University of Alberta

University Public Relations Strategies: A Case Study

by

Nicholas Kipkorir Lang'at ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

in

Administration of Postsecondary Education

Department of Educational Policy Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1997

0-612-22714-6

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author: Nicholas Kipkorir Lang'at

Title of Thesis: University Public Relations Strategies : A Case Study

Degree: Master of Education

Year this Degree Granted: 1997

Signed..............................

Permanent Address:
Moi University
P. O. Box 3900,
ELDORET, Kenya

September 29, 1997

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled ***University Public Relations Strategies: A Case Study*** submitted by Nicholas Kipkorir Lang'at in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of ***Master of Education in Administration of Postsecondary Education.***

Dr. E. W. Ratsoy, Supervisor

Dr. M. Andrews

Mr. B. Silzer

September 29, 1997

DEDICATION

To my parents

Fredrick and Priscilla Soi

Ngoberurok Jehovah

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the public relations functions and strategies that a university in Canada uses to achieve its goals and objectives. A case study research design utilizing qualitative techniques for collecting and analyzing data was adopted for the study. Nine public relations practitioners were interviewed. Printed documents and internet websites were other sources of information. A literature review and two pilot studies were undertaken prior to the main study.

The study findings indicated that the university has through the Office of Research and External Affairs designed and put in place structures that execute key public relations functions and programs. These include media relations, publications and strategic communications, community relations, and issues management. All functions seek to enhance three priorities of the University: recruitment of outstanding students, recruitment of outstanding faculty members and attraction of outstanding resources.

Practitioners perceived public relations as being sensitive to socio-economic, political and other external and internal environmental factors.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I am indebted to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Eugene Ratsoy, for his invaluable scholarly support and inspiration, confidence and optimism which enabled me to achieve this goal.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to my other thesis committee members. I am indebted to Dr. Mike Andrews for his insightful comments and positive suggestions that greatly improved the quality of my study. My gratitude goes to Mr. Brian Silzer, Associate Vice-President and Registrar of the University of Alberta who honored me by accepting to serve as an external examiner. His contribution and thoughtful comments enriched the thesis.

Second, I am eternally grateful to the World Bank and the Government of Kenya through the Project Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Education for providing me with the financial support without which I could not have undertaken my studies in Canada. I am also indebted to Moi University, Eldoret, and in particular the Management Committee and the Staff Development Committee for granting me the opportunity to further my studies.

Third, I wish to express gratitude to all my participants who volunteered to be part of my study. Without your participation, there would have been no study. Thank you.

This thesis would not have taken the form it did without the support of colleagues and friends both within the department and without. In this respect I am grateful to Eunice Kanyi for her assistance in typing, providing helpful suggestions at various stages of the study and for her editorial work. Much thanks also go to Mary Kritz for her probing questions, constructive criticisms of the work and for editorial assistance. Special words of gratitude to all staff members of the Department of Educational Policy Studies. In particular I would like to thank the department chair, Dr. Don Richards, Joan White, Barb Shokal and Chris Prokop for all the assistance they accorded me. Similarly, my thanks are extended to other friends who helped make my stay in Canada a joyous one, especially Muvita Villem Chaka, my host family Rev. Terry and Nancy Fritz, the Ngeno family, and Pastor and Mrs. Paul Nelson.

Finally, to the ones closest to my heart, my family. I thank my wife Helen for her love, courage and support. To my daughters Chemutai and Cherono too, thank you so very much for your patience and your ever cheerful smiles. To other members of my family, special thanks for your support and encouragement. This achievement is for you all and to the Glory of God.2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES **PAGE**

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

Stewart Harral (1942) writing 55 years ago on public relations in higher education stated that "One of the greatest obstacles in the path of progress in higher education is the public's very inadequate understanding of the character, purpose, process, and results of university training" (p. 4). The same sentiments are being echoed today by a number of former and current college and university presidents, university public relations practitioners and scholars in many regions of the world. For instance Benjamin Brooke (1993) in examining the public perceptions on the influence of higher education on Britain's economic and social life reports that the wide importance of higher education [universities] "is not yet grasped by the public"
(p. 47). He further notes that despite some encouraging progress in recent years, there is still a "backlog of misconception and prejudices to be overcome" (p. 47). For this reason reporting on higher education has been dogged with unpopular images most of which are not necessarily accurate. Consequently, he observed that "it is no wonder that most of the British population regard universities as mysterious places, has no reliable perception of their purpose, and knows little or nothing about the activities and aspirations of those who teach, conduct research and learn in them" (p. 48).

Derek Bok (1992) a retired President of Harvard University in his article *Reclaiming the public trust* acknowledges the fact that North American universities have over the years received numerous criticisms from the public in such areas as curriculum, quality, costs, relevance, priorities and role of universities in the lives of the general population. However, he argues, these criticisms do not represent or are not necessarily "a reflection on the standards or practices of the universities" but rather a consequence of universities not paying enough attention to articulating what they do to the public. Netherton Robin (1995) also in examining public perceptions of higher education and specifically on the knowledge of higher education across the United States records that "most members of the public know very little about the academic world" (p. 10). This phenomenon suggests an inadequacy, a deficiency or a dire need for visibility for public relations activity in universities to fulfill this specific and important function of educating the public about the importance of universities, and building relationships and trust with the public. This concern recognizes the necessity for complementary and reciprocal relationships between universities and their publics and stakeholders. This necessity would establish a state of well being for both parties involved.

In acknowledging this shortcoming, and in a bid to reverse these misconceptions, public relations in universities is increasingly seen as part of the solution. Consequently, public relations practice is gaining acceptance as a pivotal management function in universities and is increasingly gaining acceptance in the modern university's strategic management and planning (Dyson, 1988; Grunig 1992; Benjamin, 1993). In other words, public relations is regarded in the management sense as performing a pivotal function in university growth and survival. This shift towards centrality in both internal and external policy issues in many universities worldwide can be traced to the early eighties. The environments under which they were operating, began experiencing shifts in public attitudes, social policies, and funding by the governments towards higher education (Dyson, 1994, p. 23; Kowalski, 1995, p. 11; Keen & Greenhall, 1987, p.16). This trend strongly suggests that there seems to exist a relationship between institutional crises and the place of public relations functions in universities. This stand is echoed by Guth (1995) who argues that institutions which experience a greater level of crises are more likely to have their public relations functions adopt the attributes of management. Conversely, he posits, in those organizations that experience fewer crises, it is more likely that the public relations functions take on a technical role (p. 133). So while "crisis" may take many forms and definitions, it is apparent that universities world wide have been undergoing a period of crisis in terms of resource acquisition and allocation. The management of these 'crises' in universities has in effect seen the public relations functions gain greater prominence.

However, to say that public relations in universities did not exist before these challenges would be erroneous. A survey of literature on public relations in education in North America indicates that universities in the United States engaged in public relations-like activities from the colonial periods. Cutlip (1995) records that "as early as the immediate post-civil war years (in America), a few farsighted educators saw the need to inform the public of needs, benefits, and aims of higher education" (p. 229). Charles Elliot, in his inaugural speech as the president of Harvard in 1869 identified this as part of the duties of a university president,

> He must ... influence public opinion towards advancement of learning; and ... anticipate the due effect on the university of the

> fluctuations of public opinion on educational problems ... (and) of the gradual alteration of social and religious habits in the community. The university must accommodate itself promptly to significant changes in the character of the people for whom it exists. (Cutlip, 1995, p. 229)

Persons (1945) also writing on public relations in universities and colleges in the United States noted the existence of the practice and the role public relations played in building links with the public and fund raising for research in universities (p. iv). Nessman (1995) in examining the historical development of public relations in Europe records that "Public relations developed more or less simultaneously in Europe, and North America during the 19th century" (p.151). However, public relations practice has over time evolved and has more or less differed from country to country and organization to organization (Nessmann, 1995, p. 155). While public relations activities existed, they often operated under varied names such as publicity, advertising, media relations, and at different levels in the management structures or hierarchy.

The Growing Need for Public Relations in Universities

While public relations has been embraced by the business fraternity for many years, there is evidence that higher education held doubts about its relevance and consequently relegated its importance to lower levels in the management structure (Kowalski, 1996; Keen & Greenhall, 1987). Keen and Greenhall (1987) record that prior to the 1980s many universities were complacent as they felt it was "patently obvious to everyone why higher education mattered" (p.15). Therefore there was no real role for the public relations function in universities since for them it belonged to business where "one must go to considerable lengths to acquire a favorable reputation for one's company and products" (p. 16).

Besides this belief, writers have propounded that for so long, universities have been alienated from the public by the funding trends and especially in Canada where private funding involvement to universities was low. This alienation was attributed to the immense funding which universities received from the government in the sixties and seventies. Universities undertook expansion programs and projects and forgot that such progress was safe only when it carried public approval with it (Keen & Greenhall, 1987). As a result of this complacency, a host of values of higher education are not easily understood by the public and have in fact for several years, unfortunately, caused the university and the public to draw apart. Perhaps, judging from the criticisms that universities have received worldwide, the average citizen today has come to view universities less favorably. Consequently, universities have earned labels that denote negative public perceptions. For instance, in relation to funding, Dyson (1988) writes that universities have become "giant enterprises" while Kowalski (1996) quoting other sources, puts it that they are "unproductive and fiscally excessive" (p. 11). Koester (1996) states his criticisms forcefully when he contends that the era of unquestionable belief in the importance of higher education and the institution's ability to determine how best to fulfill its social responsibilities is gone (p. 285). Public relations is therefore no longer a question of choice for universities. Since public relations is not a matter of choice, every university committed to its goals and objectives must endeavor to organize and develop suitable public relations programs that will nurture community understanding and support (Nagger & Allen, 1984, p. 6).

Presently, social and economic change is taking place with a rapidity never before witnessed. It is also a time when the role of public opinion has become increasingly important and influential in the affairs of higher education. This calls for a reassessment and reinvention of new ways of doing things. It is apparent that universities and higher education can no longer be successful without the understanding and support of the people. Consequently, the university must not only have a public relations policy, but also well defined public relations programs that influence public opinion.

In many countries numerous institutions presently clamor for support, resources and attention from a cross section of publics and stakeholders. There is a silent battle for favor from these publics by each university. Each university must therefore prove, through all administrative processes, that it is worth what it costs in time, effort, and money. Universities are therefore compelled to create a favorable image in the eyes of the public or lose support to other competitors.

Equally significant is the growing importance and use of current information by administrators for quick and informed decision making. With technological advancement where modes and means of relaying information is fast changing, there is need for public relations practices to cope with and adapt to the new changes. This will aid institutions in remaining relevant and clearly understood as centers of information. Already, as a result of new technologies making information available to anyone, anywhere, at any time, universities have lost their monopoly on knowledge, teaching and learning (Massey & Zensky, 1995; Koester 1996, p. 286).

Based on the above concerns, public relations programs and strategies must develop to firstly help universities retain respectability and favor in the eyes of the public. Secondly, they must out-compete other institutions vying for the same resources.

Canadian Context

As succinctly explained by Small (1995), each of the ten Canadian provinces and two federally administered territories has jurisdiction over its own education. Constitutionally, each province independently operates a university and college system. The federal government provides financial support for higher education in the provinces. However, the provincial governments ultimately have major influence through the control of funds and program coordination (p. 115).

Canadian universities are resource acquiring institutions, and currently, universities around the world place great emphasis on the acquisition of financial support to boost their research and program base. As Alfred and Weissman (1987) indicate, universities understand that positive public attitudes about higher education are important because they affect their overall financial stability and the support of their academic programs (p. iii). Public understanding is therefore inextricably linked to every university's well being.

Many Canadian universities, in the recent past, have gone through up and down surges of public opinion and support. Similarly, since the early 1980s, Canadian universities and colleges have experienced a period of tremendous structural change due to fiscal restraint policies of provincial governments (Dennison 1995; Dennison & Callagher, 1986). These policy changes have necessitated that these institutions adopt certain administrative measures and processes with the view to cope with the effects of such restraints (Small, 1995; Dennison, 1995, p. 27). Arising from pressures caused by the cutbacks, universities have embarked on programs that are entrepreneurial in nature with the express purpose of raising alternate funding. This entrepreneurial approach involves increased linkages with industry, the business community, international funding agencies, cost recovery programs and the public in general (Dennison, 1995). Consequently, there is a need for increased and effective public relations strategies that will ensure success in such ventures.

While concerns caused by fiscal restraints have taken center stage in Canadian higher education and in particular within the province in which the university under review is located, it is not correct to assume that the objective of public relations as is now practiced, is solely to attract funds. In fact, raising funds constitutes only one activity in a whole array of activities and stated strategic public relations objectives of the university.

Student enrollments and demographic trends have been an issue of on-going concern for all Canadian universities. The downward trend in enrollments recently witnessed in the university under review, and subsequent recovery, with exceptions in certain programs such as Nursing, are issues worthy of note as they provide cause for public relations activity. Another source of pressure on universities has been the back and forth shifts in public perceptions of universities by the publics and key stakeholders. A great number of scholars on higher education in Canada however, have recorded a high degree of public satisfaction with Canadian university education from among a cross section of the publics. This poses an even a greater need for public relations to maintain a good image through comprehensive programs and deliberate effort.

Internationalization of the university in terms of the university reaching out to forge linkages and initiate student recruitment activities with selected regions of the world is also a common agenda in Canadian universities.

A mission statement that spells out the need for working public relations programs is articulately provided for by the university under study. It states that the mission of this institution is to become indisputably the leading center of excellence in teaching, research and community service in Canada and internationally. This is set to be achieved through the recruitment of outstanding students, recruitment and retention of staff and attracting outstanding resources. The attainment of the above objectives has direct public relations implications especially in terms of recruiting students, marketing programs, and subsequently, recruiting and retaining staff and mounting fundraising campaigns.

Recent trends seem to negate this vision. Certain programs are currently experiencing unstable shifts in student recruitment as well as staff retention and recruitment. Replacement of retired faculty in some departments has been slow. Given this context, how, then have the universities and colleges in Western Canada succeeded in coping with these pressure points? Failure by the university public relations departments to tackle these pressure points can lead to serious misconceptions about the university by the public.

Research Problem

As noted from the above overview, universities are dynamic organizations that engage in constant communication and active collaborative ventures with both their internal and external publics.

External publics are the groups outside the university such as other universities, governments, research organizations, parents, business community and school systems. Internal publics comprise groups within the university such as students and all cadres of staff. As noted earlier, due to increased interaction between universities and their publics, public relations as a management function is gaining prominence. If universities are to enhance their image and achieve their stated objectives, in a period that is characterized by unpredictable social, economic, technological and demographic change, then well-managed and substantive public relations programs and strategies must be employed. The image of the university under study has been central to the board of governors, senior administration and senate. The concern about the university's image is evident from the fact that in 1990, the university's *Senate Task Force on Public Relations* suggested that "the image of the university is unclear or nebulous, neither positive nor negative" and recommended that "the university should develop a planning process for public relations, incorporating a marketing approach which recognizes the needs and wants of different publics" (Public Affairs document on public perceptions, 1994).

The Public Affairs Office has since then taken up the challenge and has over a period of time endeavored to develop and cultivate relationships with the public and uphold the universities image. Given the complexities involved and differing public needs, opinions, and expectations, what strategies does the Public Affairs Office employ to ensure that the image of the university is positively portrayed to its publics and the university's stated objectives are attained? This then became the first research question for the study. Seven other questions were identified.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the mandate of the Public Affairs Office and how are its functions linked to the overall mission and goals of the university?
2. Who are the university's publics and how are they identified?
3. How are the public relations programs and strategies evaluated?
4. How has the reduced funding from the Provincial Government affected the public relations activities in the Public Affairs Office?
5. What have been the major environmental factors influencing the public relations activities and strategies adapted?
6. What have been the challenges facing public relations and practitioners at the university?
7. What are the necessary ingredients for a successful public relations program in a university?

Definition of Terms

The following definition of terms will be used in the course of the study.

Publics: This will be used throughout the study to denote groups of people who share a common interest.

Stakeholder: stakeholder refers to an individual or group who can affect or is affected by the actions, decisions policies, practices, or goals of the university.

Public relations practitioner: This refers to an individual in charge of key aspects of the day to day public relations activities of an organization.

Strategy: This refers to a plan, method, or series of maneuvers for obtaining a specific result.

Policy: This term refers to a definite course or method of action selected from among the many alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions.

Strategic management: The definition, adapted from that of Grunig (1992), is a process of thinking through the current mission of the university, thinking through the current environmental conditions and then combining these elements by setting forth a guide for future decisions and the results. (p. 11)

Significance of the Study

The reality presently facing higher education in Canada is that of reduced provincial funding. This in turn has caused universities to look for alternative funding triggering increased public relations activities. Besides the funding, the public is, according to Small (1995), increasingly questioning the role of universities in a changing society and their responsiveness to social needs. There is therefore increased demand for information on what universities stand for, where they are going, and where they stand in relation to each other in terms of excellence. This study seeks to bring to light the importance of public relations in universities and how they could effectively be used to achieve institutional goals and objectives.

The study also adds to the body of knowledge in the area of public relations as practiced in universities. Based on experiences that the focal university has had in the area of public relations, other universities both in Canada and elsewhere could benefit from the findings by employing some of the strategies that have worked well over time. It is the intention in this study to bring to light an understanding of the often under-used resources and true potential of professional public relations.

Organization of the Thesis

This study is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter provides the background of the study, outlines the need for the study, the research problem and specific research questions, significance of the study, and definitions of the terms used in the study.

The second chapter examines the context in which the study is carried out by providing a brief review of the various operational units of the External Affairs Office in the university studied. It also provides the theoretical and conceptual framework in which the practice of public relations could best be understood.

The third chapter covers an overview of literature related to the practice of public relations generally and in universities in particular. It presents the perspective of public relations as used in the study, other related concepts and operational models.

The fourth chapter presents the research design and methodology used in the study. In particular, it explains the data collection and data analysis techniques, weaknesses and trustworthiness of the study, assumptions, delimitations and limitations, and finally presents the ethical considerations that guided the study.

Chapters five, six and seven present the findings of the study, while chapter eight provides a summary of the study, personal reflections, and conclusions.

Chapter 2

Contextualization and Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This chapter presents the context of the study and the operational framework in which the practice of public relations occurs at the focal university. Brief background information is provided on the university and the administrative structures of the offices under which the practice of public relations activities operates. Specifically, overviews of the Public Affairs Office, Alumni Affairs and Development are highlighted. These offices form the core operational units that deal with the university's external and internal constituents.

This chapter concludes with a conceptual framework drawn from the survey of two branches of literature and models that have influenced the theory and practice of public relations over time. A model which links the various components, and explains the levels of interaction that prevail in a public relations activity in a university is also provided.

Context

The focal university is one of Canada's largest teaching and research universities. For ethical reasons the university remains anonymous. It was founded in the early part of the century and to date has grown substantially in physical size, in student and staff numbers, and in academic programs and resources. The university offers a wide range of undergraduate, graduate and professional programs. Presently the university enrolls more than 30,000 students, including 4,000 in graduate studies. It has over 2,000 members of academic staff and 2,700 administrative and support staff members working on campus ("Facts" brochure, 1997; Registrar's Office). On an international level there are more than 1000 international students from over 97 countries. The university participates in some 80 international exchange projects and exchanges in 30 countries, and draws its resident and visiting professors from all over the world (*"Here and Now"* 1996).

The university, being one of the oldest in Canada, is credited for its involvement in various provincial and national linkages, and its relationships at various levels with a number of audiences. These include industry, research institutions, the business community, government agencies and school systems However as noted in Koech (1995) it was not until the 1980s that this and other universities began to develop structures that would guide them in fostering greater collaborations with these audiences. This is not to say that these linkages did not exist before then, but rather that they have now become more focused and given prominence. Part of this shift was due to the decrease in funding to the university from the provincial government. The other part was based on the need by the university to make an impact in areas such as research and technology transfers.

Office of the Vice-President, Research and External Affairs

The Office of the Vice-President, Research and External Affairs is responsible for the coordination of research activities and research - related collaborative ventures with industry, and with planning and managing of the external affairs of the university. Its mandate involves overseeing the workings of the following units

- External Affairs Office

- Public Affairs Office
- Alumni Affairs Office
- Development Office
- Industry Liaison Office
- Research Grants Office

This office was constituted in May 1995 after two portfolios which had been separate and under different headship were merged. Prior to 1995, the two portfolios; Research Services, and Development and Community Affairs existed independently under separate leadership. In 1981, the university established the Office of Vice-President, Research and Research Services. Since then it has undergone a series of name changes in an effort to redefine and refine its mandate. Similarly, several other structures have been established within the "Research Services" office to revitalize the university's research efforts. These include the former Intellectual Property and Contract Office (IPCO), which has since then become the present "Industry Liaison Office" and the "Research Grants Office."

Similarly the Office of the Vice-President, Development and Community Affairs had been operating under a vice president with two mandates: Development and Community Relations. It also had structures within it that endeavored to enhance the university's development and community relations and provided services centered in the Public Affairs Office, the Alumni Affairs, and the Advancement Office.

In May 1995 the Board of Directors ratified the collapsing of the two portfolios "Research Services" and "Development and Community Relations" into one and renamed it Office of the Vice-President, Research and External Affairs. The portfolio is mandated to design, institute and manage programs that promote reciprocal relationships, "build bonds between the broader community around the university, and enhance the sense of community on campus" (*"These are the days"*, 1996, p. 3).

A number of structural changes have been made since establishment of the new office. This includes the replacement of the Department of Advancement and the creation of the Office of the Associate Vice President and Executive Director of External Affairs. This is the office to which the three core operational units of Public Affairs, Alumni Affairs and Development, are directly answerable. Below is the representation of the Office of Research and External Affairs with its various units.

