

PRSA*notes*

An electronic newsletter by and for the 200+ members of the Central Iowa Chapter
April, 2003

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Chapter Institute is Thursday, April 3

Central Iowa Chapter's 34th Annual Institute is slated for Thursday, April 3, at the HyVee Conference Center in West Des Moines. "Winning a Seat at the Strategy Table," presented by The Principal Financial Group, begins with registration at 8 a.m., and ends with the PRIME Awards at 2:45 p.m.

For more information on Institute, including registration information and a map to the HyVee Conference Center, visit www.prsaciowa.org.

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Media panelists suggest effective 'pitching' techniques

Lively presentations by two panelists were followed by lively questions from those attending the March 20 luncheon meeting of Central Iowa Chapter PRSA at the Downtown Holiday Inn. And one thing that became clear during the discussion was that a "pitch" for a news story can't be a standard product.

Panelists were Craig Black, senior editor of Meredith's Gardening Magazine, and Cal Woods, news director of KDSM-TV. To illustrate the need for "tailored" pitches, the audience was reminded that Black was putting the finishing touches on his June issue; Woods was concerned about the 9 p.m. news that day.

Black summed up the situation this way: "You work too much! You write too much! You mail too much! If you're wasting my time, you're wasting your time." He prefers a brief

announcement about a story idea by mail rather than phone calls or e-mail and warns that "the scatter shot approach is ineffective."

In urging public relations professionals to become "working partners with media representatives," he cautioned: "Don't make me work to get your information." Although he agreed that pitches should be short and to the point, Woods pointed out that because he works on shorter deadlines he's willing to receive telephone tips with story ideas. But since he's a reporter as well as news director, e-mail may not reach him when he's in the field. Woods' advice: "Control what you get on the air by telling the 'one thing' you want us to know." And he recommended that PR people always have an effective spokesperson available to comment on a breaking story.

Both panelists spurned elaborate press kits and cautioned that even well-established annual events need a new angle each time. They agreed that fact sheets are more likely to attract their interest than finished stories.

A third panelist scheduled for the meeting-Jim Boyd, news director of WHO Radio-was unable to attend because of last minute news developments.

There will be no April luncheon meeting because of the Institute April 3 at the HyVee conference center in West Des Moines.

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Chapter schedules networking, social event

Central Iowa Chapter of PRSA is hosting a special members-only networking and social event Thursday evening, April 24. Participants will have an opportunity to visit with a new professional every four minutes while rotating among stations for short, self-directed conversations. You'll have the chance to meet new chapter members, exchange business cards, and discuss challenges you're facing, big projects or new ideas.

Event Details:

Thursday, April 24
Johnny's Hall of Fame
302 Court Ave., Des Moines
4:45-5:30 p.m. Sign in and social time
5:30-6:30 p.m. Networking activity
6:30-? p.m. Social time

The cost to participate is \$5, payable at the door. An assortment of appetizers will be provided, and drinks will be available for purchase at happy hour (half-price) prices. Members who responded to the chapter survey in December indicated a strong interest in additional social and networking opportunities. In turn, the chapter is responding by hosting this event, and additional events may be considered for the future.

Registration is required for this event. To reserve a spot, please send an e-mail to Kelly Sankey at sankey.kelly@principal.com by April 17.

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Notes from the accreditation front . . .

Ferne G. Bonomi APR, Fellow PRSA, long-time accreditation chair in central Iowa, is a recent appointee to the Universal Accreditation Board, which administers accreditation for PRSA and eight other public relations groups. She reports after the March meeting of the UAB in New York City.

- "Beta" test of multiple-choice questions completed
- Extensive written submission and interview will come first
- Chapter members no longer will make pass/fail decisions on colleagues

During three weeks in March, 125 candidates for accreditation spent six hours on a computer, working their way through 298 multiple-choice questions in the "beta" test of part II of the new examination for the credential. The tests were given by individual appointment at Prometric testing centers across the country. Prometric administers the Graduate Record Examination and handles a large number of technical and professional proficiency tests. Some Iowa candidates were included in the statistical sample selected to take the test.

The "beta" constituted a field test of the second portion of the new accreditation examination. Candidates who pass will be accredited without taking the extensive first portion to be required of all subsequent candidates. Feedback from the beta candidates is now being sought by the Universal Accreditation Board, both informally and in an electronic survey.

Statistical work on the test results is underway throughout April and early May, determining which questions proved to be valid in distinguishing competence. About 25 public relations students and 25 previously accredited practitioners also sat for the test, for comparison. None of the students will be granted accreditation, since they lack the five-year experience requirement. Final scores of the beta candidates will be determined on the basis of the valid questions. The eventual multiple-choice examination is scheduled to be available in July of this year. It will be about half as long as the "beta" the early candidates were testing questions for two complete examinations which will be in the field. However, candidates for accreditation will go through a substantial "readiness" preparation before being allowed to proceed to the computer test. It is anticipated that "APR prep" courses will come into play at this stage.

