

Self-Assessment Report

Introduction:

When it comes to planning any special event, every little detail matters in creating a day that will be remembered for the rest of one's life. As a Sales and Event Coordinator intern for weddings and special events at the Pittsburgh Marriott North in Cranberry Township, I learned the importance of managing and coordinating multiple projects to ensure that those memorable days. Academically, my extensive coursework in public relations has also allowed me to gain great understanding and appreciation for professional work in the field of public relations. Through my time at Slippery Rock, I have maintained two off campus part-time jobs. My jobs have taught me how to deal with a diverse range of customers, time-management skills and patients.

Personal Statement:

When I was a senior in high school, I had a big decision to make about what I wanted to do and where I wanted to go to college.

When I was much younger, I wanted to be an early education teacher. I love children and I thought that was what I wanted to do. I knew Clarion University was a respectable school that focused in education and because I wanted to venture out on my own, it was far enough away from my hometown, I could live there. So, Clarion University is where I ended up my first two years of college studying early education.

Two years into the program, I knew being an education major was not what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. The beginning of my second semester junior year, I was in a serious car accident traveling back up to Clarion after being home for the weekend; which required my being off for a semester to recover. After recovering from my injuries, I decided to take another semester off because I knew I didn't want to go back to Clarion and continue studying early education; that is when I looked into Slippery Rock for communications with an emphasis in public relations.

Now that I am a senior, I must say I am very happy that I have switched my major and chose Slippery Rock University to finish out my college career. I have excelled through my coursework and feel that I will benefit from a very rewarding career.

Degree Goals and Outcomes:

Goal #1: Possess knowledge of the discipline: history, theory, and practices

Knowledge upon entering the program:

Ever since I started working for the Pittsburgh Marriott North, I have been interested in event planning. I wasn't sure what was involved with public relations when first entering the program but I knew that event planning was a part of it so I went ahead and entered the program.

Knowledge upon exiting the program:

A. Knowledge of the history and evaluation of the public relations field

My first full taste of public relations was in the Introduction to Public Relations class my first semester at Slippery Rock. Through that course, I was able to gain the basic understanding of the history, terminology, and role in the field. This course also allowed me to develop skills in working with a group and a real client from Butler Health System.

A course in Mass Media and Society, my second semester, provided more knowledge of the historical development of technology, current structure and roles of traditional and up-and-coming media. During this course, I also learned about the financial, lawful and moral issues facing the media.

B. Knowledge of the motivation and persuasion theory

Persuasion was my first class at Slippery Rock University. During this course, I learned the perspectives and utensils of persuasion that can be utilized, morally and competently. I gained an understanding of the difference between persuasion and manipulation, in order to be ethical and moral when utilizing the persuasion tactics and methodologies during a campaign for a real life client, Adagio Health. After taking the course, I've learned how the process of persuasion works, and the association of persuasion to other structures of communication. I studied the methods, theories and ethical concerns about persuasion and applied them when doing the campaign.

C. Knowledge of communication theory

Communication Concepts was required for studying in Public Relations. The course introduced a summary of basic theories relating to the communication process.

The course introduced me to the study of rhetoric in Ancient Greece to contemporary departments of rhetoric in communication theory.

When learning the basic communication model, I was taught different ways in which messages were sent and decoded through listening and perception. I also learned about encoding messages through verbal and nonverbal communication.

D. Knowledge of contemporary issues influencing professional practice

Currently, public relations practitioners face the issue of keeping up with new technological advances and trends, such as social media and the trend of public relations reputation online.

During my senior year, I took a Social Media course. This taught me different ways an organization could use social media. By doing case studies in the class, it made me realize how important and how challenging social media is to an organization. I learned what a community was in social media and what it took to design and maintain a community for an organization. Additionally, public relations practitioners also face criticism about the industry's bad ethical reputation. It is very important to remember to follow the Public Relations Society of American Code of Ethics.

Communication Law was my most challenging communication courses during my senior year. But yet, it was one of the most beneficial core classes. I was taught about communication-linked laws concerning freedom of press, libel, copyright, invasion of privacy, and obscenity. Communication Law taught me law-related regulations, morals, and responsibilities that I need to carry on a communication in any organization.

Goal #2: Exhibit proficient communication skills relevant to the Public Relations and Business field

Knowledge upon entering the program:

When entering the Communication, public relations program, I had basic knowledge of PowerPoint presentations and business letter formatting. I was never exposed to any of the Adobe programs and had never written informal news articles or any public relations pieces, such as press releases or feature stories.

