

# Touch of Class

News About the Rowan University Graduate Public Relations Program

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## Master Class

### Doing Good with PR: How communication helps improve the world around us

Non-profit public relations offers professionals the opportunity to follow their passion and improve the world around them at the same time.

On Monday, March 28, the Master in Public Relations program hosted its annual Master Class featuring a panel of professionals who take advantage of that opportunity daily.

The class discussion focused on nonprofit public relations this year. Four nonprofit executives shared insights on how nonprofit organizations use communication to influence action and better the lives of people and communities. The panel consisted of four MAPR alumni: Ethan Aronoff, president of the Milville Public Library Board of Trustees; Kamali Brooks, Communications Manager at Soroptimist International of the Americas; Courtney Nelson, Senior Director of Community Health for the NJ American Heart Association and Sherry Hicks, Rowan Advertising instructor and former Director of Communications for the Pennsylvania Humanities Council.

The discussion, moderated by Professor Edward Moore, centered on how non-profit PR continues to change; the fight to remain relevant; the importance of perception; and advice for conducting successful, goal-oriented campaigns. The panelists offered key insights as well as unique perspectives from varying positions within non-profit PR.

Before the evening concluded panelists were asked to share advice for someone seeking a job in nonprofit PR. Courtney Nelson, Senior Director of Community Health for the NJ American Heart Association, said, “you have to be able to talk to people on a personal level, be willing to put yourself out there. You have to show us that you’re able to represent us in a real person world.”

“Remember to set goals that are realistic and be able to justify them.”

-Kamali Brooks,



Professor Edward Moore introduces the panelists for the Master Class. Left: Professor Edward Moore. Right: Panelist, Ethan Aronoff.



Above: Panelist, Kamali Brooks offers campaign advice. From left to right: Ethan Aronoff, Kamali Brooks, Courtney Nelson and Sherry Hicks.

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# Student Spotlight: One of the 'Best'

*Steve Levine, writer and editorial specialist for the Media and Public Relations Department of Rowan University wrote a feature story on MAPR student and inaugural recipient of the Bagin Educational Foundation Memorial Scholarship, Shatoyah Best. Below is an excerpt from the full story which is featured on Rowan's website.*

Shatoyah Best never knew her father and never had a good relationship with her mother. She was born premature and expected by her delivering doctor never to walk.

She grew up in Camden with her maternal grandmother, a caring, gentle mother of 10 who massaged Best's young limbs daily, willing movement into them. By the age of one, Best not only walked but, on a routine visit to the physician who delivered her, virtually ran into the disbelieving doctor's arms.

"I was so heartbroken... I was hanging with the wrong crowd. School wasn't even an option."

Uncommonly close with her grandmother, the two attended church daily and studied the Bible at home when they could not get to services. But, in 2008, her grandmother got sick and passed away. "I was so heartbroken," she says.

Consumed by grief, Best says she gave in to the easy temptation of drugs and alcohol. It almost killed her. Twice she was admitted to the hospital for alcohol poisoning and three times she was homeless. "I could have been a statistic," she says.

Fortunately, she wasn't. On Thursday, May 12, Best will graduate at the top of her class with her second Rowan University degree, a Master of Arts in Public Relations, during the Commencement ceremony for the College of Communication and Creative Arts.

To be sure, it hasn't been an easy road for Best. Released from the hospital following the second alcohol poisoning, Best began thinking of her grandmother and dedicated herself to making her proud. She committed to her sobriety and enrolled at Camden County College in Camden, where she found a work-study job as a computer lab technician. She kept top grades, made the dean's list every semester, and graduated in 2010 with an associate's degree in computer graphics.

"My grandmother always told me a few things: get some letters behind your name and be number one in your class," she said.

Best took classes at all three Camden County College campuses – Camden, Cherry Hill and Blackwood – to broaden her exposure outside of her city, but her heart never left it. She used her graphic design skills to make affordable funeral home obituary cards for Camden families who lost loved ones and used her ease with the Internet to help fellow students complete tortuous financial aid forms.

Still living in Camden, she transferred to Rowan's Main Campus in Glassboro. Just getting to and from school could take half her day as she rode two buses and a shuttle each way. Yet, she persevered. Despite the commute—sometimes catching a little sleep in Campbell Library or an all-night computer lab—she graduated in 2014 with her bachelor's degree in advertising and a minor in new media.

Best plans to add to her graduate degree with a Ph.D. She has applied to the doctoral program in communication science at Temple University.

"What I love about this field is that through our ability to communicate we can persuade people to take action, and that's very powerful," Best said. "Whatever the medium--commercial advertising, billboards, logos--if we just frame the message properly we can persuade people to do something."

