

Wilma King

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## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

“As educators and leaders a hope we want to see realized is that our classrooms become incubators for students’ dreams, that what we teach in our classrooms go beyond the four walls, beyond the class’s duration and that it has broader meaning, not just intellectual, but emotional connection to the information we are trying to impart.” – *Wilma King, as quoted in Fashion for Good transcripts, 2007*

As a teacher, my main goal is to produce graduates with skills and knowledge necessary for practitioners in a technological, multicultural and global profession. The PR profession is multi-faceted, growing and changing, which means that redefining and emphasizing PR’s fact-providing, mediating and educating role, while keeping up with current trends in public relations is essential. I try to embody and to fully support the recommendations of the Public Relations Society of America’s (PRSA) Commission on Public Relations Education Report, so I do periodic reviews of my course syllabi and projects.

The 2006 report particularly addresses the need to infuse globalization and corporate social responsibility, two of my main areas of interest, into undergraduate course work. I try to do this in unique ways as I involve students in my projects and interest areas, and I see this as a way to try to get students to value the power of personal experience in creative and cooperative problem-solving.

I have often reflected on the reality that the answers for many of today’s social and environmental concerns will come from the next generation of decision makers, many who may not have had training or background in PR. I think that this is a compelling reason to encourage and instill a culture of collaborative approaches to the projects and service-learning activities that I like to incorporate into my courses.

A very valuable lesson that I have learned while at RIT is that our students indeed come from everywhere and at anytime – we do not get to choose – harboring a myriad of ideas, opinions and beliefs. I am very focused on teaching as a discipline and in fact, embody, study and research effective teaching techniques and ideas. As a result, some of the most successful projects and coursework have come from me being able to rally those diverse mindsets around a common interest, redirecting and advancing the notion that every situation is a PR situation.

My skills courses are large (24-32), the majority of my students are not majors or minors, and there are no prerequisites for the courses I teach. Often it is a challenge for these students to understand the benefit of their efforts unless they can see the efforts applied. I joined the Faculty Learning Community at RIT this school year with the objective of my students being able to effectively infuse the following four components into the coursework they typically do in *each* of my classes, despite the varied preparedness levels for the courses.

1. **knowledge** – theoretical underpinning and research
  2. **understanding** – discussions of news and current events
  3. **application** -- case studies analyses and case studies writing
  4. **creativity** – creative problem solving and critical thinking
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### **TEACHING METAPHOR -- Seeing both the forests and the trees**

“We are unique individuals and each of us adds important value to the whole in what we offer as ideas and creativity, dedication and exploration,” which for me meant having to see both the forest and the trees -- addressing and solving the problem that I found before me of how to provide viable applied research strategies for the students, teacher and a client, bringing together – in a campaign – myriads of ideas, opinions and beliefs. I also had to get my students to see this and to keep them focused on something bigger than themselves – a real-world, meaningful campaign that addressed the needs of others.

### **THE OUTCOMES HOPED FOR**

The outcomes hoped for are that students are able to identify relevant social needs and concerns, organize an initiative to fulfill the needs or concerns and become part of the implementation of an awareness campaign in that regard. I also wanted students to understand that the human element was what was affected by their thoughts, ideas and actions, and that these thoughts, ideas and actions can have long-term, far-reaching effects.

### **THE OUTCOMES REALIZED**

The outcomes hoped for and realized were that students are able to identify relevant social needs and concerns, organize an initiative to fulfill the needs or concerns and become part of the implementation of an awareness campaign.

Students were encouraged to submit research papers and projects to conferences and publications in various appropriate fields.

## **FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITY PROJECT**

### **INTEGRATED CAMPAIGN PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT A way to use Public Relation's Social Responsibility Focus to Bridge Disciplinary, Cultural, Spatial and Time Barriers**

The discipline of public relations (PR) provides a perfect venue for exploring current concerns and finding solutions. PR: 1) is grounded in the social sciences (anthropology, sociology and psychology); 2) requires an understanding of concepts that brings together ideology from each of these areas into the evolving sciences, medical and technology fields; and, 3) must also address the needs and concerns of global audiences and societies. *Public Relations is an applied science*, so putting theories and principles to work is the essence of the discipline.

