

# Belmont University

## Public Relations Program

### Annual Report

#### 2004-2005 (Academic Year)

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Belmont University approved a new major and minor in public relations, beginning in the fall of 2004. Students may earn a bachelor of science or a bachelor of arts degree in the major. The major was added to the Media Studies Department, which also houses journalism, mass communications, and audio/video production. As of April 13, 2005, public relations has 31 majors and six minors, establishing it as one of the fastest growing programs on campus for the academic year 2004-2005.

The Media Studies Department and its students have accomplished Herculean tasks in the past year, and the following are highlights of their accomplishments:

#### The Department

- Developed and implemented the last two courses in the core curriculum, *MDS 3180 Public Relations Research* and *MDS 4180 Public Relations Strategy and Implementation*. The entire core curriculum is now in place, because the first two courses were phased in the previous year.
- Formulated a seven-member advisory board.
- Applied for a student chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. Application is pending, and most likely will be approved at the July 2005 meeting of the PRSA Board.
- Conducted a very successful research project as part of *MDS 3180 Public Relations Research*, surveying Davidson County about the 2004 presidential election. This was a collaborative effort with the Political Science Department.
- Added new members to the Public Relations Society of Belmont and sponsored several campus-wide events, including a convocation featuring our own Greg Bailey.
- Partnered successfully with the Nashville Chapter of PRSA on many events that benefited students and brought community credibility to the program. Significant events include hosting the chapter's monthly luncheon twice during the year and two significant events of the Young Professionals Group of the Nashville Chapter. Belmont students participated in all four events. Ameila Consedine, Megan Coppage, and Sara Strong also worked the Parthenon Awards – a significant professional event of Nashville PRSA.
- Joined the Young Professionals Group as a committee member to provide a liaison between the university and Nashville PRSA. This committee work has led to internships and other opportunities for Belmont students; Belmont is the only regional school with representation on this group.
- Hired two new adjunct faculty: Professor Heath Shackleford to teach MDS 2180 and Professor Greg Pillon to teach MDS 1180. Professor Pam Parry will continue to teach those as part of a rotation, but adjunct faculty has helped meet departmental needs.

- Published professional articles in both *PR Tactics* and *Quill*, as well as a publication of the Association for Education in Journalism and Communication. The *PR Tactics* article was published in the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of the publication, giving it higher visibility. It also was published simultaneously with the launch of the program.
- Program Director was named one of four Finalists for the President Faculty Achievement Award for service to students. The Program Director was nominated for her work with the public relations program, indicating the university values public relations and the department's accomplishments to date.
- Program Director was promoted to rank of associate professor and given tenure.

### The Students

- Thirteen public relations students conducted a telephone poll on the presidential election. They wrote the survey, placed the phone calls, collected a sample size of 703, analyzed the data, wrote research papers, and presented their findings at a Belmont-wide convocation in December. Political science students also participated.
- Five of those 13 students are retooling their research project, and they will present it from a fresh perspective at the Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium (BURS) in April 2005. They are Ameila Consedine, Megan Coppage, Rebecca Neenan, Sara Strong, and Joe Woolley. This is particularly significant because it is not a class requirement; this presentation is something the students want to do over and above their hectic schedules.
- Twelve students have participated in a service-learning class that has teamed them with community partners. In essence, they have worked one hour a week with community clients so they can experience the real world. They've worked for the American Cancer Society, the Community Resource Center, the Multiple Sclerosis Society, The Southwestern Company, The National Renal Alliance, the Girl Scouts of Cumberland Valley, and several Belmont University departments.
- Four students competed in the Southeast Journalism Conference in Ruston, Louisiana, in February. This was the first time Belmont public relations students competed in the annual student event, and all four of them took first place honors. Jen Clark, Megan Coppage, and Sara Strong took first place honors in the Public Relations competition. Ameila Consedine took first place honors for Media Ethics.
- Twenty-one students wrote articles for the 2005 College of Arts and Sciences newsletter.
- Rebecca Neenan wrote and helped produce a brochure on the Public Relations Program.
- Two students – Megan Coppage and Jen Clark – were honored by the department at the College of Arts and Sciences Awards Ceremony April 20. Megan was named the 2005 Most Promising New PR Student, and Jen was named the 2005 Public Relations Practitioner of the Year.
- Rebecca Neenan is also helping to write and envision significant improvements to the departmental Web site, particularly the Public Relations section.
- Several students have secured successful internships, including Freshman Madeline Hagan who is working in the TennCare Office of the Governor. This is a significant placement, particularly for a freshman.
- Several students have gained experience writing for the student-run newspaper, *The Vision*, including Ameila Consedine who has had a regular column.