

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION  
IN PREPARING STUDENTS FOR MANAGERIAL ROLES

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ABSTRACT

While undergraduate programs do include elements of theory and goals of developing students' critical thinking and problem solving abilities, an underlying purpose in higher education is ultimately to prepare students for the workforce. In public relations, much of the workforce training involves developing technical skills such as writing, editing, and publication design. While these skills are critical for entry-level positions, how well are universities preparing public relations students to advance to managerial positions?

This study focused on practitioners with 5-10 years experience, because it represents a point in their careers when practitioners are both seeking and achieving career advancement. Participants were first screened through a questionnaire to determine whether they are primarily fulfilling managerial or technician roles in their organizations. Those selected for the sample were then asked to participate in depth interviews. This study provides practical suggestions for how education can better prepare students for career advancement. While practitioners can gain managerial skills later through job experience, observation and professional development programs, researchers and practitioners suggest some skills should be taught at the undergraduate level. These practitioners provide steps that students and recent graduates can follow to help them move up the career ladder.