

PRSA | PRSSA

FILL THE FUNNEL

Maximizing Your Relationships with PRSSA Chapters



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The relationship between PRSA and PRSSA is a symbiotic one, with benefits that flow both ways. PRSA members can help mentor and guide PRSSA students, while also learning from the fresh perspectives and new ideas that students bring to the table. PRSSA members, in turn, can benefit from the insights and experiences of PRSA professionals, who can provide guidance and advice as they navigate their way through the early stages of their careers.

Ultimately, PRSSA members are a built-in pipeline for recruiting new PRSA members to your Chapter. This handbook will assist you in developing a mutually beneficial relationship with your local PRSSA Chapter(s). The connection is critical to ensuring our Association and industry continue to thrive. This guide gives you three easy steps to elevating your PRSA/PRSSA relationship: **Connect, Engage, Convert**.

If you have any questions, we are always willing to help. We welcome the opportunity to chat with you, so please reach out to any of the following individuals:

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Step One:

CONNECT

Connecting with all of the key parties is essential to building a successful relationship with your local PRSSA Chapters. Each of these roles is different, yet each interacts with the other to build a solid foundation for student mentoring and transition to professional membership.

Chapter Liaison

Your Chapter should consider either creating a board member position or a committee dedicated to your PRSSA Chapter engagement. This liaison/committee will be responsible for, but not limited to, the following:

- Keeping the lines of communication open between the Faculty Adviser, Professional Adviser (more on this below) and PRSSA chapter members
- Making connections with the College Department Chair to highlight value of PRSSA to students and the department
- Helping solicit financial support for PRSSA ICON registration and travel fees, PRSSA sponsorships and/or first-year dues for PRSSA members transitioning to PRSA
- Work with Faculty and Professional Advisers to collaborate on joint programming
- Assist in identifying speakers for PRSSA Chapter meetings
- Recommending volunteer opportunities and job leads from PRSA and the professional community

Faculty Adviser

The Faculty Adviser is the official link between the PRSSA Chapter, the college or university and the sponsoring PRSA Chapter. A contact list of PRSSA Chapter Faculty Advisers is located in the appendix of this guide.

It is important to connect with the Faculty Adviser for introductions to student leadership. These connections are equally as important to support the Faculty Adviser and student leaders.

Professional Adviser

Each PRSSA Chapter is required to have a Professional Adviser. The qualifications for this role include:

- Good standing member of PRSA
- Minimum five years of communications experience

Ideally, the adviser would also serve within the PRSA Chapter's structure – a committee, board role, etc. The following are some of the distinct responsibilities of a Professional Adviser:

- Accountable to the PRSA Chapter president and board and should report to the board at least twice a year
- Assist in the scheduling of PRSA members to discuss case histories and explore career opportunities at PRSSA meetings
- Provide resources, support and mentoring to PRSSA members that enhance their leadership development, access to scholarships and other growth opportunities
- Invite students and Faculty Advisers to attend PRSA Chapter meetings
- Be available to individual students for advice about career questions, including job-seeking, résumé writing and interview techniques
- Arrange one-on-one contact between PRSA and PRSSA members

If one of your PRSSA Chapter(s) does not have a Professional Adviser, work with the Faculty Adviser and the PRSSA Chapter executive leadership to create a list of potential candidates. There may be a viable candidate within the university's Communications Department.

Step Two:

CONNECT

ENGAGE

Schedule Planning Meetings in August and January

Creating a schedule will help increase the opportunity to engage with your PRSSA Chapters. Since PRSA Chapters operate on a calendar year, it is important to hold biannual planning sessions with your PRSA Chapter Liaison, the Faculty Adviser and the Professional Adviser at the beginning of each semester. Discussion items could include:

Speakers/Programming

Collaborate to develop a speaker calendar based on the PRSSA meetings and identify the topics and professional speakers who could potentially participate.

Ask your PRSA members at the beginning of the semester if they are available to speak on any of these topics or can refer a subject matter expert.

Coordinate with the University Department chair to bring alumni back for panel discussions.

