

APRil Report 2021

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
GVSU ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC
RELATIONS PROGRAM

CREATIVE CAMPERS

Alumnus and wife run creative business and nonprofit while camping across the country (page 19)

INSIDE

More stories about alumni, students, and faculty!



Editors Note

Welcome to the 2021 issue of APRil Report, the annual report of the GVSU Advertising and Public Relations program. It is an understatement to say that this past year was a unique challenge. For an academic program in particular, it meant a swift pivot to online and hybrid class delivery, managing student organizations and internships differently, and still trying to maintain the level of excellence and student experience for which we are known.

In this issue, you can learn about how our faculty have been promoted within GVSU and earned recognition for their scholarship. You can see how our students not only adapted but thrived during Covid in national activities and competitions. And as always, you can read a few stories about the achievements of our successful and inspiring alumni.

Whether you are a current student, an alumnus, a prospective student, an advertising or public relations professional, an employer, or a member of the campus community, I hope this publication informs and inspires you. Thanks for reading.

Dr. Tim Penning, PhD, APR, Fellow PRSA
Professor

Coordinator of the Advertising and Public Relations Program

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Dr. Tim Penning

Intern, Writer



Morgan Layne
Class of 2021

Designer



Katrina Mahmoud
Class of 2018

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Web site: www.gvsu.edu/soc/apr
Blog "Enlighten" -- <https://gvsuapr.wordpress.com>



Advertising & Public Relations: By the Numbers 2020-2021



**610
Students**

*as of March 2021



440 Majors

170 Minors

251

Ad Emphasis

141

PR Emphasis

Faculty



6 Tenure-Track

12 Part-Time Adjunct Instructors

1 Affiliate Professor

40 Class Clients



20: Fall 2020



20: Winter 2021

Internships

180 Internships, 668 Credit Hours

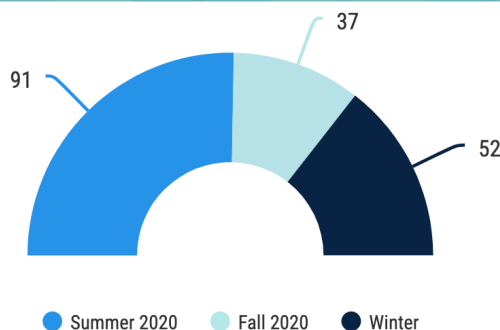
Summer 2020: 343 credit hours*

Fall 2020: 140 credit hours

Winter 2021: 85 credit hours

*includes 45 students (146 credit hours) who did an independent study in place of internship due to Covid.

**Credit hours vary because students may take internships or independent studies for 1-6 credits.



Faculty

Faculty Adapt Teaching During Pandemic

Along with the rest of the world, the faculty in Advertising and Public Relations had to adapt to the realities of Covid-19. This meant changing how they taught their classes. Faculty have been teaching online, both synchronously and asynchronously or a combination, and in some cases in-person or a hybrid of in person and online

The change happened abruptly in mid-March 2020, but then continued through the following academic year in response to data about the pandemic and resulting government guidelines. Faculty made the transition to online or other delivery modes seamlessly, help from university technology staff or because they had taught online previously. What was more challenging was changing mid-semester and maintaining aspects of an in-person class online.

"Having taught online for many years, the switch to

the asynchronous part was not difficult, though switching mid-semester and managing student expectations was not easy," said Yasmin Gopal, assistant professor. "Having them adapt was more of a challenge as was the synchronous component, both in terms of engagement and using the technology effectively. I found myself posting announcements and reminders of deadlines every week."

As time went on, students' own motivations helped them adapt to different styles of classes.

"In the beginning, students were frustrated with the changes," said Imran Mazid, assistant professor. "Nevertheless, they are resilient. I noticed that they were thriving because they wanted to learn and prepare for the job market."

Other faculty report that students were eager to learn the new teaching technology to maintain contact with other students as well as facilitate learning.

"Most students like to try new tech tools such as Padlet, Flip Grid, Jam Board and others for interaction and ideation," said Robin Spring, associate professor. "Many have appreciated break out rooms where they can connect and talk with peers and get confirmation they are on track with others."

Both faculty and students have learned new technology and skills for work and learning during the pandemic. Some of these, such as online submission of assignments as opposed to paper copies, will be retained. But most are looking forward to being physically together in classrooms again.

"I don't miss driving in the snow but am keen to get back to the classroom where I can see the smiles or looks of dismay, hear the cadences in student voices, and can read situations without the need to verbalize," Gopal said.



Gopal teaching during one of her online classes

Faculty

Professor Mazid Earns Top Paper Award for Study of Political Messaging

Assistant Professor Imran Mazid was recognized for his work at the Broadcast Education Association (BEA) Conference 2021. His paper titled 'Political public relations messages on Facebook: A study of social media virality, social presence strategies, and the 2018 U.S. Senate elections', received top paper award at the conference.

The paper is based on how Facebook is a critical component of campaigning in U.S. political campaigns, narrowing in on how political campaigns use Facebook to stay visible, spread their messages, and connect with their target audience. In this paper, Mazid examined 1,500 Facebook posts. These were of both Democratic and Republican Senate candidates.

Mazid's paper revealed interesting results. First, the paper showed that social presence strategies, political personalization posts, and messages that focus on competence are strong determinants of virality.

Some of the key findings according to Mazid are:

- Political candidates primarily used social presence strategies for the campaign communication on Facebook.
- Senate candidates used 48.1% of their Facebook posts to craft personalized political messages. Candidates invested 38.9% of their Facebook messages in projecting their competence.
- Gender and party affiliation are associated with the use of social presence strategies on Facebook.



