

Touch of Class

News about the Rowan University Graduate Public Relations Program

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Student Spotlight: Andrea Stanton

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Student spotlight: Andrea Stanton 1

Graduate focus: Brianne Rabouin 2

Graduate comps scheduled 2

P.R. professionals mentor graduate students 3

2012 Master classes 3

Some people pursue advanced degrees to help launch a new career.

Some people, like Andrea Stanton, Public Relations and Marketing Administrator at Gloucester County College, pursue advanced degrees to enhance their current careers.

We asked Stanton to tell us how her experiences at Rowan enrich her professional life.

Q. What are your current job responsibilities?

A. I have a variety of duties in this role. I attend meetings and events, work with area businesses and organizations to publicize partnership efforts, and prepare marketing materials both for print and electronic media.

I am also responsible for researching, taking photos, interviewing and writing news releases and media advisories, assisting with the monitoring and writing of website information, and arranging interviews and media opportunities that promote the positive achievements of students, programs, and the college.

Finally, I volunteer public relations assistance and serve on committees, both internally at the college and externally within the community.

Q. How long have you been in Rowan's M.A. in P.R. program?

A. I am taking the *long*, slow route, one course at a time. I started in 2006 and matriculated in fall 2009.

Q. What interested you about P.R. as an area of study?

A. I graduated from Glassboro State College with a bachelor's degree in English and quite a few art classes.

My first job was as a technical editor of six books at American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) in Philadelphia. Years later when I was a stay-at-home mom, I began freelance writing for area newspapers—The Plain Dealer (weekly), Gloucester County Times and Courier Post.

It was through reporting that I made contacts with school superintendents and was hired freelance/part time to do public relations for the Monroe Township and Glassboro School Districts. I sort of fell into P.R.

Q. Why did you choose to go back to graduate school?

A. Education has always been an important part of my life and I enjoy learning. When I was hired at Gloucester County College as the public relations administrator, taking classes towards a master's degree in P.R. was a way to develop and expand my skills, learn from professionals working in the field and improve my opportunity for career advancement.

Q. As a working professional, do you find that Rowan classes do a good job of preparing students for careers in P.R.?

A. For the most part, yes. I have been fortunate that the classes I have taken were timely. When I was in P.R. Management

and Counseling, we had a situation on campus and the information I learned in class was useful. When we introduced Facebook at the college, I was taking Online Public Relations which proved to be helpful. Now I am taking an Integrated Marketing Communications class which is also beneficial in promoting GCC's new dual enrollment partnership with Rowan.

Q. What is the most important skill a P.R. practitioner should develop?

A. Good writing skills—writing is the foundation of communication so it is important to be able to clearly articulate an idea. Other skills, such as pitching a story to the press and using social media can be learned. ●



Andrea Stanton

Graduate focus: Brianne Rabouin

Brianne Rabouin (M'11), as seen at this year's Mentor Night, fills the role of "P.R. mentor" well.

Though she graduated just last year, her array of professional and scholastic experiences make her a well-rounded P.R. professional.

We asked Rabouin to tell us about her experiences at Rowan and her current career.

Q. Where are you now working and what are your job responsibilities?

A. In July 2011, I started at the Midland Foundation—the fundraising arm of the Midland School and Midland Adult Services, Inc. (MAS) in North Branch, N.J., that serves children and adults with developmental disabilities.

I work under the director of development as the public relations associate, and together, we plan two annual fundraising events—the Midland Golf Classic and Midland Goes to the Movies with PNC (dinner and an independent film), in addition to other "friend-raisers" to spread the Midland story.

I also maintain our donor database, write gift acknowledgements, handle

media relations, manage our newly developed social media pages on Facebook and Twitter and serve as editor of our twice-yearly "Midland Messenger" newsletter.

Q. Why did you choose this particular field?

A. As an undergraduate I interned with the Volunteer Center of Gloucester County (on the Gloucester County College campus) as a public relations and special events coordinator, and as a graduate student I worked as the public relations and advertising department graduate assistant.

Both of these positions gave me experience in nonprofit work and special events in an educational setting.

