

# PRSSA

Diversity Toolkit  
2023-2024

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
About the PRSSA Vice President of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging .....	4
Being You   PRSSA National DEIB Statement.....	6
DEIB Calendar of Events and Holidays .....	7
Do’s and Don’ts of DEIB Chapter Leaders.....	11
Engaging and Recruiting with Students and Faculty Advisers at HBCU and HACU Institutions.....	12
Thinking Outside the Box: Ideas and Events.....	13
Appendix .....	19

# INTRODUCTION

Imagine a leader that embraces diversity, ensures equity, fosters inclusion, and cultivates belonging. Now, look in the mirror. For people like you, I am delighted to present the latest edition of the PRSSA Diversity Toolkit, an essential resource for all Chapter leaders committed to driving positive change.

As future communication professionals, we have a unique responsibility to shape narratives, bridge gaps, and create meaningful networks in a diverse and interconnected world. This toolkit equips you with the knowledge, strategies, and resources necessary to navigate the complexities of our Society, embrace inclusivity, and champion diverse representation.

By utilizing the PRSSA Diversity Toolkit, you have the opportunity to reshape the narrative, surpass current challenges, and prepare for those that are to come. It is through embracing diverse perspectives and empowering underrepresented voices that we can forge Chapters that truly resonate and drive meaningful change.

As PR students, we have a pivotal role to play in fostering an inclusive society where diverse voices are not only heard but celebrated. Let this toolkit be your guide as you embark on a journey of growth, understanding, and impactful communication within your Chapter.

Together, let us pave the way for a future where communication is a powerful force for unity, understanding, and equitable representation.

*Sincerely,*

**Teo Ignacio Landoni**

Vice President of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

# ABOUT THE PRSSA VICE PRESIDENT OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING

Over the years, PRSSA has put in place several programs to support members and their transition into the public relations industry. In 2019, the PRSSA Assembly voted in the inaugural vice president diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging who quickly developed initiatives that bettered the Society such as the PRoud Council and International Ambassadors. During the 2023 Leadership Assembly, the Delegates passed a bylaw amendment, changing the title of the position to 'Vice President of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging.'

## Chapter Connection

The DEIB Chapter Connection is a resource for diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging Chapter leaders to meet and talk through DEIB situations. This resource is used as a way for Chapter leaders from around the continent to provide support to one another.

Responsibilities Include:

- Leading diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging initiatives on a Chapter level to build strong relationships.
- Working through diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging dilemmas with fellow Chapter leaders.
- Supporting fellow Chapter leaders through encouragement and advice.
- Being open-minded and respectful towards all points of view.
- Promoting the diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging initiatives PRSSA National offers to their Chapter.
- Being the liaison between PRSSA National and Chapter DEIB initiatives.

## PRoud Council

The PRoud Council is a National subcommittee that assists the vice president of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging and actively facilitates diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging initiatives on a local and international level on behalf of PRSSA by acting as a resource for Chapters and individual members. This is an opportunity for committee members to be the change needed in the field of communications and the world.

Responsibilities include:

- Reflecting the highest ethical and professional standards of conduct and performance.
- Being inclusive and respectful of all people and points of view.
- Developing DEIB activities for PRSSA Chapters to engage in.
- Assisting in the implementation of DEIB workshops, webinars and virtual panels.
- Promoting diverse member attendance at national PRSSA events and participation in initiatives throughout the Society.
- Contributing to the creation of accessibility changes for members with disabilities.
- Communicating with Chapters and Faculty Advisers.
- Assisting the mentorship program with PRSA.
- Furthering digital education and professional development resources.

## International Ambassadors

To help bridge the gap between national and international Chapters, PRSSA has developed the role of International Ambassadors. We are determined to create unity and share opportunities among PRSSA members within our international Chapters in Argentina, Colombia, Puerto Rico and Peru. International Ambassadors become more involved with PRSSA nationwide and improve their public relations skills, expand their network and learn what it means as a leader to work on a remote team.

### Responsibilities include:

- Working with current Faculty Advisers to develop relationships with potential PRSSA universities (in the country).
- Promoting attendance at national PRSSA events and participation in initiatives throughout the Society.
- Developing and cultivating strategic alliances with the members of the National Committee and the Chapters.
- Assisting the vice president of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging with any matter or specific initiative of the country.
- Supporting its Chapter president in the work of achieving the objectives of the membership.
- Assisting in the planning, promotion and execution of national PRSSA events in the country.
- Serving as ambassador and liaison for the sponsoring Chapter of PRSA.
- Participating in telephone calls/teleconferences of the International Ambassador of PRSSA.

PRSSA recognizes there is more to be done to truly support our members. That is why we are putting new initiatives in place to provide better educational and professional development opportunities that will create more spaces for everyone in our community to learn together, tell their stories and make an impact.

## BEING YOU | PRSSA NATIONAL DEIB STATEMENT

PRSSA members are creative alone, but together we are visionaries. This means PRSSA members must be their authentic selves, practice inclusivity and be responsible for each other – all with respect and understanding infused within our communication. For PRSSA and the public relations industry to grow and evolve, being creative is not enough. We need visionaries to ensure we will be a more empathetic, dynamic and innovative organization and workforce.