Imran Mazid in the classroom

Mazid said there are many practical implications for his paper.

"The results demonstrated that social presence strategies could play a role in triggering virality," Mazid said. "Such findings are vital for public relations professionals. Public relations professionals could apply the insights of this research to formulate a political campaign plan on Facebook."

Mazid plans to continue research on the topic of political public relations practices on social media. "I am working on a project investigating how Senate and Gubernatorial candidates use Facebook and Instagram for political campaigns," Mazid explains. "The study will test four new independent variables: gender, political party affiliation, social platform and election competitiveness in determining the use of social presence strategies on social media."

Faculty

Spring, Wallace and Yang Promoted and Tenured

Three faculty in the Advertising and Public Relations program received tenure and promotion to associate professor in the past year.

Robin Spring and Faye Yang passed their reviews in the winter of 2020 and their tenure and associate professor status were effective in the fall of 2020. Adrienne Wallace passed her reviews in the winter of 2021 and her tenure and promotion will be in effect in the fall of 2021.

Robin Spring is the Faculty Advisor for the GVSU National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC) Team, earning four first place district wins and two national placements in the past six years. She also serves as the GVSU Student Advertising Club Advisor and works with the American Advertising Federation of West Michigan (AAF-WMI) to connect students and professionals. As the Teaching and Pedagogy Chair for the Advertising Division of the Association of Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) Professor Spring chairs the Teaching Paper Competition, the Teaching Awards Committee and the Advertising Division Pre-Conference Teaching Workshop. Professor Spring's research interests include advertising education, diversity, creativity, teamwork, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. She teaches Fundamentals of Advertising, Advertising Copywriting, Advertising/Public Relations Campaign, Advertising/Public Relations Agency Experience.

Faye Yang's teaching and research interests include diversity issues in the ad industry, movie impact on tourism, and integrated marketing communication strategy. Her recent work "Pro Tips for Advertising Educators: How Ethnic Diversity Can Solve Creative Problems" was published in the Journal of Advertising Education. Her research also has been published in the International Journal of Advertising and in the Book Shaping International Public Opinion: A Model for Nation Branding and Public Diplomacy. Faye also serves on the Global and Multicultural Committee for the American Advertising Academy since 2019. She teaches Fundamentals of Advertising, Research Basics for Advertising and Public Relations, Advertising Management and Cases.

Adrienne Wallace teaches undergraduate courses mostly in the PR emphasis and has a passion for student-to-professional development. She advises the award-winning student-run PR firm GrandPR and the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapter at GVSU. She also serves as the the program's faculty internship coordinator and Bateman Competition faculty

advisor. Adrienne is Treasurer of the West Michigan Public Relations Society of America (WMPRSA),

immediate past chair of the East Central District Public Relations Society of America (ECDPRSA), secretary for the Public Relations Society of America Educators Academy (PRSAEA) and serves the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) as the chair of the social media committee and is the chair of the website committee. She is a prolific author and conference presenter. In 2021 she co-authored: Marketing, Public Relations, & Communications in the Era of Artificial Intelligence: How to harness insights and make strategic data-driven decisions through Oxford as well as Social Media & Society: An Introduction to the Mass Media Landscape through Rowman & Littlefield. In 2020, she brought home top "Great Ideas for Teaching" awards from PRSA Educators Academy and AEJMC for co-authoring the Diversity and Inclusion Wheel for PR Practitioners and co-authored the top paper at AEJMC (PRD) for a study of PRSSA Faculty Adviser satisfaction. She was named WMPRSA PR Practitioner of the Year and a PRSSA Teahan Award for National Outstanding Adviser of the Year in 2019. Dr. Wallace is a Kopenhagen Center Fellow.



Faye Yang



Robin Spring



Adrienne Wallace

Faculty

Adjunct Instructors Bring Perspectives to Classroom

Every year, in addition to full-time faculty, a variety of adjunct instructors teach Advertising and Public Relations classes. In so doing, they enhance the students' experience by exposing them to a broader variety of professional experiences and perspectives.

We thank the adjunct instructors who taught courses in the past academic year:

- Brad Back, Partner, Vice President, Seyferth PR
- Dottie Barnes, Associate Director News, GVSU University Communications
- Jason Brower, Social Media Specialist, LaFleur Marketing
- Michael DeMeyer, Chief Strategist, De Meyer Strategy Group
- Beth Dornan, Manager—PR, Social Media and Influencers, Amway North America
- Chad Fopma, Freelance Advertising & Public Relations Specialist
- Stephan Hokanson, Senior Content Strategist, Mindscape
- Shannon Jones, Media Director/Public Relations Consultant, Bay Mills Indian Community
- Christopher Koens, Marketing & Communications Coordinator, Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts (UICA)
- Doug Lipinski, Deputy Director of Athletics for External Relations, GVSU
- Jason Manshum, Public and Government Affairs Executive Counsel
- Becky Olson, Senior PR Strategist, Approach Marketing
- Meaghan Pear, National Business Line Marketing Manager, BDO Grand Rapids
- Shawn Platt, Global Director, Global Corporate Communications, Amway
- Timothy Putman, Owner, That's Cleverly Done Advertising
- Ben Risinger, Director of Marketing and Public Relations at Imaging Software Systems
- Abigayle Sladick, Senior Community Relations Specialist, Priority Health
- Lyman Steiner, Independent PR Professional
- Lauren Teal, Marketing Specialist, MedBio LLC
- Natalie Topalian, Copywriter, the Image Shoppe
- Joel Van Kuiken, Co-Founder, Delta Project



Program

More Classes Offered Online, Before and After Covid

In the past 10 years there has been more interest by both students and faculty to have the option of online classes. For a while there were barriers to this, such as faculty trained in online teaching, technology to support it, and concerns about whether online instruction was the best pedagogy.

