

Dear Member:

I've never been more grateful to have my PRSA community to lean on. In just the past month, I've attended three (free!) webinars on topics that I needed to know about right now, networked with my Chapter and Section, called colleagues across the country seeking insights and reviewed a Silver Anvil winner that mirrors a client issue I'm navigating. None of which would have been possible without PRSA. And that doesn't count any of the official "duties" I have now as PRSA Chair. 2020 was a challenging year for all of us, PRSA included, but you can be confident we remain in an excellent position to continue increasing value for members and finding new ways to help you succeed.

So much has happened during these cold winter months, including the naming of a new CEO and the election of a new Board of Directors and Foundation president. We've moved forward on several of our most important initiatives and set plans in motion for our continued growth. If 2020 was considered by many to be a reset year, then 2021 is a year we will continue to build upon our solid foundation. If you have five minutes now, read on to learn more about why I'm so excited by what's going on across this great organization.

Linda Thomas Brooks was named our [new CEO](#) last month and comes to PRSA with a superb mix of skills and experience in corporate, startup and membership organizations, acquired at such companies as SIIA, the Association of Magazine Media and General Motors. She has jumped right into the job, and already has demonstrated what an exceptional, hands-on leader she will be for us. You will be hearing more from Linda in the weeks and months ahead and I know you will find her vision for PRSA inspiring.



Welcome Linda!

We are making great progress strengthening our commitment to Diversity & Inclusion among our membership and the communications profession. Students are, of course, among our most important constituents, now and into the future, and recently we announced a significant [agreement](#) with FINN Partners to create a mentorship program for PRSA members from historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs). This unique opportunity will be the first of many real-world experiences that expose our students to a career in communications.



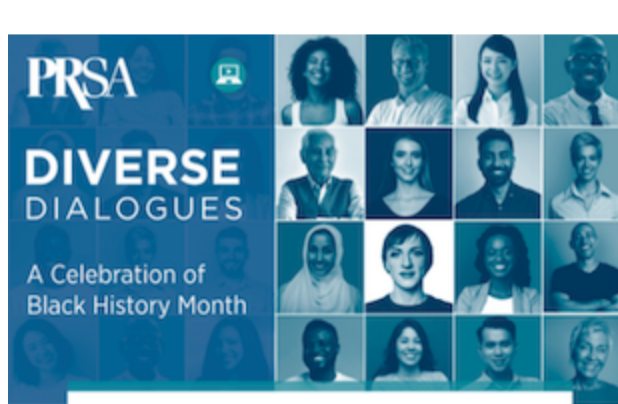
Partners For Diversity: The Internship Preview

PRSA also began the year by adding two [new Chapters](#) to its roster of nearly 375 Chapters worldwide. The most recent are the University of San Francisco and Vanguard University, which marks 26 schools affiliated with PRSA in California.



New PRSA Chapters

Our [Diverse Dialogues](#) program resumes in 2021, showcasing conversations with thought leaders about best practices for moving DEI initiatives forward. The next webinar, "What You Need to Know About HBCUs: A Reservoir of Public Relations Talent and Desire," takes place Feb. 23. Registration information can be found [here](#).



PRSA's Diversity & Inclusion Committee Presents
What You Need to Know About HBCUs

We are getting ready to launch the website for our new Voices 4 Everyone (V4E) initiative. As I mentioned in my email to you in January, V4E is built upon four pillars of crucial importance to all of us as communicators, specifically promoting civil discourse; civic engagement and ethical behavior; embracing diversity and inclusion in their broadest sense; and combatting mis/disinformation. The new website is designed to establish V4E as the go-to source for current information on how PRSA members and communications professionals can tackle these complex issues within their teams, for their clients and as ambassadors in their larger communities. You will be hearing more about the website launch very soon.

An essential element of PRSA's mission is to advocate for, and provide thought leadership on, topics and public policy surrounding and protecting the integrity of the communications profession. In the past few months, we have issued statements on news stories that speak directly to the real dangers inherent in disinformation, and the importance of civility and decency in political discourse. These include:

- [Condemning](#) the unfathomable chaos that took place at the U.S. Capitol on January 6.
- Forcefully [responding](#) to the horrific story that journalist and ICON 2020 speaker Marianna Spring was receiving death threats due to her reporting on conspiracies associated with the coronavirus and the U.S. election.

Additionally, the promotion and practice of ethical behavior continues to be at the heart of our purpose as an organization, and our Board of Ethics and Professional Standards (BEPS) recently published a series of [Position Papers](#) on subjects of direct importance to all communications professionals, including Ethics & Social Media, Plagiarism, Pay for Play and Information Leaks. These topics are germane to our roles and the guidance is central to successfully doing our jobs. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the initiative. As always, we will be looking to all of you for your insight and expertise as we continue to address tough and controversial ethics issues across the communications landscape.

We held our first Board of Directors meeting in late January and were pleased to virtually connect with our newest colleagues including representatives from several Districts as well as Chair-elect Felicia Blow, APR, and Secretary Joseph Abreu, APR, who return to the Board in Executive Committee roles. We also welcomed Ben Butler, APR, and Rick Callender as [Senior Counsel](#) and look forward to their contributions during their term.

This is an amazingly talented group of leaders, and I'm honored to be able to count them as my colleagues and friends. Our next meeting is scheduled for February 26.



2021 Board of Directors

Despite what happened in 2020, innovation across the profession did not suffer, as engaging and effective campaigns came from all corners of the communications landscape. We're looking forward to honoring this work at our Silver Anvils Awards Ceremony in June and encourage everyone to submit an entry for consideration. The final entry deadline for the Silver Anvils is February 26, while Bronze Anvil deadlines are March 12 (early) and March 26 (final). New categories have been added for both awards, details of which can be found [here](#).



Enter Today!

I also recommend you check out the [2020 Year in Review](#) report we posted to the website in conjunction with Leadership Assembly in December. It is a highly accessible guide to the many events, achievements and statistics from last year. Do you know which Chapters celebrated anniversaries? Here's a clue: Page 20.



PRSA Perspectives

I am consistently impressed by the determination and commitment you show to PRSA and to your profession, and I look forward to continuing to collaborate closely with you as we work hard to achieve the stretch goals we've set this year and make PRSA an indispensable part of your professional life.

Be safe, stay warm and be well.

Michelle Olson, APR
PRSA 2021 Chair