Inclusion is not just about having “a seat at the table.” It’s about ensuring everyone’s voice is heard and fully considered. PRSSA recognizes the importance of listening to all voices and experiences to forge a viable Society that aids the profession and future professionals in serving diverse and increasingly multicultural publics.

The most obvious contexts of diversity include race, ethnicity, religion, age, ability, sexual orientation, political belief, gender, gender identity, country of origin, culture and diversity of thought. However, in a rapidly changing society, diversity continues to evolve and can include class, socioeconomic status, life experiences, learning and working styles, personality types and intellectual traditions and perspectives. These defining attributes impact how we approach our work, connect with others and move through the world.

PRSSA encourages its members to always respect, embrace, celebrate and validate each other’s differences. These diverse and inclusive practices, when done proactively, contribute to the growth of our Chapters, the public relations industry, the communities in which we live and work, and ourselves.

PRSSA members are the future of the industry. It is our responsibility as bright, young leaders to be the change we envision.

## DEIB CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND HOLIDAYS

This initial calendar of activities is intended to provide insights and information for execution of Chapter-specific and coordinated activities.

Month	Month-long Observances	Dates
<b>January</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Mentoring Month</li> <li>Poverty in America Awareness Month</li> <li>Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness Month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jan. 1 – New Year’s Day</li> <li>Jan. 4 – National Braille Day</li> <li>Jan. 6 – Coptic Orthodox Christmas</li> <li>Jan. 7 – Mahayana New Year (Buddhist)</li> <li>Jan. 13 – Maghi (Sikh)</li> <li>Jan. 15 – World Religion Day</li> <li>Jan. 16 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</li> <li>Jan. 18 – Mahayana New Year</li> <li>Jan. 22 – Chinese New Year</li> <li>Jan. 24 – International Day of Education</li> <li>Jan. 26 – International Customs Day</li> <li>Jan. 27 – International Holocaust Remembrance Day</li> </ul>
<b>February</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American Heart Month</li> <li>Black History Month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feb. 1 – National Freedom Day</li> <li>Feb. 4 – Rosa Parks Day</li> <li>Feb. 8 – Safer Internet Day</li> <li>Feb. 11 – International Day of Women &amp; Girls in Science</li> <li>Feb. 13 – International Epilepsy Day</li> <li>Feb. 14 – Valentine’s Day</li> <li>Feb. 15 – Nirvana Day (Buddhist)</li> <li>Feb. 15 – International Childhood Cancer Day</li> <li>Feb. 18 – Maha Shivarati (Hindu)</li> <li>Feb. 20 – World Day of Social Justice</li> <li>Feb. 20 – FamilyDay (Canada)</li> <li>Feb. 21 – Mardi Gras</li> <li>Feb. 22 – Ash Wednesday</li> </ul>
<b>March</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month</li> <li>Ethnic Equality Month</li> <li>Gender Equality Month</li> <li>Greek-American Heritage Month</li> <li>Irish-American Heritage Month</li> <li>National Colon Cancer Awareness Month</li> <li>National Kidney Month</li> <li>National Multiple Sclerosis Awareness and Education Month</li> <li>National Women’s History Month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>March 3 – Employee Appreciation Day</li> <li>March 6 – Purim (Jewish)</li> <li>March 8 – International Women’s Day</li> <li>March 8 – Holi (Hindu)</li> <li>March 14 – Pi π Day</li> <li>March 15 – Equal Pay Day</li> <li>March 17 – St. Patrick’s Day</li> <li>March 21 – World Down Syndrome Day</li> <li>March 21 – Persian New Year (Nowruz)</li> <li>March 23 – Ramadan begins (Islam)</li> <li>March 23 – International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade</li> <li>March 31 – International Transgender Day of Visibility</li> </ul>

Month	Month-long Observances	Dates
<b>April</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arab-American Heritage Month</li> <li>• Autism Awareness Month</li> <li>• Celebrate Diversity Month</li> <li>• Earth Month</li> <li>• National Child Abuse Prevention Month</li> <li>• National Volunteer Month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April 2 – World Autism Awareness Day</li> <li>• April 2 – Palm Sunday (Christian)</li> <li>• April 5 – Passover begins (Jewish)</li> <li>• April 7 – Good Friday (Christian)</li> <li>• April 14 – National Day of Silence (LGBTQ+)</li> <li>• April 9/10 – Easter (Christian)</li> <li>• April 13 – Passover ends</li> <li>• April 17 – Laylat al-Qadr (Muslim)</li> <li>• April 18 – Yom Hashoah (Jewish)</li> <li>• April 20 – Start of Ridvan (Baha’i)</li> <li>• April 21 – Eid-al-Fitr/End of Ramadan (Muslim)</li> <li>• April 22 – Earth Day</li> </ul>
<b>May</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ALS Awareness Month</li> <li>• Haitian Heritage Month</li> <li>• Indian Heritage Month</li> <li>• Jewish-American Heritage Month</li> <li>• Mental Health Month</li> <li>• National Asian American and South Pacific Islander Heritage Month</li> <li>• Older Americans Month</li> <li>• South Asian American Heritage Month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 5 – Cinco de Mayo</li> <li>• May 17 – International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia</li> <li>• May 21 – World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development</li> <li>• May 22 – Victoria Day (Canada)</li> <li>• May 23 – Declaration of the Bab (Baha’i)</li> <li>• May 29 – Ascension of Baha’u’llah (Baha’i)</li> <li>• May 29 – Memorial Day</li> </ul>
<b>June</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alzheimer’s and Brain Awareness Month</li> <li>• Black Music Month</li> <li>• National Caribbean American Heritage Month</li> <li>• Pride Month (LGBTQ+)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June 5 – World Environment Day</li> <li>• June 11 – Race Unity Day</li> <li>• June 12 – Loving Day</li> <li>• June 19 – Juneteenth</li> <li>• June 20 – World Refugee Day</li> <li>• June 21 – National Indigenous Peoples Day (Canada)</li> <li>• June 21 – Litha, Summer Solstice (Pagan)</li> <li>• June 24 St-Jean-Baptiste Day (Quebec)</li> <li>• June 28- Eid al-Adha (Muslim)</li> <li>• June Pride Day (LGBTQ+) (varies by city and country)</li> </ul>