In March of 2020, however, offering classes online went from being an idea for the future to an urgent necessity due to the pandemic. For the remainder of the winter 2020 semester, courses were largely online.

Many thought that by the fall the situation would return to normal. But the pandemic and its resulting policies and protocols in college classes and every other aspect of life continued. So in the fall of 2020 a mix of course "delivery methods" continued.

The need for social distancing meant that the number of students able to be in a classroom at the same time was significantly reduced. A room that might have held 30 students could only accommodate 11 for example.

This meant courses had to be "staggered hybrid," meaning some students would attend in person one day, while the rest of the class would participate online, and then the second session of the week students would switch.

While that model worked for some, because of the way some courses are taught, it made more sense to move some classes fully online. These

were synchronous (live) or asynchronous, in which students did readings and assignments on their own time and engaged with faculty and each other through discussion boards, emails and other methods.

The Advertising and Public Relations program became mostly online. Of 38 course sections offered in the winter of 2021 (not counting internships and independent studies) 6 were staggered hybrid and the remaining 32 were online.

At the time this publication is being written, the plan for the fall of 2021 is to have classes in person in campus classrooms. But there is also a plan B in case the Covid-19 case count is not low enough to allow for in-person instruction. That plan involves classes pivoting to other modes again such as staggered hybrid or online.

"It has been a challenging year for teaching, learning, and scheduling," said Professor Tim Penning, Coordinator of the Advertising and Public Relations program. "But while this was disruptive, the good news is how adaptable our faculty have been and how resilient our students have been. We have not lost a lot in terms of quality instruction and students progressing toward graduation."

Penning said after the pandemic is fully over, some things that were adaptations to the crisis may continue. For example, in courses that have three or more sections, one may be an online option to meet student demand. Also, many of the online class features, such as digital assignments submitted to Blackboard and between class online discussion boards, may continue.

CAP 413 01 ALL 3.000 Media Planning	T	06:00 pm-08:50 pm TBA	30	29	1	0	0	Jonathan W Snedeker (P) 01/19-05/01 Jonathan W Snedeker (P) 01/19-05/01	MAK D2321 HYBRID	Staggered Hybrid
CAP 413 02 PEW 3.000 Media Planning	MW	03:00 pm-04:15 pm TBA	30	27	3	0	0	Jonathan W Snedeker (P) 01/19-05/01 Jonathan W Snedeker (P) 01/19-05/01	DEV 203E HYBRID	Staggered Hybrid
CAP 423 01 ALL 3.000 Writing Corporate Communications	MW	04:30 pm-05:45 pm TBA	22	24	-2	0	0	Timothy S Penning (P) 01/19-05/01 Timothy S Penning (P) 01/19-05/01	ONLINE ONLINE	
CAP 423 02 PEW 3.000 Writing Corporate Communications	T	06:00 pm-08:50 pm	22	19	3	0	0	Dottie M Barnes (P) 01/19-05/01	EC 410	
CAP 425 01 ALL 3.000 International Advertising and Public Relations	M	06:00 pm-08:50 pm	25	23	2	0	0	Yasmin Gopal (P) 01/19-05/01	ONLINE	

A screenshot of just a few of the online and hybrid classes that were offered this year

Program

GVSU Ranks On National Lists for College Programs in Both PR and Advertising

The Advertising and Public Relations program at Grand Valley has made an impression recently in two lists of top programs. These have highlighted both advertising and public relations.

For advertising, GVSU was named number 21 on the Study.com list of best bachelor's degree programs. There are 39 total programs listed, and GVSU is the top Michigan school. You can see the list here.

Meanwhile, the PRNEWS Education A-List named GVSU to a list of the top 35 PR programs in the U.S. Click here to read the list.

PRNEWS said the criteria to make the list included practical benefits to students.

"To compile the list, we looked at how the programs prepare students for continued success in their existing jobs and along their future career paths," PRNews said in its article about the list. "These schools continue to evolve their program offerings to reflect the changing nature of the field of communication and ensure students learn about emerging trends."

The faculty and students in the GVSU Advertising and Public Relations program were excited to see how they rank on both lists.

"These are both very exciting recognitions for our program," said Professor Tim Penning, Coordinator of Advertising and Public Relations at GVSU. "Our faculty and students work hard to be the best not just in the classroom but in our student groups, national associations and competitions where we also finish among the top in the country."

Best Bachelor's Degrees in Advertising
Feb 04, 2021

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Advertising Degrees

An advertising degree may sometimes be confused with a marketing degree, but there are differences between advertising and marketing degrees. While marketing focuses more on anticipating or predicting demand for a product, advertising focuses on creating interest in a product through commercial advertising.

Advertising programs teach students how to make products and services appeal to a targeted audience. While some entry-level advertising jobs do not require a degree, a bachelor's degree is usually preferred for most positions. Read on to learn more about the types of advertising degrees available.

