

Many Paths to Communications Leadership

PRSA's inaugural Strategies & Tactics Women of Impact honorees are strengthening organizations, advancing the profession and creating opportunities for others.

Leadership in communications does not take a single form. It can mean guiding an organization through a crisis, earning trust across a workforce, finding new ways to tell a brand's story or creating opportunities for the next generation of professionals.

The professionals recognized in PRSA's inaugural Strategies & Tactics Women of Impact Awards demonstrate that breadth of influence across agencies, corporations, nonprofits, government, higher education, sports and travel.

Honored on Aug. 6 at the Women of Impact Summit & Awards in Chicago, the recipients represent different career stages, specialties and paths into the profession. Their work reflects not only individual achievement but also the larger responsibilities of communications leaders: to provide sound counsel, act with integrity, adapt thoughtfully to emerging technology and help others advance.

The awards followed a morning of conversations about leadership and the future of communications, including artificial intelligence, measurement, sports and entertainment, and the ways professionals can extend their influence beyond a job title.

As PRSA Chair Heide Harrell, MA, APR, noted, leadership is measured not only by what professionals achieve but also by the people they "inspire, mentor and empower."

The profiles that follow introduce the 2026 recipients and highlight the work, ideas and commitments shaping their contributions to the profession.



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WOMEN of IMPACT

Meet the Winners

Elaxis Schroder

Founder, Head of the Haus | SchroderHaus Marketing Communications

Elaxis Schroder has built a national reputation as an integrated marketing communications leader. She has more than 20 years of experience developing and implementing integrated, brand-building programs that authentically share a company's mission to drive trial, sales and loyalty.

She founded SchroderHaus based on the belief that there is a better way to serve purpose-driven organizations, and is known for building camaraderie and buy-in across teams to drive maximum return on investment, all while making people laugh along the way. Today, as Head of the Haus, Schroder aims to inspire her team to deliver top-notch work daily and to serve as a trusted adviser to clients like Horizon Organic, Kettle & Fire, Applegate, Minor Figures and Mauna Loa.

She is a go-to adviser to brand and nonprofit leaders, and lovingly pushes her team and clients to reach their full potential. Schroder is an active advocate for food justice and believes we can create a more sustainable future for the next generation.

She currently leads the strategic marketing-communications committee for Metro Caring, a Denver-based anti-hunger organization. She is a board member of Naturally Colorado, helping sustain and grow the state's natural products industry.



Agency Excellence

Courtney Callaghan, APR+M

Public Affairs Officer | U.S. Navy

Lieutenant Commander Courtney Callaghan is a seasoned and award-winning public affairs officer with more than a decade of experience and a proven track record of leading communication strategies in high-stakes environments. A 2012 graduate of the United States Naval Academy, she has guided public affairs for carrier-strike groups, submarine squadrons, and Navy-wide communication campaigns.

Her career includes deployments during OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE and OPERATION ROUGH RIDER, where she directed responses to numerous international crises. At the Navy's headquarters, she led communications for the Department of the Navy's budget and future-force design and acquisition. Callaghan holds a master's degree from San Diego State University and an Accreditation in Public Relations and Military Communication (APR+M).

Her work has earned multiple PRSA Silver Anvil awards and recognition from *PRNews* as a 2025 Top Woman in PR and an industry champion. Known for her crisis management expertise and strategic counsel, she is a recognized leader shaping the future of military and public relations communications.



Crisis & Issues Navigator

Tina Kozak

CEO | Franco

Tina Kozak is the first woman and only the third person to hold the CEO position in Franco's history. In 2024, she became majority shareholder and owner of Franco. Her career highlights span a variety of areas, from client service and industry innovation to organizational culture and empowering women. As Franco's CEO, she leads the company in its values, culture and strategic vision.

One of Metro Detroit's most respected crisis communications strategists, Kozak counsels a range of clients in communications strategy, change management, and community relations. She has made it her mission to honor Franco's legacy while staying ahead of the relevance curve. Under her leadership, Franco has added services and talent to evolve the agency from traditional PR to integrated communications, leading to double-digit growth in revenue and employees.