Knowledge upon exiting the program:

A. Demonstrate proficiency in producing various forms of written communication

In Public Relations Writing, my senior year, I developed my writing skills and expanded my ability to make decisions regarding gathering news worthy information. I also grew my knowledge of how to identify goals and objectives and how to create appropriate messages depending on the target audiences. I also improved my ability to edit and proofread press releases, feature stories, etc. I was able to learn how to generate different forms of written communication such as, brochures, advertisements, press releases, feature stories, and pitch letters, fact sheets, boilerplates, radio readers and media kits.

During Publication Production, I learned nonverbal aspects of print communication. By using graphs, charts, pictures and white space, these characteristics can enhance the communication process; therefore, teaching me that my learning extended beyond

efficiency to produce publications such as, business letters, business cards, brochures, newspaper trucks, advertisements, etc. using up to date Adobe InDesign software.

When taking News Writing, my junior year, the lessons educated me on the importance of writing techniques for the journalism field but also in public relations. I was taught how to correctly structure news stories by using the inverted pyramid, this was one of the more challenging core classes for me because I was not used to the different writing style and techniques but it became easier throughout the semester.

B. Demonstrating proficiency in producing and presenting forms of oral communication

I was required to give individual speeches in most of my core class such as, Communication Law, Persuasion, Communication Concepts and Publication Production. I participated in-group presentations in my core classes, such as: Organizational Communication, Public Relations Case Studies, Public Relations Campaigns and Integrated Marketing.

Public speaking was never one of my most favorite classes but when taking Public Speaking my freshmen year, it became a little easier. I was taught how to do informal speeches, formal speeches, and impromptu speeches, PowerPoint and how to use different graphs and charts when speaking.

Goal #3: Exhibit proficient Interpersonal communication skills: consensus, team building, listening, relationship building and maintenance

Knowledge upon entering the program:

Throughout high school, I learned how to work in small groups but never groups that needed to work together for a long period of time and when needed to accomplish large tasks for real life clients. When working in different groups for campaigns and projects, it allowed me to apply my skills much more, which was something that made me feel great after seeing the final product.

Knowledge upon exiting the program:

A. Demonstrate proficiency in interpersonal group relations skills

Being a Communication major, I learned that I would be assigned to a lot of group work because that is the type of work that will be in the professional workplace as a Public Relations Practitioner. Of course, with group work there are different conflicts that arise within the group but I was able to learn how to manage personality differences and always left the group feeling I had contributed everything I could.

One of my first larger group projects was in my Visual Literacy class. At the end of the semester we were assigned to a group of people who were not your “friends” in the class. We needed to create a visual catalogue representing the most important visual elements of a decade; our group was assigned the 1960’s.

As we got started on our group project, no one seemed to really understand the project and what needed to be done, so I stepped in as the 'project manager' position because I knew what needed to be done and had an idea for what we could do. I started redirecting the group, assigning each person a 'job' or part to research for the topic based on their interests as well as setting up meetings. I really enjoyed the role of project manager, and was able to pick up the slack from the other group members by being in charge of the completion and final visual representation of the materials.

Our group started to run into problems a few days before the entire project was due because two of the group members didn't do their assignments correctly so I stayed up one night to redo their parts and to make sure that we would get a good grade. I pulled the project together and we were able to accomplish everything and ended up with a perfect grade.

Another core class that required a great deal of group work was Public Relations Case Studies. Almost every week, I would be assigned to a new group where we had to develop and apply critical thinking skills through the examination of case studies. Our groups would observe how professionals in public relations solve different problems. We, then, were able to translate objectives into a campaign, specific to the week's case study. During this class, I had one of the most widespread learning experiences by staying involved and active throughout each case study and group. Not only did I have to apply a wide range of what I had learned through my studies but I also had to adjust to a different set of people each week.

Public Relations Campaigns, I must say, was the most centered on group performance. Public Relations Campaigns was a core class that gave me great and elaborate experience in conducting a campaign for a real life client, which was Conneaut Lake Park in Meadville, PA. I worked with a team of myself and four others. I took the role of the 'writer' in the group. My role was to develop different print materials for Conneaut Lake Park to use such as: press releases, feature stories, radio readers, advertisements, a fact sheet, etc. We had three different event proposals that included, a dog swim, the 25th anniversary of Camperland (in Conneaut Lake Park), and a Regatta. My responsibility was to create a media kit for each of the events.