The Top Bachelor's Degree Programs in Advertising

Tuition	Acceptance Rate	Graduation Rate	Financial Aid %	Placement Services	Career Services	Accepts AP Credits
\$10824	32%	86%	67%	Yes	Yes	AP Credits
20. University of Florida						
Tuition	Acceptance Rate	Graduation Rate	Financial Aid %	Placement Services	Career Services	Accepts AP Credits
\$6381	37%	88%	92%	Yes	Yes	AP Credits
21. Grand Valley State University						
Tuition	Acceptance Rate	Graduation Rate	Financial Aid %	Placement Services	Career Services	Accepts AP Credits
\$13180	83%	67%	87%	Yes	Yes	AP Credits
22. University of South Carolina-Columbia						
Tuition	Acceptance Rate	Graduation Rate	Financial Aid %	Placement Services	Career Services	Accepts AP Credits
\$13688	60%	77%	95%	Yes	Yes	AP

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Career Advice

Introducing the 2021 Education A-List

02/08/2021
By PRNEWS



prnewsonline.com

Communication, Public Relations, Marketing, Communications, Strategic Communication

Admissions Contact: Tom Pattiz, mpcommunications@georgetown.edu

More Info: <https://scs.georgetown.edu/prcc>

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

Location: Allendale, MI

Hybrid Offerings: No

Course Options: Fulltime/Part-time

Specializations: Communication Studies/Interpersonal Communication, Health Communication, Public Relations, Marketing Communications

Admissions Contact: Jodi Chycinski, chycinsj@gvsu.edu

More Info: <https://www.gvsu.edu/soc/advertising-public-relations-major-47.htm>

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

Location: Washington, D.C.

Specializations: Communication, Culture and Media Studies; Media, Journalism and Film; Strategic, Legal and Management Communication

Admissions Contact: hugsadmission@howard.edu

More Info: <https://communications.howard.edu/>

Screenshots of PR News announcements

Program

Student Puts Ethics Class to the Test During Internship Interview

Maureen Stewart recently landed an internship at the tobacco company Reynolds American. To land the internship, she had to endure an extensive interview process.

One interview in particular really stood out to her. As a student in CAP 325: Advertising and Public Relations Ethics and Law with Dr. Penning, she had been learning about ethics in the field. In one specific interview, Stewart was asked to tie back each of the company's values to her own ethical life experiences. This gave her a clear example of how the program's classes play into the real world.

Class Clients, Internships Continue Despite Covid

The GVSU Advertising and Public Relations program has always placed an emphasis on giving students opportunity for applying what they learn by working with real clients in classroom projects and internships. Social distancing and remote work did not stop that from happening in 2020-21.

In spite of the fact that many employers were laying off full-time employees and had no capacity for interns, there were 135 students who did internships during the 2020-21 academic year across spring/summer, fall, and winter semesters.

Just as many employees worked remotely due to restrictions related to the pandemic, a good number of students were able to work as interns in the same fashion. See page 14 for a profile of two students who interned in this way.

An additional 45 students who were not able to find internships were set up to complete independent study projects instead. Such projects have a student work under the supervision and guidance of a professor but they study a topic of interest on their own, submitting a paper and/or project at the end to receive a grade.

Stewart said this and other courses in the program prepared her for this internship.

"The advertising and public relations program at Grand Valley has shaped me into the young professional that I am today," she said.

She is specifically grateful for the real-world experience and hands-on learning that she has experienced through the program.

Stewart plans on temporarily moving to Winston-Salem, North Carolina for the internship during the summer. She feels incredibly blessed to have this opportunity and is excited to experience a new area of public relations.

Meanwhile, the program served 80 area organizations as clients in various classes. Instead of meeting in a classroom or at the client's office, initial meetings and final presentations were via Zoom, with much email in between and final projects submitted digitally. This remote approach also made it possible to have clients from outside the geographic area of the university.

The program takes on a variety of clients for different projects based on what is taught in the course:

- Fundamentals of Advertising—an advertising campaign
- Fundamentals of PR—a public relations campaign
- Media Relations Writing—a media kit and media contact list
- Media Planning—a media plan of where to purchase advertising
- Corporate Communications Writing—a communications audit and plan and set of tactics
- Ad and PR Campaigns—an integrated campaign

More information about being a class client or having an intern can be found under the "employers" link on the program website: www.gvsu.edu/soc/apr



Students

Students Finish Fourth Nationally in Advertising Competition

A team of students Advertising and Public Relations students from Grand Valley State University finished fourth in the nation in the National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC). The annual competition is Sponsored by the American Advertising Federation (AAF), which includes the industry's top professionals. The NSAC is the premier college advertising competition that provides college students the real-world experience of creating a strategic advertising, marketing and media campaign for a corporate client. Students develop a marketing plan and then pitch their work to advertising professionals at the district, semi-final and national levels.

The group of Advertising and Public Relations students worked the entire academic year on a campaign for this year's client, Adobe. The significant, hands-on project was completed in two courses, CAP 494 Agency Experience and CAP 495 Advertising/Public Relations Campaigns. Some students from other majors also participated.

The students had to pivot in the middle of the winter semester because of the coronavirus to work on the collaborative project online. But they persisted to win first place in the AAF District 6 and then win the semi-final round to advance with only 8

other universities to the national finals. There were 102 schools in 14 districts that participated through the course of the year-long competition.

"What stands out the most is their brilliant minds, can-do spirit, and ability to collaborate (even remotely) on an exceptionally complex business-to-business problem for a highly technical ad stack product for the iconic brand such as Adobe," said Assistant Professor Robin Spring, who taught the classes and advises the NSAC team each year. "I am so proud of their creativity in solving real world problems and their ability to laugh in the face of adversity."

It was the first time in the competition's 46-year history that presentations and judging took place virtually. The client was impressed by the student's persistence as well as the quality of their work.

"Sponsoring the NSAC for 2020 has been an amazing journey," said Adam Morgan, Adobe's Executive Creative Director in a news release from AAF. "COVID-19 didn't stop the students from delivering great campaigns. We gave the students a complicated B2B technology project, and they

came back with big ideas and great research that we can use today. Best of all, the students who actually dug into learning about the ad tech category are now more prepared than half the industry."

