



PRSA & Diversity

Where are we today and where should be our heading?

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Summary

For more than a decade, PRSA's leaders have brought attention to the issue of diversity in the Public Relations profession with a mission to:

- Make PRSA a more inclusive and welcoming Society by reaching out to industry professionals of diverse racial backgrounds, ethnicities and sexual orientations.
- Help to diversify the industry by supporting minority candidates who aspire to a career in public relations by helping them develop industry familiarity and knowledge, relevant skills and a network of professional contacts.
- Bring multicultural understanding and expertise to public relations professionals in order to address the diverse audiences in the nation.

This mission is currently reflected in three focus areas for PRSA: (1) Increasing recruitment of diverse individuals to PRSA as members, (b) providing training for PRSA members and leaders with respect to diversity and multicultural communications, and (c) encouraging diverse professionals to consider leadership roles within PRSA.

Against this backdrop, the percentage of PRSA members who are self-described as diverse has increased from 7% in 2005 to 14% in 2010, and between 1997 and 2011 PRSA will have had its top leadership position (CEO and Chair of the Board) filled three times by diverse professionals. During this same period, PRSA Chapters across the country have appointed Chapter Diversity Officers, and diversity resources have become an important part of the toolkit PRSA offers members.

Nonetheless, more work needs to be done, work that is increasingly important as America itself continues to become more diverse in order to introduce a more representative workforce, reach diverse audiences who have segmented communications channels and engage a more wide-reaching thought leadership and understanding of diversity in our society.

As a result, in 2009, PRSA's board of directors began to more closely examine a number of areas of PRSA's activities to discuss how to strengthen PRSA; diversity was one of those areas. A draft blueprint was created to refocus diversity efforts; PRSA restructured its Diversity Committee to be more all-encompassing (to reflect the changing and broadening definition of diversity), and 2010 PRSA CEO and Chair Gary McCormick elevated the issue of diversity as a major priority for the organization.

PRSA's workplan includes an expansion of diversity resources for members, efforts to enhance the recruitment into PRSA of diverse members, and working with allied organizations.

Objectives

Objectives for PRSA's efforts, which will be supported by the Diversity Committee as they continue their work, will be expressed as specific metrical goals, such as:

- Make diversity an integral part of all of the Society's activities through the strategic planning process
- Increase diverse membership of PRSA by a target percentage by a certain date.

- Increase the number of diverse leaders and diverse APRs by a target percentage by a certain date.
- Create on-going partnerships with at least two diverse organizations by 2011.
- Increase traffic to diversity area of PRSA website by a certain amount by a certain date.

As well as other metrics that illustrate the Society's progress towards diversity goals.

History

- **1997:** Under the leadership of Debra Miller, APR, Fellow PRSA, the Minority Affairs Committee was then rolled into a Professional Interest Section — the Multicultural Communications Section — in 1997.
- **2000:** Ofield Dukes, APR, Fellow PRSA, led first official PRSA National Diversity Task Force. Dukes began an educational campaign across the country, taking the diversity message to Chapters as one of the top priorities of the national leadership.
- **2001:** In conjunction with the Multicultural Communications Professional Interest Section and the College of Fellows initiative, the Society made strides in educating members about diversity and multiculturalism.
 - First-ever [Chapter Awards for Diversity](#) were given to PRSA Chapters in Detroit, Atlanta and Cleveland.
 - The PRSA Foundation worked with the Multicultural Communications Section to continue its scholarship awards program.
- **2004:** Chapter survey results show that more than half of the Society was participating in a diversity outreach, or planned to do so in 2004.
 - **President and CEO, C. Del Galloway, APR, Fellow PRSA,** elevates PRSA’s diversity initiatives by creating the first National Diversity Committee, reporting directly to the board of directors.
 - **Rosanna M. Fiske, APR,** leads the first National Diversity Committee and develops **the [Diversity Tool Kit](#)[®]** for Chapter, District and Section use.
 - **Launched** “Advancing Diversity” with 20 PRSA spokespeople representing all areas of the U.S. and the Society.
 - Created diversity website within PRSA’s site (www.diversity.prsa.org) and developed the Diversity Pros database within Job Bank
 - **PRSA signs agreements with HispanicPRWire and with BlackPRWire.** LGBT Affinity Group begins its work.
- **2005:** PRSA leads the charge in the first ever PR Diversity Summit, along with allied organizations Arthur Page Society, IPR, IABC among others; participates in PR Coalition “White Paper on Diversity.”
 - PRSA’s [Diversity Tool Kit](#)[®] serves as foundation document for the Global Alliance for PR and Communications Management’s “Diversity Manifesto,” published in 2005.
 - Conducted first “The Strategist” diversity roundtable in Miami, FL.
 - Developed and delivered first teleseminars on diversity.

