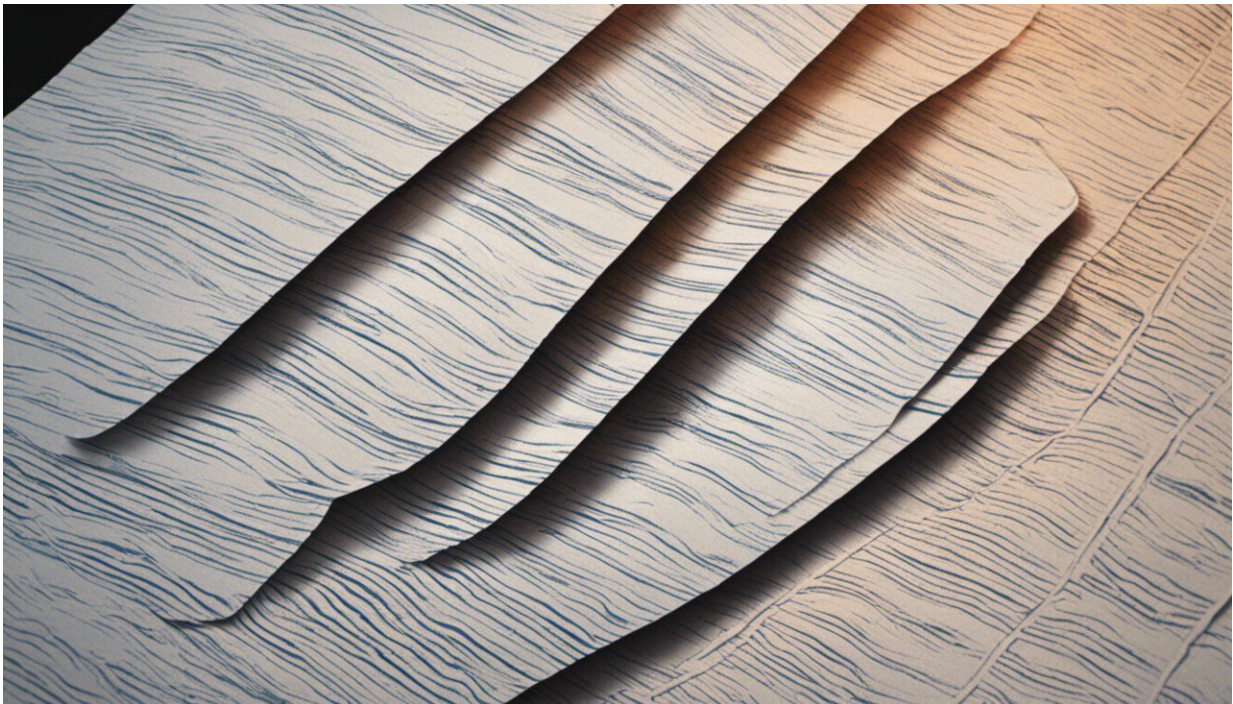


Gaps in advertising and PR education are due to new roles in social media, study finds

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Blurred boundaries between advertising and public relations professions due to new roles in social media raise the question of whether educators can adequately prepare their students for a career in those growing fields, according to a Baylor study.

"Educators need to address the deficiencies identified in this study and find ways to build these skills and competencies in their courses," said Marlene S. Neill, Ph.D., assistant professor of journalism, [public relations](#) and new media in Baylor's College of Arts & Sciences.

The study—"Gaps in Advertising and Public Relations Education: Perspectives of Agency Leaders"—is published in the *Journal of Advertising Education*.

"In the study, we have provided some specific and practical recommendations for advertising and public relations [educators](#)," Neill said.

Recommendations include:

- **Business literacy:** Have advertising and public relations students read and analyze investment reports and financial statements, as well as take current events quizzes from business and trade publications.
- **Math:** Require advertising and public relations students to take a statistics course.
- **Online community management:** Have advertising and public relations students conduct social listening/[social media](#) audit and develop evaluation reports using social media analytics; advertising students should consider taking electives in public relations to learn about crisis and issues management.
- **Media planning/buying:** PR students should consider taking advertising electives to learn about paid media strategies.

Neill and co-author Erin Schauster, Ph.D., an assistant professor at University of Colorado-Boulder, interviewed 29 executives in advertising and public relations agencies to identify emerging trends and their impact on advertising and public relations education. The

executives represented 10 states: Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia. Among the sample, 13 (45 percent) worked in public relations agencies; 10 (34 percent) worked in advertising agencies, and the remaining six represented a media planning and buying agency, two consultants, two digital agencies and an integrated marketing communications firm.

The researchers found that while traditional advertising and public relations skills, such as writing and presentation, remain foundational, other skills are now necessary for success in both fields. Areas of deficiency among recent graduates included math skills and business skills, including reading and interpreting financial documents; budgeting; applying business vocabulary; and understanding business challenges.

Some new services and roles being filled by recent graduates in today's workforce include social listening, online community management, native advertising, social media analytics, content amplification and programmatic buying.

"We concluded that as public relations executives begin pursuing more paid online media strategies, they may need additional training in [media](#) planning and buying, particularly in the areas of programmatic buying, search engine optimization and search engine marketing," Schauster said. "Likewise, as [advertising](#) executives assume online community management roles, they may need additional training in issues and crisis management."

Provided by Baylor University

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