



2021 Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan

Introduction

We at PRSA Richmond desire to be an organization where all of our members feel that they belong. Our desire is for each member to confidently participate fully and wholly as themselves and thrive within the organization. We also understand that it is up to us to continuously examine our practices and policies to ensure that we are the organization we set out to be.

We recently underwent an internal evaluation to better understand how we can incorporate more inclusivity and diversity within our organization. This initiative and planning process included a team of insightful and committed individuals within the organization who represent both leadership and broader membership. Together, we collaborated on what's best for our organization and how we can achieve our DEI promise.

We adopted a comprehensive approach to guarantee that all members - past, present, and future - had an opportunity to lend their voice to this plan. We thank everyone who participated and gave their honest feedback.

Based on the feedback, we have developed a plan that falls into three categories: Recruitment and Retention, Programming and Events, and Leadership Opportunities. We pair our goals with National PRSA's overall desire for a more diverse and inclusive organization.

Below is our intention and our strategy for the PRSA Richmond organization. Our intention is that this is not just a DEI strategic plan that only applies to the DEI committee, but to the organization as a whole.

Recruitment and Retention

Our Intention: Match national PRSA's goal to increase multicultural representation in PRSA and PRSSA by 15% within the next 3 years.

How We Will Achieve This:

1. Maintain records of member demographics

Before we measure a goal of 15% multicultural representation, we must know where we currently stand.

We will begin collecting demographics of new members to see where we are in terms of diversity in membership to ensure that we are increasing diversity within the organization. We will also send out a demographic questionnaire to our current membership to understand where we stand regarding our racial and ethnic makeup. We know we must do better, we just need to know where we are before we can assess how we meet this goal.

2. Active recruitment in colleges and universities in the area

Critical to our success is our recruitment efforts must be robust and intentional. We will strive to do the following to help recruit students to PRSSA, making sure we align with national PRSA's goals for 15% more multicultural participation (these are not mandatory, but they are legitimate considerations we will undertake):

- a. Enlist recruitment ambassadors who will assist PRSSA members with recruitment by providing marketing and communications materials.
- b. Engage BIPOC alumni who are members of PRSA to connect with BIPOC students in recruiting them for PRSSA and PRSA.
- c. Offer internship or mentorship opportunities with diverse students in mind, exposing them to the PR field and providing them hands-on experience.
- d. Continue to actively participate in student connections month and finding more ways to connect with students.
- e. Serve as speakers at PRSSA chapter events. Virginia PRSSA chapters are actively seeking professionals to speak (even virtual format) at their student membership programs: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1oKUG0aoBP0icsWWW-kvS8w5ZTEaU5dT3osWQOacTEHg/edt>
- f. Work with the PRSA Richmond Foundation to support diverse students through its scholarship program. Every year, the Foundation awards three \$1,500 scholarships to university students pursuing studies in communications/PR. Recently, the Richmond Foundation developed a specific scholarship for BIPOC members. We will help raise funds for this scholarship and upon the discretion of the various committee chairs, earmark funds for the scholarship.

We understand that representation matters, and we will strive to put forth efforts for more diverse faces in front of our students. We will commit to showing them that the profession embraces diversity, not just in name, but in spirit, and that they can achieve their goals and dreams in the profession.

3. Develop an education and information campaign

In order for PRSA Richmond to grow, there must be an active campaign to diverse groups about PRSA's mission, vision, and purpose. We should promote PRSA using traditional and digital means that remind those who are a part of PRSA the value that it brings to them and also inform those who may not know about the organization the benefits of membership.

4. Active recruitment to BIPOC organizations within the area:

We must also be intentional with partnering with groups within the region whose membership consists mainly of historically underrepresented groups. These groups include the Urban League of Greater Richmond Young Professionals Group, regional NAACP chapters, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Asian American Chamber of Commerce, LULAC, and a myriad of others who provide perspectives and voices we want to elevate within our group. Our DEI Chair, President, and President-elect will develop these relationships and collaborate with these organizations on programming opportunities as well as recruitment opportunities.