- **2006:** PRSA enters into partnership with *Hispanic PRNewswire* to conduct a Multicultural Communications and Diversity Tour, visiting Chapters across the country.
- **2008:** [*PRSA Diversity Today*](#), a podcast series focusing on diversity and multicultural communications, is established.
- **2010:** PRSA merged the Multicultural Communications Sections and LGBT Affinity Group with the Diversity Committee, under a broad structure intended to allow for a separate but coordinated focus of different aspects of diversity.
- **2010:** Public Relations and Diversity video created and posted online. Coordinated promotional campaign launching in March.
- **2101:** With the start of the new strategic planning cycle, the Society will now integrate diversity goals more completely as it conducts the strategic planning process.

Governance

PRSA's board of directors is responsible for establishing an overall vision for PRSA, for setting priorities, for creating policies, assuring that adequate resources are available for PRSA to meet the vision, and to evaluate performance of the organization.

PRSA's Committees are overseen by the board, meaning that the work of Committees must reflect the vision established by the board.

At the direction of the PRSA board, PRSA's Diversity Committee was expanded at the end of 2010 to reflect an enhanced and expanded mission that incorporated the role formerly performed by the Multicultural Communications Section, as well as the LGBT affinity group. Under the overall umbrella of the Diversity Committee, which will set direction, coordinate activities, and serve as a central oversight body, subcommittees focused on engagement and professional development focused on (a) ethnic diversity, (b) multicultural communications, (c) orientation and (d) disabilities will develop activities, programs, resources, and alliances within their respective areas.

Existing Resources and Ongoing Activities (NEED TO LINK ALL TO RESOURCE PAGES)

PRSA has undertaken a number of programs and tactics to support Diversity initiatives among members. These include:

- [College of Fellows Mentoring](#) - Identify mentors through the CFM program.
- [PRSSA Scholarships](#) (Multicultural Scholarships?). Two annual scholarships of \$1,500 for diverse students
- Articles in [Tactics](#) and [Strategist](#). A variety of articles related to diversity and multiculturalism appearing in PRSA's flagship publications.
- [Diversity Today](#). A series of podcasts devoted to topics relating to diversity.
- Diversity Tool Kit. A practical guide for Chapter, Section and District leaders seeking to increase the diversity of their membership.
- Hispanic PR Newswire Diversity Tour Chapter visits. A series of in-person events at PRSA Chapters across the United States focusing on multicultural communications.
- [Chapter Diversity Awards](#). PRSA's program to recognize Chapter excellence in the area of Diversity.
- [Speaker and Judge Outreach](#). Invitations targeted to diverse practitioners to judge PRSA Silver Anvil competition and propose presentations for PRSA's International Conference.
- Outreach is underway to diverse organizations, including the [Black Public Relations Society \(BPRS\)](#) and the [Hispanic Public Relations Association \(HPRSA\)](#).
- [PRSA Website](#). Diversity is housed under intelligence under on the PRSA website.
- New staff liaison has been appointed to coordinate and provide continuity for PRSA administrative actions regarding Diversity Committee initiatives.
- Diversity Committee has been established as the umbrella group to implement key strategies (with ad hoc groups focusing on multicultural, LGBT, Disabilities, Work/Life/Gender).

Current Plans

Activities that will be considered by the Diversity Committee as it develops its 2010 workplan include:

1. **Enhance recruitment and retention of PRSA membership among diverse audiences**
 - Create membership outreach to PRSSA multicultural students to convert to members.
 - Create mentor programs for multicultural PRSSA/PRSA members about career choices and APR certification.
 - Recruit multicultural members to serve in leadership roles on Diversity Committee and as mentors.
 - Extend outreach to recruit diverse professionals to the society and in leadership roles.
 - Recruit diverse leader to be part of “Business Case for PR” advisory board/council.
 - Benchmark issues involving gender and PR to include in future plans.

