.067	.304	.848
Q_5	.778	.036	-.055	-.319	.432	.840
Q_11	.161	.082	.573	.543	.333	.449
Q_12	.908	.174	.250	-.103	.091	.933
Q_13	-.164	.349	.552	.077	-.106	.547
Q_14	.216	.555	.478	.056	-.574	.794
Q_15	.652	.557	.335	-.071	-.321	.511
Q_17	.665	.344	.199	.349	.379	.553
Q_20	.646	.509	.196	.263	.407	.772
Q_33	.144	.384	.596	.580	.296	.605
Q_34	.669	-.050	-.119	-.174	.409	.784
Q_6	.167	.319	.585	.539	.306	.678
Q_7	.142	.361	.525	.653	.257	.795
Q_8	.581	.669	.116	.289	.286	.812
Q_9	.154	.579	.574	.149	-.306	.243
Q_10	.560	.604	.143	.141	.347	.987
Q_16	.167	.672	.215	.603	.091	.931
Q_19	.826	-.026	-.068	-.337	.377	.609
Q_35	-.001	.496	.386	.440	.351	.218
Q_22	-.362	-.211	.317	-.297	.443	.584
Q_24	-.327	.360	.121	-.553	.404	.862
Q_25	-.144	.455	.101	.509	.068	.804
Q_36r	-.087	-.289	.356	.575	-.329	-.470
Q_40	-.021	.588	.134	.186	-.511	.641
Q_26	.095	.674	.331	.548	.235	.936
Q_27	.397	.363	.524	.086	.291	.957
Q_28	.124	.770	.202	.505	.048	.878
Q_29	.374	.300	.069	.288	.164	.744
Q_30	.132	.572	.458	.577	.252	.875
Q_31	.098	.422	.513	.289	.488	.720
Q_32	.372	.449	.410	.067	.584	.868
FACTCONG	.786	.776	.617	.605	.561	.693

Note. Boldface indicates $.70 >$ congruence.

Research Question Two

The study attempted to determine the level of managerial work activity of public relations officers in higher education environments. The research question posed was, “Based on the five-factor model, to what extent do higher education public relations officers assume the role of manager?” Reported in rank order was the director level at 32.4%, vice-president level at 17.6% and executive director at 10.8%. The total of director, vice-president and executive

job titles suggest that 60.8% of the respondents held senior-level managerial positions in the higher education institutions based on job title. An additional 33.8% of participants reported job titles that suggest mid-level managerial positions. Descriptive statistical analyses suggest that a total of 94.6% of the respondents assume the role of manager based on the reporting of managerial-level job titles.

Research Question Three

The study attempted to determine the level of technical work activity of public relations officers in higher education environments. The research question posed was, “Based on the five-factor model, to what extent do higher education public relations officers assume the role of communication technician?” Descriptive statistical analyses suggest a total of 5.4% of respondents assume the role of technician based on reported job titles at the technical level.

Research Question Four

The study attempted to determine a difference in managerial work activity based on the public relations officers’ access to the institution’s president. The research question posed was, “Will participants who have direct access to the president of the institution be more likely than participants who do not have direct access to engage in the four managerial dimensions as identified by the five-factor model?” Descriptive and *t*-test statistical analyses suggest that participants who have direct access to the president of the institution are significantly *less* likely than participants who do not have direct access to engage in three of the four managerial dimensions as identified by the five-factor model.

Monitor and evaluator is the one managerial factor that suggests no significant difference between those who have direct access to the president and those who do not have direct access to the president.

Research Question Five

The study attempted to determine a difference in managerial work activity based on the type of institution in which the public relations officers were employed. The research question posed was, “Will participants employed in institutions that are identified on the Carnegie Classification as Doctorate-granting Universities and Master’s Colleges and Universities-institutions be more likely than those employed in Baccalaureate Colleges to demonstrate a higher level of the four managerial dimensions?” The overall findings of the *t*-test analysis indicated that no significant difference exists for managerial work activity among higher education public relations officers based on the type of institution in which they are employed.

Summary of the Major Findings

Overall, the findings of this study reveal a disturbing theme found in previous research that there is an apparent underutilization of the senior public relations officer as an institutional resource. The literature of research and practice suggests that the effective public relations officer should possess a complementary mix of both technical and managerial work skills and have direct access to the president to be strategically effective in advancing organizational goals, but this ideal public relations scenario is more the exception than the norm. This study reveals that the higher education senior public relations officer assumes more of a technician role, with marginal engagement of managerial role

enactment despite holding senior-level job titles. In addition, the study finds that senior public relations officers are under the direct authority of other higher education top administrators, which in effect creates an administrative barrier for direct access to the president of the institution. Furthermore, this theme is consistent throughout higher education regardless of the organizational type of institution. The importance of this study's finding is that the technical work dimension continues to have a pervasive foothold over managerial work dimensions in higher education public relations role enactment. This marginalization of managerial role enactment puts the institution in a dire position. The researcher postulates that higher education senior-level public relations officers put institutions at risk of alienation from the publics for which their very survival depends. As evidenced by the findings of this study, these senior-level public relations officers still do not have a seat at the table. Only when there are special circumstances such as institutional achievements to promote or crises to downplay, does the institution pull the senior public relations officer into a critically important, even executive role, which may explain the presence of the trouble shooter/problem solver dimension, also found among the sample CHE group in this study. While some advancements appear in few institutions where the senior level public relations officer has a seat at the table, there continues to be institutions that still undervalue the contributions of the higher education senior public relations officer.

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