5. Institute a trial period for interested members

People like to try things out before they decide to commit. We understand that for many people who may be interested in PRSA, they need an opportunity to see what PRSA is about before joining. We will institute a recruiting luncheon or meeting where members are encouraged to invite those who are not members of PRSA to come to a meeting as a guest, learn more about the organization, and consider membership. We can offer incentives to members who bring potential members along with them, especially those who bring someone from a historically underrepresented group.

- a. Provide a 30-day free trial for members to see if they are interested in joining. This goal directly matches national PRSA's strategy.
- b. Enhance our welcome email to a "welcome packet" for all new members. This packet provides an overview of PRSA Richmond and national PRSA, an executive summary of the rules and policies, a list and bio of the board members and their positions, and ways to get involved in the committees and provide feedback. We will use graphics and images to help tell the story of PRSA.
- c. After the 30-day trial period, assess membership engagement and desire to continue with a paid membership. This includes conducting a survey of these members to see what they like about PRSA and what they would like to see improved.

Our Intention: Retain diverse membership within the organization with a goal of 30% in 3 years.

Once we have concrete numbers on the makeup of our organization, we can set intentions to retain diverse membership and provide purposeful engagement to help them thrive within the organization.

6. Active retaining members who may not be able to afford full membership

- a. Actively promote national PRSA's one-time hardship application for those who have lost jobs process to members who may be interested but cannot afford membership.
- b. Actively discuss opportunities for the PRSA Richmond chapter to develop a payment plan for those who may not be able to afford PRSA dues. It is not a requirement that we support these individuals, but we encourage future boards to do so if they choose.

7. Active retention and engagement opportunities:

- a. Develop a mentorship or strategic networking program that pairs new members with a seasoned member to help develop relationships, foster continuous communication, and keep the member engaged.
- b. Based on the demographics of the organization, develop resource groups that are a part of the DEI committee.
 - i. These group leaders will not be board members but regular members who want to be engaged and have a passion for the profession and organization.
 - ii. These groups along with the DEI committee chair will develop programming and networking opportunities within their respective resource groups.
 - iii. The following groups need to be implemented (with a desire to grow groups in the future). They are open to other members who may not be of that demographic as well as those who are not fully members of PRSA. They will also be open to PRSSA members and create relationships with PRSSA chapters.
 1. BIPOC professionals (as time goes on, we may be able to split this into additional groups)
 2. LGBTQ professionals
 3. Men PRSA professionals

Programming and Events

Our Intention: Increase diversity in topics and participation in programming (both speakers and event participants) by 30% in 3 years.

1. Promote diversity in topics

PR encompasses diverse areas, and our programming must reflect this. We will commit to ensuring that the topics we pick for our programs allow for us to broaden our audience group for members, including topics such as grassroots organizing, community engagement, multicultural issues, public service, independent agencies, politics and political campaigns, religion, abilities, sexual orientation and gender identity, intersectionality, and a myriad of other topics. We will also do the following:

- a. We will actively seek out diverse speakers as a reminder that representation matters. For panels, we will do our due diligence to ensure we have at least one Black, Indigenous, Person of Color (BIPOC) member on the panel. If we cannot have a BIPOC person on our panel after due diligence, we will make sure that they represent one of our historically underrepresented groups. This includes both our general body meetings and our committee meetings.
- b. For our committee meetings, we will actively seek out diverse venues for our events that expose us to different cultures and promote BIPOC businesses to our members. We will connect with organizations and events like RVA Black Restaurant Experience, the Metropolitan Business League, Que Pasa, and other organizations and events to help us look for diverse venues for our programs.

2. Ensure broader focus on diversity

We understand the historical implications of race, gender, and sexual orientation in this country, and we honor those differences. We also know that diversity encompasses much more, and as a DEI committee, we will focus our programming and efforts on the broader definition while also honoring the topics of race, gender, and sexual orientation. We will honor this in our programming and in our promotion, by focusing on diverse collateral materials and social media practices.

