

PR UPDATE

The newsletter for AEJMC's Public Relations Division

Volume 59, No. 1 | January 2025



Winter Issue

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PR UPDATE

Vol. 59, No. 1; January 2025

Division Leadership

Head

Christopher McCollough

Jacksonville State

Vice-Head

Ioana Coman

Texas Tech

Vice-Head Elect

Virginia Harrison

Clemson

Immediate Past Head

Christopher Wilson

Brigham Young

PR UPDATE Staff

Editor

Jeffrey Ranta

Coastal Carolina

Associate Editors

Lois Boynton

UNC-Chapel Hill

Laura Lemon

Alabama

Chelsea Woods

Virginia Tech

PR UPDATE is published three times a year.

You can find past issues [here](#).

Please send all inquiries and contributions to jranta@coastal.edu

editor's note:

Jeffrey Ranta

Coastal Carolina



A message from the editor

Welcome to a New Year, a new semester, a new newsletter and a new frontier.

Here is hoping all of my PRD colleagues are off to a great start in 2025. It is my pleasure to offer this combination fall/winter newsletter.

Please pay particular attention to our Division Head's foreword that discusses some changes made at various levels of our division. Some of these changes will likely impact each of us so take some time to review Chris' information.

As I write this, I am excited and cautious about new possibilities in our field and the new advancements we are seeing, particularly in the adventure that is AI.

I am excited to see the results of the recent AI survey some of our PRD colleagues conducted recently. I am similarly intrigued by the recent NEJM publication entitled *The Promise and Perils of Autonomous AI in Science* by Gao & Harrison. NEJM AI 2025;2(1) DOI: 10.1056/AIe2401073. This hit my inbox on 12/16/24.

From a practical perspective, I was also very pleased to use a Stukent micro-certificate program in my PR principles class this past semester and I personally had mixed reviews of my own on AI's ability to produce quality PR content.

My university has been taking AI very seriously—like I am sure many of your institutions are. I and many of my faculty colleagues have been through one or more AI training sessions this past year to help us understand the promises and pitfalls of using these new generative applications. Some of the content you can create is simultaneously amazing and troubling at the same time.

Fortunately for the latter, during the fall 2024 semester, our university leadership saw fit to offer training to students as well during an AI week where students were acquainted with the benefits and problems in using generative AI. Many faculty were cautious,

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and others downright opposed to this approach of training students in the implementation of AI via course work and that debate is likely to continue for some time.

The AI training upside, from where I am sitting, is empowering faculty to understand AI, (whether we use it or not) so we can guide our students in its proper uses and capabilities. Training students through controlled, informed exposure can insulate them from plagiarism, accidental disinformation creation and loss of original thought.

One final word, please consider including the newsletter in all of your successes and victories this semester—we love celebrating your accomplishments with the newsletter--but we can't praise what we don't know.

Good luck this semester and I hope to see many of you in San Francisco in August.

Jeff Ranta

2025 AEJMC dates

March 7 - 8 | Midwinter Conference

<https://www.ou.edu/gaylord/news-events/events/aejmc-midwinter-conference>

March 13 - 15 | Southeast Colloquium

<https://tarheels.live/aejmcsoutheast2025/>

August 7 - 10 | AEJMC Conference

San Francisco

(Pre-conference Day is August 6)

<https://www.aejmc.com/home/events/annual-conference/>

October 7 | News Engagement Day

<https://www.aejmc.com/home/events/news-engagementday/>





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A message from the Division Head

Looking back on 2024, while pressing forward into 2025

Christopher J. McCollough

Jacksonville State

The fall/winter 2024-25 issue of the PRD newsletter offers us the chance to recognize the achievements of our colleagues in 2024, while talking a bit about some key changes to look forward to in 2025.

I'll begin by reiterating a thought shared shortly after the 2024 annual conference on my social channels in thanking our division membership for their efforts in delivering the 2023-2024 annual calendar to the membership. As a division, we have made a commitment to offering a year of services and programming that has value to members from all types of institutions and at every stage of their career. As in the past, our cohort of leaders in the division did not disappoint, and routinely delivered meaningful programming, and maintained an open dialog with the membership, setting a high bar for transparency we have aspired to as a division over the past several years. As you will read in this issue, we are already seeing some tremendous work from our main executive committees, which they are already reporting on. Please be sure and review to stay up to speed on our progress on your behalf.

Upon reflection, I think it important to note how admirably the newly reconstituted teaching committee, under the leadership of Amanda Weed (Kennesaw State University), made our third pillar comparably strong in balance with the traditional responsibilities of our research and professional freedom and responsibility committees. During the 2023-2024 year, they launched (1) a series of monthly sessions geared towards professional development for members looking to upskill in the classroom, (2) experimented with multiple forms of alternative content, (3) provided

additional counsel in concert with the research and professional freedom and responsibility committees, and (4) generally committed to an open mindset to attach their charge with creativity, experimentation, and courage to try anything of merit to see if it made sense for the PRD. The teaching committee was a distinctive group in that it maintained a large, engaged membership of 12, and consistently delivered each month. They set a remarkably high bar in year one of their new structure and charge, and I encourage this year's committee under the leadership of Kim Marks Malone (University of Memphis) to uphold the standard.

I would also like to take a moment to applaud the efforts of our outgoing division head, Christopher Wilson (Brigham Young University). A division head's responsibilities are diverse, and in many cases, a reflection of the adaptive nature of large, complex organizations. Chris's path to the division head's role required great flexibility, and demonstrated his poise and grace, which was a great compliment to his predecessor in the role. Chris provided a steady hand in maintaining much of the great work this division has engaged in the wake of the pandemic and in the aftermath and provided great service and support to the rest of us in the executive leadership team. Additionally, he closed his service cycle in September by performing our 5-year assessment, which drew strong praise from AEJMC's executive leadership. For any of us who have completed the 5-8 year service cycle of executive leadership, it is understood what I mean when I offer him hearty congratulations,

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my thanks, and wish him a peaceful and relatively uneventful return to the membership in the years ahead.