Event(s)

Plan at least one event to offer PRSSA members an opportunity to meet PRSA members and/or learn more about the different types of job opportunities upon graduation. These could include:

- Facilitate tours of media and communications offices, agencies and corporations
- Provide a workshop on résumé writing, portfolio critiques and interviewing skills
- Host a “Shadow Day” pairing PRSA Chapter members with students to explore day-to-day roles, tasks and experiences. This can also be tied to a Chapter meeting for additional professional development opportunities for members and students.
- Host an internship fair for PRSA Chapter members to interview and/or provide information about their upcoming intern openings
- Identify public service projects that both PRSA and PRSSA Chapters can work on jointly
- Enlist a photographer to provide professional headshots to the PRSSA members

Fundraising

Raising money can help cut out-of-pocket costs for the PRSSA Chapter to attend events ranging from the National PRSSA Conference and Leadership Rally or regional programming such as District or Section Conferences. This can provide event planning skills for the students and further engage the professional Chapter through their attendance and support.

If you are not located geographically near your PRSSA Chapter(s), try the following tips to build a relationship:

Webinars

Ask the Faculty Adviser and/or the PRSSA Chapter Executive Committee to determine what the members might be interested in learning. Encourage them to book a room (in a library or academic building) where they can project the speaker(s) on a screen and ask fellow PRSA Chapter members to be involved.

Social Media/Video Platforms

Some platforms offer “chat” options to engage in dialogue and discussion in real time.

Meet Halfway

Suggest that you find a location that’s of equal distance for both Chapters.

Plan an Annual Trip

While your PRSSA Chapter(s) may be far away, there is still an opportunity to connect in person. Schedule in advance and try carpooling with other PRSA Chapter members to their location for a luncheon or “field trip” to local PRSA Chapter member companies.

Step Three:

CONNECT

ENGAGE

CONVERT

This is the culmination of all the mentoring and support - it's conversion time. The last month before graduation can be a busy and stressful time for seniors, that's why we recommend approaching the transition to professional membership right after spring break - March or April - and right before the holidays for December graduates - October/November. It's important to make the transition from PRSSA to PRSA as seamless as possible.

1. Each March/April and October/November, work with the Faculty Adviser and Professional Adviser to schedule a special meeting/event for the graduating seniors. This could be as small as cookies and punch or a dinner/reception or even just visiting one of their meetings or a class as a guest speaker.
2. Bring a laptop or iPad.
3. Encourage students to join PRSA at the event and help them apply online. Associate Member dues are \$60 plus a free, one-year membership in PRSA's New Professionals Section to help them network and learn from peers in similar situations.
 - For those attending graduate school, there is an Associate Member, Graduate Student membership for \$60.
 - Even if the student is moving to another city or state, at minimum, they can join PRSA National before graduation and join a Chapter at another time.
4. While there is a PDF application available for download, try to avoid this option. Applying online at the meeting/event is the best opportunity to ensure follow-through.
5. If you are unable to meet in person, schedule a Zoom with the graduating seniors and help them with questions and the application on the call. The opportunity to interact in person or via Zoom can make a huge difference in converting students to PRSA. Here are a few other ideas to discuss with the new PRSA members:
 - Invitation to attend local PRSA Chapter monthly meetings
 - Determine interest in being paired with a mentor from the PRSA Chapter
 - Discuss upcoming Chapter and District conferences plus ICON
 - Outline ways to become involved, such as committees, events and special projects

Best Practice Examples

Agency Tours – North Florida Chapter

Each spring, North Florida PRSA invited the University of Florida PRSSA to attend agency tours in the Jacksonville area. The tours are a recurring favorite of PRSSA members. Members attended a panel discussion and participated in résumé/portfolio workshops prior to visiting three Jacksonville agencies. The panel-style discussion on different approaches to the public relations industry included representatives from corporate, nonprofit, agency and private practice public relations. Members were able to experience agency life on a local scale and they were also afforded the opportunity to network with PRSA professionals during and after the résumé/portfolio workshops and public relations panel. Countless connections were made between professionals and PRSSA members in this casual and welcoming environment.