Before joining Franco in 2007, Kozak was global communications manager at Metaldyne Corp., where she managed strategic-communications plans across an international company with \$2 billion in revenue and 7,500 employees in 14 countries. She holds a bachelor of arts from Wayne State University. Kozak is also a graduate of the Detroit Regional Chamber's Leadership Detroit XXXIII and was recognized as a *Crain's Detroit Business* 40 Under 40 honoree.



Agency Leader

Elizabeth Neiman

Managing Director, Strategic Engagement | International Society of Automation (ISA)

Elizabeth (Liz) Neiman has 25 years of leadership experience in communications, marketing, public relations, graphic design and event management. She is currently managing director of strategic engagement for the International Society of Automation (ISA). Neiman previously held similar roles overseeing communications, marketing, PR, and events for MIND Research Institute, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), and Kohn Pedersen Fox.

She sits on the board of the PRSA Westchester/Fairfield Chapter. She holds a bachelor of arts in English from Johns Hopkins University and currently lives in Scarsdale, N.Y.



Association/Nonprofit

Jennifer Hawton, APR

Public Relations and Executive Communications Manager | PEMCO Mutual Insurance

Jennifer Hawton, APR, is an experienced communications leader, consultant, and course designer. She manages public relations and executive communications at PEMCO Insurance and has previously worked with top companies like Workday, Boeing and Publicis (now MSLGroup). Hawton is passionate about internal and external communications, executive communications, and public relations, and has earned local, national, and international awards for her work.

Known for her creative storytelling and executive coaching, she has been a featured speaker on strategic planning, measurement and AI for communications. Outside of work, she enjoys glamping, riding her three-wheeled motorcycle and dancing.



Brand Storyteller

Rosanna Fiske, APR, Fellow PRSA

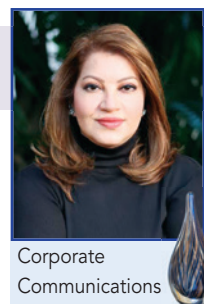
Global Head of Corporate Affairs | Signature Aviation

Rosanna M. Fiske, APR, Fellow PRSA, is global head of corporate affairs at Signature Aviation, the world's largest network of private aviation terminals, where she leads corporate communications, community impact and corporate events. Since joining Signature, she has shaped narratives that strengthen growth, reputation and impact.

With more than 25 years of global experience, she has led communications, reputation management, crisis response, marketing and social impact for brands and institutions. Previous roles include global chief communications officer for Royal Caribbean Group, senior vice president and corporate affairs leader at Wells Fargo & Co., executive vice president and chief strategy officer at a top-10 advertising agency, and head of Florida International University's Global Strategic Communications master's program.

A former PRSA chair and CEO and the first Latina CEO in the organization's 60-plus-year history, Fiske received PRSA's Gold Anvil, the profession's highest lifetime honor, in 2024. She has been recognized among the Top 100 Influential Hispanics in America, *PRWeek's* Women of Distinction and *PR Daily's* Top Communicators Hall of Fame.

She serves on the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications and is a member of the University of Florida's Business Advisory Council and the Arthur Page Society.



Corporate Communications

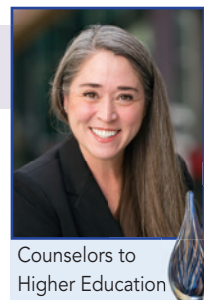
Teresa Valerio Parrot, Ed.D., APR

Principal | TVP Communications

Dr. Teresa Valerio Parrot, APR, is principal of TVP Communications, where she works at the intersection of leadership and communications. She co-hosts the "Trusted Voices Podcast," co-edits Call to Action for Inside Higher Ed, and has had numerous bylines in national and trade media. She is a frequent keynote speaker, averaging more than a dozen plenary sessions annually.

CASE awarded Parrot the Crystal Apple Award for Teaching Excellence, and she serves as a CASE Laureate. She was named a Top Woman in PR by *PR News* in 2024, and she and her team were recognized by *PR Daily* in 2024 for Media Strategy of the Year and in 2025 for Executive Communications, External/Internal Communications Campaign, and Education Campaign.

In 2025, *Diverse* (now *The EDU Ledger*) named her as a woman making a difference in academe, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* featured her insights as part of The Quarter-Century Project. She is under contract with Harvard Education Press and Cambridge University Press. Parrot serves on the boards of the PRSA Foundation and the Denver-area Scientific and Cultural Facilities District. She served as secretary of the board for PRSA and co-chaired the American Marketing Association's higher education symposium.