I also think it important to thank the network of volunteers and our dedicated staff of professionals organizing operations at AEJMC's home office in Columbia, South Carolina. We do not have an extensive network of professionals operating the association in Columbia, but the team provides operational support for both AEJMC and ASJMC's annual calendar, and they are supported by hundreds of graduate student and faculty volunteers each year in the process. I want to take this opportunity to thank them personally for those efforts in helping us have 5 solid days each August, in addition to supporting the annual execution of our charges.

Finally, in Council of Divisions, we have been asked to project an "Attitude of Gratitude" with each other and our body of volunteers and servant leaders in our respective divisions. I intend to observe this approach, and to ask each of you to embrace a mindset of prioritizing, "we over me" whenever possible when it comes to the robust body of work ahead for many of us in the division. I'd ask for patience, grace, and a sense of empathy for your peers doing the work this year.

As I turn my focus to the year ahead, I want to share my enthusiasm for my executive leadership team in welcoming Ioana Coman (Texas Tech University) and Virginia Harrison (Clemson University) as Vice Head and Vice Head-Elect, respectively. Their early efforts in setting the preliminary elements of the program and exploring early planning elements with me have been essential, and I look forward to the year ahead, and to seeing their work in executive leadership following my time as Division Head.

As we now look to the year ahead, I wanted to begin by discussing a couple of structural changes in leadership organization and the programming approach that we are exploring this year as a means to better serve the membership and improve on processes for membership. After conversing with members and hearing feedback on the 2023-2024 program year, the executive leadership team and I are working on the following changes:

The first change is to our virtual conference process that some of you may have already encountered in applying for panel considerations earlier this fall. There are several layers to this process. First, we have made both virtual conference roles (Chair and Vice Chair) permanent members of the research committee. After several years as an ad hoc committee under the stewardship of Richard Waters (University of San Francisco) and Geah Pressgrove (West Virginia University), it was clear we needed to provide them some well-deserved relief in the role and to make it an integrated part of our research production and presentation program. We owe much to them for the sustained success and interest the PRD has in the virtual conference, and it was clear we needed to make it a permanent offering. The move to align under the research committee not only institutionalized the virtual conference, but it also serve to provide built in review support from the research committee membership to support the virtual conference leadership during the fall swing of the annual calendar.

In addition to the alignment changes, we also determined it was worthwhile reorienting the virtual conference submission process with the AEJMC annual panel proposal process to guarantee a stronger offering from both programs. Moving forward, we will now offer the membership the elective opportunity to

A message from the Division Head

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have their panel proposals considered for the virtual conference if it is not selected in the executive review and negotiation process for the August program.

With the emergence of the virtual conference as a strong part of our annual program, the recent paneling process is one that made the choice to submit to the general conference or the virtual conference difficult for many members, and in some cases, left us with a weaker general conference slate in balance with some very strong, innovative offerings at the virtual conference. We believe this change will ensure a strong, balanced offering from both the virtual and traditional conference. Early returns from the process also indicated a stronger body of submissions for consideration in both the traditional AEJMC paneling and the virtual conference, and we look forward to sharing the slate of virtual conference offerings later on this winter with the membership.

Our second major change relates to how we engage with one of our long-standing partners, Edelman, while respecting and valuing the partnership. After years of offering the luncheon to a select group of 50 members who registered in varying methods, past and current leadership have heard from the membership, and wanted to make some changes to effectively address concerns related to (1) access to the content shared, and (2) fairness in access. Historically, we have attempted different paths to achieve fairness in registration to the event, but each left something to be desired. Some years, we held a lottery. Other years, it was on a first-come, first-served basis in response to a membership email. Inevitably, the demand for the event is always high, and the ability to guarantee registered members with equitable access to Edelman's annual presentation proved implausible.

Speaking with members at the 2024 conference and afterwards, we heard repeatedly about 20-year

members only being able to attend the luncheon for the first time this year, despite annual efforts to register, and the robust number of consistent attendees who are able to routinely make the list. In recent years, we have made the commitment as a division to serve the broadest base of our membership by making our offerings more readily accessible, both year-round and at the conference. Rather than press forward in an imperfect system, I have asked the executive team to work with me on a reformat of presentation that will guarantee the opportunity for PRD members to access the content Edelman brings us each year, by making it a dedicated part of our annual advertised programming at AEJMC in a panel format, rather than the luncheon of years past. Virginia, Ioana, and I are currently engaged with Edelman on the matter of format and consideration of repurposing their annual gift to provide sustainable benefit to our membership, moving forward. In reviewing the situation, we are excited about exploring the opportunity to make a benefit of membership previously exclusive to 50 members each year now more broadly accessible to our membership each conference.

As I come to the close on my first message to the PRD membership, I want to take a moment to thank the incoming team of leadership who will make up our 2024-2025 leadership group. The energy and interest to serve our membership and help us move forward is ample, and the diverse mix of perspectives promise to help us better represent the entire body of the PRD membership and provide a considerate approach in programming in the year ahead.

I'd like to welcome our 2023-2024 Committee Chairs: April Cen Yue (Research Committee Open, Student, and Special Awards Competition), Patrick

A message from the Division Head

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Merle (Virtual Conference Chair), Adrienne Wallace (Professional Freedom and Responsibility Committee), Kim Marks Malone (Teaching Committee), Tugce Ertem-Eray (Membership), Erika J. Schneider (Social Media Chair), Xi Liu & Feiyun Deng (Graduate Student Liaison Co-Chairs), Sun Young Lee

(Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair), Juan Liu (Inez Kaiser Graduate Student of Color Award Committee Chair), Nur Uysal (Susanne A. Roschwalb Grant for International Study and Research Committee Chair), Sarah Aghazadeh (Writing Support Group Chair), and Jeffrey Ranta (Newsletter Editor).

PR Division welcomes new executive leadership

The Public Relations Division welcomes Dr. Chris McCollough as the incoming head, Dr. Ioana Coman as vice-head, and Dr. Virginia Harrison as the vice-head elect.



Dr. McCollough is The Ayers Family Endowed Chair of Journalism and Mass Communication, a Professor of Advertising and Public Relations, and currently serves as the Department Head of Communication at Jacksonville

State University. His research blends the applied practice of public relations, particularly in the public and political sector, the teaching and learning of public relations, and various forms of impact on communities through the application of high-impact learning practices.