GVSU was in good competition among the nine finalists, all of whom were larger schools. The overall winner was the University of Virginia, with second and third places going to Texas State University and the University of Missouri, respectively.

"We always say just to participate in the NSAC is of great value for students," said Tim Penning, professor and coordinator of the Advertising and Public Relations program. "But this national finish is as significant as if our football team were invited to a Division I Bowl College Series game. For our students to compete among the best schools at the national level and to be judged favorably by the top ad industry professionals is a credit to the quality of our program. With this being the third time now for our students to make it to the finals, our national



Members of the NSAC team had to meet via Zoom and other technology tools

Students

PRSSA Students Create Videos to Teach High School Students About PR

Grand Valley State University's chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (GVPRSSA) and members from the nationally affiliated student-run public relations firm, GrandPR, wrote and produced informational videos to teach high school students lessons on topics spanning professional development, leadership, volunteering, and the public relations industry.

Our students have persevered through this unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the vast majority of modes of communication have changed, our students used their

creative abilities and skillsets to create informational videos to share with younger peers seeking guidance. These peer-to-peer relationships allow greater time to connect and learn about potential opportunities that these younger students have to look forward to.

"Lessons from students in college who were once in their shoes can provide high school students with the motivation needed to finish out the school year strong and perhaps brighten their future plans a little bit – even when the future feels uncertain," said Dr. Adrienne Wallace, assistant professor and academic adviser for GVPRSSA and GrandPR.

Senior Teagan Epley spearheaded the project and presented this opportunity to her fellow GrandPR and PRSSA

students. The students were proud of their contributions to their community and the effort to provide some much-needed reassurance to their younger peers during the pandemic.

"As many know, asking for guidance isn't always the easiest thing to do," said Ella Rechner, GVSU PRSSA Vice President of Public Relations. "By aiding with online content creation, GVPRSSA equipped educators with the proper tools to maintain a successful classroom while allowing more time for them to check-in with struggling students and their families. Thankfully, as many of the students have shown, with the right compassion and perseverance, delivering inspiring content is a powerful way to give back and further pre-professional development in our industry."

GVPRSSA
11 subscribers

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Video Title	Views	Upload Date
Personal Branding with Kylee Reinert	3 views	4 months ago
Social Media Do's and Don'ts with Evan Clark	8 views	4 months ago
Joining PRSSA with Lindsay Corwin	42 views	4 months ago
Podcasting with Sarah Dudinetz	7 views	4 months ago

A screenshot of GVSU's GVPRSSA's YouTube page

Students

Students Work Remote Internships During Coronavirus Summer

Morgan Layne is interning for Comcast in Plymouth, Michigan this summer before her final year of college. Alexis Smith is doing a post-graduate internship with Quicken Loans in Detroit. Layne works 9-5 daily and has many meetings. She recently finished prepping and participating in a Fox 2 Detroit news segment with Emmy Award-winner Pamela Post. Smith has been assigned to the Rock Ventures creative team and is doing a lot of copywriting, most recently a semi-annual report and internal communications.

Both of them are working from home.

Smith had originally lined up an internship with a different company, but they became uncertain given the pandemic. She applied for the position at Quicken after they had already decided to make internships fully remote. Layne's internship at Comcast was supposed to be in the office, but switched to remote. The Fox 2 segment was taped while everyone was socially distant.

"Originally, I was kind of frustrated that my internship had to be online, but once I took a step back, I realized how lucky I was," Layne said. "Out of my friends, I am the only one still able to work an internship. Comcast did so much to make sure they were able to continue their internship program, and I really appreciate that."

Smith also appreciates having a remote internship as compared to none at all.

"To me, it is a little bit upsetting just because Quicken Loans has such an awesome office space and workplace culture," Smith said. "I think that there is an opportunity with working in the office to be able to network with other interns and team members easier. Although, Quicken Loans has done a fantastic job with hosting orientations and other events that new hires normally would experience but via Zoom."

Smith, who wants to move to Detroit now that she has graduated, said the remote internship gives her more time to find housing.



Alexis Smith working in her home office

Layne admitted that it takes time to adjust to a virtual work place. But she appreciates Comcast's efforts to keep 84 interns from across the company engaged.

"We have a weekly video chat called 'Intern Thursday' and through this I get to connect and meet new friends I would have not met if I was just in the Michigan office," she said. "It has also given me a community to lean on and who understand the challenges that come with being an intern. Although I am the only public relations intern, it is cool to meet everyone with different talents in different positions. It also seems to create a new appreciation for work and the team you work on. Everyone misses the full work experience since we cannot go in, so it makes us appreciate each other more."

Looking ahead, both Layne and Smith are a little concerned about the future employment prospects given the coronavirus impact. Many companies have reduced workforces, and a second wave is a possibility this fall. But they both say it requires focus and persistence in networking and searching, because in some industries there is an even greater need for employees.

Both Smith and Layne say the GVSU Advertising and Public Relations program prepared them well for their current roles.

"The program at GVSU gave me experience in writing all the materials that I would need for this position," Smith said. "The program gave me the skills, feedback and professional growth that I needed to succeed. I now have the necessary



Morgan Layne working from home

confidence to walk into this position with intention because of the AdPR program."

Layne said her peers and professors were particular helpful in getting her the confidence to succeed.

"Whenever I have an interview, they are impressed with the projects and resources we have in our classes," Layne said. "I also think that my peers are a huge reason I am prepared. They really push me in group projects to grow and become better. Everyone in PRSSA and GrandPR are also constantly striving to grow in the field. I also think that the smaller class sizes really help when it comes to learning. It gives me the opportunity to ask questions and build relationships with my professors. At other colleges, I noticed my friends do not have these relationships and opportunities. The relationships, resources, and my peers all combine to help set me apart from other candidates applying for internships."