Another course which was group oriented was Persuasion. As I previously stated, Persuasion was a core class where I learned different tools of persuasion that myself and four others utilized, morally and professionally, for a local client, Adagio Health. We applied different methodologies and tactics we learned in class to our event. I took the lead as 'project manager' for this group as well to develop a campaign that raised awareness of safe sex and letting students on campus know that Adagio Health is a planned parenting organization that helps both females and males.

Though, I did not have these two courses in the same semester, they both taught me time management and how to work well and contribute in group projects.

Goal #4 Demonstrate proficiency in the application of visual, audio and graphic design technologies relevant to the Public Relations field

Knowledge upon entering the program:

In high school, I was only taught how to use Microsoft Office and PowerPoint. I was really curious on how to develop well designed publications, but my high school never offered anything beyond basic Microsoft Office Suite.

Knowledge upon exiting the program:

A. Demonstrate proficiency in video/audio editing and storyboarding

My second semester at Slippery Rock University, I took an introductory to video production. I learned the technologies of single-camera production, which included, operation of audio and video recording equipment and techniques for composition and lighting. I also learned how to script write and direct. Along with directing, I learned how to edit a video and audio by using software called Final Cut Professional.

B. Demonstrate proficiency in computer/ new technology uses in Public Relations

Digital Imaging exposed me to a new program called Photoshop. It taught me the importance of visual aesthetics, composition, image layering, retouching a photo, spatial relationships digital painting, editing, color adjustment, image capturing, filtering and file formatting. I had a little difficulty with this course because I was used to InDesign but as we learned more about the electronically functions, I became more interested and it became easier. I gained a lot of hands-on experience with digital camera.

**Goal #5 Demonstrate proficiency in research and analysis relevant to effective
Public Relations message design**

Knowledge upon entering the program:

I had very minimal experience in conducting research prior to Slippery Rock University. In high school, I had to do a senior project which entailed some research but not extensive.

Knowledge upon exiting the program:

A. Demonstrate an appreciation of the theoretical grounding, limitations of an implementation techniques for Public Relations research

During my Communication Research Methods class, I acquired a much deeper understanding of the process of communication research that can be applied to public relations. Whereas in Communication Concepts, as previously discussed, it just introduced me to the communication process and overview of the different theories.

B. Demonstrate an appreciation for Research design and the basics of data gather: quantitative, qualitative, surveys, sampling and focus groups

When taking Public Relations Campaigns, although my job was not the researcher, I sat in on my group's focus group. I took notes and participated in conversation with our target audience to get as much information as possible.

In Communication Research Methods, I was given the opportunity, with a partner, to conduct research about whether or not children who attend preschool have advancements in their communication and social skills. I was able to develop quantitative and qualitative research to develop a full research report.

C. Demonstrate knowledge of industry standards in research software

When doing research for my Research Methods class, I was only familiar with the database at the university, but became more familiar with other modern research tools.

D. Demonstrate knowledge of the interpretation, analysis and presentation of research data

During my Research Methods class, after summarizing and analyzing our survey findings, my partner and I produced charts, graphs, and tables to add into our paper so the reader could visually see our findings.

E. Demonstrate proficiency in identifying, analyzing and targeting appropriate audiences for public relations messages

Although I did not necessarily put the focus group together for my group in Public Relations Campaign class, I helped with the conversation and getting our focus group to talk about the questions we had for them. I did have first-hand experience with survey research in my Research Methods class. Both of these experiences have given me the confidence to conduct a wide variety of research out in the professional world.

F. Demonstrate proficiency in the critical thinking and problem solving involved in developing strategies in Public Relations campaign

After working through two campaigns with Adagio Health and Conneaut Lake Park, I feel that I have developed a firm understanding and knowledge when working through problems in the field.

G. Demonstrate proficiency in employing research methods to assess the effectiveness of PR campaign strategies and messages

I have not measured the impact and output objectives during the campaigns for PR Campaigns and Persuasion but having taken PR Case Studies I was taught the procedure and tools that would be used to effectively assess the outcomes.

Goal #6 Possess knowledge of the values that inform the professional practice of Public Relations

Knowledge upon entering the program:

I had no knowledge of the values that inform the professional practice of public relations when I came to Slippery Rock University. I didn't know there were specific guidelines that a Public Relations practitioner needed to follow, nor did I know there was PRSA Code of Ethics that needed to be followed.