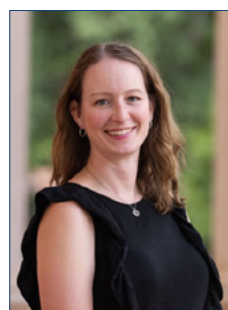
McCollough has served as chair of the Newsom and History paper competitions of the PRD, as the chair for the Teaching Committee, and as the chair of the Research Committee, before being elected to the Executive Leadership team as vice head in 2023-2024.



Dr. Coman is originally from Romania and is currently an assistant professor at Texas Tech University. Her research focuses on how different actors engage and interact in risk and crisis

communication situations via different platforms, within different contexts, such as health, terrorist attacks, disasters, climate change, and at different levels. She is also interested in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).

Coman has served as PRD secretary, member of the By-Laws Committee, chair of the DEI Committee, and chair of the Roschwalb Committee, before being elected to serve as vice head-elect in 2023-2024.



Dr. Harrison is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at Clemson University. She spent seven years in public relations and fundraising practice before entering the academy. Dr. Harrison's research centers around the concept of

stewardship, primarily in the context of nonprofit-donor relationships. She aims to better define, measure, and understand how stewardship plays a role in deepening donor engagement and to explore its value in other contexts with attention to ethical donor relations. Her secondary area of interest is better understanding how corporate social responsibility in sports impacts stakeholder relationships.

Harrison has a strong body of service in the PRD, including roles on the Graduate Student Liaison Committee, Professional Freedom and Responsibility, and Research Committees.

PRD membership 2024 survey: Reviewing member feedback and experiences

By **Tugce Ertem-Eray**, North Carolina State, **Yan Qu**, University of Maryland, **Angela Bradbery**, University of Florida

Every two years the AEJMC Public Relations Division (PRD) distributes a survey to gauge member perceptions of PRD programs and practices. The following is an overview of the results of the biennial PRD Membership Survey.

The most recent survey was distributed in November 2024, and participants ($N = 89$) were recruited via official AEJMC Public Relations Division communication channels including the official listserv and social media platforms. Data was collected anonymously, and all participants were current (or former) members of the AEJMC PR Division during the past three years.

Participants were primarily tenure-track and tenured professors ($n = 55$) working at institutions with balanced teaching and research expectations ($n = 34$). Participants were primarily White ($n = 49$) females ($n = 49$) who first joined the division between 2015-2022 ($n = 32$).

Table 1 provides a full breakdown of participant demographics.

Membership Experiences

The top two reasons participants cited for being a member of AEJMC PRD are: 1) to network with colleagues ($M = 4.20$, $SD = .92$) and 2) to stay informed about PR scholarship ($M = 4.20$, $SD = .83$)¹.

¹ Likert-type items used 5-point scales ranging from (1) strongly disagree/very unsatisfied to (5) strongly agree/very satisfied. Participants were also posed with open-ended questions to better understand their experiences in the division.

Table 1. Participant demographics

Demographics	Variables	N	%
Academic Rank	Doctoral Student (not ABD)	1	1.3
	Doctoral Candidate	5	6.3
	Adjunct Instructor	1	1.3
	Full-time Instructor	4	5.1
	Lecturer	2	2.5
	Tenure-track Assistant Professor	10	
	Tenured Associate Professor	21	
	Tenured Full Professor	24	
	Other	11	
Institution Type	Teaching	23	
	Research	18	
	Balanced	34	
Gender	Male	23	
	Female	48	
	Prefer not to identify	6	7.8
Race	African American/Black	6	8.5
	Asian	12	
	Caucasian/White	49	
	Hispanic/Latino	1	1.4
	Other	3	4.2
First Joined PRD	1965-1974	1	1.3
	1975-1984	4	5.3
	1985-1994	2	2.6
	1995-2004	9	
	2005-2014	28	
	2015-2022	32	

PRD membership 2024 survey

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Participants' membership experiences are overall positive (responses falling between 'neutral' to 'agree'). The areas that received the highest scores are the promotion of an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.11$) and the satisfaction with their membership ($M = 3.79$, $SD = .94$). The area that received the lowest score is the importance of membership for their career development ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.02$).

In recent years, the division has made a concerted effort to increase its outreach on social media and virtual event options. On average, participants are most satisfied with the in-person communication (e.g., conference events, socials, etc.) ($M = 3.97$, $SD = .76$), listserv ($M = 4.01$, $SD = .87$), and video conference system (e.g., Zoom, Webex, etc) ($M = 3.73$, $SD = .81$).

When asked to provide additional comments about member experiences with the PRD, various comments applauded the networking opportunities, events, and staying current with the PR scholarship. However, concerns were also acknowledged. For example, participants indicated that they would like to see more awards, published research articles in the journals, more information for opportunities for engagement, and greater efforts in reaching out to non-tenure-track faculty and faculty from smaller programs. Some also mentioned that the dues are expensive compared to other divisions.

Division Programming

On average, participants seemed pleased with the quality of PRD programming. Participants were satisfied with the annual conference submission process ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .79$) and the quality of content in PR sessions and panels ($M = 3.77$, $SD = .97$). However, they neither agreed nor disagreed about the

quality of reviews for the research competition ($M = 3.41$, $SD = .91$) and the teaching competition ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .93$).

Regarding members' views on different PRD events, participants are most satisfied with the Annual PRD Virtual Conference ($M = 3.98$, $SD = .89$). Additionally, participants are generally satisfied with the Annual PRD Social ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .77$), Bill Adams/Edelman Luncheon ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .89$), and the Offsite Tour ($M = 3.77$, $SD = .88$).

Next, participants indicated their satisfaction with the PRD grants and awards. They are most satisfied with the Doug Newsom Award for Global Ethics and Diversity ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .93$).