Extensive written submission and interview will come first

Candidates will be required to prepare a "written submission" describing their organization and their role in it, their experience, and their self-assessment of readiness for the written portion. Some examples: In one section, they must articulate the major problems facing their organization, and the solution or approach they would recommend

to address the opportunity or challenge. They will be asked to describe changes that might be needed in their organization, and steps they would recommend to implement the changes.

Regarding their experience, they must describe how they planned a specific public relations program, or how they would do so for an organization with which they are familiar. They must cover research, the approval process for the plan, the outcomes and evaluation of the outcomes. They will also relate what they would do, given unlimited resources and authority, to improve the process by which public relations programs in their organization are developed, approved and measured.

The self-assessment asks them to describe their strengths and weaknesses in terms of both experience and examination preparation in 10 major areas, such as history, business literacy, ethics, law, communication theory, planning, crisis communication and using information technology.

Candidates will also prepare a portfolio documenting the submission. "Glitz" is not recommended. "Keep your presentation simple and straightforward," candidates are advised. The intent is to "show your capabilities as a public relations professional, not as a graphics designer or glitzy presenter."

The written submission goes, in advance, to a new Readiness Review panel composed of three accredited members of the local chapter. Candidates will present their portfolio and defend the contents in a one- to two-hour session with the panel. Panelists will then vote on whether the candidate is ready to proceed to the second stage of the examination. The score sheets cover more than a dozen criteria not readily tested by multiple-choice, such as creativity, time management, teaching others, and communication skills specifically, speaking, interviewing, writing, editing and listening.

Chapter members no longer will make pass/fail decisions on colleagues

If a candidate is deemed unready to proceed, he or she will be informed specifically about the areas which need improvement, with recommendations about how to fill those gaps.

"In this process," Ferne Bonomi observes, "the panelists no longer pass or fail their fellow chapter members, as took place in the old oral examinations. Rather, they assist any weak candidates in becoming stronger candidates, and do not let them proceed to the final examination until they have demonstrated readiness for it."

Under the new system, there will no longer be spring and fall examination "windows," she notes. The computerized portion of the examination will be available year-round, although appointments might be scarce when other big examinations are underway at Prometric. Local chapters have control of the process, in determining when to hold prep courses and readiness reviews, she comments.

Details about the process are now available on the web site, www.accreditationboard.org. Look for FAQs and forms on the menu at the left side of the page.

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Member news . . .

Daryl Lewis joins State Public Policy Group

Daryl Lewis has left Prairie Meadows and is now with the State Public Policy Group. Her address is: 200 10th Street, 5th floor, Des Moines, IA 50309. Telephone: 515/243-2000, Ext. 115; e-mail dlewis@sppg.com.

Jason Menke moves to ISU Foundation

Jason Menke is the new assistant director of communications for the Iowa State University Foundation in Ames. Previously, he was the communication coordinator for ChildServe in Johnston. At the foundation, Menke is responsible for communication strategy and planning, media relations, internal communication, and web site development and maintenance. Menke was born at University Hospitals in Iowa City, completed some of his undergraduate work at the University of Northern Iowa, and graduated from Drake University in 1994. "Now that I'm working for the ISU Foundation," Menke said, "I've got an affiliation to every major university in Iowa. If I ever run for governor, I should do pretty well."

Ann Wilson, APR, is director of communications for the ISU Foundation.

Principal promotes Wille

Sara Wille has been promoted to senior communications consultant at the Principal Financial Group.

Remund will join Frahm at Bank of America in Charlotte, N.C.

David Remund, Communications Manager - Retirement and Investor Services, for The Principal Financial Group, has resigned his position and will relocate to Charlotte, N.C., where he will join Bank of America as vice president, communications, for its Consumer Real Estate division. One of Remund's former supervisors when he was with Wells Fargo, Dan Frahm, is now with Bank of America and recruited Remund to join his team. Remund expect to be living and working in Charlotte by the end of April.

Greenlee School gets new director

Michael Bugeja (Boo ZHAY uh), professor and associate director of the E. W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University, Athens, has been named professor and director of the Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication at Iowa State University, effective July 1. His appointment, announced by Peter Rabideau, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, is subject to review by the Board of Regents, State of Iowa.

Bugeja replaces John Eighmey as director of the Greenlee School. Eighmey will remain on the Greenlee School faculty. The Greenlee School has 21 full-time faculty positions, 16 lecturers, 1,066 undergraduate students and three majors.

Erin Wilgenbusch, APR, is one of the lecturers on public relations.

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On the national front . . .

PRSA presses Supreme Court to protect free speech right for American business

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), representing 20,000 public relations professionals across the country, has joined other national advertising, media and business organizations in urging the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn a lower court ruling that could impose a chilling limitation on free speech by American businesses and other organizations if it is allowed to stand.

The PRSA and other public relations and public affairs professional organizations filed a "friend of the court" brief with the high court in the Nike v. Kasky case in which the court is expected to render a decision by July. This filing is the latest in a series of briefs submitted by entities interested in protecting First Amendment rights, including the Bush administration, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Civil Liberties Union, organized labor, media companies and major corporations.