Smith has advice for other recent graduates who have anxiety about the current job market.

"Don't get discouraged and fill this time with purpose," she said. "Network like crazy and sharpen your skills. The moment you may not feel like searching for jobs anymore, might be the day that your dream position opens back up. Keep up the self-discipline even when it may feel impossible; that's when it is the most important."

Students

Dominic Cassisi is the Ad and PR Program Excellence in Discipline Winner

The Excellence in Discipline award honors one undergraduate student and one graduate student in each academic major. This award is selected by unit faculty based on a student's academic performance and extra-curricular activities.

Dominic Cassisi was the program's winner for the Fall 2020 semester. Throughout his time in the program, he was involved in the National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC) and attended numerous AdClub and PRSSA meetings. Cassisi also worked at the GVSU Speech Lab

as a Consultant and



Dominic Cassisi headshot

Undergraduate Researcher.

Cassisi credits the program for helping him succeed, and specifically acknowledged two faculty members.

"This program truly prepared me for the "real world" and I give all the credit to the people in it," he said. "Two people that had

a significant impact on me, and still do, are Dr. Adrienne Wallace and Robin Spring. They both did so in their own way, too."

He explained that they led in their own unique and fun ways, which made the program experience so special.

As a recent graduate Cassisi is currently working at a Cannabis company called 3Fifteen. He had a previous internship with the company and liked the potential of where the industry is going.

"There are so many young companies on the rise in the Cannabis Industry that are paving the way for the future," Cassisi shared. "I think being a part of that is an absolutely thrilling opportunity."

PRSSA 'REIMAGINED' responds to Covid, racial tensions

With a commitment to strive for a 100 percent BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) guest speaker list, Sam Stoddard, GVPRSSA's VP of Programming was approached by Dr. Adrienne Wallace with the idea to launch a virtual programming partnership with other PRSSA chapters across the country. This idea stemmed in response to the heightened political climate and countless instances of racial injustice during the summer of 2020,

This concept moved very quickly and in mid-July 2020, the first committee meeting was held. The group included GVSU, Kennesaw State University, Samford University and the University of Memphis. Then, American University and West Texas A&M University ultimately joined for the Fall 2020

programming. Following this, in the Winter 2021 semester, California State University-Fresno and the University of Arizona joined the PRSSA REIMAGINED team.

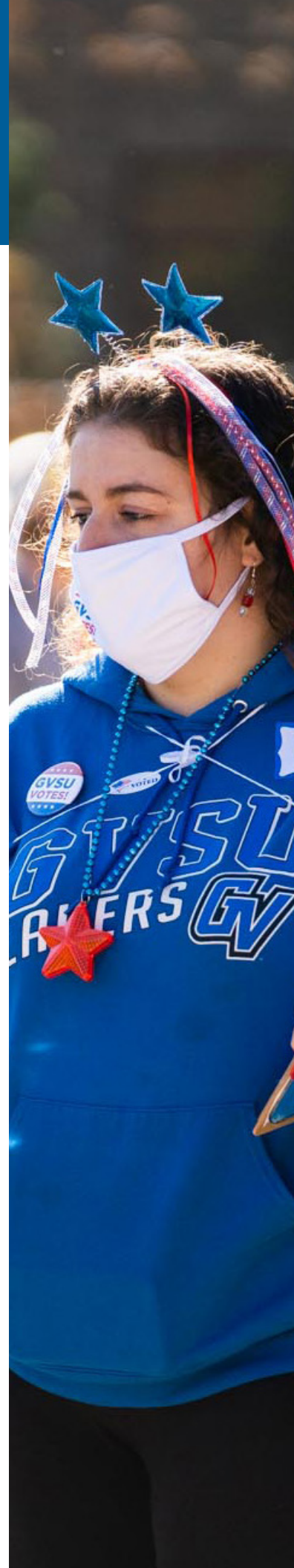
Stoddard has been project manager for the committee and event planner for events that the GVSU chapter has hosted. Stoddard said the purpose behind the series was diversity in program topics and speakers.

"Since COVID-19 has impacted the way we learn, network, and participate in campus organizations, the overall purpose of PRSSA REIMAGINED is to provide additional programming opportunities for PRSSA members nationwide," she said. "We went into it with a goal of a 100% BIPOC guest speaker list and to create a

lineup of diverse speakers and discuss a diverse range of topics."

One of Stoddard's favorite seminars was West Texas A&M University's panel on nonprofits and their use of social media. The event was around Giving Tuesday and featured Caryn Stein, Chief Communications Officer of Giving Tuesday, Allie Young, Founder of Protect the Sacred, and Sarah Silva, Director of Public Relations & Development at Martha's Home.

PRSSA Reimagined has shined light on a diverse range of topics and is continuing to offer professional development to PRSSA students around the country.



Alumni

Alumna Does PR in the 'Glittering Lights' of Vegas

Recent Grand Valley grad and successful young professional Courtney Fogle continues to carry her talents at the entertainment capital of the world, Las Vegas. Fogle is currently public relations and marketing manager at Ivory Star Productions where she thrives using her talents to assist entertainers all over the city.

Although Fogle did not start her college career at Grand Valley, that did not hold her back from making a name for herself. She was in GVPRSSA and GrandPR as well as the podcast director for "PR Hangover", GVPRSSA's very own podcast. Fogle expressed that this podcast is where it all really began for her.