The research undertaken as part of this project explored ways to focus on social responsibility to bring together a multitude of creative input from environments and groups that usually do not have an institutional relationship – stressing that visibility, a good reputation, an international outlook, and scientific credibility – are gained from the relationships; and “to unite research and projects with all areas of cultural, social and productive life” (Cittadellarte, Biella, Italy). While strengthening the concept of social responsibility in liberal arts classes, essentially, the goal of the research is to use humanities (human and social sciences) to develop and infuse a concept of *integrated planning and management* among disciplines, building on and adding to prior successful research endeavors.

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### ***Background***

#### **Growing emphasis internationally in service-learning and civic engagement pedagogy in accredited and certified programs and schools**

A quick scan of emerging models in curriculum development points to the increasing interest of communication programs around the country to exposing students to opportunities that encourage service-learning initiatives, thus enabling students to implement research-based communication strategies and tactics. The campaign strategies and tactics developed in many senior capstone courses in programs and schools accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) or Certified in Education for Public Relations (CEPR) are successfully conceptualized and implemented through collaboration of public relations, advertising, marketing, and journalism disciplines, requiring demonstrated skills in the execution of campaign plans through the development of communication materials across multi-media platforms and application of creative strategies to solve problems. Such courses and programs emphasize the ability to develop relationships and collaborative partnerships on and off campus spanning the range from the community and state levels through the national and international levels and include coordinating service-learning and civic engagement initiatives including social entrepreneurial projects that facilitate traditional and innovative ways for students to engage in these experiences. Faculty and students wish to combine learning with meaningful service; have identified and want to address issues of public concern; and recognize a social problem and wish to use entrepreneurial principles to organize, create, and manage a project to contribute to social change – developing and incorporating culminating experiences effectively across the undergraduate curriculum and other activities that may utilize and apply students critical thinking concepts normally in a unit-specific curricula.

### ***Problem Statement***

#### **Perhaps we will not learn something new, but we can learn to see things from a different perspective.**

The Department of Communication at RIT is neither accredited nor certified by either ACEJMC nor CEPR, so not having a unit-specific curricula with sequencing and prerequisites for the courses used was the main obstacle to first overcome. The courses addressed in this study were Campaign Planning and Management, an Advertising and Public Relations (APR) course in the College of Liberal Arts' Department of Communication at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), offered each Spring Quarter; and a special topics course, Strategic nonprofit Communication, developed and offered online in the Spring quarter as well.

A requirement for APR majors and an elective for others in the department, Campaign Planning and Management has also been suggested as an option to students across the campus as a liberal arts elective. The course description reads:

“This course introduces students to the managing and planning of advertising and public relations campaigns. It takes a team project approach thereby helping students learn how to work together in class as well as in a competitive agency. Service-learning will be used to expose students to community causes and service learning.”

Service-learning as defined by the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (NSLC) is “teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.”

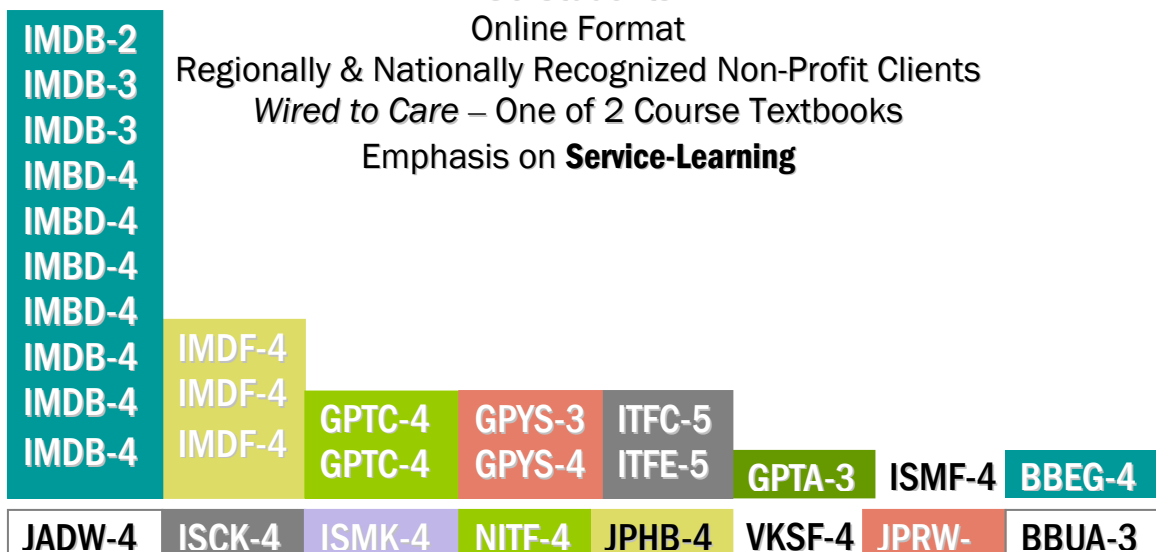
Because we are on a quarter system (10 week increments), what we do in the classroom has to really matter from a logistics point-of-view as well. For some students, this is the only opportunity they will