Paper Submission Feedback

When evaluating the quality of reviews, participants' responses fell between "neutral" and "satisfied" (on a five-point Likert scale) with the submission process ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .79$), quality of reviews for the research competition ($M = 3.41$, $SD = .91$), quality of reviews for the teaching competition ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .93$), and quality of content in PR sessions and panels ($M = 3.77$, $SD = .97$). About 88% ($n=78$) of participants planned to submit a paper to the 2025 AEJMC conference in San Francisco, and 38 of them plan to attend the conference assuming their paper gets accepted.

Division Publications

On average, participants seemed satisfied with the PRD publications. When asked to provide additional comments about publications, participants indicated that the *Journal of Public Relations Research* runs too few articles and tends to publish more quantitative research than qualitative research.

PRD membership 2024 survey

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Conclusion

In general, the PRD appears to be serving member needs. Members are pleased with the supportive environment, division resources, and programming.

However, there still exist opportunities to improve ongoing efforts. Based on survey feedback, the division and its committees are looking for opportunities to continue strengthening our offerings to the division.

As the division continues working for its members and colleagues, here are some resources to get involved with the division:

- AEJMC's Community site: <https://community.aejmc.org/publicrelationsdivision/home>
- Members are encouraged to sign up for the PRD listserv: <https://community.aejmc.org/publicrelationsdivision/publications/listserv>
- Connect with the PRD through [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter \(X\)](#) to receive the latest news and event announcements

Social media committee update

When you think of AEJMC, the annual conference in August might be the first thing that comes to mind. However, PRD members contribute extensively throughout the year, from semesters of service and virtual conferences to workshops, writing groups, and so much more. Our committee is fortunate to work with outstanding leaders and help build an online community around this programming dedicated to the PR practice and education.

- X: https://x.com/AEJMC_PRD
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AEJMCPRD>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/aejmcpd>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/aejmc-prd>
- Blog: <https://community.aejmc.org/publicrelationsdivision/home>

Since September 2024, social media mentions of AEJMC PRD have shown trends in the hashtag #PRProfs, member spotlights, and GIFT resources. Posts that include links to our blog have been

successful, which shows us that members have engaged with our CTAs. A special shout-out to our top influencers on X: Cara Hawkins-Jedlicka (@carabyrd), Will Mari (@willthewordguy), Dr. Kate (@thekatestewart), and our friends at @AEJMC. Thank you for helping us expand our community!

Our online community is most active on X but considering changes in user experience, we have seen users increasingly explore platforms like Threads, BlueSky, and Mastodon. That made us curious: If you were to leave X, which alternative platform would you consider joining? Take a look at what our X community thinks in a December 2024 [poll](#).

In 2025, we look forward to promoting the PRD virtual conference, the AEMC 2025 annual conference, calls for awards and grants, and other contributions from our members. If you have news to share, send us a message. Our committee includes Erika Schneider (Chair), Jin Chen (Vice Chair), Yoorim Hong, Teresia Nzau, Jeong Yang, Victoria Kyriakopoulos, Keonyoung Park, and Courtney Boman.

Building bridges: Networking tips for PRSSA faculty advisers

By **Breann Murphy**, Jacksonville State,
PRD Teaching Committee

In the most recent [CPRE Report \(2023\)](#), it stresses how educators and practitioners should collaborate to bring experiential learning opportunities to students to better prepare them for the industry. Experience in professional organizations provides important hands-on learning opportunities for students, such as developing industry connections and gaining essential skill sets. When it comes to the public relations industry, students must be equipped to succeed in a fast-paced, ever-evolving landscape. Therefore, participation in student organizations, like the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), becomes a valuable resource to help students prepare for this industry.

According to the [National PRSSA Chapter Handbook](#), faculty advisers serve as the bridge between the students and their PRSA network. In this role, faculty advisers must wear many hats. They set the professionalism tone for the chapter by being a motivator for their students and serving as a communicator between the chapter, university, and sponsoring PRSA chapter.

To perform these duties, faculty advisers must make the most of their professional and academic resources. However, not all PRSSA chapters have access to sufficient financial support or resources, such as those at smaller regional or teaching-focused institutions. As a result, faculty advisers must be creative in how they can maximize their networks to provide students with industry-current experience. For this reason, PRSSA faculty advisers must build bridges and make valuable connections. The following networks can serve as crucial sources for PRSSA programming:

- **Your Sponsoring PRSA Chapter.** While not all PRSSA chapters have access to a local or state sponsoring PRSA Chapter, those that do should use it. Many PRSA members want to help or mentor students. Faculty advisers should lean into it and reach out to them or ask them to be guest speakers or consultants on student projects. Bring students to PRSA chapter meetings or networking events. Additionally, faculty advisers should consider joining the board of directors for their affiliated sponsoring PRSA Chapter. While it adds to a faculty adviser's workload or time commitment, this service can help be a bridge between your PRSSA chapter and a broader professional network, increasing engagement with local or regional PRSA members. Sponsoring PRSA Chapter members can also act as great professional advisers for any PRSSA chapter.
- **Your Alumni.** Alumni have some of the strongest ties to your university and enjoy giving back to their former community. Furthermore, PRSSA alumni can be essential resources for guest speakers for chapter meetings to encourage students about the benefits of this professional student organization and how being a PRSSA member helped their careers. These alumni can make supportive or enthusiastic professional advisers as well since they already have a connection and sense of pride for your community. So, connect with them on LinkedIn, if you haven't already.
- **Your Local Community.** Networking within your PRSA/PRSSA association is crucial but connecting with community members is just as valuable and important. When considering hands-

Building bridges: Networking tips for PRSSA faculty advisers

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on learning experiences for PRSSA students, local, small businesses or nonprofits can serve as sources for community service or industry practice. You can build a clientele and have your PRSSA students participate in logo or branding competitions for one of these businesses or nonprofits. Also, remember your local community includes on- and off-campus connections. Learn the strengths or interests of your PRSSA members and find where they can use their talents and skills to help benefit the community, whether it be through graphic or multimedia design, outreach programming, or professionalism workshops.