Annual Award Ceremony – Pittsburg Chapter

Every year, PRSA Pittsburg hosts an awards ceremony where members can celebrate community achievements in the industry. This Chapter offers an award for its region's PRSSA Chapter. PRSSA members are encouraged to apply and attend the ceremony to connect with local professionals. It is an opportunity for students to expand their networks, while challenging their Chapter to grow and launch new programming every year. This Chapter also offers an award for PRSSA student scholars, allowing individuals to add this accolade to their resume and portfolio. Fostering a close relationship like this has led to job, internship and mentorship opportunities for Waynesburg PRSSA members. It also helps ease the transition from PRSSA to PRSA.

Legends Panel

Students come together in an informal Q&A with local “legends” in the field. This open dialogue provides insight, tips and guidance on ways to have a successful career in communications. From advice on what not to do to sharing their greatest accomplishments and unexpected opportunities can lead to great questions from the students. Work with university faculty to offer extra credit for attendance or pair with other PRSSA field trips/tours or other activities.

Resume Review Session

The local PRSA Chapter brings together 8-10 professionals to participate in a “speed mentoring” session with students to review resumes, offer recommendations and share interviewing techniques. This can be done on campus or hosted at a local agency.

Shadow Day - Colorado Chapter

Students are paired with a local PRSA Chapter professional to better understand the day-to-day roles of professionals in corporate, nonprofit, agency and government positions. The opportunity gives students the chance to explore, learn about roles and see firsthand internal communications, media relations, public relations, events and more. The Chapter often pairs this activity with a professional development meeting or social gathering following the day to further networking among students and pros. The program has resulted in building relationships with the students and their respective schools.

APPENDIX A

Top Three Reasons Why You Should Join PRSA

Congratulations on this momentous achievement and milestone! You have proven your capabilities in your field of study, and now, with your degree, the sky is the limit. As you begin your career journey, now is the time to join PRSA as a professional member. Here are the top three reasons you should join PRSA - Networking, Professional Growth and Mentorship. PRSA is the best investment in yourself that you can make.

1. Broaden Your Network

PRSA will connect you to a network of peers and professionals who will become lifelong colleagues, mentors and friends. With more than 100 chapters across the U.S., plus 15 professional interest sections, PRSA offers numerous activities to develop and maintain strong relationships, such as local Chapter meetings, District and Section conferences and ICON, the Association's annual conference.

As a previous PRSA member and new Associate Member, you will also receive a one-year free membership to the New Professionals Section. With nearly 500 members, this community allows you to network with peers who share your professional commitment and understand the unique challenges new pros sometimes face. You will be able to share experiences, tap into insights and learn together.

The PRSA network is vast, diverse and readily available. There is no end to the opportunities to tap this resource along your career journey.

2. Access Professional Development Programs

As a new graduate, you know that learning is important. The classes may have stopped, but the learning hasn't. PRSA offers extensive professional development sessions available both in-person and online, such as:

- Accreditation in Public Relations (APR)
- Certificate Programs
- AI Insights
- Webinars
- On-Demand Training
- Diverse Dialogues Series
- Workshops
- Conferences

PRSA provides you with a wealth of innovative programs, many of which are included in your membership at no additional cost and offers you lifelong learning with leading-edge resources to enhance your knowledge at every stage of your career.

3. Find a Mentor

Mentor Connect is an online platform that helps form relationships between you and experienced professionals from across the U.S. who will coach, lead and advise you for as long as you wish. Anyone can benefit from having a mentor if you invest in yourself and commit to growth and the desire to connect. PRSA gives you the chance to learn from the industry's best. How you leverage this resource is unique to you and your mentor. You will soon learn PRSA is a very giving community.

Join Now!

PRSA helps you become more knowledgeable, better prepared and more connected as you begin your career. As a PRSA member, Associate Member dues are only \$60 plus the free, one-year membership in PRSA's New Professionals Section. For those attending graduate school, there is an Associate Member, Graduate Student membership for \$60. Even if you are moving to another city or state, at a minimum, you can join PRSA National now and join a Chapter at another time.

Welcome to PRSA! You are taking an important first step toward your future in an amazing career.

APPENDIX B

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