Counselors to Higher Education

Monique Farmer, APR

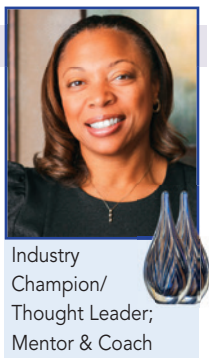
President/CEO | Avant Solutions

Monique Farmer, APR, is an accredited public relations professional with more than 23 years of experience. She leads Avant Solutions, a communication and marketing consultancy based in Omaha, Neb. Her career awards include the U.S. Army's Superior Civilian Service Award, PRSA Nebraska's Professional of the Year and Special Achievement in Public Relations Awards, and the *Omaha World-Herald's* Inspire Award.

She has earned national communication awards, including a PRSA Silver Anvil and the National School Public Relations Association's highest honor, the Gold Medallion, for brand strategy. In 2024, she published her first book, "Chart Your Path: A 9-Step Method to Getting Unstuck." Within its first two months, the book earned Amazon bestseller status and several awards.

Farmer created Anvil Ready, an online platform for PR pros. She teaches public relations courses for the University of Texas at Austin's Moody School of Communication. She is a regular contributor to PRSA's *Strategies & Tactics*. Farmer holds two master's degrees (Public Administration and Journalism/Mass Communications).

Her proudest accomplishment is being the mother of three, John Farmer III, Aaliyah Farmer, and Jordan Farmer, and the wife of Omaha Fire Captain John Farmer Jr.



Industry
Champion/
Thought Leader;
Mentor & Coach

Felicia Perez, APR

Principal | FAR Public Relations

Felicia Perez, MA, APR, is founder of FAR Public Relations, an award-winning Houston-based consultancy that delivers strategic communications for health care organizations, corporate brands, public sector entities, and mission-driven nonprofits. With more than two decades of experience, she began her career in broadcast journalism, reporting and producing newscasts from Arkansas to Houston.

She then transitioned into public relations, where she helps organizations gain visibility, build trust, and drive meaningful impact through earned media, digital strategy, and executive communications. Her work has earned top industry recognition, including the PRSA Houston Grand Excalibur Award, and national honors from PRSA, reflecting excellence in media relations and integrated communications.

Perez is a past president of PRSA Houston, currently serves as Assembly Delegate and APR chair, and is an adjunct lecturer at the University of Houston.



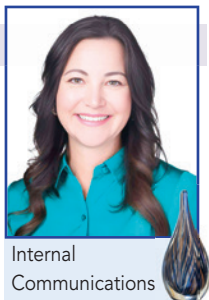
Independent
Practitioners

Brandi Smith

Manager, Corporate Communications | Avista

Brandi Smith is a manager of corporate communications at Avista, where she leads internal communications, executive messaging, and employee-engagement initiatives. She has held progressive communications roles at Avista since 2010 and has been managing internal communications since 2017. She previously worked in human resources and marketing at Clearwater Summit Group.

She is a graduate of Avista's Aspiring Leader Program and Willamette University's Utility Management certificate program. She holds a bachelor's degree in communications studies, communications and psychology from Eastern Washington University.



Internal
Communications



Haiwen Lu Langworth

Vice President of Global Communications and Marketing | Tent Partnership for Refugees

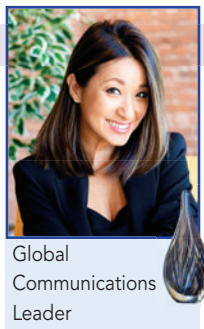
Haiwen Lu Langworth is the first-ever vice president of global communications and marketing at the Tent Partnership for Refugees (Tent). Reporting to the CEO and as part of the executive leadership team, she has built a 15-plus-strong team across 11 countries.

She drives the strategic vision and execution of all communications, marketing, and thought leadership internationally for Tent — the nonprofit founded in 2016 by Hamdi Ulukaya that has mobilized more than 500 companies to connect refugees to jobs. Before joining Tent, Langworth was vice president of global communications and social impact at leading international sports-media company DAZN Group.

