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Message from the Chair

Dear Health Academy Members,

This is a time of both challenges and opportunities for health care public relations professionals. A rapidly changing media landscape and health care reform are just two of the issues that each of us will confront this year.

A study late last year by the Pew Research Center's Project on Excellence in Journalism and the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation found that health coverage is shrinking in news outlets across the United States. You may not need a study to tell you this. Major newspapers like the *Baltimore Sun*, *Newsday* and the *Dallas Morning News* have eliminated their health and science sections, and it is likely that at least one television station in your local market has closed its health reporting unit. Meanwhile, social media are growing rapidly, and are surely here to stay. We ignore social media at our own peril, and the peril of our employers and clients.

No matter how health care reform efforts eventually turn out, it is also a sure bet that change will come in this area. Fortunately, the Health Academy and PRSA are positioned to empower public relations professionals to excel in informed, effective, ethical and respectful communications that will serve our organizations and constituencies well in the face of these unique circumstances.

We have planned our annual conference, May 13–15 in Washington D.C., with these challenges and opportunities in mind. With its singular focus on social media, the conference is not one that many of us can afford to miss. We have kept the conference's traditional focus on Beltway health care issues with keynote speaker, NPR's Mara Liasson, who surely has her finger on the health care reform pulse. And, as you'll read in this issue, we will have a presentation from the winner of our first-ever white paper competition, who will discuss how to improve health reporting in this rapidly evolving media landscape. The competition, which is in partnership with Quinnipiac University, is an effort to more closely align public relations research with practice. I hope it becomes the first of many such efforts by the Health Academy.

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Finally, I wanted to bring your attention to the articles in this issue about our two recent membership surveys. We value our members' input, and will continually look for ways to increase the value of the Health Academy to our profession and to you, our members.

Garland Stansell
PRSA Health Academy Chair – 2009

PRSA Bylaws to be Updated

PRSA will update and change its bylaws this year, in order to keep up-to-date with modern governance theories and current best practices in association management.

The Society has established a number of resources to seek input and keep members apprised of progress.

- Questions may be sent at any time to governance@prsa.org.
- A Governance e-Group is now available in the MemberNet section of the PRSA Web site, www.prsa.org.
- The site includes a list of frequently asked questions. Background materials and presentations can also be accessed.
- The PRSA Board of Directors will hold a series of calls on this topic with Chapter, District and Section leaders and assembly delegates.

Watch this newsletter, and the PRSA Web site, for updates as the process moves forward.

The One Conference You Need to Attend This Year

- Do you know what your clients are expecting of you in a Web 2.0 world?
- Do you grasp the tools your competition has already mastered?
- Are you prepared to provide communications that reach clients, customers and communities inexpensively and effectively?

These are just a few of the critical questions that the PRSA Health Academy Conference, “Leveraging Social Media in Health Care Public Relations,” will address. Join us as we assemble the nation’s leading social media experts to provide you with the Web 2.0 advantage, May 13–15, in Washington D.C.

Hear from top practitioners who will provide case studies and strategies that you can implement immediately. Leading experts will discuss:

- How to use social media to make the most of opportunities in a changing financial environment.
- How social media are changing the way the PR “game” is played across the health care sector.
- Leveraging blogosphere influentials to help carry your message.
- Ways that news media are incorporating user-generated content into new media strategies.
- How social media are changing media training requirements.
- Getting started in the health blogosphere.
- How the latest breakthroughs in health care information technology are advancing the frontiers of social media.
- How to engage patients, physicians, consumers, philanthropists, thought leaders and other stakeholders in the online environment.

Conference speakers will also provide updates and analysis on health care reform and how it will impact the industry. And we will have an enlightening preconference session at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

It is a conference you won’t want to miss! If you register by April 21, you will save \$100. For more information or to register, visit <http://healthacademy.prsa.org/2009conference.html>.

Membership Survey: Your Voice is Heard

By Garland Stansell

One hundred twenty-two, or 16 percent of all Health Academy members responded to the recent PRSA Sections Omnibus Survey. While respondents said that we were doing some things right, they indicated that there is also room for improvement. We are taking steps now to determine how we can address member concerns. Here are some highlights of survey responses:

- 58.2 percent find their Health Academy membership “somewhat” to “extremely” valuable. Another 30.3 percent of the respondents find membership value to be “neutral.”
- The Section’s perceived value score of 58.2 percent is above the median value of 55 percent for all PRSA Sections.

While these numbers are somewhat disappointing, survey respondents indicated that the Health Academy is doing a lot of things right and much of the feedback was positive. For example, over 50 percent cited the Section conference and learning about specialized public relations as benefits that are important. The top values of our current offerings to members included:

- The opportunity to meet colleagues face-to-face at events such as the conference.
- Interacting with others in the health care field through e-group
- Connecting with colleagues on social networks moderated by the Health Academy such as LinkedIn and Facebook.
- Building a network in the profession to serve as resources and support (connections/mentors).