- **Your Fellow Faculty Advisers.** Every PRSSA chapter is different, although many struggle with the same challenges, including program variety and membership recruitment. Other faculty advisers can serve as a bridge for inspiration or advice. Make connections with them, especially those at similar-sized institutions, and ask what

works for their chapter to bring fresh ideas back to your students. You can also connect with other faculty advisers by following the [Faculty Advisers for PRSSA Chapters Facebook Group](#), attending the Faculty Adviser Buzz Sessions, hosted by Ken Hagihara, the PRSSA National Faculty Adviser, or exploring other chapters in the [PRSSA Directory](#).

In general, being a faculty adviser can be challenging, especially when access to financial support or resources is limited. However, it can also be rewarding. When you make the most of these networks, it can help lead to innovative programming and industry-current experiences for PRSSA members. So, build bridges and grow your network. A new idea or connection could be waiting on the other side.

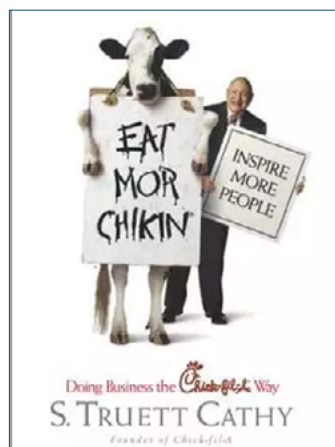
If you have any questions about PRSSA, you can reach out to our [AEJMC PRD Teaching Committee](#), as many of our members have served as PRSSA faculty advisers.

What's on my coffee table?

By **Jeff Ranta**, Coastal Carolina

What is on my coffee table? *EAT MOR CHIKIN: Inspire More People Doing Business the Chick-fil-A Way*.

This edition of the newsletter we are featuring a tasty morsel of management inspiration



EAT MOR CHIKIN: Inspire More People Doing Business the Chick-fil-A Way, (EMC). The book is written by the organization's founder S. Truett Cathy and published by Looking Glass Books in Decatur, Georgia. It is a small, 200-page book that chronicles the CFA founder's journey to becoming one of the premier quick service food chains in the United States.

Suitable for managing one's own aspirations, polishing your servant leadership skills, or use as an extended case study example in PR or communication

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What's on my coffee table?

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management classes, the book is an easy, inspiring read that explains the history of Chick-fil-A (CFA) one of the fastest growing, and sometimes controversial, quick service restaurant franchises in the country.

(In terms of current sales, according to the Franchise Times online, the CFA franchise made \$22 billion in systemwide sales in 2023, making it the 6th largest franchise in the country and 4th in terms of quick service restaurants behind McDonald's, KFC and Burger King respectively.* Franchise Times also reports the individual sales per unit of CFA exceeded \$9.4 million annually.**)

Written in 2002 when Cathy was 80 years old (Truett Cathy passed away at age 92 in 2014) *EMC* is a bit dated in its language and metaphors, but it chronicles, in very interesting terms, how Cathy and his family established the framework for a highly successful and resilient restaurant model.

Throughout its 16 chapters the author discusses everything from his beginnings as a paper boy to his philosophies about customer service, employee loyalty and managed expansion. Especially refreshing is Cathy's transparencies about both his victories and his setbacks.

EMC also talks about the origins of the CFA cows as advertising icons and the associated promotions and outreach the characters do for customer expansion and promoting the brand. Another CFA-themed book that offers more of an inside look at the CFA Cows campaign is *Covert Cows and Chick-fil-A: How Faith, Cows and Chicken Build and Iconic Brand* written by a former CFA Marketing Officer Steve Robinson.

From a managerial perspective, *EMC* offers some insights into the CFA operator selection process and

the associated Franchisee Operators' tenets that, according to Cathy, have not been changed since 1967:

- People want to work with a person, not for a company.
- Each new operator is committed to a single restaurant.
- Operators will hold no outside employments or other business interest.
- We choose Operators for their ability and their influence, so we want them in their restaurants.
- We expect quality interaction between Operators and team members
- We expect quality interaction between Operators and customers, both in the restaurant and in the community.

From a strategic communication perspective *EMC* also drills down on the importance of customer relations, and the need to serve people not just through food but through compassion and philanthropy. A robust example and advocate of servant leadership, Cathy provides discussion about his desire to help destitute children through his WinShape (shaping winners) Foundation. These efforts include assistance with adoption services, support of group homes, foster homes and a partnership with Berry College in Rome, Georgia.

In addition Cathy also talks about how he rewards his own employees with college scholarships for their hard work and donates meals to those with food insecurity. According to the Chick-fil-A web site***, since 1973 CFA has donated more than \$191 million to college and training scholarships to help 151,000 employees under their Chick-fil-A Remarkable Futures scholarships. Similarly the CFA company, through its franchises donated more than 30 million meals under

What's on my coffee table?

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their Chick-fil-A Shared Table program to help fight food insecurity.

Cathy reflects on his own life of poverty prior to becoming the humble but very successful founder of the CFA concept and franchise. He talks about how his faith informs all of his decisions, along with a desire to be a person of authentic experience and integrity. The book is refreshing in its humility and stories of resilience and is sure to not only inspire others but also challenge those inspired to continue inspiring others.

Lastly the book focuses on the ability to manage anxiety and worry by “giving things back to God.” One of his most interesting examples of this is when Cathy was finding it very hard to manage two of his dwarf house restaurants (where the iconic CFA sandwich was invented). But by giving up the worrying and anxiety for the restaurants he was able to sleep at night and manage the subsequent loss and rebuilding of one of the sites due to a fire.

In closing, CFA's policies and its founder's decisions are both based on outwardly visible Christian principles that translate into community service and its decision to remain closed on Sundays. It is in this spirit that the late president Jimmy Carter someone who similarly claimed this orientation, and a fellow Georgia native endorsed Cathy's book back in 2002.

“Truett Cathy's commitment to principles has enabled him to achieve both spiritual and financial prosperity. In *Eat Mor Chikin: Inspire More People* he tells how this simple philosophy led him to become a mentor and role model to young people, a customer-oriented restaurateur; a community leader and

philanthropist. It is one of the most remarkable stories of our time.”

EAT MOR CHIKIN: Inspire More People Doing Business the Chick-fil-A Way can be purchased for \$5 and up from Amazon or eBay. It is important to note that Cathy has also written several additional books about his experiences founding and leading the very successful CFA franchise.