I also earned a certificate of graduate study in school public relations and won the New Jersey School Public Relations Association (NJSPRA) scholarship for a strategic communications plan for a school district in 2011. So the idea of working for a school always appealed to me.

Now that I work at Midland, I am able to use my experiences and skills in a place that truly makes a difference and allows students to reach their full potential in and out of the classroom. I look forward to going to work each day and I'm proud to be a part of the Midland family.

Q. What skills did you learn at Rowan that best prepared you for the workforce?

A. Rowan's program and professors taught me writing, research and planning skills which are all applicable in my current position.

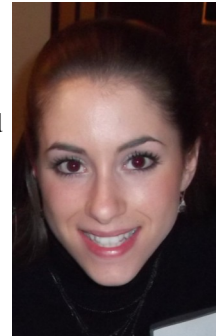
Whether I write a news release, a newsletter article, a donor thank you letter or a social media update at work, I always have the "rules" in mind and both the AP Stylebook and Prof. Litwin's *Playbook* on my desk.

Q. What skills are most valuable for P.R. professionals?

A. P.R. professionals should learn to write—and write well. A strong understanding of AP style, grammar and solid writing skills are must-haves in this field.

As communicators, it's our job to craft everything from news releases to blog posts in the most clear, concise and compelling way possible.

And that requires great writing—and great thinking. ●



Brianne Rabouin

"P.R. professionals should learn to write—and write well."

Graduate comps scheduled

Students will take the written portion of the Graduate Comprehensive Exam on **April 13**.

All current students planning to take the exam this year must register before **Feb. 29**.

Students should also attend a comps informational meeting planned for 5 p.m. on **Feb. 7**.

(You can fill out registration forms at the meeting or you can see Mrs. Hillman to get a form.)

The oral exams will take place during the week of **April 16**.

Each student will receive a specific time for his or her oral exam.

P.R. professionals mentor graduate students

They say the best way to learn is through experience. For students working toward their Master's degrees, another great way to learn is by speaking to someone who *has* experience.

That's why the M.A. in P.R. program has hosted a Mentor Night each year for more than 30 years. Mentor Night provides students a chance to connect, in person, with a mentor who has experience in the student's desired field.

This year's Mentor Night included a range of mentors, from professors to non-profit workers to corporate consultants.

It was held on Nov. 15 in Hollybush, where the historic 1967 Summit Meeting took place.

Besides giving guidance about navigating the workforce after graduation, many of the mentors are Rowan P.R. graduates. They gave students valuable tips on successfully completing the Master's program, including finishing a thesis and surviving the comprehensive exams.

Students agreed that the event was a great experience in terms of learning more about their future careers.

"Everyone had a great time," said EJ Campbell. "Not only did the students get great advice and information about specific fields, but the mentors got to reconnect with professors and other alums as well."

"I learned a lot from my mentor because her job is very similar to my non-profit internship," said Salita Demary. "We were able to discuss job duty similarities and differences."

"I walked away from Mentor Night with a renewed sense of excitement towards the field," said Rachel Graeff. ●

Jen Johnston, Christiana Care Health System

Marisa Sharkey, St. Christopher's Hospital for Children

Alisa Hogan, Stockton College

Brianne Rabouin, Midland Foundation

Larry Litwin, Rowan University

Joe Harasta, Kutztown University

Jake Farbman, NJ Council of County Colleges

Kamali Brooks, Soroptimist International of the Americas

Jeff O'Connor, St. Paul Saints

Bob Ambrose, Independent Gaming and Hospitality Consultant



Above, grad student Rose Howerter meets with mentor Kamali Brooks. Below, a group of mentors and mentees in discussion.



Touch of Class is published by the M.A. in P.R. program College of Communication Rowan University Glassboro, NJ 08028

Writer and Editor:

Cate Girone
Graduate Program Assistant

Program Advisors

Dr. Suzanne FitzGerald
sparks@rowan.edu

Professor Edward H. Moore
mooree@rowan.edu

Questions?

E-mail Cate at
girone68@students.rowan.edu

2012 Master Classes

All graduate students should attend the two master classes scheduled for this semester:

P.R. Career Trends on March 26

Using P.R. to Support School Foundations on April 3

Invited speakers will address both sessions in Hollybush at 6:30 p.m.