There, she guided DAZN from its U.S. launch to worldwide expansion into more than 200 markets and led integrated brand-building efforts that solidified the company as a recognized global home of sports and a game-changer in the advancement of women's sports.

Before that, she spent nearly a decade across offices in Asia and North America at global PR agencies Ketchum and Hill & Knowlton, where the client accounts she led included Gillette, Mercedes-Benz, Oakley and LensCrafters.

Langworth received her bachelor of science in journalism from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, where she also minored in Chinese language and culture.



Global
Communications
Leader

Mary Deming Barber, APR, Fellow PRSA

Mayor | City of Gig Harbor

Mary Deming Barber, APR, Fellow PRSA, is mayor of Gig Harbor, Wash., an office she has held since late November 2024 after serving on the city council. A strategic communications professional with more than 40 years of experience, she built her career counseling organizations in Alaska, California, Colorado and Oregon.

Barber is recognized as a leading voice in the public relations profession. As mayor, she focuses on bringing people together to find solutions and on continuing to make Gig Harbor an exceptional place to live, work, play and raise a family.

She is particularly focused on community projects such as the Fishermen's Homeport, exploring a future community center, caring for those in need, diversifying housing, and strengthening economic vitality. A lifelong volunteer, Barber has served on numerous boards, including the Public Relations Society of America, the Whitman College Alumni Association, and the Alaska Botanical Garden.

She currently serves on the Pierce County Unified Regional Approach to Homelessness elected leaders group, the board and executive committee of the South Sound Housing Affordability Partnership and the Gig Harbor Chamber of Commerce.



Public Affairs &
Government

Sheerin Salimi

Vice President, Communications | Brooklyn Sports & Entertainment

As vice president of communications at Brooklyn Sports & Entertainment, Salimi leads a team of PR professionals and works across the organization to promote its new and existing properties. Previously, she worked at Nike, where she held director-level roles focused on global storytelling.

At Nike, she oversaw the strategic communications plan and efforts for the company's 50th anniversary, including the "Seen It All" marketing campaign featuring Spike Lee, and Nike's sponsorship of the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

Before Nike, Salimi was director of global brand, sponsorship and product communications at Visa, serving as the global communications lead for Visa's FIFA, Olympics, and NFL partnerships; executive thought leadership programs for Visa's global CMO and chief brand officer; and communications for eCommerce and Small Business.

Earlier in her career, Salimi joined global PR agency FleishmanHillard as an account supervisor, where she supported communication efforts for launches including Visa Checkout and Apple Pay. In this role, she supported brands like Visa, Cadillac, AT&T and more. Salimi started her career at BWR Public Relations as an account coordinator before joining Cisco Systems as a global analyst relations and social media specialist. Salimi graduated with a bachelor of arts in sociology from UCLA.



Sports

Tanvi Kamlesh Chauhan

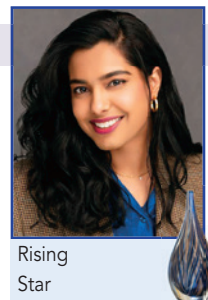
Communications Manager | Visit Savannah

Tanvi Chauhan is manager of communications at Visit Savannah, where she supports earned media strategy to position the destination on a national and global stage. In just three and a half years, much of it without agency support, she has secured coverage across top-tier media outlets including *Travel + Leisure*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Southern Living*, *Vogue*, and *Forbes*, while also contributing to *U.S. News & World Report*.

She has played a key role in major media initiatives, including a national feature with "Good Morning America," nationwide press for the Savannah Convention Center expansion, and a first-of-its-kind, destination-marketing-organization partnership with Saks Fifth Avenue. She has also supported PR messaging around destination campaigns at events such as the Head of the Charles Regatta in Boston and the State Fair of Texas.

Chauhan has hosted more than 500 journalists and led over a dozen curated media-familiarization trips, working with industry leaders like Brand USA to deliver high-impact placements that highlight local businesses and Savannah's enduring history. In 2025 alone, the Visit Savannah PR team secured earned coverage reaching 239 million unique monthly visitors, with an estimated ad value exceeding \$2 million.

The city's mayor appointed her to the Greater Savannah International Alliance board and she is a graduate of Leadership Savannah (Class of 2024).