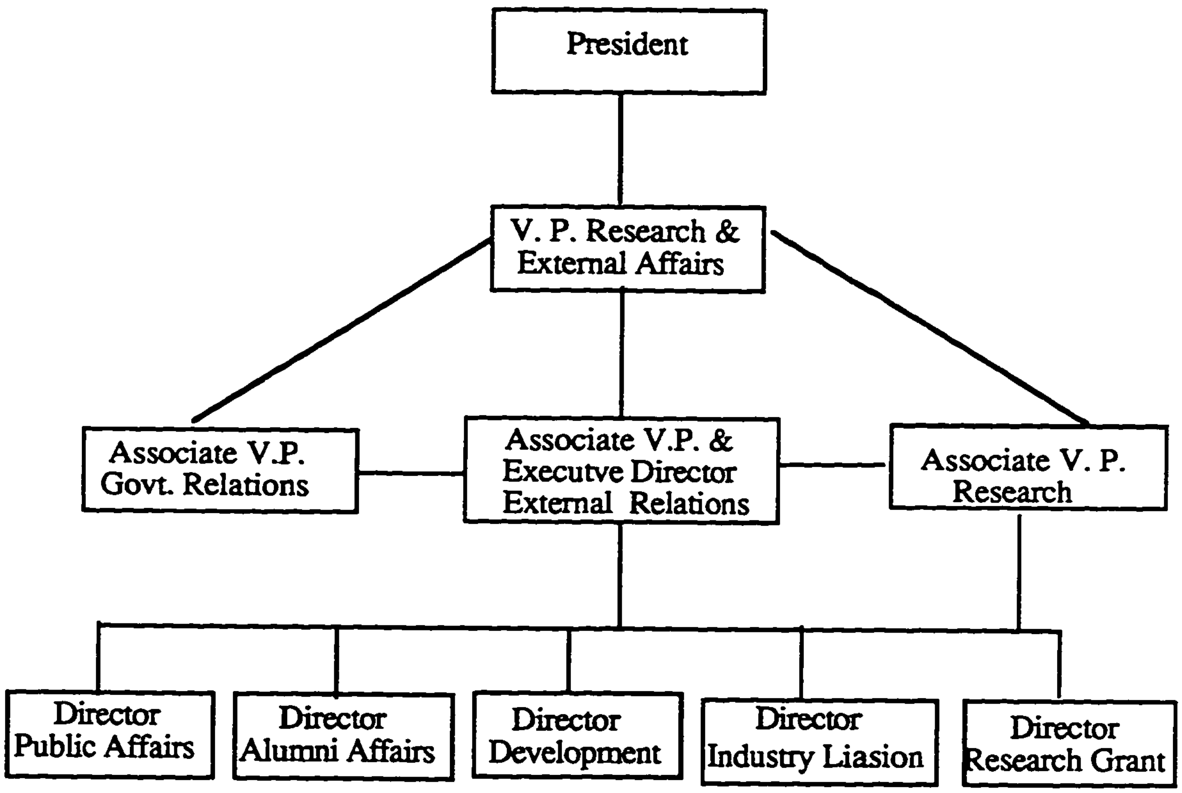

Figure 1. Organizational Chart of the Office of the Vice-President, Research and External Affairs

For the purpose of this study, the External Affairs side of the office will be described since it is under these auspices that the Public Affairs Office is placed.

External Affairs Functional Units

Public Affairs Office

This is the communications office responsible for positioning the university positively in the eyes of its constituents, and dealing with issues related to the university and the perceptions that result. In its mission statement this office is charged with the responsibility of "supporting the university in its endeavor to achieve its stated strategic priorities" ("Making sense", PA Office, 1996). To achieve this, the office has established a structure under which all operations necessary to achieve such endeavors function. They include the media relations unit, community relations unit, administrative unit and internal communication unit. Since the study will focus on this office much of its functions and other issues will be dealt with in details in Chapter 5. Structurally, the office is portrayed as follows:

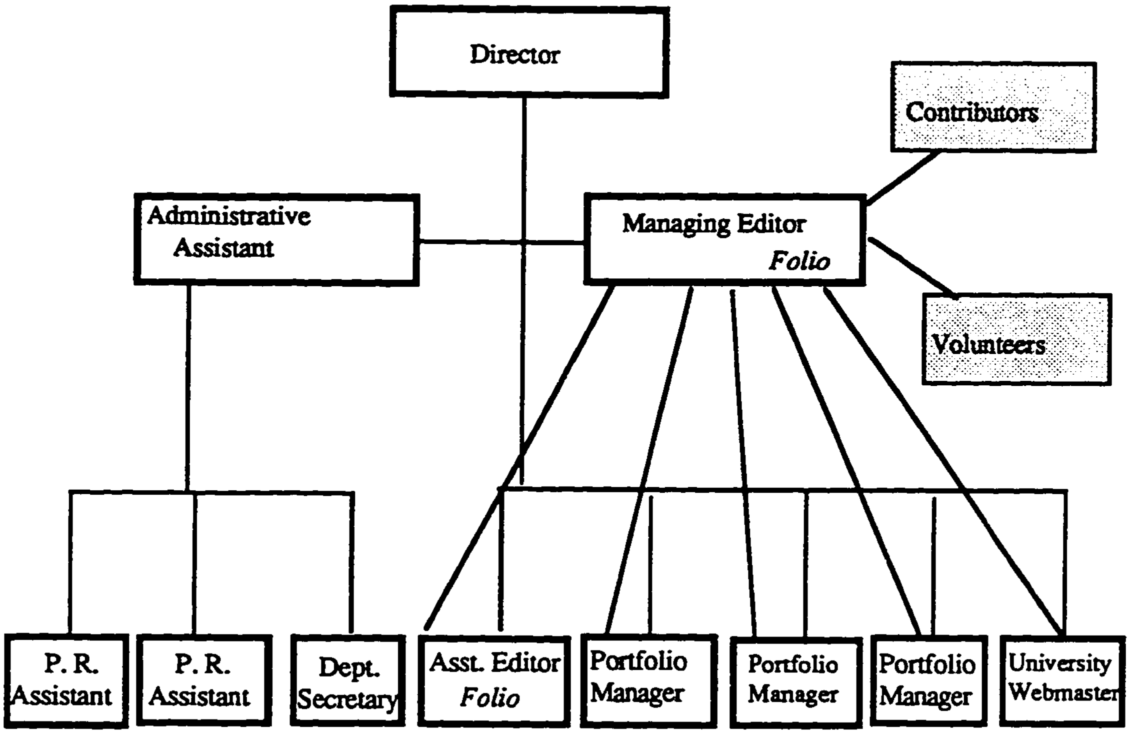

Figure 2. Organizational Chart of the Office of Public Affairs (Source: Public Affairs Office of the University: 1997.)

Alumni Affairs

The origin of the alumni office can be traced back to 1914 when its constitution was drafted and presented for acceptance at a meeting of alumni and the graduating class of 1915 (Alumni website). By 1922, a permanent office of the alumni had been established in the University. Since then the office has grown and established alumni branches in Canada and various parts of the world such as United States, Britain, Japan, Kenya, Nigeria, Korea, Malaysia, Australia, Hong Kong, Tanzania, Indonesia and Bangladesh. Currently there are over 148,000 alumni world wide.

The mission of the Alumni Office of the university and that of the Alumni Association, as stated in the Alumni Association strategic plan of 1995, is to "strengthen the relationships between the alumni and the university so that the university will be a world renowned leader in teaching, research and continuing education" (Alumni Affairs website). The office therefore has a basic mandate of connecting alumni worldwide with the university and to involve them in the life of the institution. With these associations, the alumni office hopes its initiatives will translate into general support and a return to the university in terms of student recruitment, ideas, gifts, advice or money.

Alumni Council and Alumni Association

Alumni Council. Besides the Alumni Affairs Office being answerable to the office External Affairs, it is also answerable to an external body - the Alumni Council. This body consists of 25 alumni who are prominent members of the business and professional community within the province. They serve in an advisory capacity to the governing body of the Alumni Association. The Alumni Council represents the alumni in providing advice and determining policy. It also reviews programs, provides input to the university administration, and directs assets of the association.

Alumni Association: The Alumni Association is defined as a "volunteer, non-profit organization which works independently with the office of Alumni Affairs" (Alumni Affairs Website). Membership in the Alumni Association is automatic for all of the university's alumni. The association's plan for 1997 records that "upon graduation, and without fee, all graduates of the university automatically become life members of the Association" (p. 1).

The aims of the association and its governing body Alumni Council are supported by the office of the Alumni Affairs while the funds for the association's operations are drawn from its revenue generating programs.

The Alumni Office seeks, through various strategic initiatives, to enhance the university's mission by involving its alumni and the Alumni Association in its activities. Their strategic plan can be summarized as follows:

- To create awareness, understanding and support for the university among alumni through various communication channels.
- To have the association, and its members perceived within the University community as a credible resource, one which is sought for its expertise and advice in university decision making.
- To celebrate and recognize the successes of alumni and students.
- To become the primary source for engaging volunteer resources for the University through maximizing the pool of its rich talent of alumni.
- To develop relevant programs and services consistent with the University mission statement.
- To attain financial stability and to obtain adequate human resources to fulfill the Association's mission. (Strategic Plan 1996 - 98)

In keeping with their mission of supporting the university in achieving its mission, the Office of Alumni Affairs engages in a myriad of public relations activities provincially, nationally and internationally. These activities that enhance student recruitment and fund raising efforts are conducted through its 37 alumni branches internationally.

Development Office

The Development Office has been mandated to ensure that there is donor support and commitment required to assist the university achieve its mission. In other words the development office is the income generating arm of the university. As an income generation unit, it has articulated a mission statement that clearly identifies its operating philosophy, its purpose, its key services, and who its clients are.

The above areas are summarized in the 1996 strategic plan as follows:

Purpose: To ensure the donor support and commitment required for the university.

Key Services:

- Identify and cultivate potential donors and support
- Creating opportunities for investment
- Building donor involvement and nurturing meaningful relationships
- Asking for and motivating the gift
- Nurturing a development culture in the university
- Development of data bases for all its activities
- Coordination of related development activities throughout the university

Clients/Customers: All those most likely to support the university.

Operating Philosophy: This relates to how the department goes about doing its business. The unit is guided by the University's theme (The University of ... It makes sense). But within this context, the unit's business is donor driven in its approach, characterized by a high degree of teamwork and professional standards (p. 2). All these features sum up the mission statement.

Among the operational areas of the office are (a) the Annual Fund, which is responsible for raising the dollars on an on-going basis, (b) Research, which is responsible for researching information on prospective donors, and (c) the Donor Relations, which has the responsibility for donor relations, protocol issues and stewardship.

In summary, the offices presented interact with the community on a daily and on-going basis and at the official level. The three operational units are collegial in their operations as they work jointly in most projects. It is thus difficult to label some of the public relations activities as belonging to one or another of the offices. However, it is worth noting that all offices of the university, including faculty and departmental offices, and individuals in the university in one way or another are involved in public relations.

To understand the interactions and the theoretical underpinnings, it is worth exploring some of the various branches of literature or models of study that have influenced the practice and how the various components such as the environmental factors, publics and the university interact. This will form my theoretical and conceptual framework.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The framework presented here is drawn from the literature reviewed in chapter 3. It provides a synopsis that covers two approaches or models derived from communications and behavioral theories. The reason for focusing on these two areas is because available literature offers little to formulate frameworks from, and as noted by Kowalski (1996) "those who search the literature nevertheless find little theory applicable to contemporary practice." He goes on to say that " a small growing number of public relations educators are building a theoretical foundation for the discipline but the progress is slow" (p. 43).

Each of the two models individually or combined has great relevance or significance in this study especially insofar as explaining the main dimensions to be studied such as human behavior, human relationships and desired results. Public relations, as will later be defined, has a lot to do with communication of messages to individuals or groups of individuals with a hope of changing their behavior, attitudes or beliefs about the sender and to achieving a particular purpose. Hence the blending of the two models largely explains the theoretical foundation of public relations practice and the practical aspect of it, and also depicts relationships between the various units in the whole public relations process in a given organization.

Behavioral Model

This model summarizes a number of theories presented by psychologists and behavioral scientists on various aspects of human behavior, learning and social change, and ultimately how they may relate to public relations practice in organizations such as a university. This link which has been examined in depth by Kowalski (1996) and Grunig (1992) has great influence on the framework adapted here. Much of the literature in the behavioral sciences such as sociology, psychology, education and social psychology centers on human behavior and determinants of such behavior. In other words central to their concern is the question "Why do people behave the way they do?". Consequently, several theories, models and constructs have been developed to explain this complex human characteristic. Over a period of time, behaviorist theories have had numerous applications in educational institutions such as emphasis on behavior, drill and practice in teaching, methods for breaking habits, and attention to the consequences of behavior (Ormrod, 1990, p. 25). But a new application is emerging in the area of public relations in educational institutions (Kowalski, 1996). Equally, based on these studies, other fields such organizational behavior, marketing and certain branches of medicine have tapped in to constructs that these studies have identified, with the sole purpose of influencing and understanding the behavior of the individuals within their fields or organizations.

Winnet (1986) summarizes works of behaviorists as emphasizing on cognition and behavioral change (p.12). Cognition largely refers to mental responses such as thinking, evaluation, planning and decision making. Kowalski (1996) also records that "much of behavioral theory revolves around "learning". He defines learning, as " a universal and a lifelong process through which individuals modify behavior in adapting to their environments" (p. 44). Hence the two key determinants of behavior implicit in these two contentions are cognition and environment. That is, the environment interacts with a person which leads to learning, and learning leads to behavior change. Thus, a domino effect is implicit in this theory.

In examining the various components of learning and behavioral change, Kowalski (1996), and Hergenhahn and Olson 1997), note that most psychologists generally concur learning occurs where experience produces change in adapting to their environments. A key component in this process is the concept of *experience* , which is defined as "the interaction between the individual and the environment, the internal mental activity arising out of the interaction and the influence of external events" (Kowalski, 1996 p.44).

All these combine to produce a behavioral change. This framework according to Bandura (quoted in Winett, 1986) has two basic assumptions

1. That behavior and environment are best studied as reciprocal systems. That is person-centered variables must always be studied within an environmental context.

2. The reciprocity notion means that they are bi-directional. The environment shapes, maintains, and constraints behavior. However people are not passive to this process. They are architects of their environments, although their architectural plans are influenced by prevailing environments and the environment that is constructed, in turn, influences their behavior. (p. 10)

Another theory presented by the behaviorists argues that "behaviors are learned" (Kowalski, 1996, p. 45). Further, the behaviorists believe that knowledge is learned and that changes in knowledge lead to behavioral change. Put it another way, behavioral changes result from learning. Hergenhahn and Olson (1997), in reviewing works of the various theorists on learning, concludes that "most learning theorists agree that the learning process cannot be studied directly; but instead, its nature can only be inferred from changes in behavior" (p. 3). In other words , learning is a "process that mediates behavior" and for them, "learning is something that occurs as the result of certain experiences and precedes changes in behavior" (p. 3). There are, however, other schools of thought championed by Skinner that contend that behavioral changes are learning and no further process needs to be inferred (p. 3).

Another school of thought, that of the cognitive psychologists, views individuals as active processors of information who initiate learning experiences, seek information to solve problems and reorganize knowledge to achieve new learning (Hergenhahn and Olson, 1997). Bandura (1986), (quoted by Kowalski, p. 45) in examining this phenomenon concluded that learning "is largely an information processing activity in which information about the structure of behavior and about environmental events is transformed into symbolic representation that serves as guides for action" (p. 45). Based on the above perspectives, it is apparent that behavior is a function of the combination of environmental and cognitive factors. In other words individuals process information gained through their cognitive systems and experiences to make sense of their environment, which in turn produces knowledge, meanings and beliefs about concepts and events, and finally influences behavior (Kowalski, 1996; Ormrod, 1990). Bandura (1986) summarizes this stand held by social cognitive theorists as embracing "an inter-factional model of causation in which environmental events, personal factors, and behavior all operate as interacting determinants of each other" (p. xi). This stand is consistent with Kurt Lewin's definitive formula developed years ago for this relationships. He defined this relationship as follows: Behavior as a function of personality and environment, (B=f(P*E); Personality as a function of behavior and environment (P=f(B*E) and, Environment (to some degree) is the function of behavior and personality E=f(B*P)

While environmental forces are acknowledged by most theorists as a key factor in influencing behavior and learning, social learning theorists contend that "individuals are insightful and foresighted people capable of self regulation through self reward and self punishment,"... that people are neither driven by inner forces or helplessly shaped by external forces, but rather draw information from the environment" (Heath and Bryant, 1992, p. 137). This suggests that human beings are capable of controlling their own behavior and not necessarily being manipulated by the environment.

Another theory that has been subsumed under the behaviorist model is what Rogers (1986) terms as diffusion of innovation theory. Diffusion according to Rogers denotes the "process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels or over time among the members of a social system" (p. 60). Consequently, the diffusion process is seen as a kind of social change in which certain alterations occur in the structure and functions of a social system when new ideas or products are invented and diffused, and are adopted or rejected (p. 61).

The behavioral model is an important tool that helps to explain a fundamental aspect of public relations, namely, relationship building. Public relations practitioners have as one of their functions to measure anticipated change in the public's attitudes, perceptions, beliefs and to some extent their behavior. Beyond communications activities this approach allows for deeper analysis of public relations and a deeper understanding of human personality and actions. This theory thus assists in providing a basis for gaining and maintaining support, understanding expectations of the organization's publics, modifying as need be, and channeling resources for favorable options. Since public relations is also about education and information dissemination, it is believed that these processes will lead to learning and therefore change of behavior.

Communications Model

Communications theories have had a lot of influence in the study of public relations. A large body of literature presents the two concepts as if they were synonymous. This is because public relations utilizes communication as a tool to achieve a specific purposes (Keen & Greenhall 1987, p. 14). Most of the areas examined here relate to media and communication theories. However, a large part of literature on public relations and communication embodies concepts such as rhetorics, speech and public address, propaganda, group dynamics, and interpersonal relations (Heath & Bryant, 1992; Kowalski, 1996; Oskamp, 1977).

The underlying contention in this model is that communication, in whatever form, involves exchange of information or messages which in turn elicits certain behavior or responses from the target recipient. As defined by Rogers (in Winett 1986) communication as will be understood in this framework is "a process of convergence (or divergence) as two or more individuals exchange information in order to move towards each other (or apart) in meaning that they ascribe to certain events" (p. 5). The major objective of the model is to demonstrate the relationship between the communication process in general and the feedback of information in particular.

Among theories on communication put forward have been those that relate to media-audience interactions and its role in influencing behavior. For a period of time it was held that information through the media led to behavior change or influence of opinion (Covington, 1995, p. 3). The belief in this theory led to the use of the media by institutions of higher learning to advance their agendas (Ratcliff, 1995, p. 1). Recent research on the correlation between media exposure and behavior change shows that the influence of the mass media is relatively small and probably declining (Grunig, 1992; Kowalski 1996; Covington, 1995). In literature there is some irony and inconsistency on the history of communication models and the effectiveness of the media. For instance, there were periods where the media was seen as very influential, other periods where the media was depicted as non-influential, and periods where both positions were held (Winett, 1986,

p. 14). Regardless of the views of the time, universities have continued to use the media. Employment of the media stems basically from the belief in the media, both print and broadcast, as having a significant influence on the public perceptions of their institutions. For instance, the Macleans rankings, and the regular media depictions of the university of ... graduates as being unemployed, although evidence shows to the contrary.

Of great influence to the practice of public relations are communications theories that deal with the originating of the messages, transmission reception, and the response to information. These theories categorize this model as a functional one considering that "communication is a dynamic process and often is focused on elements of change" (Winett, 1986; McQuail & Windhahl, 1981). They are functional theories in the sense that messages are originated and transmitted to an audience for a particular purpose. Hence, the whole process is a function. McQuail and Windhahl (in Winett 1986) summarize this model as follows:

> In most general terms, communication implies sender, a channel, a message, a receiver, a relationship between sender and receiver, an effect, a context in which communication occurs and a range of things to which the message refers. Sometimes, but not always, there is an intention, or a purpose to 'communicate' or to 'receive', communication can be any of the following: an action on others, an interaction with others and reaction to others. (p.13)

Other communication theories deal particularly with what Kowalski (1996) terms as "message content, exposure and effects." Effects in this case are what public relations practitioners are interested in, and will include the "behavioral, attitudinal, cognitive or physiological" (p. 47). Theories that talk about effects include that presented by Harold Laswell with the use of hypodermic needle analogy. Using medical terminology, he suggests that people could be "injected" with messages and thereby manipulated by the mass media (Oshkamp, 1977, Kowalski, 1996). This view is also held by social learning theorists who suggest that individuals learn behaviors by observing and imitating others as seen or heard in the mass media. However, they also argue that mass media produces selective effects based on differences among message recipients (Kowalski, p. 47). That is, the same message or data can be interpreted or reacted to differently by different publics. As noted earlier exposure to mass media of certain messages and images will have differing impact on different publics. Similarly, selectivity means that the university could only release information they deem necessary to the exclusion of the rest, or, that messages get to only those who have access to the particular mode of media. The focal university has maintained an open door policy in terms of release of information to the public thus opening itself to public scrutiny. This has meant that since university deals with issues such as equity programs, human rights, and sexual harassment, the university has been perceived as having a problem while in fact it simply is proactive in dealing with vices that are mirrored in the society.

Covington (1995) in examining the media and public relations practitioners' relationships noted the selectivity of issues. He commented that often negative topics are a common requirement in all media for public relations material to gain actual coverage (p. 3). It is also in this selectivity that lies both the weakness and the strength of the use of these theories in relevance to public relations. In summarizing the use of this communication model, Winett (1986), records that,

> specific types of communications can be reasonably effective (i.e., information, attitude, and behavior change) when careful attention is

> given to receiver characteristics, message content and quality, delivery channel, type of change needed and constraints to change, and extend of exposure to information (p.18).

A depiction of public relations activity at the university utilizing the communication model puts the practice into perspective. The model below identifies the multiple dimensions implicit in the practice and assists in explaining the features that make each dimension relevant to the others. The framework depicts public relations as the sum total of relationships between environmental forces, the university, and the various publics. How the university marshals all the variables towards its stated objectives constitute the public relations practice.

