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# PUBLIC RELATIONS & ADVERTISING FAQs

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**Get the Answers to the Questions You've Been Asking  
(And Ones You Didn't Even Know You Had)**

*If you know what you're doing, your time at Chapman will be incredibly rewarding. Here are some questions other students have asked and tips that faculty recommend to help things go more smoothly.*

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## The PRA program at Chapman

1. What distinguishes PRA from every other PR and/or advertising program available to undergraduate students today?

The Chapman PRA program offers several unique elements:

- a. You will study both PR and advertising, two disciplines that almost always work together and are highly integrated in today’s online world. Following classes in an integrated core, you can choose to specialize in one area or the other, or sample classes in both disciplines.
  - b. We focus on creativity in a hands-on curriculum. Uniquely positioned in Dodge College of Film and Media Arts, you will learn to use all kinds of media tools and communicate effectively using the visual media that dominate communication today.
2. Should I pursue the PRA program in Dodge if I don’t want to go into entertainment marketing or publicity?

Absolutely! Although we offer a unique focus on entertainment marketing through our capstone class, you can—and will—apply the same tools to any PR, marketing or advertising campaign you might undertake for a non-profit, in the corporate world, in health, education, politics, you name it. Every business and organization today needs to tell its story, and the PRA program offers you the education to do that using the tools that resonate with audiences today—the visual media.

## Advising

1. What can I expect from my PRA advisor?

You can expect your PRA advisor to help you plan what classes to take in the major and when you should take them and to offer advice on career planning, internships etc. Although you should also take advantage of the advising center to plan your GE courses, your PRA advisor can give you advice here as well and should review your program evaluation with you to make sure you are on track for graduation.

## 2. How do I know who my advisor is?

You should receive an email when you first enter Chapman advising you as to which faculty member you have been assigned as an advisee. In any case, your advisor is listed in WebAdvisor.

## 3. In what ways does PRA provide personalized education?

The PRA faculty are very invested in you—in getting to know you individually, in being available to meet with you to discuss your goals, class projects or just life. Take advantage of their interest by reaching out, coming in to office hours or just stopping in the hallway for a chat. You do not and should not limit your outside of class interactions to just your assigned advisor.

That said, you should share your career interests with your PRA advisor so that he or she can help you identify specific classes and other opportunities, such as internships, that will support your career goals.

## Planning for graduation

### What do I need to do to make sure I graduate on time?

1. Know your catalog year.
2. Understand the undergraduate degree requirements:
  - a. Total number of units needed to graduate (124)
  - b. Upper division units required to graduate (42)
  - c. Credits outside of the major
  - d. GE requirements
3. Know how to read your program evaluation and check it every semester.
4. Make sure you are aware of prerequisites so that you can take courses in the required order.
5. Watch what semester various courses are offered when you create your 4-year plan.

## Major/Course requirements

### 1. What is the significance of my "catalog year?"

You will be held to the specific requirements of the catalog to which you are assigned—freshmen are under the catalog for the year in which they enter Chapman. Transfer students are under the catalog for the year before you enter Chapman, working on the assumption that before you transferred you were planning your courses at your first school to work with what was being offered at Chapman. If you change catalogs because the requirements in the major may have changed while you were at Chapman or you wish to choose another major, you will also be held to any changes that may have been put in place in regards to GE. It is best to run a “what if” scenario with your program evaluation before you decide to change catalogs for any reason.

### 2. Can I mix and match PR and Advertising classes?

Yes. Although the program offers unofficial “tracks,” you are not required to choose one or the other.

### 3. What minors work well with PR and Advertising?

Truthfully, any minor will work since PR and advertising people can work in a wide variety of fields, a broad education is useful. Follow your passion or pursue a secondary area of interest. That said, certain minors can help you prepare for specific fields. For example, political science would be useful if you want to get involved with communications for a political candidate. Journalism, psychology, graphic design, television or leadership studies are also among programs that pair well with a PRA degree.

