



**PRSA**

**COLLEGE OF FELLOWS**

**2025 Applicant  
Prep Guide**



# PRSA

## COLLEGE OF FELLOWS

# 2025 Applicant Prep Guide

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# Introduction

An application to the PRSA College of Fellows is presented as testimony to one's impact, service and leadership through demonstrable communication versatility, empathy, and creativity in solving problems. The confidential submission is enriched by colleagues, chapter members, clients, and professional references who are ready to speak knowledgeably on behalf of the applicant.

While PRSA's College of Fellows is recognized as a career pinnacle of excellence, induction is not an end destination. It is a springboard to join an influential community of master public relations innovators who are committed to contributing purposeful leadership for our profession and its practitioners.

Stepping forward is an applicant's declaration that a career journey bears evidence of more to come. The rigorous peer review that follows verifies the breadth and outcomes of an applicant's work while noting the impactful relationships established along the way, an applicant's core professional integrity in upholding PRSA's pillars and ethics, and attention to detail and responsiveness throughout.

Applicants describe this retrospective career narrative as fulfilling and rewarding. Because the process is rigorous, repeat applications – after receiving feedback from the College of Fellows – are not uncommon.

We thank you for sharing your unique professional story with the College of Fellows.

# What to know

To be considered for admission to the College of Fellows, PRSA members must meet a stringent list of qualifications and complete the application process by the applicable deadlines. Applications are reviewed by the Fellows Selection Committee, which recommends new Fellows to the PRSA National Board of Directors for approval.

## Applicants must demonstrate:

- Current PRSA membership.
- A minimum of 240 months public relations and communication experience. (Note: Professional work experience in journalism, internships, volunteer, and student jobs do not count toward the 240 months of work experience in Public Relations and/or Communications.)
- To apply, applicants must complete the Experience Calculator to verify that they meet or exceed the 240-month criterion.
- Current Accreditation in Public Relations (APR).
- Outstanding professional performance in the practice/teaching of public relations.
- Advancing the profession.
- Contributing to the profession and/or the community through service and leadership.
- Serving as a role model in the profession and the community
- In addition, you must provide six letters of support with your application.

## Please Note:

- A non-refundable application processing fee of \$100 is due when the application is filed.
- For 2025, applications are due by 5 p.m. EDT on Thursday, May 1.

# The first steps

Now that you have decided to pursue an application for admission to the College of Fellows, there are some initial, mandatory steps that all applicants should take before beginning the actual application process.

They are:

1. **Download Experience Calculator** that you complete to calculate if you meet the minimum 240 months qualification to apply to the College.
2. Submit your resume for review to [GoodFellows@prsa.org](mailto:GoodFellows@prsa.org).
3. The GoodFellows chairs will review your calculator results and resume and grant approval for you to take the next steps towards submitting the application.
4. The College strongly suggests that you request a GoodFellow, our version of an application mentor who is trained to help you through the process. The deadline to request a GoodFellow is Feb. 1, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. EST.
5. Participate in the live or view the archived “How to Apply” webinar, conducted in early January.

The 2025 GoodFellows Chairs are Andy Corner, APR, Fellow PRSA, Jamie Floer, APR, Fellow PRSA, and Pamela Thompson, APR, Fellow PRSA. They are available to you, along with your GoodFellow, as a resource throughout the process.

# Application guidelines

- Case study references and letter writers cannot be repeated within your submission.
- You should obtain consent from your references. Their contact information must be accurate and complete.
- Extensions for letter writers or applications cannot be granted.
- References should be prepared to promptly respond to outreach from a member of the Selection Committee (usually in May or June). Lack of access due to potential absences (military deployments, sabbatical or parental leave) should compel you to choose your references carefully.
- Applications determined to be in any way incomplete or not in compliance with requirements will be disqualified. Grounds for disqualification may include misidentified letter writers and incomplete data related to experience (for example, not including the years an individual worked in a position).
- A Fellow may write a letter of support for up to two applicants each year.
- Be responsive to the scope of each question. Adhere to the format requested.
- Outcomes should align to the originating challenge.
- Be specific: Include organizational names/industry, measurable results.
- Writing and technical quality matter; use descriptive headlines as a synopsis for each story.
- You should not violate an ethical, confidential, or proprietary trust for your submittal.
- Repeat applicants from the prior year should follow the reapplication instructions.

# The application

There is no question that the application is a rigorous exercise in detailing one's career and achievements. The case studies are expected to be robust, measurable, and exemplary in the practice or teaching of public relations and in community engagement.