References:

* [Franchise Times Top 400 Ranks the Biggest Brands in Franchising](#)

** [Chick-fil-A Tops \\$21 Billion in Systemwide Sales as Unit Volumes Hit \\$9.4 Million](#)

***<https://www.chick-fil-a.com/>

From the Editor:

If you have a book or other reading that you think would interest the members of the AEJMC PRD, please feel free to reach out with a review for our “On my coffee table” segment.

Email: jrant@coastal.edu

Journal of Public Relations Education updates

By **Adrienne A. Wallace**, Editor-in-Chief

[The Journal of Public Relations Education \(JPRE\)](#) would like to thank our esteemed [Editorial Review Board](#) (ERB) for their time on task and high-quality reviews, which improve the state and prestige of public relations pedagogy research. The [ERB page](#) will be updated in the upcoming weeks to reflect new, returning, and retiring members.

In 2024, two new sponsored and named awards joined the *JPRE* family. It's with our profound gratitude that we introduced The Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication Top Ethics in PR Pedagogy Award and the Stan Richards School of Advertising & Public Relations – Moody College, UT Top Quality Reviewer Award. These awards join the Chuck Lubbers Award for Pedagogical Research and will be issued annually at the AEJMC Conference in August. If you missed the business meeting in August, you can find our annual report which lists the winners [here](#). Do you want to sponsor a named award? Message: jpre@gvsu.edu and let us know.

We are a journal that is 100% volunteer-powered, and our needs fluctuate over time. As such, I'm pleased to welcome to the *JPRE* editorial board of directors Assistant Editor - Style: [Drew Ashby-King](#), Ph.D., Eastern Carolina University, who will aid Luke Capizzo (Michigan State University) in all things APA.

Year-two priorities for this *JPRE* team include:

- A special issue related to graduate education (Eds: Bourland-Davis, Lubbers, Kinsky & Wallace)
- A special issue led by our graduate student committee
- Incorporating reviewer training for graduate students

- SCOPUS/CrossRef indexing
- DOI registry
- Further diversification of ERB
- Investigation into a formalized publisher relationship

Please extend a hearty thank you to the following good folks who keep the publication in sound working order for pedagogy researchers:

- Senior Associate Editor - Christopher McCollough, Ph.D., Jacksonville State University
- Associate Editor – Style - Luke Capizzo, Ph.D., APR., Michigan State University
- Associate Editor - Layout Design & Web - Amanda Weed, Ph.D., Kennesaw State University
- Associate Editor – Book/Resource Reviews - Jiun-Yi (Jenny) Tsai, Ph.D., Northern Arizona University
- Assistant Editor – Digital Media - Kate Stewart., Jacksonville State University
- Assistant Editor – Layout Design Support - Haley Higgs, Ph.D., Georgia Southern University
- Assistant Editor - Style - Drew Ashby-King, Ph.D., Eastern Carolina University

You're invited to submit your pedagogy-related manuscripts, teaching briefs, and/or book/technology reviews to the journal in 2025. Please review [the guidelines](#) prior to submission.

Our final issue of 2024 [dropped at the end of December](#).

Congratulations to the 2024 Public Relations Division paper award winners

Top Open Competition Papers

First Place:

The Role of CDR Communication Strategy in Building Trust in Gen AI through Perceived Ethics

Joon Soo Lim, Syracuse

Chunsik Lee, North Florida

Donghee Shin, Texas Tech University

Junga Kim, North Florida

Jun Zhang, Middle Tennessee State University

Second Place:

Leveraging Artificial Intelligence–Powered Chatbots for Nonprofit Organizations: Examining the Antecedents and Outcomes of Chatbot Trust and Social Media Engagement

Yang Cheng, North Carolina State

Yuan Wang, City University of Hong Kong

Third Place:

Examining USAID’s Strategic Communication for International Development in Post-Ebola Liberia

Elinam Amevor, Pittsburgh—Bradford

Top Student Papers

First Place:

Cultural Tightness and Public Assessment of Corporate Social Advocacy Legitimacy: An Exploratory Study

Dongqing Xu, Geyi Wang, Hui Shi, and Xinyu Zhao, University of Miami

Second Place:

Perception of Ethicality of CSA on Employees’ Acceptance of Diversity and Advocacy: The Role of CSA Positive Emotional and Perceptions of Organization Fit

Xinyu Zhao, University of Miami

Third Place:

Assessing the Impact of AI-PR Adoption on Mutuality, Openness, Trust and Satisfaction in Kenya

John Maina Karanja, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Top Teaching Papers

First Place:

Role-play-based gamification in the use of guest speakers: A Disney-inspired approach for student learning

Angela Mak, Hong Kong Baptist

Second Place:

The Kids Are Alright: Examining How U.S. Public Relations Students Ethically Navigate Artificial Intelligence

Alec Tefertiller, Rosalynn Vasquez, and Matthew Brammer, Baylor University

Third Place:

Exploring Key Drivers for Embracing Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations Pedagogy

Imran Mazid, Adrienne Wallace, Sera Choi, and Jin Chen, Grand Valley State

2024 Public Relations Division paper award winners

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Top GIFT

Creating a Prompt Library: Applying Generative AI Skills to Public Relations Practice

Pauline Howes, Kennesaw State

DEI Award

The employee's influence: How downward social comparisons are impacting the leadership of women CCOs

Breann Murphy, Jacksonville State

Museum of Public Relations History Award

Networking globally: The International Peace Movement's use of public relations in the 19th century

Tyler Page, Connecticut

Edward E. Adams, Brigham Young

Wenqi "Marcus" Wu, Connecticut

Newsom Award

Globalization and MNO Prosocial Communication in Public Relations:

Perspectives from Bangladesh, Botswana, Indonesia, and Kenya

Jeannette Iannacone, Tennessee

Drew Ashby-King, East Carolina

Teresia Nzau, **Boitshepo Balozwi**, Missouri

Habib Mohammad Ali, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh

Irmawan Rahyadi, Bina Nusantara University

Edelman luncheon update: Proposed changes to serve more members

The executive team and division leadership have been discussing the possibility of providing the traditional Edelman luncheon content in a different format this year. Demand has far outstripped capacity at the 50-person luncheon, with spots often filling in 15-



2024 Edelman luncheon

20 minutes. Additionally, we receive consistent feedback on our membership surveys about members' disappointment in missing this luncheon and frustration with the first-come, first-served sign-ups. We want to make sure everyone who wants to attend has access to hear from Edelman experts.