It is clear, however, that Health Academy members desire additional benefits and a strengthening of current offerings. More than 60 percent of members listed access to resources and networking as their top two desired benefits. Of the benefit deliverables provided by most “like” communities identified in the survey, the only benefits not provided by the Health Academy are information on current industry trends, monographs/white papers and specific industry resource links. I should note that we are making available a new white paper, with the Health Academy/Quinnipiac white paper competition. This research will be presented at our spring conference (see article, page 6).

Respondents were given the opportunity to recommend topics for the Section to address in future professional development planning. Recommendations included social marketing, health promotion and advocacy, consumer-driven health care and health care reform/legislative issues.

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What We Currently Offer

Last year, the section provided five issues of our electronic newsletter; held an in-person Health Intersection Event in San Francisco; four teleseminars; our own record-breaking conference in Chicago; sponsored a health care-related session at the PRSA 2008 International Conference in Detroit; and presented the annual Weaver and MacEachern awards. We also instituted our white paper competition, as noted above.

What We May Offer

The Health Academy executive committee has reviewed your responses and is taking your recommendations seriously. While we are still analyzing survey results, here is a preliminary sampling of some of the take-aways that are being considered for 2009 and beyond:

- Additional networking opportunities.
- Improved professional development opportunities for specific segments of the Section.
- Resources and links to resources pertinent to the Section.

We welcome your input and hope to improve on the already strong benefit offerings available. Please keep in mind that if you elect to be active, engaged and participatory, you will be better connected and informed, and will receive much more out of your membership. We encourage each member to take advantage of the 2009 benefits and to work with us in strengthening your organization.

Who Responded to the Survey

Health Academy members responding to the survey fit the following profile:

Health Academy member for five years or less = 60%
Health Academy member for six to nine years = 15%
Health Academy member for ten years or more = 25%
Hospital/provider sector of the industry = 46%
Insurance/payor sector of the industry = 15%
Pharmaceutical sector of the industry = 11%
Other health care related sectors = 28%

First Health Academy/Quinnipiac University Paper Sheds Light on Health Reporting

By Kurt Wise, Ph.D., APR

The phrase “accuracy in health reporting” may be something of an oxymoron, according to results of a study conducted by professors at Auburn University and the University of North Carolina/Charlotte. The surprising results of this survey will be the focus of a paper presented at the Health Academy’s 2009 spring conference in Washington, D.C. (see page 3).

Brigitta L. Brunner, Ph.D., associate professor in Auburn’s department of communication & journalism, will present “101 Ways to Improve Health Reporting.” Dr. Brunner co-authored the paper with Larissa R. Brunner Huber, Ph.D., assistant professor in the department of public health sciences at UNC/Charlotte.

The Brunners’ paper is the winner of the first PRSA Health Academy/Quinnipiac University Paper Competition. The competition is designed to encourage research that enhances the practice of health care public relations.

Dr. Brunner has published in scholarly journals focusing on public relations such as the *Journal of Public Relations Research* and *Public Relations Review*. Dr. Brunner Huber has also published in health journals including the *Journal of Women’s Health* and the *American Journal of Epidemiology*.

The paper will be presented at the Health Academy conference the morning of May 15. For more information, visit <http://healthacademy.prsa.org/2009conference.html>

Dr. Kurt Wise is the chair of the public relations department at Quinnipiac University and a member of the PRSA Health Academy Board of Directors.

Kaiser to Release Reports on Health Care Journalism

On March 11, the Kaiser Family Foundation will release a new report examining the state of health care journalism and a survey of members of the Association of Health Care Journalists. The reports will be posted on Kaiser’s Web site at 10 a.m. EDT on March 11. On March 12, the foundation will post a webcast of the news conference and expert panel discussion to release these reports. For more information, go to www.kff.org.

Health Academy Awards Survey – Thanks for Your Input (And Enter Today!)

Sixty-five Health Academy members responded to our recent survey about our awards, the Frank J. Weaver Lifetime Achievement Award and the MacEachern Chief Executive Officer Award, which honor individuals who have shown vision and leadership in health care public relations. We appreciate your input, and would like to share highlights of survey results.

- 36.9 percent of respondents had not heard of the Weaver Award, and 39.1% had not heard of the MacEachern Award. The most well-known individual award was the PRSA Gold Anvil, which 61.5% of respondents were “very familiar” with.
- Three of those responding have nominated someone for the Weaver Award, while two nominated someone for the MacEachern Award.
- Of those who have not nominated someone for either award, the most frequent reason was that they were “unaware of the awards” (46.9%), followed by “don’t usually nominate candidates for awards” (29.7%) and “don’t know anyone who is eligible” (25%).
- While a majority (62.5%) said that they have never nominated anyone for an individual award, 37.5% have nominated someone. The awards named by these respondents varied, but were primarily honors given by local groups or local chapters of national organizations, including PRSA.

To read complete results, please go to:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=2btZeY_2bgelzVRLQlq3FCS2A_3d_3d

Don't Miss Out on 2009 Awards

Based on your feedback, we are moving forward with the 2009 Health Academy Awards, which will be given at our spring conference in Washington, D.C. In response to member feedback, we will give this year’s awards during the plenary session on May 14.

Be sure to **enter by March 20**. Winners will be notified by April 10. For entry information, visit <http://healthacademy.prsa.org/documents/HA%20Awards%20Criteria%202009.pdf>.