Nike's appeal to the Supreme Court seeks to overturn a ruling in October 2002 by the California Supreme Court that effectively eliminates First Amendment protection for Nike and other corporations that speak out on public issues.

"Those of us who assist companies in gathering and disseminating information related to their businesses have always relied on the same First Amendment protections as those who openly criticize Nike and other corporations," said PRSA President and CEO Reed Bolton Byrum, APR. "Without that protection there will be a serious impact on all aspects of corporate communications-from business, to corporate crisis communications and even to philanthropic and community-outreach programs."

(Editor's Note: Reed Bolton Byrum, PRSA's 2003 President and CEO, is available to discuss this issue and its wide-reaching implications for the business, communications and marketing industries. Contact Libby M. Roberge at 212/460-1495.)

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PRSA people . . .

Technology

To last month's question about use of technological devices, one reader responded: "I have a cell phone, Palm Pilot and a laptop. I couldn't live without them. Reason why? I travel about half the time. If I didn't keep up on the road and work on planes, I'd never get through my e-mail."

This month's question is: "How much time would you estimate you spend, on an average day, writing and responding to e-mail?"

Send your responses-and other news-to wdavis@iastate.edu.

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Employment . . .

Wells Fargo Home Mortgage Job Opportunities

Communications Manager 2

Wells Fargo Home Mortgage is seeking an experienced communications professional to take responsibility for high-profile external communications activities and accountability for the media relations function. This person would develop, supervise and execute all aspects of external communications programs for Wells Fargo Home Mortgage to promote and protect the Wells Fargo brand, support marketing programs and enhance recruiting efforts. This position ensures that senior-level counsel is provided to internal clients regarding external communications activities including highly complex and sensitive issues. Requirements for this position include 10+ years experience, specifically in working with national news media , designing multifaceted public relations programs, counseling senior executives, directing corporate media relations programs, and managing highly complex and highly sensitive issues; and a bachelor's degree in communications, journalism or marketing. Excellent written and oral skills, strong management abilities and knowledge of the mortgage banking business will distinguish the top candidates. The position will be based in Iowa. Wells Fargo Home Mortgage is an equal opportunity employer.

Public Relations Consultant 4 (two positions open)

Wells Fargo Home Mortgage is seeking two experienced communications professionals to develop and execute all aspects of its media relations program. These people would provide senior-level counsel to internal clients regarding external communications programs including highly complex and sensitive issues and would have responsibility for the execution of media relations tactics related to high-profile external communications activities and accountability for the day-to-day activities of the media relations function. Requirements for these positions include 8+ years experience, specifically working with national news media (print, broadcast and Web), coaching senior executives, developing effective press materials, and executing corporate media relations programs; and a bachelor's degree in communications, journalism or marketing. Excellent written and oral skills, experience in managing highly complex and highly

sensitive issues, and knowledge of the mortgage banking business will distinguish the top candidates. These positions will be based in Iowa. Wells Fargo Home Mortgage is an equal opportunity employer.

Communications Consultant 4 (Government Relations)

Wells Fargo Home Mortgage is seeking an experienced communications professional to Develop and execute national, regional and local communications strategies to support government affairs activities to ensure that its efforts in this area are presented to external and internal audiences in a cohesive, effective and strategic manner. Requirements for this position include 8+ years experience, specifically in managing highly complex and highly sensitive issues in public relations, government relations, media relations, and corporate communications; previous leadership positions in developing and executing public relations campaigns including those targeted at affecting public sentiment on governmental issues; and a bachelor's degree in communications, journalism or marketing. Excellent written and oral skills, strong project management abilities and knowledge of the mortgage banking business will distinguish the top candidates. The position will be based in Maryland. Wells Fargo Home Mortgage is an equal opportunity employer.

Communications Consultant 4 (Community Relations)

Wells Fargo Home Mortgage is seeking an experienced communications professional to provide public relations support for its community relations initiatives. This person would develop and execute public relations and public affairs strategies to support community relations, charitable giving, Housing Foundation and volunteer, consumer education, and government affairs activities to ensure that Wells Fargo's efforts in these areas are presented to external and internal audiences in a cohesive manner. Requirements for this position include 8+ years experience, specifically in public relations, government relations, consumer education, media relations, corporate communications, corporate philanthropy, community relations, and ethnic marketing; and a bachelor's degree in communications, journalism or marketing. Excellent written and oral skills, strong project management abilities and knowledge of the mortgage banking business will distinguish the top candidates. The position will be based in Minnesota or Iowa. Wells Fargo Home Mortgage is an equal opportunity employer.

Preferred Contact: Brad Lelemsis, Recruiting Consultant, Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, 2701 Wells Fargo Way, MAC X2401-02G, Minneapolis, MN 55408. Phone 612/312-5168, Fax 612/312-5150. Bradley.Lelemsis@WellsFargo.com.

or

Sue Caley, Communications, Wells Fargo Home & Consumer Finance Group, One Home Campus, MAC X2401-02M, Des Moines, IA 50328. Phone 515/213-4112, Fax 515/213-4772. sue.caley@wellsfargo.com.

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