Month	Month-long Observances	Dates
<b>July</b>	French-American Heritage Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• July 1 – Canada Day (Canada)</li> <li>• July 4 – Independence Day (USA)</li> <li>• July 9 – Martyrdom of the Bab (Baha’i)</li> <li>• July 11 – World Populace Day</li> <li>• July 14 – Bastille Day</li> <li>• July 18 – International Nelson Mandela Day</li> <li>• July 19 – Muharram Islamic New Year</li> <li>• July 24 – Pioneer Day (Mormon)</li> <li>• July 26 – National Disability Independence Day (commemorates the signing of the Americans With Disabilities Act)</li> <li>• July 29 - Hijri New Year</li> <li>• July 30 – International Day of Friendship</li> </ul>
<b>Aug.</b>	National Civility Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aug. 7 – Purple Heart Day</li> <li>• Aug. 9 – International Day of the World’s Indigenous People</li> <li>• Aug. 13 – Left-Handers Day</li> <li>• Aug. 17 – Marcus Garvey Day (Jamaican)</li> <li>• Aug. 19 – World Humanitarian Day</li> <li>• Aug. 21 – Senior Citizens Day</li> <li>• Aug. 22 – American Business Women’s Day</li> <li>• Aug. 26 – Women’s Equality Day</li> </ul>
<b>September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hispanic Heritage Month</li> <li>• National Guide Dog Month</li> <li>• Suicide Prevention Month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sept. 4 – Labor Day</li> <li>• Sept. 5 – International Day of Charity</li> <li>• Sept. 6-7 – Krishna Janmashtami (Hindu)</li> <li>• Sept. 11 – Patriot Day (U.S.A.)</li> <li>• Sept. 15 – International Day of Democracy</li> <li>• Sept. 15 – Rosh Hashanah begins (Jewish)</li> <li>• Sept. 16 – Mexican Independence Day</li> <li>• Sept. 21 – International Day of Peace</li> <li>• Sept. 21 – World Gratitude Day</li> <li>• Sept. 22 – National Native American Day</li> <li>• Sept. 24 – Yom Kippur (Jewish)</li> <li>• Sept. 29 – Sukkot (Jewish)</li> <li>• Sept. 30 – National Day for Truth &amp; Reconciliation (Canada)</li> </ul>

Month	Month-long Observances	Dates
<b>October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breast Cancer Awareness Month</li> <li>• Bullying Prevention Month</li> <li>• Domestic Violence Awareness Month</li> <li>• Filipino-American Heritage Month</li> <li>• German-American Heritage Month</li> <li>• Italian-American Heritage Month</li> <li>• LGBTQ History Month</li> <li>• National Work and Family Month</li> <li>• Polish-American Heritage Month</li> <li>• Family History Month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oct. 2 – International Day of Nonviolence</li> <li>• Oct. 9 – National Indigenous Peoples’ Day (United States)</li> <li>• Oct. 10 – Thanksgiving Day (Canada)</li> <li>• Oct. 10 – World Mental Health Day</li> <li>• Oct. 11 – National Coming Out Day (LGBTQ+)</li> <li>• Oct. 12 – World Sight Day</li> <li>• Oct. 13–17 - PRSSA ICON</li> <li>• Oct. 15 – Navrati begins (Hindu)</li> <li>• Oct. 16 – Birth of the Bab (Baha’i)</li> <li>• Oct. 16 – Waste Reduction Week</li> <li>• Oct. 16 – Bosses’ Day</li> <li>• Oct. 19 – Spirit Day (LGBTQ+ anti-bullying)</li> <li>• Oct. 20 – Sikh Holy Day (birth of Guru Granth)</li> <li>• Oct. 22 – International Stuttering Awareness Day</li> <li>• Oct. 25 – Birth of Baha’u’llah (Baha’i)</li> <li>• Oct. 31 – Halloween</li> <li>• Oct. 31 – Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)</li> </ul>
<b>November</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diabetes Awareness Month</li> <li>• Movember</li> <li>• National Native American, American Heritage Month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nov. 1 – All Saints’ Day (Roman Catholic)</li> <li>• Nov. 1 – National Stress Awareness Day</li> <li>• Nov. 9 – Diwali (Hindu)</li> <li>• Nov. 9 – World Freedom Day</li> <li>• Nov. 9 – World Adoption Day</li> <li>• Nov. 11 – Remembrance/Veterans Day</li> <li>• Nov. 13 – World Kindness Day</li> <li>• Nov. 16 – International Day for Tolerance</li> <li>• Nov. 19 – International Men’s Day</li> <li>• Nov. 20 – Transgender Day of Remembrance</li> <li>• Nov. 20 – Universal Children’s Day (Human Rights, U.N.)</li> <li>• Nov. 23 – Thanksgiving</li> <li>• Nov. 25 – Day of the Covenant (Baha’i)</li> <li>• Nov. 27 – Ascension of Abdu’l-Baha (Baha’i)</li> </ul>
<b>December</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HIV/AIDS Awareness Month</li> <li>• Universal Human Rights Month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dec. 1 – World AIDS Day</li> <li>• Dec. 3 – International Day for People with Disabilities</li> <li>• Dec. 5 – International Volunteer Day</li> <li>• Dec. 7 – Hanukkah begins at sunset (Jewish)</li> <li>• Dec. 9 – International Genocide Prevention Day</li> <li>• Dec. 10 – International Human Rights Day</li> <li>• Dec. 8 – Hanukkah begins at sunset (Jewish)</li> <li>• Dec. 21 – Yule Winter Solstice (Pagan)</li> <li>• Dec. 25 – Christmas (Christian)</li> <li>• Dec. 26 – Kwanzaa week</li> <li>• Dec. 26 – Boxing Day</li> <li>• Dec. 31 – New Year’s Eve</li> </ul>