To this end, we are working to convert this event to a regularly scheduled panel presentation at the conference, pending Edelman approval. This would make the panel open to anyone in attendance at the conference.

We are also considering ways to make the content from the presentation available to PRD members who cannot attend the conference.

Edelman provides a generous donation to support the luncheon. If we move forward with the new format, we will ask Edelman to repurpose the donation toward something directly benefiting PRD membership (for example, travel grants or graduate student scholarships).

Note that we are still in the process of working with Edelman to approve any changes. If you have any ideas for expanding access to the Edelman lunch at the 2025 conference, please email Vice Head-Elect, Virginia Harrison at vsharri@clemson.edu.

2025 James E. Grunig and Larissa A. Grunig Outstanding Thesis and Dissertation Awards

Public Relations Division, International Communication Association

Submission Deadline: February 1, 2025

Submission Requirements

To enter the master's thesis/doctoral dissertation competition, please submit two electronic copies (one with a cover page and one without) of a 30- or 40-page manuscript, typed, double-spaced, based on the thesis/dissertation. The page limit is for manuscript text only and excludes the cover page, the abstract and keyword page, references, charts, figures and appendices. File format should be PDF.

- The manuscript and all supplemental materials must be written in English and in APA style (the 7th edition).
- The manuscript text must be carefully edited to conceal the identities of the author, his/her institutional affiliations, and the thesis/dissertation advisor. Make sure that the name and institution of the author are not shown in the "properties" section of the PDF file.
- The content of the manuscript should be derived from the thesis/dissertation and cannot go beyond it.
- The manuscript must include an abstract, introduction, literature review/conceptualization, method, findings, and discussion of the significance of the findings for public relations scholarship.
- The cover page should include (1) current contact information and affiliation of the author, (2) a statement specifying if the manuscript is intended for a master's thesis award or a doctoral dissertation award (i.e., "For consideration for the Master's Thesis Award or Doctoral Dissertation Award"), (3) master's thesis/doctoral dissertation manuscript title, (4) date of master's thesis/doctoral dissertation defense, (5) university where master's thesis/doctoral dissertation was defended and

degree awarded, and (6) contact information of the master's thesis/doctoral dissertation advisor.

- The abstract and keyword page should include a structured abstract of the master's thesis/doctoral dissertation, within 250 words, and up to 5 keywords. The structured abstract should encompass (1) purpose, (2) design/methodology/approach, (3) findings, (4) originality, and (5) theoretical and practical/social implications.
- The appendix section (appendices) must not exceed 10 pages.

Submission Link

Complete your submission at <https://hkbu.questionpro.com/2025grunigawards>

Submission Deadline

The deadline for submitting manuscripts for this competition cycle is February 1, 2025, by 11 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. All materials must be received by this date and time. Award aspirants are requested not to submit full theses and dissertations to the awards chair and not to submit materials without first ensuring that they comply with ALL the submission requirements. Submissions that fail to conform to the requirements will be automatically disqualified.

Judging

All manuscripts submitted for the awards will be subject to double-blind review by the Awards Committee comprising 5 or 7 members of the ICA Public Relations Division. The awards selection criteria are as follows:

- (1) Is this work an example of outstanding scholarship in public relations based on its theoretical framework, methodological rigor, and impact?

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2025 James E. Grunig and Larissa A. Grunig Outstanding Thesis and Dissertation Awards

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(2) Does this work make an important contribution to public relations scholarship as we continue to develop the body of knowledge in our field?

(3) Does this work have the potential for being considered a “foundational work” that lays the groundwork for a fertile stream of scholarship, whether for this author or other scholars to come?

Chair, Grunig & Grunig Thesis/Dissertation Awards Committee

Regina Chen, Ph.D.
School of Communication
Hong Kong Baptist University
Email: yrchen@hkbu.edu.hk

2025 AEJMC First Amendment Award: Call for nominations

Deadline is Feb. 15, 2025

The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) is seeking nominations for the AEJMC First Amendment Award.

The AEJMC First Amendment Award recognizes individuals or organizations who demonstrate a strong commitment to freedom of the press and who practice or support courageous journalism. Created in 2006, the award is presented by AEJMC’s Professional Freedom & Responsibility Committee.

Previous recipients of the AEJMC First Amendment Award are: Errin Haines and the Staff of The 19th (2024); Margaret Sullivan, The Guardian (2023); Steven Waldman of Report for America (2022); Omar Jimenez of CNN (2021); Shane Bauer of Mother Jones (2020); Nikole Hannah-Jones of the New York Times Magazine (2019); Ronan Farrow of the New Yorker and Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey of the New York Times (2018); The Pulitzer Prizes (2017); Reporters Without Borders (2016); Floyd Abrams (2015); Joel Simon of the Committee to Protect Journalists (2014); the First Amendment Center (2013); Carole Simpson (2012); Michael Kirk of Frontline (2011); Nat Hentoff

(2010); Seymour Hersh of the New Yorker (2009); Clarence Page of the Chicago Tribune (2008); Helen Thomas of UPI and Hearst (2007); and Molly Ivins (2006).

Nominations require only the following:

- The name and affiliation of the nominee
- A supporting statement of no more than 200 words explaining why the person or organization deserves consideration for this award

(Note that AEJMC members are not eligible to receive this award.)

To receive the award, the nominee must be available to attend the AEJMC annual conference and speak about the work being recognized.

Nominations are due on or before 5 p.m. EST, Feb. 15, 2025, to Meg Heckman, Northeastern University, at m.heckman@northeastern.edu. Please address any questions to Heckman.

The PF&R Committee will select the recipient, and the award will be presented at a session during AEJMC’s 2025 Annual Conference in San Francisco.