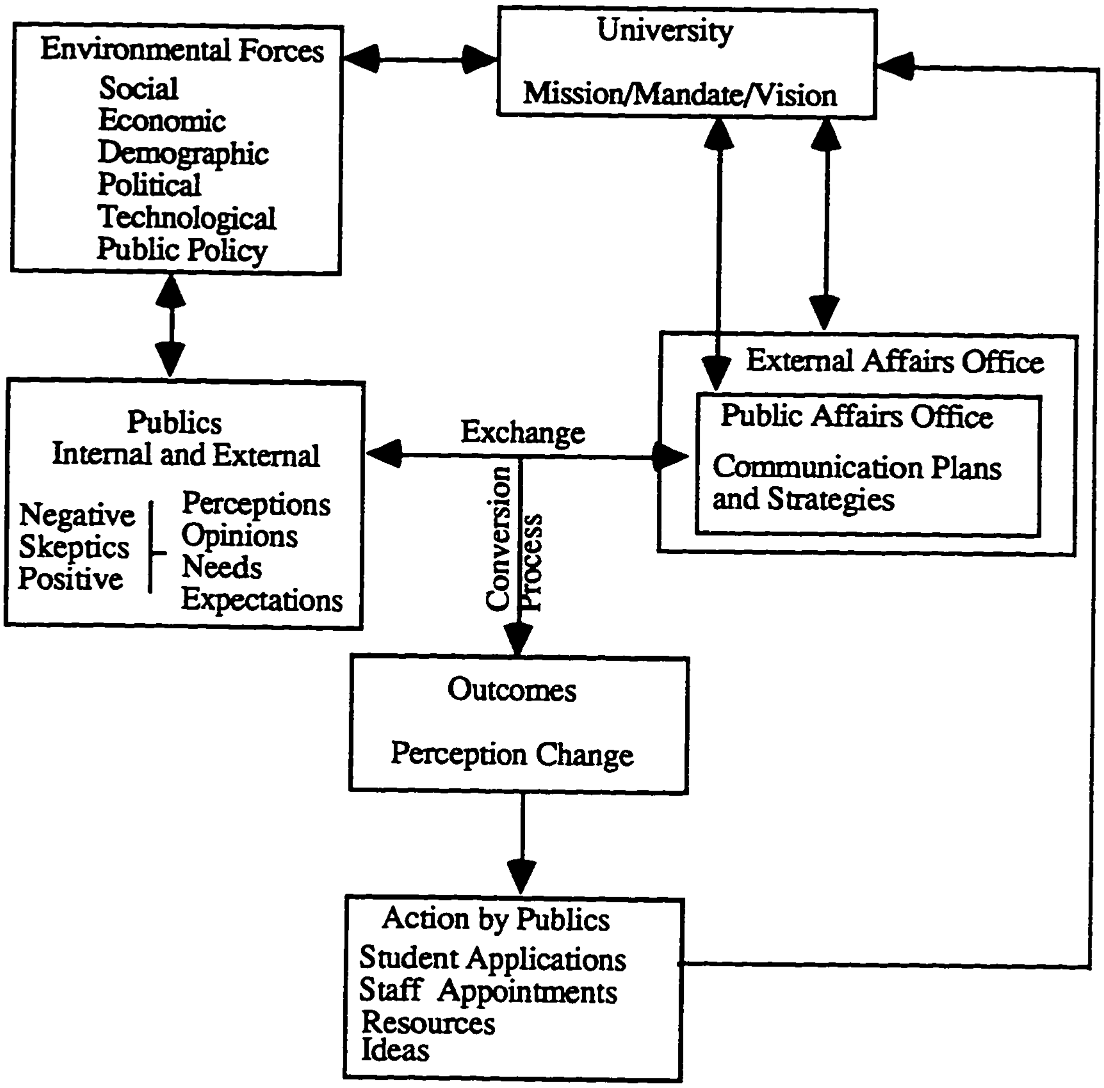

Figure 3. A conceptual model for understanding public relations activity in the university

In this model, the *"university "* represents the source or the trigger that causes all the components to relate in a particular way. It is the organization that spells out the objectives, mission and vision which all other offices within the system including the office of Public Affairs, seek to achieve. The university in the process interact with the environment and the public directly or indirectly with the office of Public Affairs as the medium. The *"Environmental forces"* comprise multiple external forces that impact on both the university and the publics; the *"publics"* are different groups with specific needs and interests and, holding differing expectations of the university, such as educational programs and services. The environment is the pool from which the university will draw its students, staff, and resources. The *"public affairs office"* serves to manifest the attributes of the university and is responsible for the drawing up a "theory of action" by which the office hopes to achieve its mandate. These actions are manifested through the strategic communication plans which facilitates or if not properly planned, retards the institution responsiveness to both internal and external constituents. *"Exchange"* refers to the flow of ideas, messages, concerns and activities between the university and its publics. This is the stage where actual public relations activities and programs are concentrated. This stage involves the implementation of programs with the view to influencing the public and telling the university's story to the publics who may otherwise have had a negative opinion towards the university. In other words it is the opinion changing stage. The "conversion *process"* in the model refers to that transforming stage of the publics attitudes, opinions and actions arising from the exchanges of information. *"Outcomes"* are the changes in attitudes arising from information obtained from the institution which lead to *action (feedback),* which are the responses by the publics vis-a-vis the initial intended goal of the institution. It is at this stage that behavior exhibited by the public will be assessed against the information exchanges and activities that were presented to the publics after taking into consideration all the environmental factors.

With this model as a framework for analysis, it is possible to illustrate precisely the variables that interact, but the specific strategies must then be determined by the practitioners of the time. What is clear is that the behavioral model and the communication model converge as they both ultimately center on the change in human behavior. This hybrid model merges both theory and practice in that most of what is practiced is backed by what theory suggests.

This framework, however fails to capture a very important component of the public relations process or activity, namely, the human or the inter-personal interactions characterized by feelings and moods that are created in the process. The informal side of public relations where relationships are struck and where public relations practitioners functions outside the formal structure, is not represented in the model.

Summary

The chapter outlines the context of the study and offer a conceptual framework for understanding the practice of public relations in the sample university. To present the context, the various administrative units in the university that deals with public relations are explored. Their place within the overall structure of the office of the Vice President Research and External Affairs and their major functions are also provided.

The chapter also examines two major branches of literature: behavioral and communication theories and how these theories have influenced the practice of public relations. Based on these branches a conceptual framework for the study is designed.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter examines literature related to the practice of public relations in educational institutions and in organizations in general. The review provides background information that leads to a better understanding of what public relations is, and complexities associated with the practice. Specifically, the review focuses on the concept of public relations from an evolutionary perspective as well as delineating it from selected and related concepts. The review examines literature on the various frameworks for studying and understanding the practice of public relations, notably the public relations models, paradigms and theories. Public relations practices, roles, functions and strategies used in universities and in other organizations are reviewed and emphasis given to practices in universities, and the field of education in general both in Canada and internationally. The chapter also reviews the development and the state of public relations practice in Canada as it provides the context for the study.

Evolution and Definition of Public Relations

General Definitions

This section of the chapter reviews the definitions accorded to the practice of public relations in two ways: first, as it is practiced generally in organizations, and secondly in educational settings, especially higher education. In defining the practice, an evolutionary approach is adopted in the sense that different periods of history have had different foci.

The term "public relations" like many concepts that are time altered, has been characterized by the lack of consensus in terms of definition, and has in the process continued to acquire labels, connotations, and perceptions that seem to obscure its meaning. The literature reveals the various meanings public relations has acquired stems from the fact that the term has been used in "varying times to describe a concept, a profession, a process and even a goal" (Kowalski, 1996, p. 3). Studies also reveal a host of debates that have persisted among scholars on whether public relations is an art, a science, or neither (Kowalski 1996; Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Gloria, 1964). For instance Gloria (1964) in contrast with the modern day discourse in the area, contends that public relations is neither a science nor an art, but a job for people who know how to employ a variety of techniques to reach others (p. 1). There are studies that try to provide frameworks for understanding and defining public relations. There is no consensus in this regard either. Among the studies are those that focus on the elements of time and context. Certain definitions accorded to public relations reflect features akin to certain periods in history, and others appear related to specific organizational settings. Definitions therefore reflect what the organization is all about. On the contrary, some writers seem to feel that time is of no consequence in defining public relations practice (Hallahan, 1993).

Other branches of literature engaged in a paradigmatic search for conceptualizing public relations have also come up with definitions worth considering. According to Hallahan (1993), public relations professionals, in defining public relations have struggled with how to treat the profession conceptually (p. 198). The struggle for him has centered on what public relations does: does it persuade, communicate, change attitudes, alter behavior, avert crisis, appease clients, or strike harmony? (p. 198).

Besides being regarded as a practice and a profession, public relations has also been regarded a discipline. Guth (1995) states, that it is a discipline in the social sciences and grounded in a strict code of ethics (p. 124).

Literature on public relations in modern organizations and the professions define their public relations as based on the missions and objectives of the respective associations (Grunig, 1992). Organizations that are service based, educational institutions, or business organizations have each carved a niche in the definition race. This view is expressed by Kowalski (1996) who contends that "organizational purpose most always influences how public relations is defined and the importance given to the process or program" (p. 3). Consequently, public relations has come to mean many things to different people. From the above, it is apparent the most important determinants of a definition of public relations are the purpose, organizational missions and objectives, function, context and time.

As indicated above, public relations can best be understood from an historical perspective. Byerly (1993) has argued that to understand the meaning of public relations, one must begin by looking backward in time over the centuries(p. 4). Arising from the concession by scholars that public relations is a dynamic process, there have been attempts to systematically record its development. Comprehensive and definitive historical development of public relations is still lacking in the literature. Grunig and Hunt (1984) state that, a great deal of bits and pieces of information on the topic is found in books, journals, and biographies, though in no apparent sequence, and focusing on a wide range of issues related to public relations. The joint authors in examining the development of public relations have suggested that public relations activities have always existed as long as there was an organized society. Other public relations historians and scholars such as Cutlip (1995), Newson and Scott (1989) and Don (1995), also traced the origin of "public relations-like" activities and roles to ancient Greece.

Cutlip (1995) in his survey on the history of public relations from the 17th to the 20th century records that "what is known today of ancient Egypt, Assyria and Persia (Iran) comes largely from recorded material intended to publicize and glorify the rulers of the day" (p.xi). He further records that "much of the literature and art of antiquity was designed to build support for kings, priests and other leaders," and "in all other instances there was acknowledged need for a third party to facilitate communication and mediate adjustment of conflicting interests" (p. xii). Following this perspective, Newson and Scott (1989) posit that public relations broadly defined,

> is as old as civilization, because underlying all public relations activities is the effort to persuade. ... Persuasion is still the driving force of public relations, and many tactics that modern public relations practitioners use to persuade have been used by leaders of society for thousands of years.

Implicit in this synopsis is the idea that historically, public relations was largely executed at a societal level by a group or social class for specific social or political objectives. Early definitions reflect such characteristics. One such definition is provided by Byerly (1993) who states that public relations is

> any intentional, managed campaign intended to negotiate the power relations between (or among) groups in society, or within the membership of a given organization, for the purpose of either 1) maintaining or strengthening the status quo of institutional practices, or 2) reforming or radically altering those practices (p.7).

Peake in Grunig and Hunt (1984) also defining public relations akin to the early definitions states that "public relations is the planned persuasion to change adverse public opinion..." (p. 7). These definitions portray a situation where power relations were skewed in favor of a dominant party. They also carry a great deal of socio-political overtones. Early definitions portray as their central purpose a campaign which is more of a propaganda program with both political and social agendas. The use of phrases such as "change adverse public opinion" portrays a mood of intolerance to alternative views and opinions. Hence what was considered "adverse" was met with propaganda action with an intent to change such attitudes. Most writers point to the period of the middle ages when, informational campaigns and religious propaganda were used by religious or opposition groups to change certain social practices (Byerly, 1993; Grunig, 1994; Don, 1995). Byerly (1993) in emphasizing this phenomenon states that reformulated definitions place public relations practices at the very heart of human social relations and the power struggles among specific groups at any given point in time (p. 8). The practice therefore always had and still has a motive or an intent, to persuade. Hence according to Kowalski (1996), definitions that have been accorded over time have been on the "basis of intent."

Intent to persuade has been the driving force in public relations for centuries and has been reflected in most definitions. Earlier works by Marson (1963), Persons (1945), and Harral (1942) have had "persuasive communications" as key words in their definitions. Their works which largely refer to public relations in universities in the early parts of the 20th century have described public relations as " the use of information to influence the public opinion" and thus making public relations "an instrument of persuasion" (Kowalski, 1996, p. 4). While most of these early writers see public relations emphasizing on persuasion as an intent, Peake in Grunig (1994) consider it an "effect." Generally, this was the time when the practice was characterized as press agentry utilizing a one way information flow.

As a profession, public relations is considered by many to be a 20th century phenomenon (Grunig, 1994; Kruckerberg, 1995; Kowalski, 1996; Cutlip, 1996). It is also now more of an organizational practice and an occupational specialization than just an instrument of persuasion. Wills (1987) in a review on the evolution of the profession, states that the beginnings of the field have been traced to the 17th century (p.19). Based on the works of earlier writers, she observes that this was the period when a "number of communication techniques ... eventually evolved in coincidence with the development of other tools until all the elements became recognized as belonging to one field" (p. 19). Some of the tools that evolved independently included newsletters, lobbying and planning. Wills (1989) indicates that as late as 1930s these tools had not worked together as one specialized function so as to be regarded as part of a profession (p. 20). While quoting Griswold and Griswold (1948), Wills (1989) contends that public relations in the 1940s centered on perfecting existing techniques and tools, as well as discovering new ones. But more importantly, this period saw the grouping of certain public relations techniques into steps and procedures (p. 22). By 1950s and 1960s in a number of Western countries, the practice had been embraced by many organizations at management levels. More recently, with public relations becoming an important tool in organizational management, definitions have tended to be more expansive and inclusive in terms of scope, functions and tools employed.

In retrospect it is evident that public relations has undergone various changes and at the same time has retained a number of aspects from the past. These aspects have been transformed as they respond to the changing realities over time.

While earlier definitions focused on intent and were less inclusive to public inputs, definitions of modern public relations, on the contrary, focus on communication flow and intended purpose for both the organization and the audiences. This inclusiveness is attributed to recognition in the 1970s of public relations as a results oriented management function. Hence there is emphasis on reciprocity and interaction rather than just on information.

What then is public relations? Cutlip (1995) in reference to modern practice, defines public relations as "the management function that establishes and maintains mutual beneficial relationships between organizations and the publics on whom its success or failures depends" (p. 6). Grunig and Hunt (1984) offers a simple definition that captures the whole essence of the practice. They define it as, the management of communications between the organization and its publics" (p. 6).

In reviewing both definitions, it is apparent that there is recognition and focus on public relations as being a management function. Both definitions view the practice as a management function that utilizes communication to facilitate relationships between the publics and the organization. Cutlip's definition further posits that organizational stability and survival are often dependent on the maintenance of mutual understanding created through public relations activity. In short, these definitions emphasize three things: management, communication, and effects or results.

Other definitions have besides "effects" incorporated "tools". One such is offered by Harlow (as stated in Grunig 1994) and states in part; "... Public relations serves as an early warning system to help anticipated trends; and uses research and sound ethical communication techniques as its tools" (p. 7).

Nolte (1986) in expounding on intent found in other authors in modern public relations, argues that persuasion could be expanded to include two way communication. He states that public relations is

> a management function which adapts an organization to its social, political, and economic environment for the benefit of both. This implies a two way type of activity. First the public relations practitioner must persuade management to do things to the organization that will make it worthy of approval. Secondly, the public relations practitioner must convince the public that the organization deserves its approval.

The emphasis here is on two way communication despite the fact that the intent is to persuade both management and the publics. This definition also introduces the role of enlightening top level management and depicts the public relations practitioner's role as that of shuttling between management officers and the publics they are trying to persuade.

Two widely referred to definitions are those provided by Grunig (1984) and the First World Assembly of Public Relations Associations convened in Mexico in 1978. The Assembly defined public relations as "the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organizational leaders and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both the organization and the public interest" (Kowalski, 1996, p. 5; Grunig, 1984, p. 7; Newson and Scott 1989 and Vanslykoe, 1989, p. 6). Grunig defines public relations as "the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a plan of action to earn public understanding" (p. 8).

This conceptualization of public relations not only emphasizes the mutual and reciprocal interactions between the organization and the public, but also the set of functions that go into that exchange. It further emphasizes the centrality of public relations in the well-being of the organization and its integral part in leadership and decision making. White and Mazur (1995) also consider public relations to a large extend as a set of functions performed for particular organizational objectives (p. 12).

Current studies on public relations indicate that as a result of the newly acquired functions such as marketing and public affairs the practice has had a reformulated definition. Perhaps one that is still to capture attention is Kruckerberg's and Stark's (1995) who have argued that a fundamental reason why public relations exists today is because of a loss of community, especially within the most technologically advanced regions of the world. They have argued that technological advancement has distanced the community from organizations in the way they communicate due to the impersonal nature of technology. Public relations therefore according to them is "the active attempt [by organizations] to restore and maintain a sense of community" (p. 7).

The proliferation of definitions of public relations has been a matter of concern by many writers. In 1976, Harlow (quoted in Grunig 1984), found 472 definitions from books, journals, magazines and practitioners (p. 7). This poses a grave danger in that it is likely to widen the confusion on the scope and meaning of public relations. To bring the definition back on track writers have now tended to provide definitions based on organizational missions or profession rather than attempting to provide a definition that covers all aspects of public relations.

Definition of Public Relations in Education

Definitions of public relations in the field of education have, as in other domains, been evolutionary and in constant change (Botan, 1993; , Osborne, 1984). "Public relations" as a term applied to educational institutions was used for the first time in 1882 by D. Eaton, a Law Professor in Yale University (Grunig, 1984). He had attached to it the meaning "looking out for the welfare of the public" (p. 14). Since then the concept has continuously changed. Studies also indicate that public relations activities were being practiced in universities long before the use of the term (Pelletier, 1985; Cutlip 1995; Grunig, 1992). Most of their activities then, pass for what today are classified as publicity and advertising (Cutlip, 1995). Grunig (1992) calls these activities press agentry. In fact many universities in the United States had by 1890s established presses to publish promotional and advertising material for their universities (Pelletier, 1985; Cutlip, 1995; Pearson 1945; Harral 1942; Grunig and Hunt 1984). Pelletier records that Cornell, Harvard and John Hopkins universities had by the 1890 been placing advertisements in newspapers and circulating brochures for student recruitment. He further indicates that by 1910, several American universities had full-fledged public relations departments and that by 1930 there were more than 200 college publicity offices (p. 56).

A survey of the literature indicates that public relations activities in education have for centuries been perceived mainly in terms of the institutional purpose that it serves. The literature has have also been specific to the types of institutions and the levels of education provided.

Some writers have included organs of educational governance present in these institutions. Thus a plethora of definitions exists specific to school systems, and how they relate to their boards and school districts, colleges, technical institutes and polytechnics, universities and higher education in general. Generally speaking, definitions offered in respect to education overlap with general definitions, only that most are specific on their intentions and their publics. Richard Saxe (1984), in examining the role of public relations in school systems, asserts that "public relations involves practices initiated by educators and designed to influence the public" (p. 12). James Jones (in Kowalski, 1996) thirty years ago wrote, "public relations designates all functions and relationships that pertain in a two way exchange of ideas between school and community (p. 6).

Similarly, Walling (1982), while beholding school public relations as an instrument in communicating with their various publics, defines it is a "philosophy of communication" (p. 14). He also criticizes notions that portray public relations as the art of image creation and maintenance. He argues that school public relations is not about institutional image but about relationships (p. 15).

There has also been a trend to operationalize the practice to include recent changes and development in the social and technological system. West (1985) defines educational public relations as "a systematically, continuously planned, executed, and evaluated program of interactive communication and human relationships that employ paper, electronic, and people mediums to attain internal as well as external support for an educational institution" (p. 23). This definition introduces the notion and usage of multi-medium techniques for increased communication. Morris James (1984) also asserts that public relations is defined better in terms of public relationships. This is understood in relation to mediums that are technological in nature which to him only dehumanize the practice. He contends that emphasis on technological mediums of communication only make the practice impersonal. This criticism is not far-fetched as current trends in the practice as examined by Rick Malaspina, and others (1993) in their article on highly technological public relations reveal increased usage or reliance on electronic media for most public relations communications in the Western World.

Dyson (1989) in examining the management of university public relations defines it as "the process of organizing two way communication between a university and its many audiences, with the objective of building a level of mutual understanding and respect which allows the university's aims and objectives to be readily met" (p. 21)

Like most definitions at this level, the emphasis is on "organized," "two way communication," "mutual," "understanding and respect," and "internal as well as external audiences." But at the heart of all these relationships according to the definition is the university's purpose of achieving its goals. Some authors have suggested that in this respect the public relations departments in universities exists for the purposes of putting out fires to enable universities to work to achieve their goals. This contention is narrow in that crisis management comprises one among many functions of public relations departments. Perhaps the most elaborate and inclusive definition related to educational institutions and one which appears most appropriate for this study is that offered by Kowalski (1996). According to Kowalski,

> Public relations in educational institutions is an evolving social science and leadership process utilizing multi media

> approaches designed to build goodwill, enhance the public's attitude towards the value of education, augment interaction and two way communication between the institutions and their ecosystem, provide vital and useful information to the public and employees, and serve as an integral part of the planning and decision making functions (p. 9).

This conceptualization is holistic in that it incorporates all the parts that various writers at different points in time have emphasized. It for instance incorporates a theoretical framework (social science), intentional strategic communication processes, tools and outcomes. It also highlights the fact that the practice of public relations is a dynamic and evolutionary concept that is subject to social and technological change. It also supports the notion that public relations is generally carried out by organizations seeking to establish mutually beneficial relationships between themselves and their publics within a complex environment (Byerly, 1993; Cutlip et al, 1985; Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Baskin & Aronoff, 1992). Embedded in these characteristics is the conception of public relations recognizing the field as having a dual obligation: to serve the organization and the public's interests.

In summing up this account, it is evident from the literature that a wide range of perspectives exist on what constitutes public relations. Consequently a wide range of studies focusing on various aspects of public relations have been undertaken. This has led to the current search for a professional framework in which to study and analyze public relations work. Such studies dubbed "paradigm struggles and public relations" try to summarize all the areas that cumulatively define the practice. Among the writers with a paradigmatic approach include Hallahan (1993), and Botan (1993).

Public Relations Paradigms

Paradigms have often been viewed as a reassessment of a phenomenon in a whole new way and often in contrast with the existing or long held beliefs. Scholars on public relations are now attempting to provide new ways of understanding it. Botan (1993) has identified two paradigms: "one focusing on the values and skills needed for practice, and the other on the values and skills needed for scholarship" (p. 107). Hallahan (1993) identified seven paradigms for conceptualizing public relations. While both borrow from Kuhn (1970) they define a paradigm as "a pattern of thinking about studying a problem ... and as the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community" (Botan 1993, p. 107; Hallahan, 1993, p. 199). Hallahan states that the present paradigm struggle is the result of a lack of consensus as to what constitutes public relations. Each of Hallahan's paradigms listed below offers a perspective on the public relations as seen by various authors and are in fact reflected in many definitions of public relations.