## DO'S AND DON'TS OF DEIB CHAPTER LEADERS

The job of the PRSSA DEIB Chapter leader is one that is vitally important to our PRSSA Chapters. There may be a desire to quickly take on the role with gusto, but below are varied “do’s” and “don’ts” to ensure you remain effective while doing your job.

### Do's:

- Seek support and advice from fellow DEIB student leaders or leaders in the industry.
- Develop a DEIB strategic plan for your Chapter that aligns with the PRSSA DEIB Strategic Plan and Chapter plans.
- Place DEIB at the top of executive board meeting agendas to show priority.
- Brainstorm and seek ideas.
- Designate a committee in your Chapter dedicated to DEIB.
- Ensure the Chapter’s plan fits in with the overall DEIB Strategic Plan.
- Develop a yearlong calendar.
- Proactively lay out how others can contribute to the success of your Chapter’s plan.
- Implement consistent and ongoing activities to educate members on different aspects of DEIB.
- Provide guidance on how to leverage personal and PRSSA social media platforms to advance your Chapter’s DEIB efforts and initiatives.
- Build guidance on acceptable/unacceptable content.
- Seek opportunities to partner with other affinity groups and civic organizations.
- Seek opportunities to partner with local high schools.
- Use the Toolkit and also develop a list of resources to have readily available to refer to and share with others.
- Remain aware of the passage of prosocial programs and the elevation of trailblazers in your community and determine how to acknowledge them (social media platforms, Op-Ed, etc.).
- Use inclusive language in Chapter meetings. For example “Hello Everyone” rather than gender leaning words such as guys or girls.
- Tag PRSSA Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging and PRSA Foundation in addition to your Chapter on significant posts:  
#prdiversity, @prdiversity, @prsafoundation.
- Conduct monthly/quarterly meetings to discuss Chapter progress.

### Don'ts:

- Take on too much or go about it alone.
- Be intimidated by the moment. Breathe.
- Allow yourself to be defined as having the answers to how to solve all inequities.
- Be afraid to add your voice to the conversation.

## ENGAGING AND RECRUITING WITH STUDENTS AND FACULTY ADVISERS AT HBCU AND HACU INSTITUTIONS

Faculty Advisers at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and institutions recognized by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACUs) have revealed a consistent need for support both in professional development and financial resources for their PRSSA Chapters. There are often opportunities that are not available for students and Faculty Advisers from these institutions. The lack of these resources should never prevent students or their Faculty Advisers from taking advantage of the exceptional assets PRSSA has to offer.

After numerous insightful conversations between PRSA and Faculty Advisers from HBCUs and HACUs, PRSSA shares some recommendations from PRSA to strengthen our collective commitment to the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging and future practitioners.

**To that end, below are recommendations for your engagement in this regard:**

- Help to diversify the industry by supporting minority students who aspire to a career in public relations by helping them develop industry familiarity and knowledge, relevant skills and a network of professional contacts.
- Be generous in offering internship and/or mentorship opportunities. Even if your Chapter may not have a formal paid or unpaid internship program, be creative about offering exposure to a professional work environment.
- Take advantage of the opportunities available from PRSSA National.
- Invite local PRSA Chapters to attend your meetings and attend their meetings.
- Collaborate with local PRSA Chapters to host training sessions consistently and regularly.
- Have agency, corporate and other speakers come to campuses to help with LinkedIn profiles, professional social media presence and resume writing and interviewing.
- Work closely with diversity departments at your college/university in addition to HBCU and HACU Chapters.
- If your local PRSA Chapter has a strong relationship with a sponsor, partner with the sponsor in support of diverse students. The advantage of “priming the pipeline” benefits students and your PRSSA Chapter as well as the PRSA Chapter and the sponsor.
- Set aside a fundraising event for the sole purpose of sending a student or students to a District event or the PRSSA International Conference.
- Partner with other student groups to drive diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging initiatives locally, or to implement a new program or project for the community.
- Ask PRSA Chapters to offer PRSSA International Conference sponsorship/underwriting for students and Faculty Advisers to attend.