Rising
Star

Save the Date!

The 2027 Women of Impact program and awards ceremony takes place on Aug. 5 at the Union League Club in Chicago.

Supriya Christopher

Director of Public Relations | Visit Savannah

Supriya Christopher is a senior communications executive with three decades of experience leading strategic public and media relations. Christopher began her career in broadcast journalism as a news anchor for *USA Today* and ABC News. She currently serves as director of public relations for Visit Savannah, the official destination-marketing organization for Savannah and Tybee Island, Ga. Christopher has built an award-winning earned-media strategy positioning Savannah as a top-ranked U.S. travel destination.

Under her leadership, Savannah has received national and international media coverage and accolades from "Good Morning America," *Travel + Leisure*, *Garden & Gun*, *Southern Living*, *The New York Times* and other prestigious outlets. She holds a bachelor's degree in communications from Seton Hall University and a master's degree in media writing from Johns Hopkins University.

Commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Army Signal Corps, she is one of the first female U.S. Army paratroopers. She brings disciplined leadership, strategic vision, and storytelling expertise to every role she serves.

She is married to Capt. Damien Christopher, a retired Navy F/A-18 pilot and current chief test pilot at Gulfstream Aerospace. The Christophers have two adult sons and reside in Savannah, Ga.



Travel & Tourism

Alice Ferreira

Senior Managing Director | Webster Bank

Alice Ferreira currently serves as senior managing director of corporate communications at Webster Bank. She was recruited by the Stamford, Conn., bank in 2018, to guide reputation and communications strategy for the succession of the third CEO in the company's 90-year history. Her career foundation includes extensive experience at one of the largest commercial banks in the United States and at a Fortune 200 global health care company.

She has advised more than 15 CEOs of publicly traded companies in highly regulated industries, establishing herself as a national expert in navigating complex corporate environments where strategic partnerships, reputation management, and stakeholder communications directly impact business outcomes.

Previously, Ferreira was vice president of communications at United Healthcare, director of corporate communications at Health Net, and assistant director of public relations at Sacred Heart University.



Financial Communication

Kristen Nicholson, APR

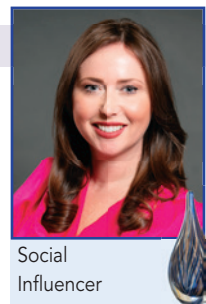
Vice President of Strategic Communications | mhp.si

Kristen Vandaveer Nicholson, APR, is an award-winning public relations and social media strategist and leader. As vice president of strategic communications and a partner at mhp.si since 2021, she brings more than 15 years of experience in developing high-impact PR strategies, leading integrated campaigns, and managing complex crisis communications.

Her work is marked by innovation, agility and a deep understanding of brand reputation in today's fast-paced media environment. Nicholson spearheaded the launch of mhp.si's Content Studio in 2022, which has positioned the firm at the forefront of content strategy in the industry.

Since its launch, the Content Studio has secured four Arkansas PRSA Prism Awards, two Telly Awards, and a Henry Award for innovative, results-driven social media campaigns, further solidifying mhp.si's reputation as a leader in digital storytelling and strategic content-creation. Nicholson serves as engagement chair for Little Rock Rotary Club 99, one of the oldest and largest Rotary clubs in the nation.

She is a board member for Junior Achievement of Arkansas, a past president of PRSA Arkansas, a member of the PRSA Past Presidents Council and an alumna of Leadership Greater Little Rock (Class XXXI), where she now serves on the advisory board.



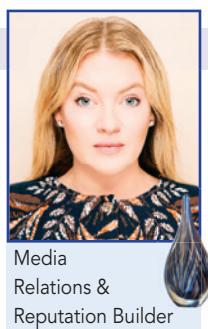
Social Influencer

Jessica Schaefer

Founder/CEO | Capital V Strategies

Jessica Schaefer is an entrepreneur and businesswoman who founded Bevel, a communications firm serving the tech and venture capital sectors, which was acquired in 2023 at a combined valuation of \$75 million. She previously led communications for Steve Cohen's \$30 billion hedge fund Point72 and has held senior roles at Moody's and Acorns.