### 4. How many PRA elective classes are available and how often are they offered?

There are a good number of PRA electives, however we are limited by the university as to how many classes we can offer. Given the size of our majors and minors, we need to offer the required courses to serve our students first, which can limit how many electives we can offer in any given term. Typically, we offer Advanced Public Relations Writing, Storytelling for Business, Business Presentations, Student Advertising Agency and Producing Commercials on a regular basis.

### 5. What are PRA majors required to take Visual Storytelling and Film Aesthetics? Why can't I just rent the videos for Film Aesthetics instead of taking the lab?

The vast majority of communication today includes visual components—from YouTube videos to professionally produced commercials. In order to work successfully as a PR or advertising professional, it is essential that you understand the language of visual communication—how things such as camera angle, editing, sound, narrative arcs etc. shape a story or corporate communication. You may or may not be directly creating visual communications, but you will certainly be involved in supervising, requesting or critiquing these tools as they support your work. Hence it is critical that you know what works and what doesn't and why. (As far as the lab goes, faculty provide context for the screenings and this insures that students see films as they were intended on the big screen and that they do, in fact see them.)

### 6. What is the difference between PR and Advertising and Strategic and Corporate Communications?

Although these degrees are similar in their focus on communication, the PRA degree is more focused on a hands-on program using media tools and developing creative strategies to support the communication goals of all kinds of organizations—PR firms and ad agencies, businesses of all kinds, non-profits, educational and arts groups etc. and to handle media relations, event planning, social media, the creative work behind ads and PR campaigns and so on. Strategic and Corporate Communications is more focused on theory and research, with more business classes, preparing students to work in a corporate setting.

### 7. What's the difference between Media Strategies and Media Relations?

Media Relations teaches PR students how to pitch and deal with the media—how to build strong media relationships for the benefit of PR clients. Media Strategies covers the process of buying space and time for advertising. We have recently renamed that course Media Planning and Buying to eliminate the confusion.

8. What do I need to know technically? What programs should I be acquainted with? InDesign? Photoshop? PPT? WordPress, etc.

The more computer programs you know, the better, although certainly Microsoft Office, particularly Word and Excel, InDesign and Photoshop can be particularly valuable. But don't stress too much about these programs because what's most important in general computer literacy and knowing how to teach yourself new or updated programs. Whatever programs you know now will undoubtedly continue to be revised, so you just need to do your best to master the basics and keep learning.

9. Is there a resource outside the classroom to learn some of the programs (Photoshop, InDesign)?

Yes, Chapman students have free access to the online software tutorial at [Lynda.com](http://Lynda.com). You can access this resource at <https://webfarm.chapman.edu/lyndacas> using your Chapman user name and password.

10. What is the difference between "capstone course" and "senior project"?

The senior project is the culminating campaign created by students who are following either the PR or the advertising track. Entertainment Marketing and Promotion is often referred to as the capstone course because it brings together all of the elements of the program in one class.

11. How can I get a course substitution or a course at another school approved?

You need to send the name, course number and catalog description of the course at the other institution to the Division Chair, Janell Shearer at [shearer@chapman.edu](mailto:shearer@chapman.edu) along with the name of the school where you plan to take the course, a copy of your program evaluation, and the name and number of the course you suggest that the outside course be substituted for. She will review the request and let you know whether the substitution is approved.

12. Can I take a course in the major or minor pass/no pass?

No.

13. How do I get into a class that's full? How does the waitlist work?

Show up on the first day of class to see if there is room available. However, be advised that which students are admitted to a class is entirely up to the instructor. Typically, students are admitted on the basis of class standing, thus seniors have preference over juniors, juniors over sophomores etc. In addition, majors have preference over minors or non-majors. Your position on the waitlist does not guarantee you a place in the class once the first day of the semester begins. The waitlist only places students in a class when a previously enrolled student drops the course *before the semester begins*. Once the semester begins, the instructor can choose whom to admit, regardless of any student's previous standing on the waitlist. Basically, the waitlist means nothing once the term begins.

## Study abroad

### 1. Can I take PRA courses overseas when I study abroad?

Yes, but in general you should not plan on finding courses that will be approved for the major when you study abroad, as they are pretty rare. If you plan to study abroad, you should assume that most of the courses you will take will be either GE courses or general electives. Thus, it is often best to plan to do study abroad before your senior year.