Process Paradigm

This paradigm suggests that public relations should be examined as a set of routinized activities, often ongoing and without regard to time frames. This perspective has been criticized partly because it does not seem to recognize the fact that current functions and practices are continuations of ideas with origins in the past while other practices of the past may not be desirable presently.

Plan or Program Paradigm

This paradigm focuses on the strategies and tactics of public relations work. Hallahan (1993) contends that while educators and other practitioners talk about public relations as a process, most activities are executed as part of programs or campaigns which are basically self-contained output efforts by institutions stressing objectives, strategies and tactics.

Communication/Practice Style Paradigm

This paradigm asserts that public relations can be examined from the perspective of the communications produced, without regard to either process or plan. Hallahan points out that this paradigm should be related to the outcomes obtained. This is consistent with Grundig's (1992) four models of public relations.

Organizational/Managerial Effectiveness Paradigm

This paradigm suggests that "success" in public relations is a function of meeting organizational expectations and the development of effective working relations within the organization (Hallahan, 1993). A number of studies centering on evaluation components in public relations embrace this view.

Behavioral Paradigm

This paradigm suggests that the most appropriate measure to examine public relations efforts is at the level of the individual or target groups. It propounds that the success of a public relations program is in getting target audiences to conform to certain intended ways. Hence this approach aligns public relations to social psychology and consumer behavior which suggests that public relations practitioners must evaluate their work in terms of the impact on their audience or publics.

Social Problem Paradigm

This paradigm assumes that public relations problems and opportunities are inherently political and sociological in nature, and suggests that practitioners deal with power relationships in society as a whole. This approach suggests that public relations is not so much the effort to alter individual behavior but to influence the behavior of organizations and institutions. It has also been referred to as the public opinion or constructionist approach.

Systems Paradigm

This paradigm views public relations from a systems perspective which involves a series of inputs (both internal and external) and outputs (actions and communication) which are designed to reduced conflicts and build consensus between organizations and publics. This paradigm which is also explored by Cutlip, Center and Broom (1985), and Grunig and Hunt (1984) asserts that the degree to which the practitioners strike a good relationships between the inputs and outputs, success in public relations is achieved.

Related Concepts

Further understanding to the concept of public relations demands consideration of other concepts that have in many circles been mistaken to be synonymous with public relations. Among these concepts are, lobbying, promotion, publicity, advertising, marketing, communication, community relations and propaganda. Darrow and Forestall (1979) in their public relations handbook considered these concepts with the exception of propaganda as "subdivisions" of public relations (p. 86).

Publicity

Literature points out that in the first part of the 20th century, the term was used to explain what public relations is today (Cutlip, 1995). According to Darrow and Forestall (1979, p. 91) publicity is largely considered a technique or a tool of public relations rather than a specialty of its own. They add that in many cases, publicity often masquerades behind the term "media relations," and that while it is fundamental to all public relations, it is usually at the heart of the marketing function. Moore and Canfield (1977, p. 5) described publicity as both the technique of securing public notice or the public notice itself. Basically, literature has described publicity as denoting information with news value designed to advance the interest of a place, a person, a cause or an institution and that it occurs through the newspaper, exhibits, conferences, radio, television and other established channels (Keen and Greenall, 1987; Darrow and Forestall, 1979; Grunig 1992; Kowalski, 1996). So while public relations constitute all relationships, publicity constitutes an organized and deliberate effort to enlist support by doing something and telling others about it (Brownell, Maroon, and Gans 1955, p. 96).

Advertising

Literature also depicts advertising as a promotional tool that organizations use to position themselves better in the minds of their audience (Grunig (1984). While referring to the works of Douglas Johnson, Grunig (1984) records that there are more than a dozen labels for various nuances of corporate advertising such as "concept advertising," general advertising," "promotional advertising," goodwill advertising," "image advertising", etc. He however advances the view that public relations advertising is an umbrella concept that covers the entire spectrum. From an educational perspective, and especially in universities, Keen and Greenall (1987) have identified three types of advertising namely; staff recruitment, student recruitment, and corporate advertising (p. 58). Staff recruitment, he elaborates, is seen to be within the sphere of personnel domain , students recruitment more in the domain of marketing, and corporate advertising more in the domain of public relations (p. 60). A distinct feature in advertising, though not always, is that advertising through most media channels involves financial outlays. It is in reference to this feature that Moore and Canfield (1977) defined advertising as "paid, non-personal communication through various media of communication by an identified individual or organization" (p. 5). Public relations thus makes use of advertising in its activities but advertising in itself does not constitute public relations.

Community Relations

Grunig and Hunt (1984) make a distinction between two types of community relations practices, " expressive" and "instrumental" (p.265). Expressive community relations, they state, are community activities by institutions to promote themselves and show their goodwill to the community. Instrumental community relations, are activities to improve the community or to change the community to make it easier for their institution to work there (p. 225). Further, they reckon that there exist two levels of understanding for the term "community". They are (i) *a locality* -

meaning grouped by geographical location and (ii) as non-*geographical community of interest* - meaning people with common interest (p. 266). These understandings in effect shape the nature of community relations programs in institutions. While the two may overlap, the literature points out that community relations programs in educational institutions are normally designed for the first community. An umbrella definition would thus be that offered by Grunig (1984) who states that, "community relations programs are specialized public relations programs to facilitate communication between an organization and publics in its geographic locality" (p. 267).

Kowalski (1996) indicates that historically the term community relations has been used synonymously with public relations by educators (p. 6). He states that "public relations is viewed as a broad construct, and community relations is seen as its primary objective" (p. 6). A survey of community relations activities in universities reveals different levels of zeal in carrying out these activities especially if they involve faculty members. Dickson, Gallagher, Longden and Bartlett in their writings on higher education and community examined the relationships between institutions of higher learning in Britain and the communities in which they were geographically located. They found their relations had for over 20 years been somewhat indirect. They noted relations with the public had little or well placed interests from among the academicians. Some academics clearly indicated they had better things to do. They note "... it is precisely because academics have been seen as defining their involvement on their own terms that community activities have been very suspicious of both its motivation and its growth (p. 57).

Marketing and Public Relations

Of recent interest in administration of higher education is the growing application of marketing techniques and theories to the running of educational institutions. This has been greatly influenced by the changing trends in funding and competition among institutions for students and resources. (Michael, 1991; Pelletier 1985; McNamara, 1985). Marketing in educational institutions have been treated as a distinct practice from that of business because it basically markets its programs for the purposes of enrolling students and raising funds as opposed to selling products and services found in the business world. Recent studies on marketing practices in universities for instance indicate that they have been subsumed in public relations to a point where both have been seen to be one and the same thing or to some extent subordinating public relations. Pelletier (1985) in tracing the background of marketing in higher education, states that "to the extent that they have lobbied for students universities have always engaged in a crude version of marketing, based traditionally in public relations" (p. 56). Steve Michael (1991) in a study of marketing higher education examined the extent to which universities in western Canada have adapted marketing strategies. In the study he treats public relations as one of the marketing tools used in universities. Marketing in educational institutions is seen according to Pelletier (1985) as having to do with promoting a mutually satisfactory exchange. Students exchange tuition money for an education. Donors give money to the university in exchange for an altruistic feeling or for the feeling that they have paid back their alma mater

From the business standpoint, marketing as defined by the British Institute of Marketing is "the management function responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements at a profit" (

Keen & Greenall, p. 140). Keen and Greenall (1987) further contend that the definition of marketing is influenced by schools of thoughts in the marketing discipline. Regardless of the school, implicit in all is the notion of exchange of goods and services for a profit. The American Marketing Association has defined marketing as "the process of planning and executing, the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives (Hills G. 1994, p. 6). Krachenberg (in Pelletier 1985) presents yet another comprehensive definition of marketing. It contends that "marketing deals with the concept of uncovering specific needs, satisfying these needs by the development of appropriate goods and services, letting people know its availability, and offering them at appropriate prices, at the right time and place" (p. 57).

From the above definitions, a comparison of the concepts of marketing and public relations in educational context provides distinct differences. Pelletier (1985) in his article on marketing within higher education suggests that marketing in universities is a more inclusive concept which utilizes public relations as its strategy to get the world to itself. Others have argued to the contrary. In fact Pelletier (1985) concedes that while public relations preceded marketing, it has been subsumed by marketing. Technically speaking, according to Keen and Greenall (1987), marketing in higher education and public relations "share some objectives and methods, and play interrelated roles in their institutions and yet pursue overall goals which are fundamentally different" (p. 140). This assertion is illustrated by the above definitions that for a marketer, exchange for profits is the goal, while mutual understanding and relationships with the publics is the goal for public relations.

In summary this section has through available literature attempted to draw a line between public relations and related concepts as well as those that have encroached on its conceptualization. One notes that many of these related concepts are actually tools or techniques that public relations practitioners use in advancing their goals. Some of these concepts have been erroneously equated with public relations by a number of writers. But as seen from the a foregone discussion, each of these concepts is distinct and plays distinct roles in the whole public relations process.

Communication Theories, Models and Public Relations

Most works on public relations and its related concepts hinge on communication. This is evident from definitions accorded to public relations. However, public relations is not just about communication, but rather, communication is used as a tool. It is perhaps the most used tool. Due to its importance in the practice Keen and Greenall, (1987) have observed that when communication involves a large educational institution like universities which deal with varied audience, it is unwise to leave it to chance or grapevine but should be organized and managed. How then is communication linked to public relations? This section will outline the most referred to communication model in literature which actually provides a framework on how all exchanges take place, as well as general theories of communications that have a direct link to public relations.

SMCR Communications Models

Robinson (1966) contends that public relations practitioners are first and foremost communicators. This he attributes to the fact that most of their daily activities can be translated into a communications context. According to him, practitioners employ all sorts of mediums - spoken and written to perform tasks (p.18). Literature on communications as a process, revolve around the model that Hanson (1991) has labeled SMCR communications model (p.251). (SMCR stands for S= sender or source, M= message, C= channel, R= receiver). The same model has been examined by several writers before him and after such as; Columbus Eliot, 1966; Robinson, 1969; Rockey Edward, 1977, Winnet, R. 1986; Grunig 1992, Kowalski, 1996. In fact Winett (1986) attributes the original model to Laswell who presented it in 1948 (p. 13) A model as described by Winett (1986) seeks to show the main elements of any structure or process and the relationship between these elements (p, 13). The model traces the process of communication or sequence of the communication process from the source, the message being conveyed, through a specific medium to the recipient. Winett, (1986) using the works of McQuail and Windahl (1981), adds that,

> ... sometimes the originators of the models point to two additional processes, that of "encoding" (at the sender end of the model and that of "decoding" (at the receiver end). Encoding means that the message is translated into a language or code suitable for means of transmission and the intended audience. Decoding refers to the re-translation of the message in order to extract meaning (p. 13).

The model below is a representation of a communication model showing the main stages of a communication process.

A Communication Model

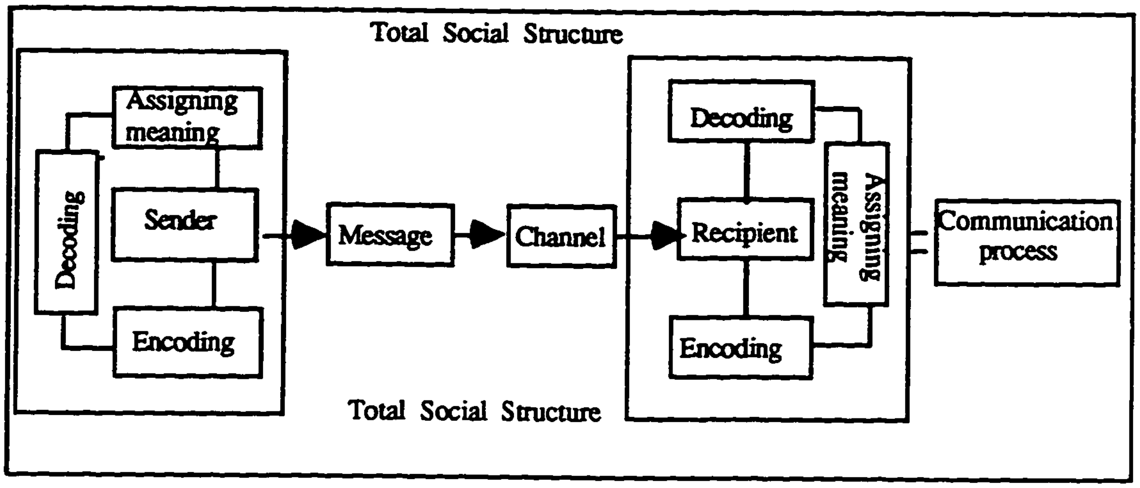

Figure 4. Model depicting communication process modified from Robinson J. Edward. *Public relations and survey research* 1969, p.20)

Earlier studies on communications saw the emergence of models which Corwin and Monahan (1967, pp. 71–77) summarized as physical, mathematical and social models of communication. These models realized the birth of concepts many of which are beyond the scope of this study. Another communications model put forward by Moore (1977, p. 66) stressed the need for common field of experiences between the sender and the recipient and the notion of feedback. Many current writers add the notion of feedback to make the communication process complete. So, depending on the feedback, one is able to evaluate whether the right message was communicated. If the response does not corroborate, then most likely there exists a barrier.

Another model is McGuire's model. This model presents the relationship between communications and technology (Winett, 1986). While the model recognizes the stages of SMCR, McGuire's model focuses more on behavior. Hence the effects of a communications process on the receiver or the behavior obtained is central to this model.

In examining communication as an area of discipline and practice, from an organizational standpoint, a number of theories come to light. Hanson (1991) has classified them as classical organization theories (scientific management and bureaucracy), human relations (social systems or socio-political (group theory)) and open system theory (p.251). He observes that most aspects of communication found in all the three schools of thought (theories) can be found in the SMCR model.

Classical theories according to Hanson (1991) focus on operation of certain communications processes such as who should say what, through what channel, to whom and to what effect (p.252). For instance, scientific management (one of the classical theories) saw communication as existing to facilitate the leader's command and control over the organization through vertical, and formal channels. It was therefore largely a one way (top-down) mode of communication, and task related.

Human relations theory which has its roots in the 1930s Hawthorne studies in Chicago, has within the context of communications been defined by Rogers (in Hanson (1991)) as the "exchange of meaning." Implicit here is the existence of an understanding between parties exchanging information. This model according to Hanson, lays emphasis on human relationship and interactions as well as the less visible and informal aspects of communication. Issues such as motivation, perspectives, non verbal cues, stereotypes, and behavior are considered important in the human relations package (p. 252–253).

Open System theories have been described as the "science of wholeness" (Hanson, 1991, p. 253). Systems theories in management concern themselves with inter-relatedness and how each sub unit in an organization or a system works or functions. Open systems in the context of communications has been seen as an "exchange of messages and meaning between an organization and its environment, and between the network of interdependent subsystems" (Hanson, 1991, p. 253). A key dimension in these theories is the emphasis on the role and impact of the environment on the organizational functioning.

Hence in terms of relationship between public relations theories, studies indicate that the open systems provide frameworks of understanding relationships between the organization and the publics (Coombs, 1993). Similarly, classical theories have been viewed as providing frameworks for internal communications, power relations and decision making, while the human relations theories provide framework for both internal and external personal relationships.

Public Relations Models

As a basis for understanding the manner of practices in organizations and in universities in particular, it is apparent that one examines the various models that have been employed by practitioners over a period of time. A model as defined by Grunig (1992) refers to a "pattern of behavior that characterize the approach taken by a public relations department or individual practitioner to all programs, or in some cases, to specific programs or campaigns" (p 286). Literature reveal the existence of four dominant models put forward by Grunig in 1984. These models reflect the interpretation and perceived communication roles of public relations practitioners (Sweep et al 1994, Barney and Black, 1994). Grunig (1992) states that different times in history stressed different aspect of the models based on their perceived role of public relations. The Grunig models are comprised of,

i) the press agentry/publicity model

ii) the public information model

iii) the two way asymmetrical model, and

iv) the two way symmetrical

The Press Agentry Model

Grunig and Hunt (1984) record that this model was practiced mainly in the mid 19th century and very little presently. The model has the following characteristics

1. The purpose is to serve a propaganda function.
2. The nature of communication is one way, and truth is not essential.
3. The communication model is characterized by sender to receiver and no regard for feedback.
4. Utilizes little or no research to design communications plans.

Public Information Model

1. The main purpose of this model is to disseminate information.
2. The nature of communication is one way, though the truth is important.
3. Practitioners are merely journalists and are inclined on reporting objectively
   on the institution.
4. Communications model is sender to receiver with little regard for feedback.
5. The model utilizes little research but is concerned about readership and readability of information by the public.

Two Way Asymmetrical Model

1. Purpose can best be described as scientific persuasion. Practitioners utilizing this model employ social science theories and research about attitudes, behavior to persuade the public to accept the organization's point of view.
2. The nature of communication can be described as two way, though with imbalanced effect in favor of the organization.
3. Communication from the public comes as feedback not dialogue.
4. Formative and evaluative research is adapted. Formative help to plan an activity and to choose objectives, while evaluative research will find out what the public will accept and tolerate.

Two Way Symmetrical Model

1. The purpose of this model is to forge mutual understanding between organizations and their publics
2. Nature of communication is two-way with a balanced effect. Ideally, both management and the publics communicate and either side is likely to be persuaded. Mutual relationship is the intent, not persuasion.
3. The model considers neither group a sender or receiver because of constant interaction and dialogue.
4. Formative research is used to learn how the public perceive the institution and to determine what consequences the organization has for the public.
5. Evaluation research is used to measure whether the public relations effort has actually improved the understanding the publics have of the organization and vise versa.

The models presented in literature are instrumental in shedding light and providing us with a way of describing and explaining how and why contemporary public relations is presently practiced. Perhaps what set the models apart as Grunig and Grunig (1992) explain is the fact that they have different objectives, are generally found in different organizational settings, and require different means of evaluating their success. Further they observe that the models reflect a high and logical possibility that they have evolved through history hence "making public relations a concept". A great deal of studies have been done analyzing organizational public relations in relation to the models. For instance Gabriel and Maureen (1994) in analyzing the models noted that the one-way versus two-way alludes to the direction of communication where one-way disseminate information while two way exchanges information. They further observed that the asymmetrical versus symmetrical contrast refers to the purpose of public relations as an unbalanced communication relationship (p. 7). Equally, Barney and Black (1994) observe that with the exception of the symmetrical model, the primary effort of the other three models are to change strategic publics, but not necessarily to change the organization. They therefore have as their primary function the "formulating and distribution of persuasive information designed to affect target groups in favor of the communicating organization" (p. 235).

Debates have arisen as to which model(s) is/are most effective or suitable for organizations (Grunig, 1992, Cutlip 1994). Based on these studies, consensus seems to indicate that at the organizational level, practitioners are able to influence the model for the organization (Sweep, D; Cameron, G; Lariscy, R ; 1994 : 319). In fact Grunig and Hunt (1984) contend that public relations managers must determine which one suits the organization and provide it. According to Sweep et al, (1994) practitioners need to have influence at the highest level of management or be part of what Thomson (1967) terms the dominant coalition.

In summary, public relations as in publicity are perceived largely as hinging on communication. Hence literature looks at models in terms of the nature of communication strategies demonstrated between organizations and the public.

Theories on University Public Relations

Public relations scholars who have studied university phenomenon have acknowledged existence of complexities arising from their uniqueness as opposed to other formal organizations and business enterprises. A number of theories have thus resulted to explain the practice. The theories highlighted below identify the intricacies that exist in universities' public relations practice and how they are perceived. Dyson (1987) in examining public relations management in some British universities summarized four theories that revolve around the practice. He outlines them as follows:

Teleological Theories

These theories according to Dyson (1987), view public relations in universities as directed towards a general social purpose. The theories argue that public relations is spurred on by the political aim of making academics accountable for use of large resources which they are entrusted and for the quality of their teaching and research. (p. 28). What sets them apart from other theories is that public relations in universities is shaped by an overriding communal imperative, not by the conscious desires of some sectional group (p. 229). For these theories, accountability to the public is the reason for public relations practice. For the focal university, this ties in with the key performance indicators and the government agenda.

Instrumental theories

Contrary to teleological theories of university public relations, Dyson (1987) states that instrumental theories (also known as capture theory) view public relations in universities as the instrument of some narrow social group pursuing its own interests rather than pursuing a public purpose (p. 29). Hence central to this argument is that university public relations is the captive of dominant interests. These could take the form of lobbying by the biggest departments, or the most active academics. It has also been viewed as a selfish instrument of administrators to create job expansion in times of university contraction (p. 29)

Public choice theory

This theory further pushes the notion of academic dominance. It portrays university public relations as a juggling of power relations among academicians. The proponents of this theory regard departments and individuals who have both the incentive and the capacity to dominate as benefiting at the expense of the others. Dyson writes that public relations in universities is not typically the creation of any wide public interests benefits, but a creation of the academics because it is in their own interests (p. 29). He contends that,

> what is basically at stake in public relations is the transfer of status within universities, in the form of higher or lower visibility for university departments or individuals in brochures, press releases, exhibitions etc. The form that public relations takes is crucially determined by the incentive that academic groups have to organize, and their capacity to do so (p. 29).

This theory views university public relations practitioners as rational egoists who only respond to departments offering the highest rewards in terms of good stories. Hence public relations as practiced in universities, work against those departments that are scattered or badly organized academic groupings, and work in favor of big corporately organized departments (p. 30).

Administrative Theories

These theories according to Dyson (1987) stems from the notion that public relations involves the development and implementation of strategies, procedures, rules, and conducted by bureaucratic structures, and has to solve a variety of problems for public relations to succeed. That in the most part, public relations focus on the successes and failures of three areas namely administrative tools for public relations management, intelligence gathering for strategic public relations planning, and coordination and control (implementation of programs).

As one examines literature on the practice of public relations in universities it is apparent that these perspectives are manifested. For instance Joan Rodgers (1996) in *"Professors and public relations"* observes that the relationships between the two is not always smooth, and that public relations practitioners have difficulty enlisting professors in their favor even when it means publicizing their research findings.