Knowledge upon exiting the program:

A. Possess knowledge of the legal considerations and constraints relevant to the professional practice of PR

During Communication Law, I learned about freedom of press, copyright, libel, invasion of privacy, regulations, obscenity, and ethics that an organization and communicator must sustain in the Communication field. After learning about all these issues, I feel that I have gained great knowledge that is relevant to my success in completing the course.

B. Possess knowledge of the Public Relations Society of America Code of Ethics, and the necessity of an ethical approach to the PR practice

Since I did not take Public Relations Writing until my senior year, I was first introduced to the PRSA code of ethics when I became a PRSSA member my first semester at Slippery Rock University. Members of PRSA pledge specific core principles, values and PR practice guidelines. Following the PRSA Code of Ethics, it will guarantee a PR practitioner success in the PR field.

C. Demonstrate knowledge of the manner in which intercultural issues and issues of diversity necessarily inform the professional PR practice

Organizational Communication allowed me to gain knowledge of organizational communication and how 'ranking' works within an organization. During this course, we had to analyze an organization, Slippery Rock Radio, and how they could improve their communication skills within their organization and what communication skills they already have well established.

Goal #7 Possess career awareness and proficiency in career skills related to Public Relations

Knowledge upon entering the program:

I had very little experience with the field and moral concern that practitioners in PR can be faced with when I came to Slippery Rock University. I knew and understood some of the social media and technology used within the field but not the regulations.

Knowledge upon exiting the program:

A. Possess knowledge of the business and organization considerations that influence that professional practice of PR which includes career development, self-assessment, professional portfolio, interviewing skills, and resume development.

I possess a greater understanding of Public Relations issues and the significance in the organizational and business world. As technology rapidly changes, the public relations field has and will continue to change as well.

Classes such as Introduction to Public Relations, Mass Media and Society, Persuasion and Public Relations Case Studies gave me a greater understanding of the unique questions PR practitioners can and will faced.

Throughout the development of my professional portfolio and my self-assessment report, I was able to go back and reflect on my two and a half year experience at Slippery Rock University. To help my career development, I was able to be critiqued on two mock interviews, one in junior seminar at the SRU's Career Services department and one in senior seminar with a PR practitioner from Duquesne.

Personal Goals:

Short-term goals:

I plan and have applied to various jobs around the Pittsburgh area with hopes to obtain an entry-level position in order to gain more knowledge and experience in the Public Relations field. I would like to work for a well-established company for a few years in the Pittsburgh area before heading off to New York City.

Long-term goals:

I would really enjoy moving to New York City and working for a PR firm there. I really enjoy the fast pace life-style and enjoy being in the city where there is a lot of action. But where ever I end up, I hope to use my creative writing skills, organizational skills and great experience.

Desired Entry-Level Job Skills and Qualities

Motivation (Skills Rating: 10):

I feel that I am easily motivated especially when it is something I enjoy so much such as, public relations writing and event proposals. I really enjoy working on event proposals because I get to be as creative as I want and my client request. Being creative really gets me motivated to do great things that I know I have the experience.

When writing feature stories, photo releases, etc. in PR writing, I also set to use my creative side and think of different things that could happen in real life. I feel that I

have learned a lot, have a wide variety of experience and confidence that an employer will be seeking.

Verbal Communication (Skills Rating: 9):

When it comes to public speaking and when I needed to take Public Speaking my first year of college, I did really well. In the PR field and taking all the required courses, public speaking became second nature to me because of all the presentations we, as a class, needed to give. I was never the presenter in any group, but I would have been if needed. I gave myself a 9 because there is always room for improvement.

Analytical Skills (Skills Rating: 9)

Research Methods gave me the skills necessary to research a topic and complete a full research paper and Organizational Communication gave me a better understanding of what goes on within an organization when it comes to communication. What different types of tools and methods they use.

Organizational Skills (Skills Rating:10):

Working a part-time job and being a nanny the two days I am not at school, gave me great organizational skills. It taught me how to work ahead, to complete assignments and to work effectively and on time. I have learned that by working and going to school full-time that it is necessary to possess planning skills as well as organizational skills.

Teamwork and Interpersonal Skills (Skills Rating: 10)

As I previously mentioned, there are a lot of group projects in the field of Public Relations. Working with different groups every week in PR Case Studies gave me great experience with handling different problems and different personalities on a weekly basis. Also, working on an entire campaign in PR Campaigns, gave me great experience when it came to communicating with the client as well as within the group for an entire semester. I learned the perks of working in a group and the hardships of working in a group but I will be able to use my interpersonal skills and teamwork skills in the workplace in the near future.