These are just a few suggestions on how your PRSSA Chapter can grow and strengthen its relationship with PRSA Chapters and Faculty Advisers at HBCUs and HACUs. It’s important to note that these suggestions are not all encompassing. We encourage PRSSA Chapters to create opportunities that fit their Chapter personalities and the needs of diverse students within their reach.

Our commitment to providing opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds has never been stronger. Members of the PRoud Council will continue the dialogue with Faculty Advisers – with emphasis on those at HBCUs and HACUs – and will continue to develop strategies and tactics to meet these needs.

## THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: IDEAS AND EVENTS

George Floyd's death in May 2020, combined with a history of systemic racism and police brutality toward innocent Black people and people of color, advanced the rise in protests and caused the mobilization of people to share educational resources and stories across social media. Due to the uproar on social media, organizations and public relations pros have become much more aware of the need for allies and activists to fight against social injustices. As PRSSA works to improve and bolster its diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging initiatives, we encourage Chapters not to resort to what is familiar. Instead, we urge Chapters to think outside the box in order to educate students and create a welcoming, fulfilling environment for our diverse members.

According to Business Insider, organizations tend to turn to “unconscious bias training,” or implicit bias training, as the go-to solution for increasing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. Unconscious bias training programs are designed to expose people to their unconscious biases, provide tools to adjust automatic patterns of thinking and ultimately eliminate discriminatory behaviors.

Unconscious bias (or implicit bias) is often defined as prejudice or unsupported judgments in favor of or against one thing, person or group as compared to another in a way that is usually considered unfair. As a result of unconscious biases, certain people benefit and other people are penalized.

Despite the popularity of unconscious bias training, there is growing evidence that these training sessions do not work. Below are several issues regarding unconscious bias training:

- Some organizational members are skeptical of the training sessions to begin with.
- The validity and effectiveness of bias training is weak.
- Companies treat these training sessions as the sole ingredient in the corporate diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) recipe.
- There is often a lack of focus placed on structural and systemic issues, which may hamper the success of these training sessions.

This doesn't mean organizations should give up on unconscious bias training. They can improve their training, and they also can look for other opportunities. Below are some strategies recommended by PRSSA for Chapters to address issues of social injustice and ensure that their practices truly lead to long-term changes in the organization.

### Examine Chapter practices.

Your Chapter may have cracks within its structure. Go through the different practices your Chapter has adopted and evaluate whether fair standards have been utilized. Consider if inequities and imbalances within your organization trickle down from the executive board/senior level members. Be honest about your practices and ask if they have or have not improved your Chapter's culture.

### Be accountable.

Open up about your DEIB shortfalls. This could include negative interactions with the executive board, toxicity, cliques, a lack of messaging about your Chapter's DEIB efforts and more. Once you are accountable for your Chapter's shortfalls, environment, mistakes and/or decisions that may have done more damage than good, you can work with your Chapter to move forward on a more positive note. It's also important to emphasize that DEIB is everyone's responsibility, not just the job of the chief diversity officer.

## **Include relevant scenarios in unconscious bias training.**

If you do decide to implement unconscious bias training into your Chapter, include several job- or internship-relevant scenarios to increase the training effectiveness. According to a Harvard Business Review study, including job-relevant scenarios into unconscious bias training allowed employees to make concrete commitments to activities and behaviors in the workplace. So rather than focusing solely on concepts and terminology (which are important for a baseline understanding), Chapter DEIB leaders should make sure their efforts are put into creating training that encompasses workplace practices where bias is more likely to creep in such as in agencies or corporations. Chapter DEIB leaders also should be provided with actionable steps to prevent bias from impacting decision-making processes. This is likely to increase members' commitment to goals and objectives set forth in the unconscious bias training, thus increasing the overall effectiveness of the training.

### **General suggestions**

- Learn as much as possible about unconscious bias and ways to combat it.
- Tell your story ... and listen to the stories of others.
- Avoid stereotypes and over generalizations.
- Separate feelings from facts.
- Have a diverse group of people around the decision-making table.
- Engage in self-reflection to uncover personal biases.
- Develop safe and brave spaces to discuss unconscious bias.
- Don't expect a quick fix.
- Practice empathy.

## **DIVERSITY RECRUITMENT TIPS**

PRSSA Chapters must adapt to ever-changing member needs. Engaging a diverse pool of students adds to the challenge. Below are recommendations that can be used both in person and virtually, for the recruitment of diverse members.

### **Publicize your Chapter's diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging policy before the school year begins.**

Your policy should set formal goals and strategies pertaining to creating an equal opportunity environment. Once your policy is in place it should be made public both internally and externally.