This guide provides a series of tips and “thought starters,” beginning with Section 2.2 – “Experience” – and through case studies, to help applicants demonstrate their career successes.

# The application

## Section 2.2 | Experience – Job/Rank Descriptions

In descending sequence, index your professional roles with public relations or communication responsibilities by months and years of service. The Experience Calculator will provide the percentage of time exclusively for this work for each held position and compute the allowable tally of months for each position held.

### Job/Rank Descriptions:

Each position should include a brief description of the employer/industry if this is not self-evident, e.g., nonprofit, association, private equity, boutique agency, government, community college, retail, manufacturer, among others. All applicants with military background (active duty, reserves or veterans) should list their rank and progressions as they are the equivalents of civilian job titles with advancements.

Military reservists: Outline your military reserve career with the same detail as your civilian career. It is part-time work, but it is also a parallel career with a separate path of advancement and recognition. Make sure the selection committee can see that.

Remember the Selection Committee only sees what you include in your application and the content of the letters of support.

Note: Professional work experience in journalism, internships, volunteer, and student jobs do not count toward the 240 months of work experience in Public Relations and/or Communications.



# The application

## Section 2.2 | Calculating Experience by Month

Cumulatively, the minimum number of months dedicated to public relations-centric work for eligibility to the College of Fellows must meet or exceed 240 months. Applicants are encouraged to exceed this amount by viewing this as a minimum threshold. Refer to the Experience Calculator to complete this section.

Full-time public relations and communication roles (including program leadership and related responsibilities) may be calculated as 100%. A position requiring at least 50% time assigned to communication work is calculated as full time.

**Note: Roles should not overlap in the same month. This will cause the month to be double counted. If you ended and started a role in the same month, change the start or end date for one of the roles.**

Consult these examples for format and computations so that you can convert your career into months.

<b>Pt-Time Conference Marketing</b>	<b>Vertex, global drug discovery corporation</b>	<b>8/2015 – 8/2019</b>
<b>Qualified and managed digital presentation vendors for large industry sales and educational conferences</b>		
<b>Wrote and produced pre-conference mailers to boost attendance; conferences shortened sales cycle to hospital, clinic trials by 30 percent</b>		
<b>Percentage PR/Comms: 100%</b>	<b>48 Months @ half-time = <u>24 Months</u></b> <b>*The job is calibrated for part-time</b>	

# The application

## Section 2.2 | Calculating Experience by Month (cont.)

Adjunct Faculty, Communications	UMass Amherst, hub campus of state's largest land grant research university, 30K enrollment	9– 12/2020
<p>Developed and executed DE&amp;I undergrad communications course</p> <p>As mentor, provided pitch guidance to students resulting in four internship placements</p> <p>Grow administrative support with campus poster symposium attended by faculty, prospective employer hosts and future students</p>		
Percentage PR/Comms: 100%		2 Months *Each one-semester/3-credit course = 2 Months

Self-Employed Principal	Spots for Zebras Communications, independent writing, and media relations agency	5/2000 – 2/2011
<p>Write wide-ranging editorial, website and social content for hospitality, tourism and food clients</p> <p>Orient to brand positioning against competition and web search traffic for SEO</p> <p>Provide spokesperson preparation and reporter follow-up</p>		
Percentage PR/Comms: 100% NOTE: A Solo practitioner is spending 100 percent of their time in PR: planning/execution, business development or networking.		122 Months

# The application

## Section 3 | Testimonial letters

### Instructions

Identify five individuals to write letters of support in addition to the Chapter, Section, District form and letter.

Four must be from individuals who are public relations or communication practitioners or public relations or communication educators.

Public relations/communication practitioner/educator letters: Carefully consider whom you ask to write these letters. Authors of these letters must know you and your public relations/communication work firsthand. They must be able to articulate your qualifications as an applicant.

If possible, include at least two letters from members of the College of Fellows or from PRSA members who have earned the APR.

Non-public relations (fifth letter): One letter must come from an individual who is not a public relations or communication practitioner or public relations or communication educator. The letter from the non-PR practitioner or non-PR educator cannot be from someone who is a member of PRSA, IABC, AMA or any similar organization. Do ensure the letter writer is familiar with your work as a public relations practitioner/educator and can address your contributions and leadership within the field.

**NOTE: A letter writer cannot be used as a reference in any of the case studies examples.** Members of the College of Fellows are allowed to write letters on behalf to two applicants annually. Chapter, district and section leaders can write letters for multiple applicants.