Growing up, Fogle always loved Las Vegas. Not only did she have a love for the city, but she knew that she was made for entertainment PR. After a Thanksgiving trip to Las Vegas, Fogle was offered an internship in her dream city. She quickly had to arrange her class schedule for the next semester to be able graduate and then fly back out in August of 2019. This internship constantly kept her on her toes and tested her skills, at which she continued to excel.

After a fully packed internship, Fogle then found her current job at Ivory Star Productions. As a public relations and marketing manager, her

clients have ranged from America's Got Talent Phenomenon Tape Face to "Glittering Lights", a holiday lights show at Las Vegas Motor Speedway. She has numerous accomplishments so far in her position and continues to set the bar high in the entertainment public relations industry. Fogle conducts interviews, develops visual content like blogs, social, and website materials, secures various media coverage, and even independently

Another highlight of Fogle's recent client work is running the one-year anniversary campaign for FRIENDS! The Musical Parody. Through this campaign she drew lots of coverage including six morning TV hits.

COVID-19 did provide a challenge for Fogle and her clients, since in-person events were shut down in March. Providing virtual shows and new online content helped to keep them engaged with the public as the pandemic continues.

"Shows and events as we know them are far from being restored to pre-covid standards," Fogle said. "In times like this, we need to adapt and put on our problem-solving hats to figure out new ways to reach our client goals. Open communication has been key throughout this process."

In-person events are starting to open up in the city, which allows for Fogle and her team to resume some normalcy. Fogle wanted to share some advice for students considering the world of entertainment PR.

"Entertainment is competitive, so, grow your network with professionals in the field and keep up to date

with industry trends," Fogle said. "It's important to understand that working in entertainment PR is not all glitz and glam. Although rewarding, be prepared for long hours and a fast-paced environment filled with big personalities."



Courtney Fogle and Tape Face at a show in Las Vegas.

handles red carpet appearances. Tape Face, her America's Got Talent client even got to meet his idol, Tim Burton, all thanks to her PR magic. Nothing will stop Fogle from doing the PR most to get coverage, even fully immersing herself into the holiday spirit by dressing up as the Elf on the Shelf during a segment with KSNV News 3.

Alumni

Bills works her way to manager with Nike app

In a few short years, Rachel Bills has taken her digital PR skills to an integral role at a major global brand.

Currently, 2017 graduate Rachel Bills is working at Nike as the North American NDDC (Nike Direct Digital Commerce) Lifecycle Growth Manager. Her position is a business function that sits at the intersection of Marketing, Consumer Science, Merchandising and Operations. She partners with the Nike app team specifically and looks at the lifecycle of users and assesses levers and tactics to optimize performance to ensure the app is hitting its growth projections.

Prior to her current role, she was the Senior Growth Marketing Manager for Nike Adventure Club, which is a shoe subscription service for kids. She worked at digital agencies in Detroit and Portland, Oregon before starting her career at Nike.

So far, Bills has been able to experience a lot of projects at Nike.

When she was still with the Nike Adventure Club last spring, Bills got to work on her favorite project. Her team worked to produce relevant digital content, since they were mainly parents trying to navigate life at home with their kids.

"With a small team of five, we were able to produce activities for kids, resources for parents and provide exclusive online events with our partners to really meet our consumers where they were at," Bills explained. "Our retention rates were strong and it was some of the most fulfilling work I've done in my career."

During her time at Grand Valley, she was very involved in the program. She was in the 2015-2017 cohort for the Peter C. Cook Leadership Academy out of the Hauenstein Center for Presidential Studies. Bills also served on the executive board for GV's chapter of PRSSA, and held the VP of



Rachel Bills

Programming position for two years.

"My favorite memory at GVSU is not one particular moment but a collection of feelings," Bills explained. "When I was at GVSU I knew I was working toward my future and I was so lucky to have so much support from my professors and friends."

Bills advises current students to combine work and fun.

"My advice to students and young professionals is this...Have fun. Work hard. Don't be afraid to ask for help," she advises. "And as Dr. Adrienne Wallace always told me, sun screen, eye cream, caffeine... THE holy trinity."

Alumni

Alumna Jennifer Cunningham honored with Navy award

Jennifer K. Cunningham, a 2004 GVSU graduate, was recently honored as the Junior Reserve Public Affairs Officer of the Year (2019). Cunningham, a Lieutenant in the Navy reserves, has been activated and stationed in Djibouti, Africa, for past nine months. She was pleased to know that her commanding officers were so appreciative of her service in nominating her for the award.

"She is my public affairs conscience and trusted advisor who flawlessly communicates my strategic messages to all key audiences with maximum visibility and effectiveness," said U.S. Navy Captain Ken Crowe in a letter nominating her for the Thomson-Ravitz Award for Public Affairs Excellence.

Cunningham credits both GVSU and her Navy training for her success.

"Grand Valley gave me a great foundation, and then the Navy has given me some great opportunities to learn and excel and grow," she said.

Cunningham recalls her first campus visit to GVSU in the Fall of 1999, a year before she enrolled. She knew from the moment she stepped on to the campus, accompanied by her mother, that GVSU was the place she wanted to be.

"It's kind of a perfect university. I could walk across campus – after I'd been there for a semester or so – and I could always find someone that I knew to say hi to," she recalls. "But it was also not so small that I couldn't find new people to meet in the same walk."

She opted for a major in Journalism and secured a place at the Honors College. It was her mother's suggestion that she take up Public Relations as a minor. She recalls her reaction to her mother's suggestion being "I don't even know what that is, but sure, whatever." That reaction changed almost instantaneously. Her first PR fundamentals class with Dr. Betty Pritchard had her switching her minor into her major and three and a half years

later, she graduated with a degree in APR with a PR emphasis. She had found her vocation.