### **Expand your network. Now.**

Word-of-mouth is a great method that isn't going anywhere. Building relationships with more employers or students can encourage them to spread the word to potential members with diverse backgrounds. You can reach out to:

- Diverse affinity groups at your college/university.
- People from conferences, seminars, job fairs and networking events.
- Professionals through online networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook.
- Your own diverse friends, neighbors, colleagues.
- Your local PRSA Chapter. Perhaps your Chapter has a connection with your local PRSA Chapter. Inform the PRSA Chapter that your PRSSA Chapter is struggling to obtain diverse memberships and let them know your Chapter needs help.

## Highlight member benefits

These can include:

- Workshops on DEIB, ethics, traditional public relations deliverables such as press releases, LinkedIn, different creative platforms used in agencies, etc.
- Scholarships and awards - As a PRSSA member, you can apply for many scholarships and leadership awards provided by the PRSA Foundation that recognize your excellence and provide funding to help you get through school.
- Access to Student-run Firms associated with the Chapter – This provides hands-on public relations experience allowing students to improve their skills before stepping into their first internship or job.
- Chapter size – If you're a big Chapter, emphasize that. You are able to offer a lot of opportunities to grow and gain leadership experience by joining our executive board or getting involved in meetings and events.
- Extensive alumni network and opportunities to connect you with jobs in the future.
- In-person or virtual agency tours.
- Access to the school's internship center.
- Connect with students and professionals from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds.
- Early bird pricing.
- DEIB Instagram Chat.
- Diverse Dialogues.

## Create a video or animation.

Using social media to share this video or animation, present the job opportunities and internships that can come out of your PRSSA Chapter. This content will help prove that there is value in spending money to be in PRSSA.

## Mention past, present, and future work.

What has the past DEIB officer or co-chair done so far regarding your Chapter's DEIB initiatives? What has worked? What are you currently working on regarding your Chapter's DEIB initiatives? How is your Chapter being proactive, instead of reactive, when it comes to creating meaningful change through DEIB?

## Reach out to groups you wouldn't have before.

Diversity is more than how people look, so target students whose creative minds may mesh well with those already in your Chapter. This could include students in journalism, media studies and production, business, arts, music, etc.

## Leverage the strengths of the diversity you have so far.

Ask yourself: What are the diversity strengths I have so far? How can my Chapter and I build on those strengths? Your Chapter may be diverse in the way you think. It's important for PRSSA Chapters to build a culture where differences in thinking and ways of working are valued and leveraged. So focus on your members' unique strengths or those underlying qualities that energize them, and unlock their full potential for others to witness.

## **Talk about public relations-related issues you are determined to tackle throughout the year.**

For example, having relevant discussions about companies' race-related public relations/advertising issues are important for public relations students and your Chapter. How do companies' public relations/communications/advertising teams end up with an ad in which a Black woman transforms into a white woman after using Dove body wash, or in which a black boy is wearing a sweatshirt reading "cutest monkey in the jungle" as in an H&M ad? These are real examples of advertisements that were racially insensitive. Your Chapter has the opportunity to escape its comfort zone and address these issues now, before heading into the public relations workforce where there is a lack of diversity.

## **Sample Programming Ideas and Events**

The PRSA Diversity & Inclusion Committee is a great resource for developing diverse programming and event ideas. The following are samples of programming ideas and topics provided by PRSA Chapters and Districts and the PRSSA National Committee.

### **Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging Managers**

Many of today's businesses hire experts to serve as directors, vice presidents and managers of diversity to lead companies in recruiting and retaining diverse candidates. Reach out to some of these individuals to see if they can offer your Chapter's executive board insights for recruiting and retaining diverse members. In addition, invite one of these managers to speak to your campus' human resources and public relations students.

### **Visits to Non-Public Relations Classes**

To recruit PRSSA members outside the public relations major, visit classes in majors such as marketing, advertising, graphic design and journalism. During the visit, discuss what public relations is and how the specific major you are speaking with can benefit from learning more about the public relations profession. At the end of the discussion, invite the students to your next meeting.

### **Diversity and Human Resources**

Work with your campuses' office of human resources to create a program that discusses employee communications and communicating with diverse employees on campus. Also, partner with a local HR organization (e.g., Society for Human Resource Management) in your area and invite them to speak about their experiences with employee relations and diversity in local companies.

### **Communicating Across Cultures**

Our language is filled with interesting colloquialisms and metaphors. But some of these words and phrases can be hurtful to people of certain ethnicities and religions, or other groups. Co-sponsor a writing and language workshop with journalism students or the press/broadcast news club on your campus to learn some of the ways people inadvertently use offensive language – and suggest more appropriate ways to get your message across.

### **Public Relations Chairs/Directors**

Various organizations on your campus may have public relations officers or chairs. A good way to recruit and retain new members is to reach out to those organizations and communicate the benefit of the public relations chairs being part of PRSSA to learn how to better serve in their roles. Also consider hosting a workshop for this audience.



## School Spirit

Co-sponsor a workshop with student athletes and the athletics department media relations office on your campus. At the workshop, discuss how your university's sports teams are being promoted and how student athletes feel about their image and the image of university athletics. The results could lead to a campaign led by your Student-run Firm. Promote PRSSA membership to any athletes interested in combining their passion for sports with a communications career.