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Both courses mirrored a dissected view of the campus community, comprised of a broad cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural, ethnically diverse groups of students, ranging from aspiring nanotechnology engineers and information technology designers to public relations, advertising, marketing practitioners, graphic designers, and photographers. This is an ideal environment for researching ways to infuse human and social science skills into cross-disciplinary projects that are important to developing positive, global initiatives – again, *integrated planning and management*. Relationship skills, useful in the myriad of future workplaces, are seeded as the students learn that practitioners in any given field do not work in isolation nor do they work solely with others who share the same knowledge, enthusiasm and zeal for the profession.

## **STRATEGIC NON PROFIT COMMUNICATIONS**

## Emphasis on **Service-Learning**



## 16 Different Disciplines

## CAMPAIGN PLANNING AND MANGEMENT

### *Course Enrollment by Program and Year*

#### Key Course Components included:

29 Students

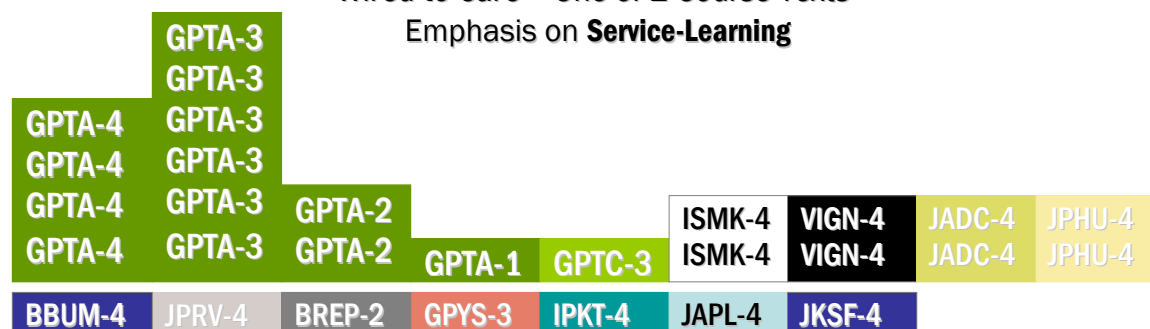
Traditional setting

Nationally Recognized Commercial Client

The TV Show, “Celebrity Apprentice” as Learning Tool

*Wired to Care* – One of 2 Course Texts

Emphasis on **Service-Learning**



### 13 Different Disciplines

#### *The Research Project:*

Two strategic campaign planning and management courses addressed ways to provide viable applied research strategies for a very diverse population of students, bringing together myriad of ideas, opinions and knowledge bases.

#### **Integrating Student Research into the Course**

The methodology used is a combination of strategies that have proven successful in prior collaborations:

- 1) Seek out, identify, and gain access to case study campaigns that show commonalities from environments and groups that usually do not have an institutional relationship.
- 2) Format the case studies to be used as classroom teaching materials and include electronic access to the communication materials used in the campaigns.
- 3) Write a series of case scenarios, identifying specific problems to be addressed and solved.
- 4) Create a team of online experts with whom the student groups can engage in online chats, email or other social networking methods to discuss the scenarios and topics.