Cunningham remembers her time at Grand Valley very fondly. She joined the Renaissance Fair Club, served on the campus security team and wrote for the *Lanthorn*.

"My first story that I believe I had to write was for the 9/11 vigil that happened at the Carillon Tower," she reminisced.

While at GVSU, Cunningham interned with the ALS Foundation of West Michigan and Mercy General Health Partners in Muskegon. After graduation, she put in a year's stint at the Kalamazoo Nature Center and then moved to the Air Zoo Aerospace & Science Museum in Portage, Kalamazoo, where her job as a PR Manager sharpened her skill set and set her up for her current role as a Public Affairs Officer in the Navy.

Cunningham would have stayed in West Michigan but she met a Navy recruiter and ended up marrying him and moving out west where her new husband, Brent, was stationed. It was not a challenging giving up her job to move.

"My degree in Public Relations from GV and my experience is what allowed me to get a commission in the Navy Reserve as a Public Affairs Officer," she said.

Her role as a Navy reservist has taken Cunningham to the far corners of the globe: Spain, Germany, Poland, Lithuania and Timor-Leste, to name a few. She recalls being in Hawaii for the 75th Commemoration of the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 2016 where she had the honor of meeting some of the survivors, and



Jennifer Cunningham in front of U.S. Navy trucks on base.

where she was assigned to escort media teams from across the world.

Cunningham's stint in Djibouti is coming to an end and, depending on how the Covid-19 crisis pans out, she hopes to be back home in the summer. During her 9-month stint at Camp Lemonnier, she has witnessed some ups and downs, a particularly rough situation being extensive flooding during which Cunningham proved her PR chops. Another excerpt from the recommendation letter written by Capt. Ken Crowe speaks to Cunningham's skill at her chosen vocation:

"Her innovative strategic crisis communication during a monumental flooding of the base resulted in a 400% increase in positive social media interactions, which increased the safety and security of base personnel," Crowe wrote. "As a result of her expert leadership, her team of two mass communication specialists both received a Flag Letter of Commendation (FLOC) from Vice Admiral Luke McCollum for their communication contributions during this time."

Such dedication to one's vocation also calls for some sacrifices. Part of the price Cunningham has had to pay for her service to the nation is missing out key family events: she missed her elder daughter Kaylee's fifth birthday

Alumni

Alumnus Tyler Way is Entrepreneur in Business and Nonprofit Ventures

It wasn't long after Tyler Way graduated in 2009 with a major in Advertising and Public Relations and a minor in Entrepreneurship that he launched both a creative business and a nonprofit focused on veterans.

ONE-Y-ONE is a small design and content creation firm he runs with his wife, Kendra Clapp Olguin, that he describes as a Spanglish convergence of their cultures, backgrounds and experience. Way also started Has Heart, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with the mission to share veterans' stories through the mediums of art, design, and fashion by partnering them with designers.

The idea for the nonprofit came while he was still at GVSU.

"One important lesson I learned in college was the open-ended networking opportunities," he recalls. "That's how I met Michael Hyacinthe, a Bronx-native and U.S. Navy Veteran living in Grand Rapids. Over a cup of coffee in 2010, we realized the disconnect between our two worlds and felt the need to bridge that gap between Veterans and creatives ourselves."

Meanwhile, Way's career in fashion design started also started at GVSU. He recalls as a freshman doodling on an old shoe with a Sharpie marker. Later he was an intern for the Detroit Pistons,

after which he custom-designed sneakers and painted large-scale artwork for professional athletes. He worked for a while as a part-time shoe salesman, before becoming a footwear designer for Wolverine World Wide, a major shoe brand.

"One thing will always lead to the next, but you have to be willing to jump," Way says. ". Building a career as a creative isn't a linear process, so having patience and soaking up every experience along the way will only help strengthen your skills and expand your perspective."



Tyler Way and his wife, Kendra Clapp Olguin, at work on the road.

Way and his wife left their careers in the fashion industry shortly after getting married in 2017 to start their firm. They also wanted to take the Has Heart mission across the country for 18 months, so they sold their condo and everything in it and travelled in an Airstream trailer. When

the money ran out, he and his wife lived in his in-laws' basement. But just before the pandemic hit, they were contacted by Campspot, an online-camping booking platform, who contracted them to provide content.

"We wanted our work to flow with our desired lifestyle seamlessly, so we've been fortunate to be traveling full-time and getting paid for it," he says. "If you're passionate about your work and have a clear vision of what you want to do, you'll be willing to make the sacrifices needed to accomplish it."

His next goal is to begin working with outdoor and lifestyle brands to design a capsule collection of footwear and apparel products to serve multiple purposes. For Has Heart, he wants to complete the "50 States: Veterans + Artists United" tour. Then he has plans to open a Has Heart Coffee Shop and retail experience in downtown Grand Rapids at Veterans Memorial Park.

Way said his Advertising and Public Relations and Entrepreneurship classes were instrumental in every step of his process with his career development. He started a custom sneaker business and small clothing line while still in college, immediately implementing what he was learning in classes. He encourages students to find a club, volunteer with an

organization, or apply for an internship that will enable them to continue learning outside the classroom.

"Take advantage of being a college student," he says. "Send emails and make phone calls and start them with, 'I'm a college student...' because that will open more doors for you now than any other time in your life. Ask questions, seek out mentors, and closely follow the industries you aspire to work in so that you can soak up the knowledge now before you need it later."

"The strength and adaptability of the Grand Valley community has been so inspiring over the last year. Brighter days are ahead!"

- Philomena Mantella
President of Grand Valley State University



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