## Greek Life: Image Is Everything

Host a workshop with fraternity and sorority communications chairs and committee members to identify topics such as reputation management, crisis communication and publicity/public relations. Most Greek organizations have public relations officers or programming chairs. Your PRSSA Chapter could offer suggestions on how to best communicate their organization's message to the student body.

## Students With Disabilities

Co-sponsor an event with the Center for Students with Disabilities on your campus. The event could be a partnership with an existing organization in your area such as the Special Olympics. Your Chapter could also generate awareness about the Center for Students with Disabilities by offering public relations services such as news releases.

## Lifestyle Magazines and Publications

Lifestyle magazines are a burgeoning market, particularly in the LGBTQ+ community. Host a roundtable discussion between communications professionals from LGBTQ+-oriented lifestyle magazines, your PRSSA Chapter and LGBTQ+ campus organizations.

## Empowering Women

Invite faculty from your campus' women's studies department and local businesswomen to discuss the promotion of women in today's organizations, and how females in leadership positions affect diversity in the workplace.

## Language and Communication

Do Latinx audiences prefer Spanish to English? What is the preferred language by Chinese Americans? How many dialects do Chinese Americans speak, and which is politically correct to use in public relations? Host a guest speaker series co-sponsored by a campus organization for international students that addresses questions about language and communication, both on and off campus.

## Crisis Case Study

Host a workshop or competition where professionals describe a crisis or challenge they faced within an ethnic market (e.g., Nike racial discrimination suit). Have participants offer solutions for the crisis before the real-life solution is presented.

## Challenges of Diversity

Partner with your area's largest public and private employers to discuss the different diversity challenges they have faced, especially those related to communications.

## Working With Ethnic Public Relations

Ask corporate/governmental practitioners to be guest speakers on your campus and discuss how they work with ethnic public relations agencies, ethnic initiatives and ethnic campaigns.

## Emerging Markets

Host a discussion with your local PRSA Chapter that addresses emerging business markets. Discuss the different opportunities the emerging markets can provide for public relations professionals.

## Ethnic Radio

This is a powerful and often overlooked medium. Try to identify ethnic radio markets in your area and invite members of the station to speak to your Chapter regarding ethnic radio and how public relations professionals can use it to reach diverse audiences.

## Perceptions

What are the changes experienced by today's ethnic communities? Hold a discussion regarding issues of perceptions of certain ethnic groups and how to communicate when differences exist, both in person and in public relations campaigns. Invite diversity officers from businesses in the area to be guest speakers.

## International Chapter Connections

PRSSA currently has five international Chapters in Argentina, Colombia, Peru and Puerto Rico. If you have members with connections or an interest, encourage them to reach out to those Chapters to learn how public relations differs in their location — or ask one of the Chapters' members to have a virtual meeting. These are just a few topics you can cover to bring the value of diversity to your members.

Reach out to your local PRSA Chapter or PRSSA vice president of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging at [vpdiversity@prsa.org](mailto:vpdiversity@prsa.org) for more ideas and to discuss how to make these programs work for your Chapter.

## APPENDIX

### Media Style Guides for Race, Ethnicity and Religion: Writing tips for engaging with diverse audiences

#### Inclusive Language Guides

- [National Association of Black Journalists Style Guide](#)
- [Asian American Journalists Association Handbook](#)
- [Native American Journalists Association Reporter's Indigenous Terminology Guide](#)
- [Religion Newswriters Association's Religion Stylebook](#)

# APPENDIX

## Race, Ethnicity and National Origin

Identity	Explanation	Example(s)
African American/Black	<p>Black and African American are not always interchangeable. Some individuals prefer the term Black because they do not identify as African and/or American.</p> <p>Individuals may identify as African, Afro Caribbean, Afro Latino or other.</p>	<p>Refer to groups as Black students, Black faculty members etc., not Blacks.</p> <p>Consider the necessity of using race within your text. Ask yourself: "Would I mention 'white student' or 'white faculty member' when discussing others?"</p>
Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander	<p>Asian Refers to people who are citizens of countries in the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent, or to describe people of Asian Descent.</p> <p>Asian Americans trace their origins to these regions.</p> <p>Pacific Islander includes Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian, Fijian and other peoples of the Pacific Island nations.</p> <p>Use Asian/Pacific Islander when referring to the relevant population in its entirety. Otherwise, use the preferred term of the individual or group.</p>	<p>Refer to groups as Asian students, Asian Faculty members, etc., not Asians.</p> <p>Consider the necessity of using race within your text. Ask yourself: "Would I mention 'white student' or 'white faculty member' when discussing others?"</p>
Hispanic, Latino(a/o) and Latinx	<p>Hispanic refers to people from Spanish-speaking countries.</p> <p>Latino, Latina or Latinx is a person of Latin American descent who can be of any background or language. If the individual or group does not identify as either Latino or Latina, the gender-neutral term Latinx can be used. When referring to a group, generally use Latinx as it is gender inclusive.</p>	<p>People from Mexico, Cuba and Guatemala who speak Spanish are both Hispanic and Latin(o/a)/Latinx.</p> <p>Brazilians who speak Portuguese and Latin(o/a)/Latinx but not Hispanic.</p> <p>Spanish-speaking people in Spain and outside Latin America are Hispanic but not Latin (o/a)/Latinx.</p>
Native American	<p>Native American is preferred unless the individual or group specifies otherwise.</p> <p>Occasionally some prefer American Indian, however, this is not universal.</p>	<p>The term "Indian" is used only when referring to people from India, not for Native Americans.</p>
People of Color	<p>Sometimes, we don't use the term people of color because not all minorities have the same experience. Instead, refer to groups with their name.</p>	<p>Do not use the term "colored people." ie) African American, Asian and Hispanic vs. people of color</p>
Underserved/Underrepresented	<p>Do not use the term minority to describe students from diverse backgrounds. When referring to multiple groups of students from diverse backgrounds, use "Underserved/Underrepresented students," however, use the specific group title when possible.</p>	<p>For example: LGBTQ+ students, Black students, undocumented students etc.</p>
Immigration Status	<p>Do not use the word "illegal immigrant" or "illegal alien" to refer to individuals who are not U.S. citizens/permanent residents, who do not hold visas to reside in the U.S. or who have not applied for official residency.</p>	<p>Example: Undocumented students, Undocumented individuals</p>