Public Relations Roles and Functions in Higher Education

Dyson (1988) contends that at the very heart of every broad based canvas of activities in public relations in universities and colleges is the positive image management (p. 22). According to him, this entails the combating of ignorance, misunderstanding and prejudices. Consequently, all public relations activities that ensue would be channeled towards achieving this goal. Other scholars however, differ on the focus of public relations functions and roles. Many contemporary writers and practitioners agree that university public relations practices do and must focus on the university missions and the public relations department missions. (Lubertkin, 1992; Keen and Greenall, 1987; Weisman and Alfred, 1987; Nertherton, 1996 Halstead, 1993; Kowalski, 1996). Many public relations practitioners have tended to try and achieve both goals - image management and university missions at the same time. While many writers do not agree on the nature of public relations functions, there is almost a consensus among them on the view that "misplacement of public relations functions within an organization undermines its ability to achieve its goals" (Guth 1993).

In examining public relations functions or activities in universities, one is generally at the same time examining public relations practitioner's roles. A variety of noteworthy studies on public relations roles is available from literature. These include works from scholars like Broom, Cutlip and Center (1971), Sweep et al, (1994). They examined these roles based on an analysis of practitioner relationships and communications flows within the management structures. Similarly, Don (1995), Grunig and Hunt (1984), analyzed the roles of public relations practitioners from the communication's perspective. Other studies examine public relations roles in relation with the environment which particular organizations must interact with (Kowalski, 1996; Guth, 1995).

Literature on university public relations is also replete with controversies with regard to functions, and raising questions as to whether public relations in universities is a profession. Some studies have portrayed public relations practitioners in universities as mere technicians whose work is to be called upon as quick fixes whenever trouble occurs. Some portray them as members of the management team, while others portray a combination of both technician and management roles (Wylie, 1984; Winston, 1993; Kowalski, 1996; Keen and Greenall 1987; and Dyson 1993). Several factors have accounted for these and is manifested in the way universities place these practitioners in their organizational management hierarchy.

Halstead (1993) posits that practices or functions of public relations practitioners vary according to size of the institution. He argues that small colleges and universities face many unique public relations challenges because they "operate in a competitive environment where size often attracts attention and bigger is often equated with better" (p. 107). He adds that the challenges of smallness in times of diminishing funds, competition for students and public trust means that the roles of public relations practitioners will vary in intensity and scope (p. 108).

Functions and roles have also been influenced by university's stability. Guth (1995) examined the relationships between crisis in educational institutions and the public relations functions. His findings suggest a strong correlation between the two. He states that, based on his studies most large institutions like universities, experience frequent crisis more than small universities and colleges (p. 133). He further observes that most of those that experience frequent crisis have elevated public relations practice to management levels while those that have less crisis experience have had many of their public relations practices remain at the technician level (p. 134).

Other bodies of literature have argued that functions have been influenced by type of university leadership and management systems. The literature indicates that roles are practiced at the discretion of management. In other words, practitioners work within certain constraints imposed by management (Sweep et al, 1994, p. 319). In terms of management systems, literature points out that in participative management systems, a great deal of communication exists between public relations practitioners and all levels of management. Hence as Ryan, (in Sweep et al (1994)) contends, public relations roles in a participative environment will exhibit less constraints and management muzzling than those in authoritative environments. Other studies view leadership determinants of functions on two fronts: institutions chief executive, and public relations chief. Each of the leaders could determine to a large extent what the functions and roles of public relations offices are (Lubertkin, 1992, Donna, 1993; Landsberg, 1993). Some university leadership have not been able to embrace public relations as a management function, and have only recently done so since it assists in income generation programs. Dyson, (1993) states, in the universities he studied in Britain, there was a correlation between the willingness to embrace public relations management and a bias towards income generation in academic activities (p. 25). This phenomenon will in effect influence the functions of practitioners in the sense that leadership will determine what is best for the institution and thus influence the type of roles and functions that public relations will adopt.

Hence public relations functions and practices are not necessarily as universal as they could be subject to influence based on size, levels of public relations practitioners in organizational hierarchy, leadership, management systems, and stability or crisis situation. Regardless of the influence, it is evident that the functions and roles taken can be viewed from two broad categories: Policy/management and technical. Cutlip and Center (1971) categorizes the functions as the "operating concepts" and the "specialized functions.

The operating concept (management) according to Cutlip and Center (1971), defines how management views operations of public relations, whether integral to management or not. This largely relates to the extent to which public relations practitioners participate in areas such as issue management, government relations, social and community relations, and regulatory matters (Cutlip and Center, 1971; Fox, I983; White and Mazur 1995). According to these authors many organizations in the US had by 1970 considered public relations as an integral part or a service to management.

The same may not be generalized for universities and other educational institutions. In a study done by Wylie Frank (1984) involving 200 college and university public relations directors and 100 of their presidents, in North West United States, he reports that one of the concerns of university presidents is the fact that many universities are unable to attract practitioners with many years of experience. This, he attributes to the levels of public relations positions and remuneration. He points out that less than half of the practitioners surveyed report directly to the president and therefore lack access to information to do the job (p. 66). Similarly, Dyson (1993) reports that in some British universities, public relations is part of the Registrar's office and doubles up with duties like graduation ceremonies and other matters. He further states that in some universities, public relations is regarded in traditional terms as less than press relations (p.28).

Contrary to the above position, Donna (1993) in an article entitled "They *pledge loyalty*" examined levels of public relations practitioners and working relationships with their presidents in 5 universities in the United States. She notes that all public relations practitioners are held fairly high in the hierarchy and that "in each case, the public relations chiefs not only communicates their institution's policy but are also present in their creation" (p. 20). They also have regular informal meetings with the president. Similarly, in a study cited in *CASE Currents* journal 1995 entitled *Staff Structures* , details are presented of how three campus public relations offices are organized, (Boston University, Webster University and Austin Peay State University). It reported all the public relations practitioners were reporting to a vice president and that they were members of the president's cabinet (management team). Management therefore forms one of the key functions of public relations.

The special Service function according to Cutlip and Center (1971) assumes a four step process which includes research, planning, communication and evaluation (p. 139). Some branch of literature consider these steps not only as functions but tools as well (Keen and Greenall, 1987; Grunig 1992; Kowalski 1996). Broom (1982) has classified these functions into four roles namely expert prescriber, problem solving process facilitator, communication facilitator and communications technician. A survey of literature in universities indicate that service functions are common in universities. The details of how they are executed may have been suggested by Dyson (1987) and vary depending on the public relations practitioners and the model of university governance. Among the most commonly mentioned service functions in universities and colleges is outlined by Keen and Greenall and include; media relations, publications, exhibitions, visits, speaker panels, films tape-slide presentation and audio tapes, open days, advertising and special events (p. 50-62). Halstead (1993) quoting a 1992 *Institutional advancement Professional Area Guide, Washington DC. CASE,* indicates that campus public relations practitioners work in the area of broadcast and print media relations, special events, speech writing, electronic media, internal communications, community relations and marketing (P. 110). He further adds that the functions of practitioners have expanded to include conducting market research, measuring public opinion, and formulating appropriate action plans, recruitment students, and establishing the institution as a positive force to a broad and diverse audience.

Public relations being an evolving concept and practice keeps acquiring functions and adapting to new realities of a changing social and economic environment. A branch of literature indicates that universities that have changed their office names from public relations to public affairs did so after incorporating the portfolio of government relations (Ryans, and Shanklin, 1986). Equally, others have as a result of increased entrepreneurial activities, acquired marketing and fundraising functions. Dyson (1987) observed that,

> as income generation becomes a major aim of the universities, commercial strategies are evolved to expand full cost academic services. University public relations is consequently, developing as an unusual hybrid of commercialization and of public service, as a part of the pursuit of financial gain and of establishing relevance to social need (p. 23).

A survey done by Kathleen Kelly (1992) on public relations and fundraising indicates that the fundraising function is not only being performed by public relation practitioners in universities but has actually threatened to take over and subordinate public relations itself. She warns that the fundraising function is "encroaching on public relations" (p. 3). She also noted that an earlier exploratory study on educational charitable organizations "had documented the subordination of public relations by fundraising in alarming proportions on those organizations" (p.4). The same is said of marketing. Kathleen (1992) reports of research done by Lauzen and Dozier in 1991 on encroachment of marketing on public relations where they theorized that "marketing encroachment is the result of an organizationally weak public relations department and an aggressive marketing department, particularly during unstable times (p. 5).

Overall the literature identifies a wide range of functions and practices of a public relations office and practitioners. Practitioners therefore perform multiple tasks and may vary from one university to the other depending on the issues raised from the overview above.

Public Relations Strategies in Universities

Universities, like all organizations, as a reaction to environmental changes have employed public relations strategies and also established pro-active strategies to counter them and create a favorable image. Alfred and Weisman (1987) in contrasting university public relations strategies with business, points out that business have had their strategies focus on the improvement in corporate products and services based on information about consumer needs preferences, values and satisfaction. Consequently, significant resources have been spent on areas that would enhance this goal: opinion research, marketing, improvement in services, and staff development to improve public perception of the organizational products and operations. He states that while universities now tend to focus on the external environment, they have for a long time tended to focus on elements internal to the organizations that can be easily controlled. Such elements include institutional publications, outreach activities, involvement in campus activities, and campus based performance assessment.

Halstead (1995) in *"effective public relations and communications strategies"* identified 16 public relations strategies which small colleges and universities use to achieve stated missions. Literature reveals a great overlap of these strategies. A number of writers (Dona, 1993; Lubertkin, 1992; Kowalski, 1996; Poulin, 1989; Keen and Greenall, 1987) have agreed on a number of strategies brought up by Halstead. They include;

1. Obtain top-down commitment and financial resources
2. Organize and build staff
3. Create ways to maximize resources
4. Create systematic communications plan
5. Build a campus-based communications team
6. Set realistic goals
7. Establish priorities
8. Identify publics
9. Research the attitudes and opinions of key audiences

10 Determine key messages and themes

11. Use right strategies and tactics at the right time
12. Develop action plans and schedule activities

13 make internal communications and community relations a high priority

14. Use publications to reach audience

15 Tell the story through the news media

16. Establish methods for monitoring and evaluating results.

Poulin (1989) in his study *"Strategies required for an effective public relations program"* examined strategies used by six school jurisdictions within the province of Alberta, Canada. He identified a host of strategies that were both extracted from the literature and those practiced on the ground. He concludes, based on the frequency of strategies, that they can be looked at from a four level approach namely; analysis, planning, communication and evaluation (p. 23). John Heron (1954) in looking at public relations in public service, including educational institutions, reckons that strategies for good public relations is for the organization to first build a base or lay a foundation. This involves the organization examining itself in terms of weaknesses, strength, and having to prepare facts to present to the public. He posits that once the processes are in motion, then the following strategies would be most effective; be simple, be specific, be persuasive, be positive, and be persistent. From literature it indicates that public relations strategies in higher education are broadly defined from the standpoint taken by Poulin.

Literature on Public Relations in Canada

Most of the public relations literature in North America is American based. A literature search in this domain on the Canadian scene, and especially as relates to universities, reveals a serious gap compared to the United states. Mcleod (quoted in Herbert and Jenkins 1984) and once vice-president of the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) remarked that members of the CPRS have for a long time been searching for a book defining public relations as practiced in Canada. It was not only until 1984 that such a book *"Public relations in Canada: Some perspectives"* by Osborne James was published. It is perhaps still the only comprehensive book on the subject to date. Before then there had been only two others available, but in French. Many studies on Canadian public relations examine the content of public relations programs as they are offered in institutions rather than the practices in organizations or educational institutions. (Osborne, J. 1984; Wills 1987). Other studies have been done by Piekos, and Einsiended (1989) who centered on the women participation in public relations practices in Canada with a brief comparison to their American counterparts. In general literature on Canadian educational public relations is lacking.

Development of Public Relations in Canada

Brown (1984) observes that most of Canada's development in the public relations profession has been taking place within the last 25 years even though it has been around for the last 75 years. Marsh (1988) however traces the practice to late 19th century when in 1896–1911 the then Ministry of Interior set up a massive publicity campaign both in Canada and the United states with the aim of attracting immigrants to the West (1786). A notable individual vigorously involved in such ventures at that time was Sir Wilfred Laurier. In reviewing the development of the profession, Brown (1984) identifies five stages or phases that the practice has gone through,

i) public relations prior to 1939
ii) public relations during World War II
iii) public relations after world war II
iv) public relations and the creation of the CPRS
v) public relations and the environment of the 1980s [and beyond].

Public Relations Prior to 1939

Brown (1984) observed that by 1939 the first public relations advisors had emerged in Canada (p. 8). They, according to him, were mainly former press agents who had had some experience in public relations like functions through involvement with the press. With the economic and social stress of the time, businesses and corporations were already experiencing pressure from public opinion and hence needed people who would connect them with the press and through the press, to the people (p. 8). Through these experiences, the advisors were already urging management of organizations to "take an interest in enlightened social responsibility and to communicate with the publics." The public relations functions had therefore passed into an embryonic stage (p. 9).

Public Relations During World War II

By 1939 Canada had a handful of practitioners. Incidentally this was the period in which many writers on the subject identified as being characterized by unparalleled propaganda efforts and movements (Brown, 1984; Grunig, 1984, and 1992; Byerly, 1993). According to Brown (1984) hundreds of Canadian newsmen volunteered to form information branches of the armed forces of the government. Their work as wartime information officers was to "glorify Canada's victories and minimize losses to the folks back home, in order to sustain the morale needed to supply the munitions, planes, dollars, and recruitment required for overseas action" (p. 9). These groups organized and stage managed appearances by war veterans throughout Canada for support. As observed by Brown, in Canada, the war still stands as the only point in the last [many decades] when the vast majority of the Canadian public was in positive agreement and stood in support of its major institutions (p. 8).

Public Relations After World War II

Brown (1984) contends that public relations as it exist today, can be attributed to war time information officers, who mostly did not return to pre-war news work but joined different institutions and government sectors as public relations officers (p. 10). Historically, in Canada as well as in other parts of the world, this was the period characterized by a high degree of economic expansion. This phenomenon for Brown provided a different scenario to these ex-war time practitioners who by then had been joined by new communicators to "convert Canadians to peacetime, work time and boom time thinking" (p. 11).

An interesting feature according to Brown, is that despite having been in the war propaganda business, these practitioners had changed to preaching social responsibility and goodwill. However, they used their war time propaganda skills to propagate good causes and good policies (p. 11). They also, as a result of war experiences managed to forge good media networks across the country. Unfortunately, these war time propaganda experiences of the then public relations practitioners have lingered on to the detriment of the profession. Present stigmas that public relations have, can be traced back to war time practices.

Establishment of the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS)

With the proliferation of practitioners and fast growth of the practice, many practitioners in different parts of Canada established societies. The first as reported by Brown was in Montreal, followed by Toronto, and in 1948, the two merged to found the CPRS. The driving force behind the formation was the need to professionalize it through the establishment of ethics and standard controls.

Membership has now grown to include all regions of Canada. From the 1960s with changes in technology and expansions, organizations began to appoint practitioners not only from the media but also specialists from other fields and background (Brown 1984, p. 12).

Public Relations and the Environment of the 80s and Beyond

The socio economic, technological and political environment changes in the 1980s has meant rethinking in public relations practice. Brown states that many organizations started looking at issues specific to their organization. For instance universities had to grapple with campus unrest in the 70s and other issues to survive. This trend has continued to date where universities have had to deal with changes in funding situation, demographics, public opinion, and restructuring.

Public relations as it stands now in Canada is evolving based on new socio-economic and technological realities, and professionalization of the practice. The information revolution is set to again redirect the means and mode of information delivery as well as force a redefinition of the practice. Public relations is also gaining support in Canadian management circles in all organizations and universities due to its role in their the achievement of missions.

Professionalization of Public Relations in Canada

In 1969, CPRS inaugurated an accreditation program which required members to have several years of service in the field, specialized education as well as sit for an exam by the National Accreditation Board of the CPRS. However, Osborne (1984) contends that "the number of qualified people in public relations is incapable of meeting the present demand for competent practitioners in Canada (p. 244). This he attributes to the lack of public relations disciplines in Canadian universities. He notes that while there are approximately 400 colleges and universities in the United States offering degree courses labeled "public relations", there are less than 5 in Canada (p. 244). They include Mt. St. Vincent in Halifax, L'universite' de Montreal with a BA majoring in Public relations and University of Calgary with a Master of Communications Studies (p. 244).

Osborne (1984) states that for a long time Canadian universities and to a lesser extent community colleges, have been reluctant to recognize public relations as an academic discipline, much less a professional discipline and consequently has developed slowly in Canada. Presently a large number of colleges offer a two year diploma in public relations with a practical component (Wills, 1987). Osborne concludes that despite the recognition by Canadian universities on the importance of public relations and the interest shown among them to offer such a program, introduction of public relations programs is slower than other countries such as the United States and Britain.

Public Relations Studies on Sample University

A few studies have been done that concerns the public relations activities and related offices in the university in which this study is based. The most current is the public perceptions report entitled *"Baseline study of* *public perceptions of the University of... 1995"* The study was an effort to determine the public perception of the university, or as the report puts it "to determine clearly the knowledge about and image of the University held by members of the public". The study commissioned by the office of the Public Affairs served as an evaluation of the public relations and other strategic activities of the Public Affairs Office. The study was as a result of a *Senate Task Force on Public Relations* that in 1990 suggested that "the image of the university be established" (p. 1). The report records that the study established the public, which mostly comprised of residents of the province, ranked the university as "better than average" compared to other Canadian universities.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed a number of broad concepts related to the practice of public relations in general and in particular universities. The review began with a historical survey of the evolution and conceptualization of public relations both in the general sense and as applied to educational institutions. A number of paradigms, theories and models that fit into the domain of public relations were surveyed. These helped to provide new ways of understanding public relations as it is practiced now in universities as opposed to the early periods. The literature also drew distinction between the various related concepts that have often been thought synonymous.

The chapter also reviewed literature relating to the domain of public relations in Canada, its development, the current stage and its future. There is a paucity of research or published works in this field on Canadian universities. The review has also provided a broad understanding of the practice and how it has been utilized over time to achieve various goals.

Chapter 4

Research Design

Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the method used to conduct the study. It addresses the design, approach, sampling, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, validity of the data, delimitation and limitations of the study. McMillan and Schumacher (1989) record that research design "refers to the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer the research question" (p. 30). The design would concern itself with the description of the procedures for conducting research, including when, from whom, what data collection techniques are used and under what conditions the data was collected (Berg, 1989, p. 25, McMillan & Schumacher, p. 30). Merrian (1988) in defining research design, compares it to a structural framework. She states, " a research design is similar to an architectural blueprint. It is a plan for assembling, organizing, and integrating information (data), and it results in a specific end product (research findings)" (p. 6).

Design

The study sought to investigate the public relations activities and strategies that a selected university uses to achieve its mandate. To achieve this purpose, a qualitative research approach was used. Qualitative research is consistent with an interpretive paradigm that has been characterized as seeing the social world as an emergent social process which is created by individuals concerned (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 28; Pisesky, 1992, p. 57). In applying this strategy or approach, qualitative researchers, according to Bogdan and Bilken (1982) continually ask questions of the people in the situation they are studying with the intention of discovering "what they are experiencing, how they interpret their experiences and how they themselves structure the social world in which they live" (p. 30). This scenario is perhaps best captured in Patton's (1985) examination of the importance of qualitative or naturalistic research in terms of understanding the uniqueness of each situation and context. He asserts that,

> This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting ... , what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting, ... and in analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. (p. 1)

This phenomenological perspective which Owens (1982) contends, seeks to "integrate the various meanings ascribed to events, situations, individuals and their relationships to present an holistic viewpoint and create understanding about the area of inquiry" is what guided this study. Specifically, the study adopted a case study methodology.

Case Study Approach

Borg and Gall (1996) contend that one of the main characteristics of qualitative research is its focus on the intensive study of specific instances, or a phenomenon. While case studies have been defined in a variety of ways or from different perspectives and across disciplines, an examination of a number of definitions reveal several basic characteristics inherent in this methodology. Some of the characteristics that various definitions have come up with include "emphasis on real life contexts, primary theme focus, shifting boundaries, naturalistic data collection techniques, its holistic nature, and a search for causal relationships" (Pisesky, 1992, p. 59). According to Borg and Gall (1989), a case study provides an intensive, detailed examination of a single subject or group, phenomenon, or social unit (p. 403). Gay (1987) defines case studies as "in-depth investigations of individuals, groups or institutions that determine the relationships among factors that have resulted in current behavior or status of subject of the study." In other words its purpose "is to determine 'why', not just 'what'" (p. 207). On its holistic nature, the case studies are conducted "by giving special emphasis and attention to totality in the observation, reconstruction and analysis of the case study (Hamel, 1993, p. 1). On shifting boundaries, Yin , (quoted in Burgess 1988) views case studies as empirical inquiries that "investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life contexts, when the boundaries between phenomenon and contexts are not clearly evident" (p. 4). Robert Stakes (quoted in Borg and Gall, 1996) has observed that, "As a form of research, case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by method of inquiry used." Hence, "some researchers focus on the study of one case because of its intrinsic interest, whereas other researchers study multiple cases in order to test generalizability of themes and patterns" (p. 544). Despite the shortcomings that the case study method has earned in terms of sample size, subjectivity, lack of generalizability and precision, it was chosen because it was best suited to achieve the objectives of the study in terms of enhancing understanding of activities, intricacies, forces and processes that take place in the (External Affairs Office) public affairs office of the university under study. In other words, it affords the opportunity to understand unique social phenomena of a real life situation. As will be noted from the questions, the practice of public relations in the university was the only issue studied. Hence this method as Runyan (quoted in Burgess, 1993) contends, is justified in terms of its "inherently greater suitability for tasks such as describing an individual's experience, developing idiographic interpretations of that experience, and developing context-specific predictions, plans and decisions." (p. 125).

Participants

The primary focus of the study was public relations activities of the Public Affairs Office of a university in Canada. The university was chosen due to its proximity to the researcher and the fact that it is one of the largest and well established universities in Canada. The assumption underlying this choice is that having been established in the early part of the century, the university has over the years developed comprehensive public relations strategies that have been used to project the university positively to the public.

