

# Touch of Class

News about the Rowan University Graduate Public Relations Program

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## Graduate Focus: Cassandra Duffey Finds A Home in Collingswood

When Cassandra (Young) Duffey (M '06) graduated with a master's in public relations from Rowan University, many of the jobs she applied for were in the corporate sector. But then an opening with the Borough of Collingswood came along. Cassandra was intrigued and applied. She has never looked back.

After winning the position (Director of Communication) Cassandra quickly came to love the Borough of Collingswood and her job. She describes her work as similar to corporate in many respects. While she does not consider herself a designer by trade, she enjoys working on a myriad of campaigns and design projects for a small town.

"I like being part of a team that makes decisions on bettering the town. I feel vested here and I truly want to work to make Collingswood stand out," Cassandra explained. "I like helping residents and really enjoy having something different to do each week."

We asked Cassandra about her career and her time at Rowan.

**Q:** Looking back, how did the PR program at Rowan help you get your career under way?

**A:** Writing is a huge part of the program and I do a lot of that here. I write everything from captions to full length articles with bylines. Plus, the connections and networking at Rowan are a wonderful resource for graduating students and PR pros that have worked for years. That network is something you get with your Rowan degree and it's helpful for a career at any stage.

**Q:** How is your job different from most PR jobs?

**A:** I wear a lot of hats and there isn't one person to write copy, design, counsel, execute, and so on. I take photos of kids at Fire Safety Day then run next door to do some heavy duty PR counseling with the mayor and administrator. It keeps me on my toes, keeps me challenged and keeps me humble at the same time. Also, I have 14,300 [resident] bosses.

**Q:** What accomplishments are you most proud of?

**A:** I'm proud to be a part of many projects including: Kicking off Collingswood TV; working on the Transit Village program; helping bring home awards and recognition, as well as planning and executing new events.



Cassandra Duffey

**Q:** How did the Rowan program help you evolve into the person that you are now?

**A:** I am a tough editor. I cut words out of people's sentences when they talk to me and I notice typos on menus. Family and friends roll their eyes when I begin diatribes on active voice. Ironically, proof-reading has never been my strength; the program taught me to write cleanly and clearly, and gave me a confidence and well-roundedness in the field when I left.

**Q:** What job-seeking or career advice would you have for those in the program?

**A:** Don't judge that job posting by its summary! Go in, meet people! You could lose a potentially life-changing opportunity because you thought you weren't interested. It's just as much about the vision and message as it is about the company, person or product.

## New Student Focus: Brian Scott Nicholas

Brian Scott Nicholas entered the master's in public relations program in the fall of 2009 with an array of skills and experiences. Like many students in the program, Brian continues his professional career while earning his degree.

Brian graduated from High Point University in 2006 with a degree in journalism. He then served as a beat reporter for *The Carolina Peacemaker*, a weekly paper in Greensboro, NC, and a production assistant at Davidson County Broadcasting.

After transitioning to radio full-time, Brian moved to New Jersey to become Creative Services Director for Millennium Radio for New Jersey's shore cluster, where he is still employed today.

"I made the transition to radio and have been there ever since. At this point, my background in writing has proven to be extremely useful. Nearly all of my experience to this point is in advertising," Brian said.

**Q:** What do you hope to gain from the program?

**A:** Prior to the coming to Rowan, I had zero public relations experience. I hope to obtain the skills necessary to succeed in this field. I've also always felt that advertising and public relations are treated as competing communication tools in the real world. I believe they can work together and I hope to learn the right strategies for achieving that here.

**Q:** What has impressed you about the program so far?

**A:** The level of real-world expertise and experience that both the professors and students bring to the table is astounding. I feel as though there's

something to learn from everyone. Many programs only teach you the theory, but this program also teaches you how to function in reality.

**Q:** Looking forward, what professional areas do you think programs such as the one at Rowan need to focus on to make sure their students succeed professionally?

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***"The level of real - world expertise and experience that both the professors and students bring to the table is astounding."***

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**A:** It's imperative that the program stays at the forefront of new communications technologies. In addition to understanding traditional public relations avenues, it's important that students have a firm grasp on the digital world, particularly the ways in which

cell phones can be used as effective PR tools. I believe that a solid understanding of website and application development will be an essential skill for public relations practitioners in the near future.

**Q:** Based on what you've seen so far, what else should graduates of the program know about?

**A:** Graduates of the program are the best source for current information on the state of the industry. In addition to mentoring students, it's important that graduates keep the program aware of new concepts and practices. I'd like to see more graduates offer opportunities for current students to shadow them, so that students are exposed to a wide range of different areas within the public relations field.

While Brian hopes the program will help add public relations experience to his practice portfolio, he eventually would like to earn a doctorate. One long-term goal: teaching at a university in the South.