Gary Divens, dean of Camden County College's Camden campus and a mentor to Best, said that sounds familiar. Despite all of the difficulties life has thrown at her, she remains triumphant. "Everything is coming together for her and I'm just so proud," Divens said. "She will be a role model, not just for her family but for the city."

On April 16, during the 4th Annual College of Communication Awards Show and Student Showcase, Best was the inaugural recipient of the Bagin Educational Foundation Memorial Scholarship. Though the dollar amount may vary in coming years, the \$2,500 award is to support graduate students with a community service bent and high academic achievement.

"My grandmother always told me: get some letters behind your name and be number one in your class."

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Special thanks to Steve Levine for providing the student spotlight, One of the 'Best' and to MAPR student Nadya Rivera for providing feedback on Mentor Night.

Questions?  
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## Class Spotlight Special Topics: How Media Affect Reputation

Professor Patricia Quigley's special topics course, *How Media Affect Reputation*, demonstrates a unique opportunity for both undergraduate and graduate students.

As a professor and an experienced journalist, Quigley brings a comprehensive perspective to media relations. She offers students in-depth learning based on both a journalist's and public relations practitioner's point-of-view.

In addition, the special topics course features two guest speakers offering varying viewpoints. The first guest speaker, political strategist Steve Ayscue, spoke of the sometimes turbulent relationship politicians and the media share. He offered students interested in public affairs an inside look at the hard work that goes on behind the scenes of every political campaign.

Later in the semester the class also featured a second guest speaker, Rowan University's social media coordinator, Danielle Roberts.

Roberts explained the importance of social media and how vital communication takes place over social media platforms daily.

Students learned the unique challenges inherent to using social media from a University's point-of-view as well as the fast-paced thinking behind social media communication during a crisis.

This classroom's heterogeneous student make up afforded individuals with a unique learning opportunity. From undergrad to part-time student professionals, everyone's participation in class led to a weekly dialogue from which everyone learned something new.



**Above:** Political strategist, Steve Ayscue.  
**Below:** Rowan Social Media Coordinator, Danielle Roberts.



## ***Congratulations!*** MAPR Student to Intern for NCI Health Communications

First year MAPR student Lucia Allen was recently selected as an intern for the highly competitive Health Communication Internship Program at the National Cancer Institute. She will work in the Office of Communications and Public Liaison/Office of Public Affairs. Allen looks forward to the professional mentorship and many opportunities for career development.

The National Cancer Institute (NCI), the largest of the 27 institutes and centers comprising the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The Health Communication Internship Program (HCIP) was established in 1975 and gives qualified graduate students opportunity to take part in health and science communication projects with an emphasis in either health communication or science writing.

## Mentor Night

### MAPR Students match with program alum

Mentor night, hosted on December 8, offered MAPR students the opportunity to meet, network and exchange information with an alum of the program.

Mentors and mentees enjoyed refreshments and took part in one-on-one discussions. Mentors offered students advice on job searching, tips based on personal experience and how to find success after graduating from the MAPR program.

“Mentor Night allowed me invaluable one-on-one time with an expert in the field.”

For MAPR students, meeting a mentor means connecting with someone and building social networks. According to MAPR student, Nadya Rivera, “After meeting my mentor we connected on LinkedIn and still keep in touch. She encouraged me to reach out should I ever have questions or need guidance on anything.”



**Above:** Mentor, Jennifer Johnston listens to questions from MAPR students Kimberlee Cirillo (left) and Chelsea Skinner (right).

**Below:** MAPR students Tim Louie (left) and Amanda Hiltner (right) talk with mentor Steve Levine.



## To Our Mentors: Thank you!

### Steve Levine

Writer/Editorial Specialist,  
Media and Public Relations  
*Rowan University*

### Jennifer Johnston

Senior Communications Manager  
*Christiana Care Health System*

### Dan Lockwood

Manager, Stakeholder Relations  
*South Jersey Industries*

### Patricia Quigley

Assistant Director of Media and  
Public Relations  
*Rowan University*

### Gregory Richter

Senior Medical Communications  
Officer  
*Penn Medicine, University of  
Pennsylvania Health System*

### Claire Riggs

Public Affairs Director  
*Axeon Specialty Products, LLC*

### Arianna Stefanoni Sherlock

Corporate Public Relations  
*Vanguard*



## Get Connected

Connect with fellow Rowan public relations graduates and students through our new Facebook group. Share job leads, internship information or ask PR-related questions.

As a closed group, only other group members can see your posts or replies.

Link: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/953191958095248/>