# The application

## Section 3 | Testimonial letters (cont.)

The following may not write a letter of support for you:

- Members of the PRSA Board of Directors
- Members of the College of Fellows Executive and Selection Committees
- PRSA staff members
- Your GoodFellow (Your GoodFellow may write a letter of support for another applicant.)

It is your responsibility to:

- Follow up with each letter writer to ensure that the letter written on your behalf is submitted no later than the application submission deadline. Ensure that letter writers understand the significance of becoming a Fellow.
- A good letter of support should:
  - Add something to your application. It should not simply repeat information from your resume or application.
  - Add content and substance to your application, expand upon an example you have used and give a more complete picture of your outstanding performance.
- Writers should:
  - Know you and your work.
  - Briefly explain why/how this individual is in a position to write on your behalf.
  - Address College of Fellows criteria:
    - Your outstanding professional capabilities and achievements,
    - What you have done to advance the public relations or communication profession,
    - Your service and leadership in PRSA and in the community,
    - Your reputation, integrity, how you have been a role model or how you have demonstrated the highest ethical standards.

# The application

## Section 3 | Testimonial letters (cont.)

Provide letter writers with letter of support guidelines. Every letter received on your behalf must meet all criteria listed here or the letter will not be accepted, and each letter must be written by the individuals cited in your application.

Letters must be:

- No longer than one page.
- A maximum of 500 words.
- Submitted on business, organization or personal letterhead. Submitted by the letter writer. You cannot submit letters of support on your own behalf.
- Submitted with an original or electronic signature.
- Sent directly to the PRSA College of Fellows *via the link emailed to them or via email to [FellowsApplication@prsa.org](mailto:FellowsApplication@prsa.org)*.
- Received by the PRSA College of Fellows no later than the application deadline.

*The letter with original or electronic signature must be received no later than 5 p.m. (EDT) on Thursday, May 1, 2025. For assistance, please write to [FellowsApplication@prsa.org](mailto:FellowsApplication@prsa.org).*

# The application

## Section 3 | Testimonial letters - Chapter/District/Section Form and Letter Instructions

An officer, current or immediate-past president/chair of a Chapter, Section, or District who knows you and your contributions to the public relations or communication profession is asked to submit two documents: a Comment Form accompanied by a letter. The form requests that the executive committee, board or leadership of the Chapter, Section, or District discuss your role within that group privately and confidentially and give the Fellows Selection Committee comments. The form is located on the [PRSA website](#).

This letter is one of the six required letters of support. The letter must be one page and no longer than 500 words.

A Chapter, Section or District officer, current president or immediate-past president/chair can submit comment forms and letters for multiple applicants within their chapter/section/district who meet the criteria and that the group considers to be qualified for membership in the PRSA College of Fellows. There are no restrictions on the number of forms and letters an officer or immediate-past president/chair can submit in those roles. However, the Chapter/District/Section letter is only signed by one individual.

Letters must be:

- No longer than one page
- A maximum of 500 words
- Submitted on business, organization or personal letterhead. Submitted by the letter writer. You cannot submit letters of support on your own behalf.
- Submitted with an original or electronic signature.
- Sent directly to the PRSA College of Fellows via email.
- Received by the PRSA College of Fellows no later than the application deadline.
- *The comment form and letter with original or electronic signature must both be sent directly to the PRSA College of Fellows via the link emailed to them or emailed to [FellowsApplication@prsa.org](mailto:FellowsApplication@prsa.org). They must be received no later than 5 p.m. (EDT) on Thursday, May 1, 2025.*
- *For assistance, please write to [FellowsApplication@prsa.org](mailto:FellowsApplication@prsa.org).*

# The application

## Section 4.1 | Outstanding Performance

Provide five (5) case studies from your career as a practitioner, an educator, in the military or in any industry setting as evidence that your work has been consequential to or achieved wide influence in an industry, your community or for a specific cause.

Examples as thought starters:

- Use of innovative strategies and tactics to accomplish exceptional results for an organization, employer or client.
- Strategies used to defuse opposition that achieved notable benefits for all involved groups beyond your own sphere of influence.
- Effective programs that were adapted for broader use. For instance, you resolved a problem that has plagued many organizations and then shared your solution with others who face the same issue, extending the impact of your work within a community, industry, or public policy.
- Anecdotes about the success of current or past students beyond the classroom or efforts that succeeded in elevating the reputation of your department or school.
- Groundbreaking research that led to change in your or your client's organization and was successfully applied later in other situations.
- Development of new crisis protocols that helped your organization, your client or another stakeholder, potentially enabling others to avoid the problem altogether.
- Military commendation medals as apply to public relations work are equivalent to civilian public relations awards. This is the place to amplify awards with a quote from the actual citation. Example: The Navy Commendation Medal by the Commander Naval Reserve Force for Meritorious Achievement stated in its citation: "The resulting exposure greatly enhanced the image of the Navy and boosted recruiting efforts for the Naval Reserve."