Target Population

The group targeted for the study were the public relations practitioners and senior university administrators whose offices are constantly involved with public relations activities or are closely linked with the External Affairs Office. Hence the target population comprised at one level all senior officers in the External Affairs office, from the position of Director to Vice President, Research and External Affairs, Associate Vice President and Registrar, and Vice President Government Relations. The other level comprised all section heads in the office of Public Affairs. The participants in this study therefore represented individuals from two distinct cadres of staff in the organizational structure. The researcher chose to categorize them as 'policy makers' and 'public relations practitioners' respectively. These participants as already implied, were selected on the basis of their knowledge, position and their involvement with public relations activities by virtue of their office. The rationale behind the choice of this group is that being in their positions, they are presumed to posses the necessary training, information and experience for the purpose of the study. It was therefore a criterion-based purposive sample. Bailey (1982), explains such sampling with his contention that purposeful sampling is the strategy by which "the researcher uses his or her own judgment about which respondent to choose, and picks only those who best meet the purpose of the study" (p. 99). In total, the target population was 11 potential participants and all were contacted to participate in the study.

Accessible Population

Out of the 11 individuals contacted, nine consented and participated in the study. Of the nine participants, five fall under the category that the researcher labeled "policy makers" while the remaining four section heads as "public relations practitioners" or "non policy makers". The participants were contacted by mail before the study. The purpose of the study was explained, and a request to participate in an interview session extended. While it may not have had much influence in the outcome of the study, it is worth noting that out of the nine participants, five were female while the other four were male. Out of the five policy makers, two were female while the four practitioners had one male. However the gender composition is not a factor in the analysis. The group had had prior experiences related to their work either at other universities or in other organizations. The length of their experience at this University ranged between 1 to 18 years. Those who had few years at this University had served in other organizations in the same area before they were employed at this university.

Table. 1

Profile of participants

Position	Sex	Years in current position
Vice President, Research and External Affairs	F	2
Associate Vice President and Registrar	M	5
Director Public Affairs.	M	4
Director Development.	M	1
Director Alumni.	F	15
Administrative Assistant Public Affairs Office	F	15
Manager *Folio* Public Affairs	M	10
Manager Media Relations	F	18
Manager Community Relations	F	5

Table 1 above offers a brief profile of the participants of the study.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher was the primary instrument for both the data collection and analysis for the study. This is in keeping with one of Bogdan and Bilken's (1982) four approaches to qualitative research which states that "qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument" (p. 27). To obtain data for the study, various techniques for data collection were utilized. This approach termed "methodological triangulation" (Borg and Gall, 1996) enabled the researcher to obtain data from three sources, namely, interviews with e-mail communication follow-up, printed documents and the internet, drawing information from relevant Web sites or home pages.

Interviews

Formal interviews with eight participants were scheduled individually by letters and followed up with a telephone call. One appointment was arranged by telephone. A general letter was sent to all targeted participants to introduce myself as the researcher. At the same time, the researcher detailed the purpose of the study and made a formal request for their participation. Prior to sending the letter to the four section heads, the researcher sought permission from their director to utilize them for the study. Permission was granted and accessibility to them enhanced when their director sent them e-mail messages requesting them to accord me the necessary assistance. One participant who by the time of the study had just resigned from the position targeted for the study was contacted by telephone and an appointment made. (see Appendix A for general letter of introduction, Appendix B, for request for use of staff in the Public Affairs Office).

All interviews took place in the participants' offices. The background of the study was provided to all participants prior to the interview. Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, or any procedural concerns and to their role in the study.

Interview guides had been prepared ahead of time and consisted of a series of open-ended, semi-structured questions on various aspects of public relations related to the overall question of the study (refer to Appendix C for a sample interview guide). The interview guides varied slightly from participant to participant especially in areas that dealt with functions of their particular offices. The guides were structured in two broad sections. The first part dealt with operations and public relations strategies used by each office to achieve their mandates. The second part dealt with views on various aspects of public relations in the university and universities in general, and centered on issues that were meant to elicit personal opinions, narrate experiences and challenges, and elicit advice on the general subject of public relations.

The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour and a half. As each question was answered, the researcher checked to ensure that all questions were covered since the sequence set on the guide was not rigidly followed.

All interviews were audio tape recorded. However notes were also taken in situations where the participants used graphic illustrations for their administrative structures and strategies to explain or clarify their responses. In concluding each interview the researcher accorded participants an opportunity to make additional comments that they felt were relevant but had not been covered in the interview guide.

Documentary Sources

The researcher examined published documents related to the operations of the External Affairs Office, as well as those that spelled out the mission and objectives of the University. Emphasis was given to documents that had direct relevance to the Public Affairs Office. These documents were used to supplement and corroborate information obtained from the interviews. The documents were obtained from participants upon the request of the researcher following mention or reference to them in the course of the interview. The documents include brochures prepared for several university public functions organized by the office, mission statements, organizational structures of the offices, the university calendar, policy documents, the annual report, copies of *Folio,* fund raising campaign publications and evaluation reports. In general, the document search mainly focused on those print sources that spelled out policy directions, strategies and objectives of the External Affairs Office, and in particular the Public Affairs Office, program evaluation and the university mission in general.

Internet

Borg and Gall (1996) define the internet as " A worldwide network of computers that enables network members to communicate with each other and to access electronic information resources by computer" (p. 761). This took two forms, namely, *e-mail* messages between the researcher and a number of the participants who had earlier participated in the interview, and accessing *'websites'* or *'home pages'* of participating offices as well as public-relations-related Canadian professional organizations such as the Canadian Public Relations Society. The use of *e - mail* was a product of issues that emerged during the initial data analysis that needed clarification, from the need to ask questions on new issues that emerged, and when information seemed to be lacking or conflicting. This method was adopted partly due to time constraints on both the side of the researcher as well as the respondents. The researcher incorporated *e-mail* responses that verified the content of earlier discussions into the corresponding transcripts. Similarly, responses to supplementary questions were treated separately and analyzed alongside data from other sources.

While it was the researcher's intention to interview each respondent once, one participant who had participated in the pilot study was interviewed again for the main study. However the researcher saw this as an extension of the earlier interview since only those questions that had not been covered during the pilot study were asked. The researcher felt this reduced the risk of data contamination.

Pilot Study

Prior to the main study, two pilot studies were conducted. The first pilot study was conducted in April 1996 and involved interviewing one public relations practitioner from the university in which the major study was undertaken. A limited number of documents and some website information related to the office of external affairs were also accessed for analysis. The initial pilot study had sought to identify public relations strategies of the university. The second pilot study was conducted in September 1996. This involved examining the operations of community relations programs at two colleges in the city in which the focal university is located. The participants of the second pilot study were the executive directors of the community relations offices in their respective institutions.

The pilot studies immensely aided the researcher in crafting the main study. Specifically, they enabled the researcher to gauge the feasibility of the methodology that was adopted. They also helped to assess the suitability of the interview guides that were used, to get a sense of staff willingness to discuss certain issues, to gain confidence in conducting this kind of research, and to develop a sense of who the public relations practitioners were and thereby draw up guides for each.

In addition, the studies helped in the identification of participants and relevant documents for the main study, in determining the utility of the data gathered in the interviews, and in formulating data analysis procedures. In short, beside providing meaningful data, the pilot studies were used to test the validity of data collection techniques that were utilized in the main study while allowing the researcher to gain a hands-on experience in qualitative research.

Data Analysis Procedures

After all the audio-taped interview data were transcribed, the researcher assembled all the data from the other sources for purposes of the analysis and interpretation. Data analysis according to Sowell and Cassey (1982) refers to all the operations done to data collected from subjects. McMillan and Schumacher (1989) define qualitative data analysis as "systematic process of selecting, categorizing, comparing, synthesizing and interpreting to provide explanations of the single phenomenon of interest" (p. 414). A cursory look at the literature on qualitative methods of inquiry reveals a host of different strategies and guidelines that can be and have been used to analyze such data. This scenario is echoed by Miles and Huberman (1984) who record that "there are few agreed on canons for qualitative data analysis." This has largely been attributed to the difference in research foci, purpose, and data collection strategies. However, data analysis according to MacMillan and Schumacher (1989) entails three cyclical phases, namely,

> 1) continuous discovery, especially in the field but also throughout the entire study, so as to identify tentative themes and develop concepts and mini theories;
>
> 2) categorizing and ordering of data, typically after data collection, so as to *refine* one's understanding of patterns and themes;
>
> 3) qualitative assessing the trustworthiness of the data, so as to *refine* one's understanding of the setting and social scenes (p. 414).

And at another level, Patton (1990) contends,

> Regardless of how analysis is done, analysts have an obligation to monitor and report their own analytical procedures and processes as fully and truthfully as possible (p. 372).

The researcher was guided by a series of analytical strategies outlined by Bogdan and Bilken (1982), and Lincoln and Guba (1985). The process involved the researcher taking transcript information provided by each respondent and repeatedly reading through while jotting down notes, comments, observations and questions. These notes, as Goetz and La Compte (1989) have argued, served to isolate the initially most striking, if not ultimately the most important aspects of the data (p. 191). They later formed the basis for coding, a process by which the data are sorted into topic categories. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have referred to this process as "identifying units of information." These units consisted of striking words, phrases, sentences and sometimes an entire paragraph which contained information that formed key themes. Once the researcher had developed a list of coding categories, the information in the transcriptions was then organized or classified into major themes. It was also at the initial stages of analysis that the researcher drew supplementary questions and identified areas with a need for validation, thereafter respondents were contacted via e-mail.

The documents were analyzed for their content. Documents were examined with the intent of validating and supplementing the data collected from the interviews. Hence the researcher only used relevant sections from the documents rather than referring to full documents as they were. The issues extracted from the documents were also thematically coded. They were then compared and integrated with the interview data results for the final analysis/reporting. Meanwhile new themes that were identified with each data collection technique that did not fit into existing categories were added to the coding and the resulting expanded categories included in the study findings. The information identified and downloaded from the internet was analyzed alongside the documents obtained from the respondents. Because it is updated regularly, some of the information from the internet was more current than in some printed documents.

The combination of these methods generated a comparative set of information and factual data that on analysis formed the research findings.

Weaknesses and Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the umbrella concept of trustworthiness includes four criteria, 1) credibility - that is the results reflect the social world being studied, 2) dependability - the findings could be replicated with the same or similar participants and contexts, 3) transferability - the findings are applicable in other similar situations, and 4) confirmability - the outcomes mirror the social phenomenon rather than personal perspectives of the researcher. While designing the study, collecting , analyzing and interpreting the data, the above concerns were noted as they pose possible weaknesses, and in fact acted as a basis or guide for much of the study.

In striving for trustworthiness, the researcher made adequate preparation. This included the use of peer debriefing in order to eliminate any biases. This was done with the help of colleagues who looked through the interview guides to ensure that leading or ambiguous questions in the interview guides were restructured.

Credibility was enhanced through the triangulation of data. Information provided in the interviews was integrated and cross-checked with information from the documents such as newsletters, university calendar, mission statements and brochures, and with website information. Credibility of the study was also enhanced by emphasizing recorded information and perceptions. The researcher carefully and repeatedly listened to recorded interview data to ensure accuracy of meanings of the statements in the tape. Additionally, the sources of the data were consulted in areas that needed validation and verification. Various perceptions of different people were also solicited.

With respect to transferability, the researcher attempted to describe, the structure in which public relations activities operate and the type of activities in which the public affairs office engage. It is worth noting here though that it was not the intention of the researcher to draw generalizations from these findings to other situations but to understand the particular setting. Nonetheless, based on the description of this research context, readers can then determine whether the particular findings are related or applicable to other similar situations.

In terms of dependability, a consistent coding process was maintained by the researcher as well as having colleagues check on interpretations given to the data.

In summary, trustworthiness was ensured by employing triangulation of data, choosing adequate, proper and verifiable sources, employing peer debriefing as well as establishing audit trails among other research methods.

Ethical Considerations

The research was guided by the ethical guidelines established by the University's General Faculties Council and the Research Ethics Review Policies and Procedures of the Department of Educational Policy Studies. (See attached copy of interviewees consent form - Appendix D). Initial contacts with the participants was through introductory letters (except for one). These were later followed up with telephone calls and in each instance, the nature of the research was shared as well as the nature of each potential participant's involvement. This was to ensure that the researcher obtained an informed consent from all the respondents. All the ethical considerations as outlined in the consent form were again shared before the interview. Each participant consented by signing the form, a copy of which was kept by each party.

Participants were informed that their involvement was purely voluntary and they had the right to opt out at any stage of the study without prejudice. They were also assured of confidentiality. No information that would put their confidentiality at risk has been or will be disclosed. Safety of the recorded data was also assured as the researcher would be responsible for their storage and disposal. To further assure confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to the participants and the University's identity withheld.

However, the positions held by the participants at the time of the study are mentioned.

All perceptual and factual information that has been used in the report is deemed not to be harmful or embarrassing to the individuals concerned or the University. All the respondents gave the researcher approval to use their responses or quote them directly as long as the quotations were accurate and in the right contexts.

Assumptions, Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, the participating practitioners were assumed to possess the information and knowledge about public relations practices or functions at the university. Therefore, their opinions, suggestions and recommendations were assumed to be valid information and given weight in the analysis.

Delimitations

As mentioned above, the study concentrated on one university therefore generalizations beyond this institution can be made only to the extent that other institutions have similar contexts.

University structures are such that there is much decentralization and autonomy given to departments and faculties. As a result, some forms of public relations functions are performed at the faculty and departmental level. This study will be delimited to the public relations functions at the institutional level as performed by the External Affairs Office only.

Another delimitation relates to the expanse and the inter-relatedness of the functions or activities of the Public Affairs Office with other offices that fall under the office of External Affairs. For instance, the offices of the Alumni Affairs and Development work in close collaboration with the Public Affairs Office on many issues. In fact all the three offices cited above report to the Executive Director of External Affairs. However, this study focused mainly on the Public Affairs Office, giving little prominence to the other related offices though mention was accorded to their functions from the public relations point of view.

A further delimitation is the period of time during which the study was conducted. In this respect, the study is time specific. The operations of the Public Affairs Office may have been different earlier and are likely to be different in the future.

The final delimitation is there was no input from members of the public in terms of viewpoints about the activities, weaknesses and strengths of the Public Affairs Office. This aspect relied on documentary data available.

Limitations

The major limitation of the study lies in the purposive selection of the sample institution and the interview participants. Although efforts were made to ensure that interview information was collected from relevant participants, the study is limited by the fact that the information provided in the interviews represent the perceptions of the nine individual participants.

Because the researcher serves as the major instrument in this study, any of his weaknesses are likely to have been reflected in the relationships that were established with the participants and in the way that the factual and perceptual information provided were collected and interpreted.

Summary

In this chapter, the research methodology detailing the design, participants, data collection techniques and data analyses procedures are explained. The research methodology involved gathering information through interviews from 9 participants who are involved with public relations activities in the sample university. Other sources included printed documents and internet websites. Information analysis was done through open coding, and categories that emerged, into themes.

The chapter also outlined the study's weaknesses, and trustworthiness, assumptions, delimitations and limitations. Ethical considerations that guided the study are also provided.

Chapter 5

Public Relations Functions and Perspectives

Introduction

This chapter highlights a number of public relations functions that are practiced in the Public Affairs Office, and discusses perspectives of the nine participants described in chapter 4 on several related issues. Their perspectives are based on their personal involvement and participation in public relations and public affairs activities at the university. To begin with, the chapter lays a foundation by examining how these practitioners conceptualize public relations and public affairs. It then moves to examine the mandates and missions of the offices in the External Affairs Office and how they relate to the university's overall mission and vision. The rest of the chapter then explores the major functions and roles of the Public Affairs Office, the implications for public relations, and the evaluation procedures for the various functions. In discussing the various roles and functions, perspectives on pertinent issues are provided.

Conceptualization of Public Relations

This section examines how the respondents in their own words perceived or understood the meanings of public relations, and also how public relations differed from public affairs. This distinction was considered necessary as there exists a diverse understanding of the terminologies and practice. A great deal of disagreement exists on which is broader or more inclusive public relations or public affairs. Drawing a clear distinction on their meanings on the difference was considered a good starting point. At the same time, it assured the researcher that a commonly understood concept and practice was being studied.

There was a great deal of consensus among the respondents on what public relations practice encompassed. They provided definitions that primarily outlined the various activities that they perform, and the purpose which the practices served in the University. In other words public relations for most respondents was pretty much a series of outreach functions and activities using specific channels aimed at achieving specified objectives. However, all respondents indicated that the purpose for all public relations activities in the university was to communicate as best as possible the University's story to the public with the express purpose of achieving the University's stated strategic goals and mission. In elaborating their perceptions, one respondent remarked,

> *Ideally, we are talking about communicating to other people. We are building relationships. And we do that through a number of ways; the media, publications, face to face . ... All these go towards achieving the university mission.* (Peter (1) 16–19)

Another had this to say,

> *I suppose public relations is a two way communication between the university and its important publics. That involves getting feedback from defined publics that we forge for and getting to these publics. So it is a two way kind of thing....* (Cheryll (1) 33–36)

Based on these conceptions, the following deductions can be made. Public relations is a (1) communication process and practice (2) this process involves communicating with specific publics, (3) a number of different kinds of media are used, (4) feedback is valued, (5) it is about conveying messages, (6) it is communicating to people for relationship building, and (7) this relations building is done so that certain short and long term goals and objectives are attained. Further, the deliberate use of certain terms such as "important publics" or "defined publics" connotes that public relations practice is selective in its outreach. An implication drawn from all this is that in university public relations programs, there is a deliberate choice of publics with a relevance to the institution, from whom the institution stands to benefit and with whom the university has the means and resources to reach.

Other terms such as "two way communication" which is somewhat a text book definition were used by the majority of respondents to depict public relations as a reciprocal kind of activity and process. Respondents tried to give credence to the reciprocal relationship by their expressed view that the University draws from the public as much as gives.

These traditional forms of definitions of public relations when tested against what respondents perceived "public affairs" to be, provided a wide range of delineation. A number of practitioners whom I have labeled elsewhere as "non-policy" makers seemed quite unsure on where to draw the line. To several of them, the functions of an office seemed more important than the name. They argued the portfolio had undergone a name change before, and yet the functions had largely remained the same. The differences to this group was "in theory", in rhetoric, and in the institutions desire to keep with a name change trend. The following remark illustrate these sentiments,

> *Well, I don't make a hard delineation of the difference between public relations and public affairs ...I understand there is a theoretical difference but really we are all talking about building relationships. It's all about communicating to other people. ...*

All these changes are supposed to support the University achieve its objectives. (Bill (1) 15 –29)

Another respondent expressed the following,

I wouldn't distinguish between them as the differences are more rhetorical. At one time we used to be the office of Community Services, and we have changed the name over the years, but our functions have not changed. (Joy (1) 29–37)

Yet another had this to say,

...I think it's just a trend really because for so many years there was an office that used to be called the community relations office and functions have not changed, but have just decided to change to Public Affairs . ... Last year, we thought "well, does Public Affairs say what we do for the University or doesn't it"? and we thought we should have the name changed again to Communications Center for the university which would better describe exactly what our functions are. (Bruce (2) 39–44)

What the above views suggest is that there exists some degree of apathy or indifference surrounding the disparity between the two concepts, and further exposes the fact that a number of practitioners seem not to reconcile the office tags and functions of offices under the two names. What is evident is that to these respondents, public relations and public affairs appears functionally synonymous. Apparently, the functions of these offices, with either of the names, would more or less be the same. This is evident from the idea that they are both about "building relationships" and "communicating to people." A number of respondents have perceived the two as being functionally the same but there may be a "thin line" between theoretical or rhetorical difference.

Additionally, these respondents stated that functions of an office should be related to the name or to some extent determine what the name of the office should be. Specifically, any name change should directly correspond to changed functions and vice versa. Further investigation into this phenomenon at this university revealed that the name change occurred with the expansion of the umbrella office to that of Research and External Affairs to accommodate the then newly created office of Government Relations. But, as respondents mentioned, the other functions of the Public Affairs Office did not change.

Three of respondents referred to as "policy makers" presented what could be argued to be the functional difference between the two concepts and the basis on which the office is named. Inasmuch as one insinuated a move towards a general trend in name change in organizations, there was a consensus that public affairs had a lot to do with issue management, decision making processes and policy issues. In contrast public relations comprises a set of activities conducted specifically to establish relationships with specific university publics to achieve set goals. One of the respondents contended that,

> *Public Affairs in the most part is the communication office that deals with issues related to the university and the perceptions that will result in the university related to those issues. Public relations is more a series of activities that are conducted to establish relationships with publics that are key to helping universities realize their strategic goals, objectives or in the case of this university, our strategic priorities.* (Peter (1) 21–27).

Another respondent commented,

> *I am not familiar with the textbook definition for public relations and public affairs. ... I know we have historically called our office that deals with those issues Public Relations, Community Relations and now Public Affairs. We have evolved to calling it a softer term Public Affairs because I think public relations has a sort of context to it that is more in terms of hype and promotion. Public Affairs {for me} suggest the enterprise is more interactive and where you are not only*

> *trying to tell your story, but trying to assess needs of the community and attend to those needs.* (Ben (1) 25–35).

The above respondent suggests that public affairs is more interactive than public relations. According to him public affairs refers to an office where issues management takes place complete with structure that the university has established to deal with issues such as public relations. It is, as one respondent puts it, "a communications office that manages corporate communications issues." The same respondents had explained that the university has strategic priorities that it seeks to achieve, and the Public Affairs Office in its endeavor to support the university, plans and executes programs and projects that will enhance these priorities. Most of these activities employ public relations activities. Hence public affairs in this university seems to be a planning and policy arm while public relations appears to be the functional arm.

Another interesting finding relates to the apparent trend to change names for offices currying out functions like those of the Public Affairs office and the public relations office. One respondent suggests the reason for this trend as being the general negative perceptions towards the activities of public relations offices. Grunig (1992) expresses this concern. He observes that "although public relations is probably the oldest concept used to describe the communications of organizations, many organizations now use the term "public affairs" in part because of the negative connotations of public relations" P. 4). The debate on which is broader or more inclusive has not been resolved by public relations writers and practitioners. However the trend is now moving to public affairs which Grunig and Hunt (1984) contends is the merger of all communications units of department into one department (p. 284).

The use of the words "hype" and "promotion" associated with public relations practices and especially where higher education is concerned are examples of such negative perceptions. However, the respondents talked of hype and promotion in a positive sense where the university engages in celebrating it's successes to make the university known. This could take the form of elaborate celebrations or advertising for exposure or make the university known and heard. He further adds that in promoting and celebrating university successes high ethical considerations are adhered to. The university, for instance avoids deceptive advertising. At a certain level however, "hype" as referred to by another respondent, implies the use of certain practices that are "loud" and with which do not necessarily enhance the university's mission. Promotion also in this context implied publicity stunts or advertising services from a marketing standpoint. The change of name for the former respondent by implication indicated that public affairs was a "softer" term, implying more interaction, more inclusion, and more reciprocity than public relations.