## Gender and Sexuality

Identity	Explanation	Example(s)
LGBTQ(+)	Shorthand and umbrella term for individuals who have a non-hetero/cis-normative gender or sexuality. LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. The “+” includes all other non-hetero/cis- normative identities not included within the LGBTQ acronym.	
Lesbian	Women who are primarily attracted to other women.	It is not appropriate to use the word “homosexual” or “WSW” (women who have sex with women).
Gay	Men who are attracted to other men,  Some individuals refer to lesbian women as “gay women.” Generally, do not do so unless preferred by the group/individual.	It is not appropriate to use the word “homosexual” or “MSM” (men who have sex with men).
Bisexual	An individual who experiences attraction to men and women.	
Transgender	A gender description for someone who has transitioned (or is transitioning) from living as one gender to another. Transgender can sometimes be written as “trans.”	It is not appropriate to ask a transgender individual which part of their transition they are currently in. A biological man who is transitioning into a woman is a transgender woman, or transwoman. A biological woman who is transitioning into a man is a transgender man or transman.
Queer	An umbrella term to describe individuals who do not identify as straight and or cisgender.	It is important to consider the context when using the word queer as it was formally used as a derogatory word. It has since been reclaimed.  Never add “a” in front of the word. Example: He is Queer.
Ally	A typically straight and or cisgender person who supports and respects members of the LGBTQ+ community.	
Cisgender	A gender description for when someone’s sex assigned at birth and gender identity corresponds in the socially constructed and socially expected way.	
Gender Non-Conforming	A gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary (binary: man or woman).	

## Noun usage

Subjective	Objective	Possessive Adjectives	Possessive Pronouns	Reflective	Pronunciation
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself	Pronounced as it looks.
He	Him	His	His	Himself	Pronounced as it looks.
Ze	Zim	Zir	Zirs	Zirself	Pronounced Zay or Zee/Zim (rhymes with them). Zir (rhymes with their).
They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themselves	Pronounced as it looks.

## Making Chapter Meetings Accessible

### Guidelines for writing and referring to People with Disabilities

The ADA National Network provides information and guidance on how to implement the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities and its purpose is to guarantee equal rights and opportunities.

Below are some of the ADA National Network's guidelines for portraying individuals with disabilities in a respectful and balanced way by using language that is accurate, neutral, and objective.

- Choose a language that emphasizes what people can do instead of what they can't do. For example, say "a person who uses a communication device" instead of "a person that can't talk".
- In general, refer to the person first and the disability second: When referring to an individual with a disability it's important to identify them as a person with a disability, not a disabled person. For example, say "a person on the autism spectrum", not "autistic" or "autistic person". The "Person First" mentality should also be applied when discussing mental health conditions.
- However, it's important to keep in mind that people with disabilities have different preferences when referring to their disability. For instance, some people see their disability as an essential part of who they are and prefer to be identified with their disability first. This is called the "Identity First" language. Examples of Identity First language include identifying someone as a "deaf person" instead of a "person who is deaf". Always ask to find out an individual's language preferences.
- Use the term accessible rather than disabled or handicapped to refer to facilities. Avoid outdated, offensive words such as handicapped, retarded, crazy, etc. Avoid using self-diagnosing language such as, "I'm OCD," and "I'm having an anxiety attack right now" unless these mental illnesses have been diagnosed.
- Don't use language that perpetuates negative stereotypes about psychiatric disabilities. For example, say "a person experiencing alcohol/drug problem" instead of "an addict".
- Portray successful people with disabilities in a balanced way, not as heroic or superhuman.
- Don't refer to a person's disability or condition unless it relates to the full understanding of your message. It's okay to identify someone's disability if it is essential to the story. For example, "Peter, who uses a wheelchair, spoke about his experience with using accessible transportation". However, it's important to analyze every situation and consider the necessity of referring to their disability.

### Examine Chapter Practices

When examining Chapter practices it is important to keep all members' needs in the mind of Chapter leadership. This may include changing a location to make the space wheelchair accessible, auditory accessible, and visually accessible for all members.

The intent in evaluating the environment is to make everyone comfortable being themselves and getting the most out of Chapter meetings and events.

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- [Native American Journalists Association Reporter's Indigenous Terminology Guide](#)
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