

**College of Journalism & Communications – Department of Public Relations**  
**Minutes of the April 28, 2015, Meeting**  
**Weimer Hall 2066 from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m.**

**Faculty members present:** Linda Hon, Kathleen Kelly, Deanna Pelfrey, Mary Ann Ferguson, Ann Christiano, Kay Tappan, Juan-Carlos Molleda, and Jasper Fessmann (doctoral student).

**Absent:** Moon Lee (excused because her daughter was sick)

Agenda Item	Discussion and/or action taken	Follow-up
1) Call to order	<p>Dr. Molleda called the meeting to order and asked for the approval of the minutes from the April 14, 2015 meeting. Faculty reviewed the minutes. A motion was made by Dr. Kelly and seconded by Prof. Pelfrey to approve the minutes. Faculty voted unanimously in favor of the motion. The minutes were approved.</p> <p>As the College representative to the UF International Council, Dr. Molleda shared with the faculty the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department of Housing has dedicated and furnished 16 apartments for international visiting scholars and visiting professionals. They have a cost and can be reserved for short stays (from two weeks up to three/four month). The apartments are conveniently located on campus and include all services and furniture. For reservations, please contact Robert W. Ostrow at 392-2171 ext. 10562 or <a href="mailto:Roberto@housing.ufl.edu">Roberto@housing.ufl.edu</a></li> <li>• Request to the College and Departments: The UFIC asks to all university units to request the international travel registration before approving an international travel authorization for faculty/staff going abroad on university/professional business. The registration provides free travel insurance that covers the repatriation of the traveler to the United States in case of an emergency. The international travel registration can be completed at <a href="http://www.ufic.ufl.edu/TravelRegistration.html">http://www.ufic.ufl.edu/TravelRegistration.html</a>. The UFIC will share best practices for the implementation of systems that allow for the enforcement of this important request.</li> </ul>	
2) A dialogue on the achievements and the strategic plan of the Public Interest	<p>Dr. Molleda introduced this item of the agenda by highlighting how the Public Interest Communication (PIC) program has achieved great importance for the College and the Department. He explained that this was a good opportunity to identify avenues to support the advancement of PIC scholarship and research agenda in relation to</p>	

Communication program.

the prominence of the public relations (PR) program, the experience of the faculty, and the common aspects and aims of PIC and PR.

Prof. Christiano then presented the achievements of the PIC program and future plans. She started by reminding the primary mandates/charges of the endowment: develop a curriculum, build professional community, and identify the science and scholarship that inform, define the field of study, and drive the practice. In terms of curriculum, a PIC undergraduate course has been taught since fall 2011, a PIC undergraduate certificate was approved in 2013 (it needs revisions because two core courses were eliminated during the College-wide curriculum development), and an online master's degree concentration will be developed in summer 2015. The professional community has been built through the "frank" gathering, training programs, and an interactive website and social media platforms. Frank 2015 gathered around 300 professionals and students and counted on around 200 volunteers. Finally, a paper/publication competition/prize and "frankology" are furthering the research/scholarship charge of the endowment. In addition, Prof. Christiano has co-authored a conceptualization paper about PIC with first-year doctoral student Jasper Fessmann, which would be submitted for consideration to the 2015 PRSA Educators Academy Super Saturday Conference.

Prof. Christiano and Fessmann argued that PIC is more like other disciplines of study (such as?) rather than a sub-field but that the public relations skill set is very similar to the skill set needed for the practice of PIC.

Faculty addressed the challenges of building and established a discipline/area of study as distinctive from other strategic/persuasive communication area. Faculty raised some fundamental questions such as:

- Dr. Kelly said that there is no current PIC scholar on board to create such a program at the graduate level; nor does PIC have any theories of its own yet. She also asked how does one conceptualize "good," which is at present an integral part of the definition of PIC?
- Dr. Ferguson asked how does PIC differ from non-profit public relations?
- Dr. Hon said that PRSA will inevitably ask how one distinguishes PIC from PR.

Faculty also provided the following insights and recommendations:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The conceptualization paper on PIC could analyze the comparison with the PR field of study as a continuum instead of a dichotomy. Given the neutrality of PIC and PR, this continuum may range from organizations-centered to public-community-centered approach. Also, in addition to addressing the relevant scholarship in sociology, psychology, and neurosciences; the paper could also include literature from communication (e.g., developmental communication or communication for development), journalism, public relations, corporate social performance, and interdisciplinary studies in corporate social responsibility and sustainability that focus on social change and community wellbeing.</li> <li>• The consideration of panels, research teams, edited books, and more conference papers to build a knowledge base that may result in the conceptualization and launching of an academic journal with the close collaboration between scholars and professionals.</li> <li>• The building of a new specialized field goes first before establishing an undergraduate or graduate curriculum and creating a professional accreditation or certification. For instance, the Associate Public Relations (APR) certification was only possible because of the existence of a published textbook of principles of PR.</li> <li>• The membership with the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA) could be considered to extend the reach of PIC to the professional and academic communities.</li> <li>• The development of case studies and their submission to competitions such as the PRSA Silver Anvil Awards may be advisable. The award has a “public service” category, which has archived 278 cases up to date.</li> </ul> <p>In conclusion, the faculty unanimously agreed that the intellectual conversation was helpful and should continue in future meetings, that a PIC research agenda should be developed with the contributions of professionals and scholars, that the dialogue about the PIC program is useful to debate the role of public relations for social change, that PR faculty expertise and academic experience could facilitate the development of PIC as a field of study, and that the intersection between PIC and PR could be further explore.</p>	
7) Old Business	None	
8) New Business	None	
8) Adjourn	Dr. Molleda adjourned the final meeting of the spring semester and wished faculty a happy and productive summer.	

**Respectfully submitted by Juan-Carlos Molleda on 4/30/15**