# The application

## Section 4.2 | Advancement of the Profession

Provide five (5) case studies of your significant contributions to, or advocacy for the public relations profession through your leadership that has been emulated, altered perceptions of the field, or otherwise achieved influence for public relations among decision makers or other audiences.

Examples as thought starters:

- Articles, books, chapters, published monographs or blogs, hosted chats, or podcasts that you led or lectures given that contributed to the profession's body of knowledge or increased understanding of the profession by corporate executives, community nonprofit boards, the public, news media, or career hopefuls. Be specific about the title, publication, and/or date of any presentation, as well as the impact.

**Note:** Simply stating that an article appeared in *Strategies & Tactics* in which you were interviewed or that you gave a speech or presentation about PR are both insufficient outcomes. You must cite an article or podcast's impact by providing specific information about how it influenced others to advance the profession. Similarly, you would need to explicitly state how a speech or presentation influenced others and advanced the profession.

- Comprehensive campaigns resulting in desired behavioral change that you have used as lessons learned to educate other public relations professionals.
- Exceptional management of the business or teaching of public relations that generated a new standard of collaboration, enhanced results from new technology and/or new training excellence.
- Significant instances of your demonstrated leadership within PRSA at the Chapter, Section, District, National Committee or task force level and/or the National Board of Directors or national officer level.



# The application

## Section 4.2 | Advancement of the Profession (cont.)

Case studies may also include:

- Significant contributions to other professional communication organizations (e.g., IABC, American Marketing Association, Association for Women in Communications, or Arthur W. Page Society, among others).
- Research activities you created and/or conducted, such as studies published or otherwise made public that advanced the profession in a significant way. Explain how each research activity advanced the profession. Unpublished articles or proprietary research cannot be considered without a clear explanation of their benefits to the profession.
- Programs or events that you initiated or developed and passed on to others to continue.
- Activities you have led or created that increased appreciation and understanding of public relations among those who are neither practitioners nor educators.
- A critical ethical issue or dilemma that you have faced as informed by PRSA's Code of Ethics and the outcome as an ethical resolution. Do not compromise confidentiality.

# The application

## Section 4.3 | Service & Leadership

Provide five (5) examples of your present or past volunteer or elected service through which your leadership has made a significant contribution to beneficiary groups. While case studies may include PRSA service, this is also about you leveraging your skills and knowledge for a larger legacy footprint, well beyond our profession. Be clear about delineating the outcomes of your contributions.

Examples as thought starters:

- Significant contributions to professional organizations in an industry where you work or have worked (e.g., architecture, engineering, healthcare, travel/tourism, among others).
- Leadership through volunteer service in your community for an organization, nonprofit or cause where your participation had a significant impact (e.g., school board, elected position, alumni association).
- Clear, strong, and ethical leadership in a variety of places/organizations.
- Service to an organizational board through which your contributions of crisis response, customer communication or advocacy helped to grow awareness and participation in this group or cause or helped the organization reach its strategic goals.
- Demonstrating how you merged a personal passion or community need with your skills to achieve an appreciable benefit for others.
- Illustrating how an effectively planned and executed public relations strategy can achieve a turnaround, policy change, donor/member growth all leading to new durability of the organization.
- Outstanding public and community service you performed that was not part of your job and did not provide you direct financial gain. Describe the benefit of the activities, your role and why you were involved. Also indicate the scope (local, regional, state, national or international) of each program.

# The application

## Section 4.4 | Empowerment & Opportunity

Provide five (5) case studies of how you have worked to empower others.

Empowerment comes in many forms: as a mentor beyond the requirements of an existing supervisory relationship, by enlightening organizational leadership as to the gains of being inclusive, or by being an accessible career confidante or role model. Giving back and paying it forward is at the heart of the College of Fellows ethos.