3. Actively incorporate diversity in our social media posts

To align with the national PRSA plan, we will highlight national and local diversity days and months on social media. We strive to also provide programming around these monumental events if we can. The DEI committee will be in charge of maintaining this calendar and collaborating with the social media chair to celebrate these days and months. The DEI committee will use their discretion on ways to celebrate these events.

Leadership and Professional Development

Our Intention: Align with national’s goals to increase diverse leadership by 25% in 3 years

1. Better promote our clear and transparent system and actively recruit diverse leadership

- a. Change begins with awareness. From our research, we learned that many people are unaware of how to become a board member and to obtain a leadership role in the organization. In order to increase diverse leadership at both the Chair and Board levels, the PRSA organization must continuously inform its members of the clear and transparent path for serving in a leadership position. Developing a “leadership roadmap” will serve and benefit all members of the organization by clearly illustrating the
 - i. Process for joining a committee
 - ii. Process for becoming a committee Chair
 - iii. Process for joining the Board
 - iv. Process for taking on a Board leadership role, and
 - v. Expectations/responsibilities for serving in both Chair and Board leadership positions.

To achieve this continuous communication, the information is located permanently on the PRSA website members’ portal; listed in the new member welcome packets; shared “in-person” during announcements at the monthly luncheons (when applicable); and promoted through direct email to members (when applicable). We will also use social media to promote this process when necessary.

- b. In addition to informing members of the general process for serving in a PRSA leadership position, current Chairs and Board members are responsible for actively advocating for diverse members to fill available leadership roles. We will achieve this by:
 - i. Developing active relationships with diverse members
 - ii. Identifying diverse, interested members for possible leadership positions in advance of vacant leadership roles
 - iii. Providing on-boarding support for a seamless transition in the leadership role
 - iv. Actively working with the DEI Chair when additional support is needed.

2. Encourage Accountability of board members and committee chairs

We all share accountability in ensuring that PRSA Richmond is a diverse, equitable and inclusive organization. As a result, board members and committee chairs are responsible for ensuring diverse representation on the board and one of the annual goals for the committee chairs.

- a. Board members and committee chairs are encouraged to develop relationships with diverse members and make themselves available for the mentorship program. They can also find other ways to connect with diverse members, including but not limited to attending, promoting, and volunteering for DEI events, connecting with diverse PRSSA students for internship opportunities, building a relationship with the DEI chair and serving on the DEI committee.
- b. Programs will be a vehicle to promote leadership diversity on the board and in committees.
- c. Partner with PRSSA and provide opportunities for students to learn more about the business of PRSA and formally engage with the board.
 - We suggest that the board adopts an open position on the board to engage with a PRSSA member. The board would solicit applications/nominations and the individual would be voted in by Next Wave members. The Student Relations committee chair would serve as a de facto mentor for the students PRSSA member.

Our Intention: Integrate DEI within all aspects of the organization and committee work

It is the responsibility of the board, committee chairs, staff, speakers, and members to prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion in *all* PRSA activities and programs. All members have a responsibility for helping PRSA Richmond address DEI initiatives and achieve DEI goals.

- a. Board members and committee chairs will develop a set of diversity, equity and inclusion priorities annually.
- b. The DEI committee will develop guiding principles to help each committee incorporate DEI into their annual plans. These priorities will be vetted through the DEI committee.
- c. Members will agree to support the chapter's DEI promise in PRSA Richmond activities and programs.

Conclusion

We understand that DEI is a process, a journey that is not won, but one that constantly evolves as time evolves. The above plan will be revisited on a regular basis to adapt to the times and set new goals and metrics based on participation and engagement.

A plan like this takes commitment, hard work, and dedication. It takes everyone willingly participating and for DEI to become part of the DNA of the organization to reach the goals that both national PRSA and our own community have set for us. Our hope is that with this plan and with everyone's commitment, we can begin to move the needle forward for our chapter to becoming a place where everyone in PR belongs.