

# Touch of Class

News about the Rowan University Graduate Public Relations Program

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## National Crisis Experts Share Their Expertise with Rowan Students

Two leading school crisis experts journeyed to Rowan this semester to share their expertise in school-crisis communication with students in the M.A. in Public Relations program. The speakers included:

**Rick Kaufman**, executive director of community relations and emergency management for Bloomington Public Schools; Bloomington, Minn. As the executive director of public engagement and communications for Jeffco Public Schools in Littleton, Colo., Kaufman led the Crisis Response Team and became a familiar face and voice in national media coverage of the Columbine High School tragedy. He has since worked with school systems and government agencies nationally on crisis-response issues.

**Rich Bagin**, executive director of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) in Rockville, Md. Bagin, a graduate of the M.A. in Public Relations program, has worked with hundreds of school systems across the U.S. and Canada on school crisis and P.R. assessment issues. Bagin is a leading national authority on conducting communication audits in school systems. Along with an accomplished career in educational public relations, Bagin also served more than 10 years as a senior executive with two international public rela-

tions agencies.

Both speakers have written and presented extensively on school public relations planning and assessment. Most recently, Kaufman authored *The Complete Crisis Communication Management Manual*. Bagin is the author of *Making Parent Communication Effective and Easy*.

During the class, Kaufman and Bagin reflected on the key crisis-communication trends that have developed since high profile incidents such as Columbine, as well as the current state of crisis readiness among schools and their school PR practitioners today.

“We’ve learned a lot over past 11 years (since Columbine). Schools are far more prepared today. If you ask how many people here have a crisis plan in their organization these days, almost everyone has one. But training is just as important,” Kaufman said.

Kaufman stressed that knowing what to do in the “first 10 minutes” can be the difference between calm and chaos. “The first 10 minutes sets the tone for how you will respond throughout the crisis,” he explained.

Bagin added that social media have become a key channel to communicate quickly with key



**Rick Kaufman**



**Richard Bagin**

audiences, including parents, when a crisis breaks. But he noted that traditional media still play important roles in communication during school crises. “It’s important to get all of the facts together and then think it through. If the media is involved, your best option is to tell the truth,” Bagin advised.

“Be careful you don’t add to the crisis by giving out uncorroborated information,” Kaufman added.

Turning to building careers in public relations, both speakers urged students to become strong writers and to continue learning as much as they can after leaving the classroom. “Your learning should never stop,” Bagin said.

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## National Crisis Experts Share Their Expertise with Rowan Students

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They advised students to join and get active in professional associations, attend and present at seminars, read both academic and professional publications, and develop an active network of professional peers you can turn to when you need advice and counsel.

Kaufman revealed that, as the Columbine incident unfolded, Bagin was one of the first people he called for help and advice. Along with offering ideas on how to manage unfolding events, Bagin helped assemble a team of experienced PR professionals from throughout the country who volunteered their time to fly to Colorado and help Kaufman's staff in the days following the tragedy.

"Learn as much as you can about what's out there and become involved. Become a sponge for information. Read and try to interview experts in the field every opportunity you get," Kaufman advised students.

The School Crisis Master Class was offered in conjunction with the School PR course taught by Professor Edward Moore. "Master classes give us the chance to bring leading experts into

the classroom and let students hear firsthand from people who were directly involved in the kind of events and cases we read about in books and talk about in classes," Moore explained. "They also offer students a great way to begin building their professional network while still in the classroom."

"The Master Class concept is one that was strongly supported by the program's founder, Dr. Don Bagin, who was known for frequently hosting national experts in key PR areas," Moore explained. "Dr. Bagin made this a tradition in the PR program here and we're delighted that we can continue it." The Master Class was supported in part by the Bagin Education Foundation, an organization founded by Dr. Bagin and dedicated to supporting graduate PR education and students at Rowan.

Rowan's M.A. in Public Relations program was the first in the country and one of the few today offering students the chance to create a focus in school public relations during their study of P.R. The Rowan program also offers a 9-credit Certificate of Graduate Study in School Public Relations. For more information, visit [www.rowan.edu/mapr](http://www.rowan.edu/mapr).

## Faculty Updates

- Department Chair Dr. Suzanne FitzGerald, Dr. Joseph Basso, and Graduate Assistant Patrick T. Coyle have completed market research work for Fortune 500 Company, International SOS — the world's leading provider of medical assistance, international healthcare, security services and outsourced customer care.

- Professor Fulginiti is teaching a new ethics course for PR/Advertising and will develop a curriculum proposal for it.

- PRSA evaluators visited the Rowan Campus recently to re-evaluate the undergraduate program and continue its Certification for Education in Public Relations (CEPR). Rowan remains one of only 22 schools in the U.S. with this certification. Reviewers included Dr. Dean Kruckeberg, APR, Fellow PRSA; and Debbie Mason, APR, Fellow PRSA. Recertification should be complete this summer and granted in October at the International PRSA Conference, in Washington, D.C.

- Professor Edward Moore has completed the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the text *The School and Community Relations*. Used in more than 200 graduate programs, the text's co-authors are all Rowan faculty, including former professors Dr. Don Bagin and Dr. Donald Gallagher. The new edition will be published by Allyn Bacon/Pearson next January.

- Dr. Tracie Babb presented to the Greater Vine-land Chamber of Commerce on "Tweet This: Social Media's Impact on Public Relations and Marketing Practices."

- The accreditation committee for Philadelphia PRSA will video podcast the three sessions this year for use by candidates in the future as they prepare to take the accreditation test. Dr. FitzGerald is the Accreditation Chair for PRSA Philly. Professor Fulginiti and John Moscatelli, of Anne Klein, were the two presenters of the three Saturdays program.