### 2. What countries offer PRA accepted courses, if I choose to study abroad?

Your best source for reviewing what courses might transfer is Chapman's Center for Global Education. There are some pre-approved courses. See [PRA study abroad courses](#)

## Internships

### 1. Does my internship advisor have to be my PRA advisor?

No, but your internship supervisor does have to be a PRA faculty member.

### 2. How many times can I take an internship for elective credit in the major?

One time (3 credits). You can take additional internship credits, and we recommend it, but they will not count toward the electives in the major, only toward the general elective credits going toward graduation.

### 3. How do I go about getting an internship?

You can find internships through Chapman's Career Center <http://www.chapman.edu/students/services/career-development/internship/> through the Dodge College Slate, which is emailed to students each week, or through your faculty or your own contacts. Once you are offered an internship, you need to find a faculty advisor and register through the Career Center.

### 4. When should I do an internship?

You can do an internship any time, but you will be better prepared, have more to offer your internship employer, and be more competitive in getting an internship if you wait until you have a few PRA classes under your belt?

## Extracurricular opportunities/career preparation

### 1. What involvement opportunities does PRA offer to its students?

Dodge College has two very active programs for PRA students, Chapman Ad Club and PRSSA, the Public Relations Student Society of America. They meet alternating weeks on Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. in MKS 132. Each club offers a variety of speakers, field trips and social opportunities. Check out their activities on Facebook at [Chapman Ad Club](#) and [Chapman PRSSA](#)

Specifically, Chapman Ad Club and PRSSA are also the sponsors of the two national competitions in which our students regularly participate: the National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC) and the PRSSA Bateman Case Study Competition.

## 2. How can I get involved in NSAC and how does it work?

Some 40-50 students participate on Chapman's NSAC team each year, building a campaign for a major corporate sponsor. Teams from around the country compete at the regional level and then regional winners compete at the national level. Chapman took the national championship in 2010 with a campaign for State Farm Insurance. Chapman teams have placed first in their region three times. Students must apply to be on the team.

## 3. How can I get involved in the Bateman competition and how does it work?

The Bateman competition asks students to create and implement a PR campaign for a sponsor; often on behalf of an important social cause such as bullying or childhood obesity. Each team is composed of just five members, although a school can have more than one team and Chapman has sponsored multiple teams over the years. Teams compete on a national level against teams at other colleges and universities. Chapman teams have received national recognition 13 times and placed first in the nation in 1995. Students must apply to be on the team.

## 4. When I graduate will I have a PRA portfolio to show prospective employers? What will it look like?

A number of projects that you will complete during your studies are appropriate for a portfolio to show prospective employers. We suggest you keep copies of the following:

- a. Writing samples: press releases, feature stories, pitches created in Writing for PR, Advanced Writing for PR, Storytelling for Business or Media Relations
- b. Anything you have had published: Consider writing for *The Panther*, for Dodge College's blog or the *In Production* magazine.
- c. Work done for internships that is not proprietary (check with your internship supervisor).
- d. Social media products: Assignments for Internet Communications
- e. Design projects: Assignments from Desktop Publishing
- f. Campaign plans: Work done in intro courses such as Introduction to Advertising or Public Relations, complete plans done in Advertising or PR Campaigns, your Entertainment Marketing plan
- g. Extracurricular work or Independent Study projects: Campaign books created for the National Student Advertising Campaign (NSAC) or Bateman Case Study competitions. Other independent projects as appropriate.

## Advice from current students:

1. Take Visual Storytelling in the spring as early in your time at Chapman as possible.
2. Get involved in Ad Club or PRSSA—it looks good on your resume and can help you make professional connections that can lead to internships or jobs.
3. Every Freshman should create their own 4-year plan--a roadmap--and review it with your advisor.
4. Meet with advisors as soon as possible in your freshman year. It benefits both student and faculty.

5. Take advantage of Interterm—it's a time you can take a unique or unusual class (such as the trip to the Sundance Film Festival) and you can focus and give whatever class you take your best effort.