She is currently the founder of Lushi, an AI fertility tech platform, and Cap V, a strategic advisory and communications firm launched in 2025. Schaefer holds a master of business administration from Baruch College and a bachelor of arts from Quinnipiac University, and has been recognized by *Business Insider*, *Crain's New York Business*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, among other publications.



Media Relations & Reputation Builder

Diane Schwartz

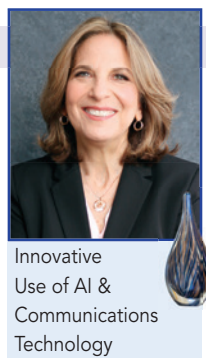
CEO | Ragan Communications

Diane Schwartz is chief executive officer of Ragan Communications, an industry-leading learning and development company. An avid writer, speaker and advocate for communicators as business leaders, she brings more than 25 years of experience to Ragan's media, events and training experiences. The first female CEO in the company's 56-year history, Schwartz has led the organization to unparalleled growth for five consecutive years.

Under her tenure, the company's offerings have expanded to include groundbreaking products such as Women's Retreats, Future of Communications Conference, AI Horizons, Certificate Programs, and the development of the industry-leading learning platform, Ragan Training. In 2025, Schwartz launched Ragan's Center for AI Strategy, boasting more than 250 members in its first year.

Her leadership landed Ragan Communications on *Inc.*'s 2025 list of 5000 Growing Companies. She has served as a guest lecturer at Columbia University, NYU, DePaul and UMass Amherst. She is certified in Organizational Leadership from Harvard Business School and Northwestern University's Advanced Leadership program.

She chairs the Communications Week board. Schwartz is a recipient of the President's Award from Access Intelligence and a Silver Stevie Award for Maverick of the Year.



Innovative Use of AI & Communications Technology

Lyndsey Akers

Founder & CEO | Akers & Co.

Lyndsey Akers is a strategic communications adviser, speaker, and founder of Akers & Co., a boutique advisory firm that supports founders, executives, and mission-driven organizations. With more than 15 years of experience spanning Capitol Hill, corporate communications, and national nonprofits, she partners with military-connected and impact-focused leaders to strengthen influence, expand opportunity, and advance mission-driven work.

Akers holds a master's degree in strategic public relations from George Washington University and a bachelor's degree in communications from Charleston Southern University. An Air Force spouse and mother of two, her work is deeply rooted in her lived experience within the military community. She was named the 2026 Armed Forces Insurance Air Force Spouse of the Year in recognition of her leadership and service.



Purpose & Community Impact

Awards of Commendation

- ★ **Agency Excellence:** Jess Overbeck, Artemis ARC
- ★ **Agency Leader:** Abbie S. Fink, HMA Public Relations
- ★ **Agency Leader:** Kristi Piehl, Media Minefield
- ★ **Agency Leader:** Sarah Segal, Segal Communications
- ★ **Corporate Communications:** Stacey McCray, Bojangles
- ★ **Counselors to Higher Education:** Cassie Ann Kiggen, University of Georgia's College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences
- ★ **Crisis & Issues Navigator:** Kari Porter, Scout Lab
- ★ **Crisis & Issues Navigator:** Amber Roberts, Vested
- ★ **Industry Champion/Thought Leader:** Kimberly Eberl, The Motion Agency
- ★ **Industry Champion/Thought Leader:** Leah Gladu, KWI Communications
- ★ **Industry Champion/Thought Leader:** Tara McDonagh, Tara McDonagh Communications Inc.
- ★ **Industry Champion/Thought Leader:** Genna Rosenberg, GennComm
- ★ **Industry Champion/Thought Leader:** Rachel Rosenblatt, FTI Consulting
- ★ **Media Relations & Reputation Builder:** Ashley Bernardi, Nardi Media, LLC
- ★ **Mentor & Coach:** Kara Christ, CCS Fundraising
- ★ **Public Affairs & Government:** Brenda Duran, Los Angeles County Justice, Care and Opportunities Department
- ★ **Public Affairs & Government:** Natasha Hill, MBA, Tarrant Regional Water District
- ★ **Public Affairs & Government:** Keagan Lenihan, PMI U.S.
- ★ **Public Affairs & Government:** Katherine McLane, The MACH 1 Group
- ★ **Purpose & Community Impact:** Marian Salzman, PMI U.S.