Member shout-outs

Alice Cheng

North Carolina State University

The membership committee is excited to recognize Dr. Alice Cheng (NC State University) for her groundbreaking contributions to the field of communication and artificial intelligence.

Recently, Dr. Cheng secured a prestigious grant for the project “Embedding AI in Society Ethically (EASE) Center,” funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Her extensive academic background, including a Ph.D. from the Missouri School of Journalism and an MBA from the Crosby program, highlights her commitment to excellence.

As an associate professor at NC State University, Dr. Cheng has not only taught a diverse range of courses but has also published over 150 influential works in top-tier journals or national conferences, demonstrating her dedication to scholarly rigor and innovation.

Moreover, Dr. Cheng’s role as Principal Investigator for research funded by prestigious institutions, amounting to nearly \$2 million, showcases her leadership and expertise in exploring critical issues such as global public relations and corporate social responsibility. Her recognition through numerous awards, including the University Faculty Scholar title and multiple Top Paper Awards, reflects the impact and originality of her research.

Dr. Cheng’s service on editorial boards and advisory committees further illustrates her commitment to shaping the future of communication studies. Her impressive achievements inspire both her students and colleagues, making her an invaluable asset to the academic community.



Heidi Wilson

Newberry College

I recently self-published the second edition of my eBook titled *Navigating Public Relations for Your Business*. While working with students in the classroom, I noticed that they could really relate to the material when I invited practitioners to speak. I then decided to write a book from a practitioner’s perspective that includes a conversational tone, practice exercises, and real life scenarios. This is a great resource for an Introduction to Public Relations course. Please contact me for additional information about the book!



Email: hwilsonpublicrelations@gmail.com

Twitter (X): @HeidiWilsonPR

Share your achievements!

We are looking for:

- Publications or books you have published
- New or innovative teaching/instruction you have piloted
- Examples of unique or exceptional service
- Presentations or other prestigious achievements
- Anything else relevant you want to share

To participate please email Jeffrey Ranta (jranta@coastal.edu) the following information:

1. Name, position/title, and organization
2. What you did (include title(s) in APA style; relevant dates; other information)
3. Your contact information
4. A photo or examples of your work if you wish

Position announcements

Following are some select positions being advertised for employment. If you have positions you wish to share inviting new colleagues to join your institution, please feel free to forward them to jranta@coastal.edu for publication in our next newsletter.

Tenure-Track Faculty Position, Associate Professor/Professor – Social Scientist

Pennsylvania State University

The Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications at Penn State seeks an outstanding faculty member for a tenure-track position at the Associate Professor or Professor rank. We seek a social scientist employing quantitative/computational or mixed methods to conduct empirical research on the psychological processes and effects of engaging with AI-based media and communication. This position's tenure home will be in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications and will also involve a joint position in Penn State's Institute for Computational and Data Sciences (ICDS). The specific department within Communications will be determined upon appointment for the successful candidate, based on their teaching experience and interests.

Review of applications will begin January 24th, 2025, and will continue until the position is filled.

Apply online at <https://apptrkr.com/5885977>

Tenure-Track, Assistant Professor of Mass Communication – Public Relations

University of North Alabama

The Department of Communication at the University of North Alabama is seeking a dynamic and experienced individual to join our faculty for a tenure-track, Assistant Professor position in Mass Communication – Public Relations, beginning in August 2025. This is a nine-month appointment, with an opportunity for teaching in the summer based on departmental need. The successful candidate will demonstrate a strong commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and service.

The standard teaching load is twelve (12) credit hours per semester. Experience in online teaching or a willingness to learn how to develop and teach online courses is required. The successful candidate will be expected to teach courses in Crisis Management, PR Cases, PR Writing, and other courses as needed.

A PhD in mass communication or a related area from an accredited university is required (ABD candidates may be considered). Preference will be given to candidates who have experience in public relations or communications and a record of teaching excellence.

Review of applications will begin on February 17, 2025, and continue until the position is filled.

To apply for this position, please visit our Online Employment System at <https://www.schooljobs.com/careers/unajobs/4759739/tenure-track-assistant-professor-of-mass-communication-public-relations>.

Assistant Professor Robertson School – Public Relations

Virginia Commonwealth University

This new faculty member will primarily teach undergraduate public relations courses and graduate courses in our master's program. The successful candidate will have a research focus in AI and the media and a research agenda and activities that lead to publications in refereed journals, books and conference presentations and other scholarly pursuits. They will be expected to work directly with our developing AI and Media Lab initiative as a lead researcher in this initiative and point of contact for research-related concerns.

Candidates must have: (1) a Ph.D. degree in public relations or in a related field; (2) an academic scholarship track record and a strong interest in AI in media; (3) a proven track record of inspiring, guiding and mentoring others to reach their full potential; and (4) high expectations for students. Successful college teaching experience is highly preferred.

Review of applicants will begin in mid-January. The position remains open until filled. For additional information, contact Dr. Baobao Song at bsong@vcu.edu or visit the School's website at <http://robertson.vcu.edu>

Strategic Communication Faculty - Open Rank

High Point University

The Nido R. Qubein School of Communication at High Point University is searching for a new colleague to teach in Advertising, Public Relations, and Strategic Communication program and the Social Media and Digital Communication program. The successful candidate will have at least 15 years of professional experience in advertising, public relations, or social media. A master's degree or PhD in strategic communication or business is required.

The successful candidate will teach a variety of undergraduate courses, such as Foundations of Strategic Communication, Case Studies, PR Writing, Social Media & Analytics, and Campaigns. Depending on qualifications, there will be an opportunity to add more specialized courses to the curriculum or teach in our innovative, new graduate program in Communication and Business Leadership. The regular teaching load at HPU is three, four-credit-hour courses per semester on a 9-month contract with the opportunity for summer teaching. In addition, the successful candidate will have additional administrative responsibilities such as academic advising.

Screening of applications will begin January 2025.

Please apply by visiting https://highpoint.wd1.myworkdayjobs.com/en-US/Highpoint-Faculty/job/Strategic-Communication-Faculty---Open-Rank_R0006543?locations=9427adc46d25105bc85ed62089e378e3