You can reach Brian at: [brianscottnicholas@gmail.com](mailto:brianscottnicholas@gmail.com)



**Brian Nicholas (left) at Mentor Night, with mentor Claire Riggs**

## Alumni Return to Rowan to Mentor Students

Thirteen alumni returned to Rowan recently for the master's in public relations Mentor Night, continuing a 30-year-tradition of graduates helping current students.

This year's mentors included: Rebecca Acevedo, Public Relations Manger at TD Bank; Kamali Brooks, Public Relations Specialist, Soroptimist; Jake Farbman, Director of Communications, New Jersey Council of County Colleges; Cristin Farney, Development Coordinator, Samaritan Hospice; Steve Levine, Content Manager, Rowan University Web Services; and Morgan Johnson, Associate of Communication and Investor Development, The Reinvestment Fund.



**Mentor Randi Woerner (right)  
with student Elizabeth Herrick**



**Mentor Steve Levine (left)  
with student Jeffery O'Connor**



**Mentor Jennifer Johnston**



**Mentor Morgan Johnson (left) with  
student Tim Green**

Also included were Jennifer Johnston, Communication Manager, Christian Care Health System; Allyson Roberts, Assistant Director of Publications, Widener University; Megan York Parker, Director of Client Services and Public Relations, Marketing 180 Degrees; Claire Riggs, Regional Public Affairs Manager, NuStar Energy Company; Pat J. Rose, Public Affairs Manager, New Jersey Economic Development Authority; Randi Woerner, Director of Economic Development, Borough of Glassboro; and Christina Unger, Science News Researcher, American Institute of Physics.

Participants spent the evening discussing job-search tips, PR issues, and new developments in the program.

## Resume Tip: Your Online Postings are Fair Game for Employers

Rick Sykes and Edward Hutchinson, Central Michigan University, presented a paper researching online job-search issues, "Twenty-five years later: How two communications organizations use the Internet in screening potential employees," at the recent International Association of Online Communicators conference in Washington, D.C.

**Some findings:** The application of online technology has become integral to the job-search process. Researchers believe that an applicant's resume rhetoric is impacted by

words employers use to search the Internet for viable employment candidates. *In other words:* Key words count and need to be considered as you build your resume and online presence.

**Another insight:** Employers increasingly review a candidate's posting on social networking sites — looking for any information to assess qualifications and "fit" for a position. *The bottom line:* Be aware that *all* of your online postings are now part of your resume.

## Program Updates

### Touch of Class Staff

**Contributors:**

Dr. Suzanne FitzGerald  
sparks@rowan.edu  
Professor Edward H. Moore  
mooree@rowan.edu  
Professor Claudia Cuddy  
cuddy@rowan.edu

**Writer and  
Layout/Design Editor:**

Patrick T. Coyle  
Graduate Assistant

**Questions?**

E-mail the graduate assistant at  
coylep23@students.rowan.edu

[www.rowan.edu](http://www.rowan.edu)

### Summer Classes

The following Summer 2010 classes have been tentatively scheduled. Check with program professors if you have any questions.

**First Session:**

MAPR 01524; Fundraising and Development; MTWR; 6:30-9:30 p.m., 5/17-5/27, 2 credits  
MAPR 01554; Planning Special Events; TWR; 6:00-10:00 p.m., 6/1-6/3, 1 credit

**Second Session:**

MAPR 01539; Client Relationships; MTWR; 6:00 – 9:00 p.m., 6/7 – 6/10, 1 credit  
MAPR 01537; Contemporary PR Challenges; MTWR; 6:00-9:00 p.m., 6/14-6/17, 1 credit  
MAPR 01538; Legislative Liaison; MTWR; 6:00-9:00 p.m., 6/21-6/24, 1 credit  
MAPR 01610; Internship; 3 credits (Meeting times coordinated with the Internship professor)  
MAPR 06515; Online PR (web assisted); 3 credits; M; 6:00-9:00; 6/7-7/29

### Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to Veronica Martinez and Brian Nicolas, this year's winners of New Jersey School Public Relations (NJSPRA) Association scholarships. Each student received a \$1000 scholarship from NJSPRA. The scholarships recognize outstanding Rowan students pursuing graduate study in school public relations.

### 2010 Comprehensive Exam Scheduled for April 9

The written portion of the comprehensive exam has been scheduled for Friday, April 9. Students will complete oral exams during the following week. Students will receive specific times for the oral portion of the exam.

Students who wish to take the exam in 2010 need to register for the exam in advance. Look for an announcement concerning registration forms and deadlines at the beginning of the Spring 2010 semester.

The department will hold an informational session on the exam early in the Spring 2010 semester. Check for the date and time for this meeting at the beginning of the semester.