The origins of the change of name trend according to one branch of the literature can be traced back to second world war propaganda campaigns. This was the period in which massive propaganda activity was designed and instituted and which has often been equated with public relations. This has left a bad legacy and has cast a stigma on the practice in the minds of the public. The change to public affairs seems to have toned down these misconceptions and at the same time given credence to the office that deals with the public. From the literature, records contentions on the scope of the two concepts. White and Mazur (1995) records that "within the public relations, public affairs is a specialized practice that focused on relationships which will have a bearing on public policy" (p. 182). They further contend that on "major focus of public affairs is the management of relationships with the government." Further they posit that "some public affairs practitioners will argue that their presence is superior to public relations which they view as mainly concerned with media and publicity" (p.183).

Public Affairs and the University Mission and Vision

This section of the chapter addresses the research question that sought to determine the relationship between the mandate and mission of Public Affairs, and the overall mission and vision of the university. In examining this issue, and because of the inter-relatedness of other sister offices within the External Affairs office, missions of the other two offices of Development and Alumni Affairs are also be outlined. These mission and mandates are considered also because they in effect lay out the major functions that these offices undertake.

All the offices within the External Affairs Office had clear mandates and missions. While each office had its own statements on mission, mandate, goals, and objectives, they are all associated with the vision and the major strategic priorities of the University which were set by the current president. The vision and the three strategic priorities were spelled out by the president in his inaugural address as the president of the university in 1995. (Public Affairs website). All respondents were aware of these priority areas, and they all articulated them well. Implications of having an office with no mission or with one unrelated to the university mission was emphasized as grave to the institution. One respondent simply stated,

> *If it doesn't, then the office shouldn't be there, or if it doesn't then the office is going all over the place, because it doesn't know what it is doing. ... Any organization that has a director of Public Affairs who doesn't know what the vision, mission, or*

> *strategic priorities of the organization are, and is operating in a vacuum without a mandate is having a terrible time.* (Peter (2) 41–43, 57–59)

According to *These are the days* (1996), a document which articulates the strategic initiatives of the office of the Vice President, Research and External Affairs, the University's vision as set by the President states "Our vision, as we emerge from this and enter the next century, is to be indisputably recognized, nationally and internationally, as one of Canada's finest universities (p. 2). This vision, which seeks to leave a legacy of excellence, means that it has to set "all systems rolling" towards achieving it. To achieve this vision, specific initiatives have to be identified and pursued. Respondents and other documents have referred to the initiatives as either "Strategic goals" or just "goals of the university." The above mentioned document states, "Three major objectives are critical to the achievement of this vision: the recruitment and retention of outstanding students, the recruitment and retention of outstanding staff, and the attraction and provision of outstanding resources (P. 2).

The document goes on to provide the justification as to why these three goals are central to the university's mission and vision. It states as follows,

> The attainment of these three goals will provide the prerequisite for the creation of the optimal learning and research environments for our students and staff to excel in their respective fields and disciplines. Each of these goals is central to fulfilling the academic mission of the university; each of these goals is critical to meeting our vision each of these goals is key to our being indisputably recognized as one of Canada's finest universities (p. 2).

While each of the goals is important and pursued independently with independent strategies, practices and personnel, the respondents as well as documents stressed their inextricable nature to a point where the failure of one spells failure for the rest. The document elaborates this as follows:

> Each of these goals is inextricably linked to the other; no one of them can be achieve without successfully accomplishing the other two. Thus the real challenge is to focus on all these areas, mobilizing our current resources, strengths and expertise in such a fashion that all three goals are attained simultaneously. (p. 2)

The university vision which the External Affairs Office identifies as "collective vision" is seen as a link for all unit missions as they all focus their contributions towards its attainment. In other words, the Research and External Affairs Office seeks to have the same vision and aim for all its own units. Its strategic initiatives document states:

> Our aim is to be indisputably recognized as the finest university Research and External Affairs Office in Canada. We will all work to ensure that our activities strengthen the bonds between the broader community and the university ... and enhance the sense of community on our campus (p. 3)

From the larger University vision and mission, the umbrella Office of Research and External Affairs crafts its own. The sub-units in the External Affairs specifically, Public Affairs, Development and Alumni Affairs craft their own, from it as well. Strategic initiatives and functions that are hoped ultimately to translate into attainment of the larger university vision are also designed from the university mission.

Each unit's strategic plan reveals well articulated mission statements consistent with the university vision and mission. For instance, the *Public Affairs Strategic Plan* of 1996, spells out its vision and mission as follows,

> We must become indisputably recognized as the best Public Affairs team the university has ever seen, as the team that led the communications that attracted the students, staff and

> resources central to the university's vision of excellence and as the model public affairs office for Canadian universities. (p. 4)

Further Public Affairs states its mission and mandate from the public relations perspective: "Our mission is to connect the university and its priority communities - to build the understanding, support and image essential for the university ... to become indisputably recognized ... "(p. 5).

The *Alumni Association strategic plan 1995-1998*, spells out the mission of the Alumni Affairs Office as being: "To strengthen the relationship between the alumni and the university so the university will be a world renowned leader in teaching, research and continuing education" (p. 1).

To achieve this mission, the Alumni Office with the Alumni Association set forth key results areas that would propel them to achieve this mission. These include communications to create awareness and understanding, celebration and recognition, to enhance the reputation of the university and create a climate of sustained support, focusing volunteer energy, programming evaluation and financial stability.

The Development Office which forms the third of the three key offices of External Affairs has as one of its mandates to generate funds from private sources for the university. Revenue generated by this office goes toward the support of the other two goals of the university.

Implication for Public Relations

It is evident from all the mission statements and visions that the public relations activities of the university are focused toward specific goals, prioritized, measurable, and harmonized amongst the related offices. It seems that in all the offices within the External Affairs Office, public relations activity undertaken is weighed in relation to the strategic priorities or goals of the university. The focused nature of the mission is such that units cannot come up with activities just because they are good for the unit but should be related to the goals of the university. At the operational level, respondents involved in the day-to-day public relations functions had clear perceptions of how the mission, visions and mandate guided their practice. One of the respondents remarked,

> *... The issue is for that office to structure its public relations activities, its goals and its objectives around the objectives of the University and to measure its progress, and its performance on the basis of how well [they] are doing in meeting the goals of the University* . (Linda (5)121–126).

This relationship quickly sets parameters and boundaries for evaluating the relevance as well as guiding activities. While charging the public relations units with these parameters, three respondents introduced the notion that the public relations activities are the sum total of the efforts of many other units. One of the three respondents held that "to the extent those other units recognize your work as advancing their mission, and they begin to rely on public affairs for their well-being, then the activities being carried out here are relevant." Another respondent submits,

> *I don't see [ours]as an isolated unit, I see it as an integrated unit working with other units,. So to be able to say, well Public Affairs is credited for xyz is probably unrealistic. Why? If deans, academics, administration, student groups, or the university community as a whole begin to use, rely on, depend on Public Affairs to advance their mission, then I think we've done what we need to do.* (Linda (5)126–132)

Hence, in terms of public relations, perceptions of the activities of Public Affairs and its sister offices, provide a good measure of the relevance of their activities. It is from this perspective that the notion of harmony with other units was raised. What the respondents meant was that public relations is a campus-wide activity but with direction offered from the Public Affairs office.

Harmony or coherence as termed by respondents in relation to activities of sister offices seemed to provide a general focus for all public relations activity. Specifically, inasmuch as these offices had their activities crafted towards the same overall university goals, they did not duplicate activities but rather played complementary roles. One respondent, on being asked about the relationship of the Public Affairs mission and that of the university, remarked,

> *The other way of looking at it is ... here are the goals of the university, what is the appropriate role of the Public Affairs department ... [and] what's the role of the Alumni Affairs department in the recruitment of students? What is the appropriate role of the Development Office in the recruitment of students? They will be different but, that's why they are under one Vice President's office. They should be in agreement, so Public Affairs should know what the Alumni office is doing, what Development is doing in the recruitment of students, so that they are doing it in a similar way.* (Linda (6)140-149)

Another respondent observed,

> *We worked in cohort with Public Affairs and Alumni Affairs, whether that is designed in our CASE statement, or whether that is designed in a brochure that we are going to be sending out to invite people to support the university, there is a continual link in using the Public Affairs as a touch -tone to make sure that the messages that are given out are consistent with key messages that Public Affairs and Alumni Affairs wants to have stressed.* (Bill (1–2) 25–33)

What was evident from the above is the existence of team work and collegiality in the way these offices and their personnel related to each other. One way of doing this was through joint projects. Expertise from all the areas combine to plan and execute a project with each unit coming from a different angle on the project, but all doing it in a coordinated way. Regular meetings within the sections are held to review projects and at times, when a senior officer is set to meet with major clients. Hence, there appeared to be harmony and complementary roles resulting from the different office pursuing the same mission. While the Office of public Affairs and the sister offices in external affairs are involved in student recruitment, it was indicated by one respondent that the involvement is at a high level of image building to facilitate the process. The office of the Registrar and Student Awards and the faculties, and teaching departments are the direct contacts with the students.

In terms of time frames, the vision enunciated by the president, and echoed by most respondents and individual office strategic plans, was such that entry into the 21st century was the focal point. A number of initiatives or target objectives had been given time frames for accomplishment. The target was that by the time of entering the 21st century the university vision would be attained. Consequently, most initiatives had been allocated time frames for accomplishment. Most activities were planned around when and how they could be accomplished. What this means is that Public Relations activities could be measured from time to time based on accomplishment and this provided room for activities to be re-focused. It also meant that constant improvement was encouraged as those goals that were accomplished provided room for new initiatives. It is from this perspective that one respondent commented that a "number of our publications have a very short shelf life" (Linda(7)184-185). A constant review of activities seemed to be undertaken to create new ones or redirect those in progress.

Certain facts in brochures and related publications became outdated quickly and hence these needed constant review.

In summary, the study revealed a strong relationship between the mandates and missions of the Public Affairs Office and sister offices within External Affairs and those of the University. It is from the university's mission and vision that all these offices drew theirs. The logic presented was that independent and unrelated missions would not lead to the university attaining its mission and vision. In other words the university's mission was seen as paramount and the general feeling was that all other units within the office of Research and External Affairs must support it.

Public Affairs Functions and Public Relations Activities

At the time of the research, the Public Affairs comprised of four main portfolios, namely, Media Relations, which also complements the Registrar's Office in the recruitment of outstanding students; *Folio,* which complements the development office in attracting resources ; Community Relations, which complements staff recruitment; and an Administrative unit. These portfolios perform parallel functions that basically belong to two categories, (1) operational functions, and (2) strategic functions.

In differentiating the two functions, one respondent indicated that "operational functions are the kind of services we provide and strategic functions are the areas in which we provide those services. And so they work like a roller track and the people tie these together" (Peter (3)81–84). Operational functions are thus services and activities performed to fulfill strategic goals.

Operational functions as explained by the respondents comprised,

(1) Internal/external communications (Publications- notably *Folio*)

(2) Media relations

(3) Community relations, specifically,

-Visiting committees

-Super Saturday

-Annual General Meeting

-Report to the community

-Reunion weekend

-Awards night.

Other functions grouped as operational, and did not have a unit of their own, but rather were performed in general terms by the entire office were described as, Special projects, Issues management, Government relations, and Consulting.

Strategic functions constitute,

(1) Recruitment and development of students

(2) Recruitment and retention of staff

(3) Generation of resources to support the first two.

In terms of the relationship between the two, the operational functions are to a large extent geared towards attaining the strategic functions, by ensuring that efforts in recruitment of students, staff and resources are successful. Hence, as will be seen later, the above efforts are not done in isolation by the Public Affairs Office but in concert with other units of the university established to attain the above strategic functions, especially the three offices within External Affairs.

While many respondents agreed that image of the university was central to their activities, and that the sum total of their activities endeavored to project that, most stated that the paramount concern as evident in their functions was the fulfillment of the university strategic priorities. On this issue one policy maker observed,

> ... *And so when they come up with their strategic plan or whatever, activities of the year, they are thinking recruitment of students, faculty, and resources, and they are saying, does this activity help us recruit outstanding students or faculty, or does it help us in our fund campaign? If it doesn't help us, and it's just a nice activity, we shouldn't be doing it.* (Linda (3) 61–69)

One respondent categorized as a public relations practitioner on the same issue remarked,

> ... *We have to be in synchrony with the overall mission of the University. If we are doing things that are unrelated then we are irrelevant. So we are not doing things which one has fun doing. All things we do are directly tied to the overall university goal.* (Bruce (1)12–16)

The important finding here was the guiding philosophy of the office, which is the centrality of the mission in directing of their functions. Further examination of each functional area revealed a host of activities and objectives. Each is examined in turn from the perspective of the respondents.

1. Internal and External Communication Roles and Issues

According to one respondent, Public Affairs has as one of its mandates to communicate to its internal and external publics. The major channel of information dissemination is through publications of various nature and focus. From the study it was established that the entire office of External Affairs produce numerous publications in the form of informational brochures for a host of purposes, annual reports, newsletters, fundraising publications, community relations activities, alumni magazines, etc. It was observed that due to a pool of communication expertise in the Public Affairs Office, faculties and teaching departments do approach them for the preparation of promotional publications. Documents that have been published, though majority may have as short as a year's shelf life, have and are still dynamic documents. According to one respondent, they constitute "helpful blueprints". They also serve as guide to many set goals. The respondent affirms,

> *I believe it accomplishes two things; one it keeps people focused at least once a year on where we are, where we are going and what we are doing. Secondly,, ...its very powerful to come back to these documents six - eight months later and see how much you have accomplished. ... In any case these are ongoing events, they never stop. And the next document will pull out some of the things that we have finished and we identify still missing and add* (Linda (8) 194–197, 205–207, 210–213).

Publications thus from this perspective act not only as informational documents but are key in planning, evaluation and guiding. They are also historical documents. Of all the publications out of Public Affairs Office, the most consistently produced and which constitutes the official university newspaper is what they refer to as "Folio." *Folio* was the most talked about by all respondents. Consequently issues raised will be discussed.

Perspectives on the Role of *Folio*

The Public Affairs Office produces a 12 page magazine, the *Folio,* every fortnight or 20 issues per year. Each production constitutes around 7,000 copies with the bulk of it is circulated on campus. When asked the primary objective of the publication one respondent who fell under practitioners category attested that it is "To keep people informed and to let people know about the good things that are going on in campus." (Bruce (2) 31-32)

This respondent further observed that,

> *It has a secondary role. When we publish folio, we put it out primarily for the internal community. ...The secondary role is that it also serve as a basis for external pressure issues, media relations and to some extent long term projects. ... So its primary role is internal communication [and its] secondary role is external communication.* (Bruce (2) 33–34, 39–41, 48–49)

Similarly, another respondent who fell under the policy maker category articulated the role of *Folio* and publications as follows,

> *We have the responsibility to communicate internally the strategic goals [and] objectives of the university ... We assist ... the senior administration of the university in doing this, that's the Board, the President and the Vice Presidents. And we do it [mainly] through a publication called Folio which is our newspaper.* (Peter (3) 88–93)

This sentiment and those from other respondents seem to centre on their perspectives on the issue of improving internal relations. The value of internal relations was underscored by the respondents as a means of achieving harmony with the staff and students whom they regarded as the major stakeholders of the university. *Folio* plays a crucial role in that it not only articulates the university's policies and serves as an information source, it also provides the university community with a forum for exchanging views and ideas as well as announcing research findings and other scholarly works. In fact one of the respondents attested that *Folio* "provided a place for debates to go on."

While the *Folio* was seen to be fulfilling its mandate, some respondents felt that not every one in the university was satisfied with its role. They claimed that there existed some form of dissatisfaction within a section of the university audiences, majority being from the faculty. Respondents felt that this section of staff did not have full confidence or full trust in *Folio* especially in terms of who it serves. Commenting on the *Folio*'s performance and representation, one respondent remarked,

> *... to the extend that we cover campus, Folio has been very successful. But Folio like most university newspapers is still perceived as the official voice of the administration. So most people on campus still believe and to some extend they are right, that Folio serves the university administration purposes and not the whole community. And this is common.* (Bruce (6) 154–159)

The respondents attributed part of this dissatisfaction to the fact that the audiences, especially the faculty, were too critical concomitant with a diversity of interests. Delineating this perspective one of the respondents observed,

> . . . *You see, there are so many people on the campus who are very critical of Folio. Either because it does not reflect the whole diversity of opinion ... its a big issue* (Joy (6) 162–165),

However, the majority of respondents considered *Folio* to be a powerful information source and pool of ideas and opinions. They felt that albeit the existence of a section that is critical to its operations, a great deal of participation by the faculty and administrative staff is evident especially in the supply of articles. That in itself, according to a section of the respondents, is an indication that *Folio* is not suffering from a credibility problem. The respondents felt that the faculty also makes use of *Folio* to further their course. For instance, they submit their departmental newsletter from which stories are picked and carried in *Folio*. This is also reinforced from the fact that issues that are perceived as critical are carried in the *Folio* and people allowed to participate in airing views as relates to those issues. *Folio*'s credibility is enhanced from the fact that the paper operates with a great degree of autonomy from the senior administration and with consistency in terms of releasing issues. According to one of the respondents, "This is the only one in Canada besides that of Toronto that has more autonomy from administration. There are a few that operate on strictly journalistic principles" (Bruce (6)159-161)

Content

As outlined elsewhere, the functions in Public Affairs office are designed to achieve university's strategic goals. One way that *Folio* attempts to do so is in the choice of its contents. The office organization chart shows that the *Folio* manager is in charge of both Folio publication as well as development. This means that besides writing for *Folio,* the manager coordinates and reports activities of the development office. Issues therefore that would go along way in serving the three strategies are given priority in coverage in the paper. For instance, recent issues have given the fund raising campaign center stage in its coverage. Other issues include tuition issues and research.

According to the respondents a number of considerations and ways of arriving at specific issues are used to determine what gets published in *Folio.* Elaborating on this process one of the respondents said,

> *We get together as an office. We sit down together every other week and then we have a story list, and decide things that must be included, ... it also serves as a service function. For example, advertising, sports, opinions column etc.* (Bruce (4) 89–93, 99)

At a certain level the senior administration could decide what goes into the paper. One respondent pointed out that "to another extent the

'University Hall' (senior administration) has a prerogative on the story. They could say, ... I think you should have a story on this. ... And you have to do it (Bruce (4) 104–107). However, even then, items that are determined by the administration are not necessarily censured by administration for content except those that are deemed to be contentious. In other words, the administration generally stays away.

When asked whether the university hall has to see the items (articles) before they are circulated, one of the respondents replied "No. Only on some contentious issues. ... it goes out. Essentially, they tend to stay away, and in some issues its more of self censorship. In some issues we stay away completely" (Bruce (5) 112–116)

The issue that stood out from among other respondents, were that issues are covered had to be of importance or relevance in terms of advancing the mission of the university. Issues that were deemed to unnecessarily create debates that are not healthy or do not contribute to the well being of the university were better left out. Hence, positive self censorship was perceived to be an important means of averting unnecessary controversies.

In summary, content issues were found to be determined by

i) team/group effort especially the office staff

ii) Senior administration

iii) Mandatory issues

It was further evident that journalistic behavior was guided by self censorship rather that external censorship. That there was respect for editors' work and freedom, meaning none or minimal interference from the administration except where issues involved were of a 'sensitive' nature. Teamwork was also evident at another level as one respondent contends, *We have a writer, [though others contribute], editor, we have administrative people whose responsibility is to put the bag together. We had an advertising person who is responsible for beating the bushes for us. So you see the structure works as a whole. Then the paper is put together by our graphics people before we it is taken to the printer.* (Bruce (7) 172–177)

In short, teamwork is seen here in the light of the entire office allocating responsibilities to individuals in the various stages of production. So that at the end of the day, it takes a team to produce as much as it takes a team to decide what gets published.

Circulation

To reach the intended audience, *Folio* and other publications have to be supported by a sound distribution program. As noted earlier, *Folio*'s primary audience is the internal publics with external publics as secondary audience. Asked as to whom, why and how they circulate the *Folio*, one respondent explained,

We have a mailing list. On campus, we distribute to all departments base on their numbers. And of the 7,000 issues, most of those copies are distributed on campus. There is a small external mailing list that is sent to city councilors, provincial and federal politicians, bureaucrats in the federal and provincial government, to our counterparts across the country in our universities. ...We also send a number of folios to people who give us money. We try and have them informed ...We do not send to public schools but we send them to community colleges and technical institutes primarily in [Alberta], some in Saskatchewan. Then we have few people who want to get in touch with what's going on inside the university. (Bruce (3) 70–80 , 85–90)

It was also evident that most of what is published is targeted to an already determined and prioritized audience. A structure and means for ensuring important audiences or publics to the university are not omitted had be established. Mailing lists for both internal and external audience are key in this regard in that it cuts across a spectrum of university stakeholders. These include politicians, business community, federal officials, prospective students from colleges and technical institutes and all internal audiences. Part of the circulation strategy include placing bulk of copies on strategic and vantage points within the university frequently patronized by both staff and students.

Evaluation

One important component in every public affairs and public relations activity is evaluation. *Folio* and other publications have an in-built and consistent evaluation component. Among the forms of evaluation cited by respondents included external criterion, editorial meetings, self criticisms also referred by some respondents as "post-mortem", community feedback and continuous improvement. Commenting on the evaluation of *Folio,* one responded said,

> *To some extend others evaluate it. We also have editorial meetings. We look at past issues and say, "this worked, this didn't." Sort of like immediate feedback. We certainly get evaluated by the community, If they didn't like the story, they call us immediately. With other publications we sit down afterwards and say, "what could we have done better?" ... So we try and make improvements every year for the folio and any issues.* (Bruce (5) 130 - 132, 134 -139, 142-143)

It was noted that for *Folio* to fulfill its mission, evaluation represent a key issue in the continuous re-focusing of issues, content, distribution and even design. Most of the evaluation was campus based, no external evaluation. Across campus team, though not regular, has been used in the past for evaluation. The result of the evaluation has been a continuos improvement.

2. Perspectives on the Role of Media Relations

Media relations constitute one of the key functions in every public relations or public affairs offices in any organization. This is because in every respect, it is the media or the press by which most publics get to hear or read about the university. Hence, universities have to safe guard information that gets to the media by ensuring that the portrayal is fair factual and prompt. Any university's image is therefore always tested in the media circles.