Examples as thought starters:

- State the case for how you recommended, executed and advanced actions to improve workforce culture and connectedness, particularly as the pandemic pushed us into detached, remote work positions.
- Explain how you supported a DEI mindset to include contributing to intentional recruitment, inclusive policies, and programming.
- Explain how you used education, policy, or brand positioning that measurably deepened connections to, and understanding by, individuals who self-identify as LGBTQ.
- Through your mentoring, ethics training and other educational activities, you enhanced the professional skills of young people or practitioners who were not your own students or employees. Simply providing the name of someone you mentored, or the date of a training session is not sufficient. Instead, describe the impact of your work and what expertise you applied to benefit others.
- Beyond the list you furnished in the “Experience” section, amplify the meaning behind a standout recognition that you achieved and what was cited as the reasons for your recognition.

# The application

## Section 5 | Why the College of Fellows?

This series of short answer questions further introduces you to the College of Fellows selection committee. Our objective is to learn more about you, why you are applying to the College, what you have learned throughout your career and what you may have learned from a project or program that may not have concluded as you envisioned.

In 250 words or less per question, please tell us:

Q 5.1: Why are you applying to the College of Fellows?

Q 5.2: Share an example of wisdom you gained from expected or unexpected results in your public relations practice.

Q 5.3: Explain how you will be an asset to the College of Fellows.

# Evaluation

## Scoring the applicant

Using a rubric, the College of Fellows Selection Committee scores each applicant on all aspects of the application. The scores serve as a "conversation starter" when the application comes before the committee for discussion.

Scores are based on responses, solution efficacy, validation through references, originality, persuasiveness, measurable objectives, outcomes and attention to detail.

Committee members review each application and scores are tabulated based on the following:

Sections 1 & 2	Qualifications and Experience	20 points
Section 3	All letters	15 points
Section 4.1	Outstanding Performance	10 points
Section 4.2	Advancement of the Profession	10 points
Section 4.3	Service & Leadership	10 points
Section 4.4	Empowerment & Opportunity	10 points
Section 5	Why the College of Fellows?	10 points
Writing & Technical Quality		15 points

Following the review of all applications, the Selection Committee forwards recommendations for new Fellows to the PRSA National Board of Directors for approval.

# Recommended timeline

The following is a suggested working timeline to prepare you for meeting the application deadline:

## **November/December 2024**

Thoughtfully consider your body of work

- A minimum of 240 months (prior to Jan 1, 2025) in PR/Communication
- Accomplishments
- Awards, accolades
- Service and leadership to PRSA: chapter, section, district or national
- Service and leadership to community

Thoughtfully consider commitment of time to prepare application

## **December 2024 – early January 2025**

Draft an outline for all criteria and start to put case studies with each. Do you have case studies that might work in more than one category? Consider the best fit for each one. Select case studies from throughout your career and reconnect with colleagues who can verify your work and its impact.

- The application criteria that need five supporting case studies are:
- Outstanding Performance
- Advancement of the Profession
- Service and Leadership
- Empowerment and Opportunity

## **January 2025**

Complete the experience calculator and submit with your resume noting dates, number of months and the percentage of time in a PR/communication role to [GoodFellows@prsa.org](mailto:GoodFellows@prsa.org)

# Recommended timeline

## January 2025 (cont.)

- Consider who you will ask to write your letters of support; make early asks. Please note that Fellows and APRs are preferred.
- Consider who will serve as references for all your case studies (20). Try to use a contact only once and make sure they are separate from letter writers. References may be colleagues with whom you worked on the program. Begin to contact them personally (this takes a while – enjoy revisiting career highlights with them).
- Request a GoodFellow by February 1 – they will be a huge help during the process.

## February 2025

- By end of month, share a first draft of your application with your GoodFellow; incorporate feedback and schedule a time to review second draft with them.
- Secure all letter writers and enter names and contact information in the online application (there are two places to enter their names on the application).
- Share letter-writing requirements with each writer.
- Determine which aspect of your experience each letter writer will focus on.
- Continue contacting references for each of your case studies – you may have more than one for each case study – pick the best one for each. If possible, do not repeat references within your application – aim for a separate reference for each case study.

# Recommended timeline

## March 15, 2025

- Provide a second draft of application to your GoodFellow – recommend drafting in Word before entering into electronic version online.
- Continue contacting references for each of your case studies.

## March 30, 2025

- Provide a third draft of application to your GoodFellow.
- Remind letter writers/make sure they are set to meet deadline and review drafts if needed.

## April 15, 2025

- Final draft to your GoodFellow; consider asking a second source to review and edit.
- Make final edits to application and let it “sit” for a few days before final reading.
- Send last-minute reminder to letter writers.
- Ensure all references are secured.

## Week of April 24, 2025

- Cut and paste the sections of your application into the correct sections online.
- Review a final time. Submit with fee by 5 pm EDT, Thursday, May 1, 2025.





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