2. **Create and make available resources about best diversity practices and PR**
 - PRSA’s Diversity Committee will create, archive and promote podcasts, seminars, web conferences, etc, that inform members of effective communications practices to reach multicultural and/ or non-traditional audiences.
 - Diversity Committee will update PRSA Diversity Tool Kit on the web.
 - Archive PRSA **Tactics** Diversity columns under Website Diversity page.
 - Advocacy section will include outreach to multicultural audiences as part of “Business Case for PR” and promote to Diversity and mainstream publications.
 - Notify Chapter Diversity Officers each year of Diversity resources on PRSA’s Website and solicit feedback.
 - Develop a plan to circulate the Diversity video done by Lynn Appelbaum, APR, Fellow PRSA
 - Facilitate and promote sharing of best practices at the Chapter level and with national to create web resources
 - Enhance and promote current initiatives that educate members about effective communications with multicultural audiences.
 - Develop turn key tools for Chapters and share templates at Leadership Rally.

3. **Create effective partnerships to enhance PRSA connection to diverse communities and to raise awareness of PRSA’s Diversity initiatives**
 - Identify strategic partnerships with PR multicultural affinity groups, such as the 4 A’s, Black Public Relations Society (BPRS), and the Hispanic Public Relations Association (HPRA) to raise awareness of PRSA’s Diversity initiatives and to create strategic alliances for members in all organizations.
 - Communicate Diversity initiatives to relevant trade/diversity media, Diversity blogs and PRSAY.
 - Partner with outside organizations with strong track records of success in communicating with diverse audiences and about diversity issues to support programs and member resources.

4. **Structural/Administrative/Tracking changes**
 5. PRSA Membership staff will track multicultural/ membership enrollment and renewal (as gathered on invoices and join form) and share information with Diversity Committee quarterly.
 5. Make monitoring diversity benchmarks including membership, APR, PD activities, speakers and attendance part of PRSA on-going administrative responsibilities.
 5. Use findings of PRSA Chapter Diversity leadership survey to identify member priorities regarding diversity initiatives and to refine short-term objectives.
 5. Investigate ways to gather information from members on diversity topics through focus groups, surveys, or questions contained in broader surveys.
 5. Invite experts on Diversity issues to speak with PRSA Board during at least one quarterly meeting annually.
 5. Make Diversity a Board agenda item at least 2 times annually.
 5. Integrate diversity into the strategic planning process.

Demographics

PRSA collects demographic information from members in periodic surveys that are conducted, as well as at a variety of other opportunities including (a) membership applications, (b) renewal invoices, (c) thru the MyPRSA portion of the website, and through periodic demographics campaigns during which members are asked to provide information. PRSA’s members, who currently are 70% female, have grown more ethnically diverse in recent years, with the percentage of non-white practitioners nearly doubling between 2005 and 2010, from 7% of membership to 14% of membership, as shown below in Table 1:

Table 1: Race/Ethnicity of PRSA Members, 2005 - Present

Race/Ethnicity	2005 Survey	2008 Survey	PRSA Database
White	93%	87%	86.25%
African American	3%	5%	6.5%
Asian Pacific/Asian American	0%	1%	3%
American Indian/Native American	1%	1%	.5%
Hispanic Latino	3%	5%	3.75

Issues: Members' Priority and Awareness

Over the past several years, PRSA has conducted a variety of member surveys, including broad surveys of membership to examine, overall, their needs and interests. Through these surveys, members have indicated that, relative to other PRSA offerings, Diversity is not a high priority.

For example, when members were asked about attributes that are important to them in a professional association (not specifically PRSA) – “promoting diversity” had a relatively low importance. “Promoting diversity” had a mean score of 6.92 on a 0 – 10 scale of importance. As a point of comparison “Is an advocate for the profession” scored a mean of 8.83 and “Provides access to the most current news and information in the field” scored a mean of 8.91. However, when looking at the mean scores, the numbers still indicate a level of importance.

Furthermore, members are somewhat unaware of what PRSA is doing with respect to diversity, for example, with relatively high levels of unawareness reported regarding programs such as PRSA’s Chapter Diversity Awards program or PRSA’s Diversity Tool Kit. When asked about value of PRSA-specific products, PRSA’s Diversity Initiatives got a mean value of 5.58, with 32% of members unaware of PRSA Diversity Initiatives. High ranking products include Code of Ethics (Mean = 8.83), Networking provided by local Chapters (Mean = 8.01), *Tactics* (Mean =7.82) and *Strategist* (Mean =7.79).

These findings suggest that, in addition to focusing and strengthening ongoing activities, there is a communications challenge facing PRSA, so that more members become aware of the issues, their relevance and importance to their public relations practices, and the resources that PRSA has available.

By making Diversity an essential component of the strategic planning process over time it will become better integrated, at a deeper level, into the actions and thought leadership of the Society.