From the office organizational structure, the portfolio manager is also responsible for both official media relations activities as well as complementing the Registrar's Office in the recruitment of outstanding students. The recruitment of students component is complementary to functions performed by the Registrar's office. Pertinent issues that came out of media relations function relates to its role in university strategies for dealing with media, why use of different media channels, relationships of media relations officers and the media and evaluation of media relations programs. Asked what the media relations was all about, one of the respondents remarked "its dealing with the print, broadcast and reporters."

Media relations interactions at the university, according to the respondents, occurred at two fronts, namely (1) Where the university takes the initiative to provide information to the media, and (2) Where journalists or reporters solicit information from the university. Further, it was observed that contact with the media occurred at different points of the university in a number of occasions. For example, some departments or professors could issue information concerning their activities to the media without necessarily consulting the media relations office in the Public Affairs Office. Consequently, it was possible for media to seek clarification on issues from the media relations office regardless of whether the office were the source or not. This situation, according to one respondent, puts considerable strain on the media relations officer in trying to keep track with what releases go to the press.

Media relations function like publications serves an important role in achieving the university's strategic goals. This role is performed through such activities as news releases, news conferences, interview sessions with university officers, responding to media reports and inquiries, media training and providing advice and counsel to senior administration on major news items, and news events. One of the respondents summarized these functions as follows,

> *Advising and consulting with central senior administration on media relations issues, on strategies and then execute them*
> (Barb (1) 15–16)

Media reporting dealt with diverse issues, which according to the respondents centered on official functions, research issues, student achievements, crisis situations, important visits, special announcements, and special events. This diversity of issues implied that various strategies were also used to execute the functions. Delineating the strategies used in media relations to execute their functions one of the respondents remarked,

> *It certainly depend on the situation. Sometimes we wouldn't do anything, and that would be a strategy to not do anything. Sometimes we recommend a press conference, sometimes we recommend a news release, [and] sometimes we recommend*

> *individual calls to the media, specific media. So it depends on issue, on the event or on whatever.* (Barb (1) 18–24)

According to this respondent the choice of a particular strategy tends to be influenced by the issue at hand as well as the particular situation. In other words, implied in the above sentiments is a contention that available to the media personnel is a cross section of options from which to chose when dealing with the media while covering or reporting on an issue. However, as can be gauged from the perspectives of the respondents, the choice of a specific strategy from the array of strategies requires consideration of certain factors. The factors cited by the respondents included the needs of specific media, the nature of the message, resources, the audience, and the most suitable means of communicating the message. Outlining the factors for opting for particular strategy over another, were outlined by one respondent remarked,

> *What influences that is (1) the message we need to send, (2)who we are sending the message to, (3)what is the best way to reach them and 4) what is economically viable.* (Peter (9)314–317)

Another respondent commenting on the same issue observed,

> *They have different needs. The TV has to be much more visual than print. It is easier to sell to print because you can only take a shot of a student walking or campus or hitting a volley ball so many times. So it depends on individual story and what kind of dimension it has. It is different with TV.* (Barb (3) 56 –60)

This respondent further explained,

> *We use judgment. Sometimes you don't send a story to everybody because not everyone could handle its responsibly. It's using judgment on how you get the most play for your buck.* (Barb (5) 121–124, 127)

Hence, a series of factors are considered before a particular medium or channel or strategy is selected. It was also apparent from the views of a number of respondents that the media was not a homogenous group. They indicated that each media channel had different reporting or editorial policies so that one story could appear slightly different from the other. Editorial policies could therefore treat the same story in a distinct manner, and hence different form of media played a key role not only in how stories are crafted but in deciding whether to use them or not.

Another important finding relates to the issue of fairness in reporting. When asked how they ensure that information released to the media was balanced and not just that which was in favor the university, one respondent remarked, "judgment. That's the measure, we just use judgment". However, this respondent went on to explain that most reporting was basically positive to the university, though never intended to deceive. Explaining further this respondent observed,

> *That's where good reporting gets in. You see, we don't issue news releases with that intent, news releases are simply factual. So there is no editorial at all.* (Barb (5) 134–136)

Fair reporting was also ensured by constant verification from the media in addition to inviting the media to cover university functions and to do press conferences.

On relationship with the media, the respondents felt that mutual respect existed between Media Relations Officer and Press/media. This was contrary to notions in the literature which characterizes the relationship as of mutual mistrust. In the view of the respondents there existed of constant dialogue and close working relationships between the Media Relations Offices and the Press. One described this relationship as follows,

> *In this office, our media relations is highly regarded and respected right from the "Global Mail" ... all the way down. . . . We call them when we have something to say and when they call us we respond right away, so there is a mutual respect.* (Barb (8)218–223)

This mutual relationship as expressed by another respondent is evident in the number of items carried by the media about the university, and the frequency of coverage in different media channels. The respondent attributed this situation to the "open door" policy that the office has adopted with regard to the media. In short, the respondents seem to argue that it is because of their cooperation with journalists that the university gets frequent coverage. It then follows that if the policy adopted was restrictive, it would breed mistrust and little coverage.

The significance of this relationship is embodied in the immediate media coverage of important issues regarding to the three strategic goals of the university. This in turn positions the university positively. Indeed, it was evident from a clipping service which the office operates, that many dailies cover the university well and extensively. For instance, by 9 o'clock of the interview day, the office had clipped over 10 articles. The significance of the clipping service is imbued in the ability of the media office to monitor university's image and gauge attitudes, as well as their performance from these reporting. This information is in turn used to advise senior administration on perceived areas of concern.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important component in the running of media affairs. Among the evaluation methods the Media Relations Office use is what they referred to as "media tracking. According to one respondent media tracking is,

> *Where we look at what this office initiated or tried to initiate with the media. What kind of responses we got ... So we just monitor print or any odd TV or Radio report which we hear.* (Barb (56)139–144)

Part of the media tracking activities included the newspaper clipping service. This activity involves the clipping of articles on the university from a host of local daily newspapers and weekly magazines. It was also noted that due to logistical issues, it was not possible to monitor areas such as broadcast despite the fact that a lot of coverage come from this source. According to the respondents, media tracking was basically tracking the image of the university, and the moods and perceptions of peoples about the university from the media. This stems from the idea that unfavorable or "odd reports" as they call it, would be damaging to the university image, hence the need for to respond immediately. Media tracking was therefore considered to be a major evaluation component. Indeed, according to one respondent, the department (Media Office) used to operate a national clipping service prior the cutbacks. This service, which was provided by a company in Toronto would assemble clippings on university from all newspapers and magazines available in the country on a monthly basis, and sends them to the university. This activity portrayed the coverage of the university from a national perspective. This clipping service has since been discontinued.

The other form of evaluation is quantitative in nature. Evaluation was also effected through taking into account the number of press conferences, articles news releases etc. have been written or issued that are directly related to, or assist the realization of the university's vision.

3. Community Relations Roles and Issues

Community relations function as explained by respondents could loosely be described as the university's interactions with the general community through a number of organized and specific programs or projects. The term community as defined by some respondents was consistent with Grunig's definition based on geographical proximity to the university. Hence to the university, community relations activities are aimed primarily at those who live within the university and the province. Community relations programs affords both the university and the community the opportunity to build relationships as well as share ideas and visions. According to the respondents, Community Relations provides opportunity for the public, to be part of university development and influence the direction or course of certain events. By so doing, the community becomes part or partners in the university's growth while being informed of the university operations. For the university, the programs largely assists in the achievement of the mission. Hence, community relations as seen by many respondents had multiple objectives. One respondent on being asked why the university run community relations programs remarked, *The community relations programs is to keep the public who are the tax payers informed about what the university is about and to get their views on things about the university.* (Cheryl (3) 75–77)

The respondent further explained,

The primary objectives of the community relations programs fall under three priority areas the President has set for this university for the next five years. They are .the recruitment of students ... So we work very much as a service oriented kind of work to support that initiative (Cheryl (2) 47–52)

So, basically community relations was found to be among the many initiatives that entails a two way communication interaction whereby the university tells its story to the public, tries to influence the public , while drawing ideas from its various publics.

Examples of Community Relations Programs at the University

Below are brief descriptions of three primary community relations programs that were identified by the respondents.

1). Visiting committees. The program which now runs ten in faculties of the university, as explained by one respondent, was established after a model in Harvard University in the United States. It is a program in which a faculty invites twenty high profile community leaders and other people from the community who the faculty deem "useful" for a one day general visit at the university. Composition of the group would thus vary from one faculty to the other as *"each faculty tries to identify the unit of people that would benefit them"* (cheryll (4)89–90). Hence, depending on the faculty, the visiting committee would comprise of people with expertise in that particular area while some would be influential laymen. The committee gets to meet with the faculty staff, students, receive a talk from among the best professors in the faculty, tour facilities, attend a plenary session or discussion. To conclude the visit the committee give a report to the department as well as fill evaluation questionnaires. In short, the visiting committee is accorded an opportunity to interact with that faculty and to get involved with what goes on in the faculty. What the visiting committees then seeks to achieve, according to respondents, is to forge links with the publics relevant to the faculty that would translate into exchange of ideas as well as resources. It is hoped that through this activity the university positive image would be enhanced.

*ii) **Super Saturday.*** This is an activity carried out in the fall, usually in conjunction with the Alumni Reunion weekend. The program provides about 20–30 of the very best professors who through a series of short lectures discuss various issues and research throughout the day. Super Saturday, according to two respondents closest to the activity, draws between 100-200 people who include the general public.

*iii) **Annual General Meeting (AGM).*** This occasion, according to one respondent entails "reporting to the community activities of the university". The AGM is a one hour presentation to business persons, community leaders, alumni and the general public, whereby the "university reports to its constituents about some of its outstanding achievements during the past year" (*University Days 1996,* p.2).

Other activities that constitute community relations include open houses and special events organized at departmental level, production of annual reports, production of a publications for reaching the community such as *"Report to the commu*nity." The university distributes about 600,000 copies of the publication to Albertans.

In a nutshell, the respondents saw the role of community relations programs as a tool for reaching out to the community with the objective of

i) Obtaining community's views or perspectives on the university.

ii) Providing a way for the university to influence the community, or seek support for what the university is doing and essentially detailing its contribution to society.

iii) Providing a forum and means for community to participate in university affairs.

iv) Creating for the university a forum for accountability, particularly through reporting to its constituents who are taxpayers.

v) Pursuing of the university's mission by crafting messages towards recruiting students, staff and attracting resources.

vi) Providing a forum for the university to influence the lives of community around it especially through open days where departments showcase research activities and innovations that the community could use are provided.

vii) Directing activities at the faculty and departmental level.

Overall, the respondents felt that the community relations serves to establish good neighborliness, friendships and reciprocal relationships with the community around it.

While community relations programs comprise mainly activities that are organized by the university, respondents indicated that activities that were organized by the community were attended by university officials in a limited and selective manner. Asked whether the community relations included the university attending community functions, one respondent declared,

> *Limited. We get involved with community to the extend that they assist us in realizing our strategic priorities. So when there are situations that help us attract students, staff and resources, then we are involved in them. So they are kind of selective.*'(Peter (12) 425–428)

Besides relevance of community functions being the determining factor, the respondents attributed their limited participation to lack of time. The same respondent asserted,

> *... or we could be all the time out there involved in community activities and never do our work. We have to be very selective in how we get involved in community activities because it can waste a lot of your time and be non productive in realizing your objectives.* (Peter (12) 428–432)

Hence, like all involvement, the university's mission or strategic objectives provide a focus for participation. If the activity does not play a specific role then the Public Affairs does not participate.

Evaluation of Community Relations Programs

To ensure that community relations programs are focused and achieving what they are designed for, evaluation is in-built component of every program or project. According to the respondents soliciting of feedback immediately after each function from the participants as well as from staff, constitute the standard evaluation process. This is done through the use of questionnaires which are handed out after each function. One respondent explained,

> *We try an evaluate our own programs as often as possible to try and determine whether or not we're realizing our goals and objectives.* (Peter (13) 434–437)

Another participant remarked,

> *...We have an evaluation component built in all our community relations and communication programs. We have all members fill out a form, just a brief questionnaire at the end of the day of each function. So we get feedback for the Annual General Meeting, Super Saturday, and all other programs.*
> (Cheryl (5) 121–125, 141)

Evaluation of programs is basically effect at two levels, internal and external. External evaluation comprise participation of external consultants, survey groups such as the population research laboratory based in the department of Sociology, and focus groups outside the department. Internal evaluation refers to departmental involvement in evaluating their own activities. This takes the form of internal meetings to debrief on performance of each event, and recommending improvements in the next event.

Evaluation in General

One of the research questions in the study sought to describe evaluation methods for public relations activities at the university. This section outlines the evaluation procedures in general terms since specifics have been elaborated above. The study revealed evaluation was an integral part of every project and program. Respondents saw the component as central since each activity had a specific goal. Attainment of the goal would then be affirmed only after an evaluation was carried out.

The study revealed that evaluation procedures and processes were specific to a particular function, program or project. Examination of each function revealed distinct evaluation processes and procedures. Hence, it is difficult to develop general procedures for all offices as procedures would vary according to the projects. Evaluation for many respondents, is trying to measure the degree of success in achieving goals.

The study, also revealed evidence that evaluation was perceived in terms of short-term and long-term effort. Respondents indicated that short-term evaluation were being carried out for specific projects that span over a short period. Conversely, long-term evaluation were for issues that are over a long period of time and performed in a manner that is incremental towards an objective such as the university image. The respondents discussed a number of crucial issues that were to evaluation. First, the respondents stressed the need to be clear on what was being evaluated. One respondent who fell on the policy maker category affirmed,

> *We do try and evaluate all our major projects to try and see whether we realize our goals and objectives. That's why we put goals and objectives to begin with. ... What do I want to accomplish here, then we try and measure it at the end.* (Peter (12) 405–408)

According to the above respondent and alongside others, the central issue to every evaluation process are the goals and objectives of a particular function, project or program that is being evaluated.

Second, respondents emphasized the importance of examining the process of project implementation itself. In other words, there is need to address such questions as, 'was the project presented well?, did the public receive the right information?, were the right tools and mediums used?, and if yes or not, then what went wrong? This view was supported by comments like,

> *We are certainly criticized, no doubt about it ... We sit down afterwards and say what went wrong; what could we have done better, where do we improve next year.* (Bruce (5) 136–138)

The third issue that the respondents addressed focused on the question of who was doing the evaluation. According to the respondents evaluation was carried out by three categories namely, (i) Public relations practitioners themselves or self evaluation based on attainment of specific goals, (ii) an external body such as focus groups, and (iii) the general publics who may be recipient or targets of projects through various feedback avenues. For instance the above statement indicate that "we" refer to office staff responsible for specific projects who have to take stock of events versus outcomes. Yet another respondent stated,

> *To some extend others evaluate it ... certainly we get evaluated by the community. If they don't like the story they call us immediately.* (Bruce (5) 130–131, 134–135)

This respondent also disclosed the use of in campus focus groups used in the evaluation process.

> *We had a group on campus to assess Folio. That happened every 2-3 years. We got them in a room together; we asked them questions like, what works for you; what do they think what would they like to see?* (Bruce (6)147–151)

Included in the above remarks was a fourth aspect that focused on the frequency of evaluation. According to the above respondent evaluation by an external focus group occurred every 2-3 years. Otherwise, internal evaluation which is often project specific occurs both as an on-going process as well at the end of each project. For projects or publications evaluation occurred after each issue.

The fifth area the respondent dwelt on related to criteria or basis for measuring of achievement. One respondent underscored the need for benchmarks with which to determine whether goals were achieved or not. Delineating the basis used for evaluation one of the respondents remarked,

> *...Ultimately, evaluation for us is how much money we raise. So this is pretty easy way to evaluate.* (Bill (12) 319–320)

Another respondent said,

> *Our primary performance indicator in the thing that we are accountable for is student registrations... that's where we measure our enrollment, how many different interaction we have with prospective student, we measure how many publications we produced and placed in the hands of key publics.* (Ben (8) 274–275, 282–285)

Yet, for another respondent, referring specifically to the use of publications such as strategic plans and project publications, mentioned deadlines assigned to each initiative as benchmark for evaluation. Items put forward with dates for accomplishments provided a focus for which if not attained justifies evaluation.

Forms of Evaluation Identified

- Feedback from participants of projects and programs: questionnaire and project assessment.
- Meetings: internal assessment, editorial meetings.
- Focus group, consultants.
- Surveys: public perceptions surveys.
- Result-performance indicators, e.g. amount of funds, students numbers.
- Goals/objectives: student, funds, deadlines.
- Staff evaluation: individual performance, staff team performance.
- Participation in activities.

- Content analysis e.g. *Folio..*
- Self criticism - postmortem.
- Community feedback.
- Use of statistics: derive assumptions from statistics, attendance, donations and enrollment.

Summary

The chapter started by drawing a line from the participants understanding between the term public relations and how it differed from public affairs. Some felt there was little difference between the two based on the fact that the office under which they operate had undergone a name change while the functions basically remained the same. Some provide a functional difference where public affairs leans towards policy formulation and public relations is the action side.

Participants provided what they felt was a linkage between their office mission and mandates and that of the university. They stated that their mandate exist to enhance the overall university mission and to achieve its ultimate vision. Roles of the Public Affairs Office and its major operational units such as media relations, community relations and publications are explored. While each have distinct roles and functions they ultimate all seek to achieve three university strategic goals. The goals were identified as recruitment and training of outstanding students, recruitment and retention of outstanding faculty, and attracting outstanding resources.

Issues arising from roles of the operational units such as the role of the *Folio,* community relations programs and media relations. Evaluation of the above programs was identified as key to the success of the Public

Affairs Office. Most evaluation is project and program based, are continuous and participatory.

Chapter 6

Public Relations Strategies and the Pursuit of University Strategic Goals

Introduction

This chapter addresses the major research question of the study. The question seeks to identify the public relations strategies that the university uses to achieve its objectives. It discusses the various public relations strategies that the Office of Public Affairs has developed to reach its various publics and for what reasons. In other words, it integrates the specific public relations functions discussed in chapter 5, and how each function has generated specific strategies towards achieving the three strategic goals of the university. I wish to note here that a series of terms was used by respondents interchangeably. Specifically, in referring to the three university goals, respondents used the terms "strategic goals," "goals," "strategic initiatives," and "objectives."

In comparing data obtained from documents of participating offices, and those collected from interviews, the term strategy was used at two different levels. The first level of strategy referred to the areas that must be pursued by the university in order to achieve the vision outlined earlier, i.e., to be indisputably recognized as one of Canada's finest universities. For instance, *"These are the days"* (1996) profiles four strategies for achieving the university's mission as: (1) identification of an overall university theme; (2) recruitment of outstanding students; (3) recruitment and retention of outstanding staff, and (4) attraction and provision of outstanding resources.

For each strategy identified above, the Office of Public Affairs has identified a series of activities to be undertaken to achieve it. These activities have been termed "initiatives." These initiatives ideally refer to the various activities that the major offices within the Office of Public Affairs undertake to achieve each strategy. These initiatives are spread over the three main functional offices namely, media relations, communication and publications, and community relations.

The second level of strategies which mainly reflect that which was obtained from the interviews refers to specific activities or optional activities undertaken to achieve objectives for specific office unit. For example, activities for media relations functions such as news releases, face to face encounters, press conferences, advertisements, special projects and announcements amounted to strategies for reaching out to the public with specific messages.

Both levels of understanding are acknowledged, but for purposes of this study, the understanding obtained from and discussed by the participants is given the greater emphasis. Basically, initiatives referred to in the strategic plan documents were actually what the office units were already doing, while others were proposals to be covered within a given period of time. For instance, the Alumni Strategic Plan spans the years 1995-1998, the current Public Affairs plan covered the period from 1996-1997, while for Development Plan the span was 1996-97. Strategies or initiatives discussed in the interviews referred to what had already been done or was in the process of being done. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that what was being done by these offices was drawn from the initiatives outlined in the respective plans. Mention is also given to those initiatives not identified by participants yet already in place and spelt out in strategic plans.

For this section of the chapter discussion is approached from the standpoint of the four strategic priorities laid out by the Public Affairs Office and how each section within the External Affairs Office, had laid out, activities and strategies to achieve objectives of each of the priority areas.

1. Identification of Overall University Theme

According to *These are the days* (1996) the achievement of the University vision first "requires a coordinated effort to develop a consistent profile and image of the university" (p. 4). This according to the document would be achieved through an identification and adaptation of a consistent and strong university theme. The overall theme "University of ... it makes sense" was adapted in 1996. Previously the university had concentrated on it motto "whatsoever things are true" and the university crest to create a consistent theme and visual identity. The current theme was designed to highlight the unique features and strengths of the university and to provide the framework for specific initiatives associated with the university goals. Since its adaptation, it has consistently been used in a variety of university publications, souvenirs, advertisements, and many other keepsake items. The extensive use of this theme fulfills the role accorded to external affairs offices on the use of the theme, which is to "encourage the widespread use of the theme so as to provide a means of identification with the university for students, staff. alumni and friends" (*These are the days*, p. 4).

Among the strategies that have been used by these offices to ensure the identity of the university with this theme have been the following,

- Visits to deans, the directors of major service and academic departments to popularize and to encourage the use of the theme in a manner that gives the university a unique identity.

- The placement of university signage in high profile and conspicuous locations in the city with the theme. Other places that have been earmarked include the airport and major road intersections.

Already the offices of Public Affairs, Development and Alumni Affairs have worked with the graphics department to display the theme in all university billboards, buses and brochures, and on T-shirts, in badges, in publication, and in internet pages. The popular slogans associated with the theme include "Research makes sense." This highlights the research powers associated with the university. This slogan is on jacket crests, vehicle doors, coffee mugs, watches and other souvenir items. All brochures on campus bear the message, as well as other promotional materials such as insurance, programs, master card credit cards and travel programs. One respondent saw the issue of the theme as a way of making the university message live on by continuing to emphasize the message. She remarked in reference of "Research makes sense,"

> *What I have learned is that you can't repeat it enough. ... That message has been out there two to two and half years and if you'd walk on campus and seen two or three people with their button, you'd see it's still there. It's still alive, it's still thriving ... It's still a vibrant message.* (Linda (15) 403–408)

Overall, strategies have included the expansion of signage bearing the message both on-and off-campus, and off campus advertising and promotional materials.

2. Recruitment and Development of Outstanding Students

From the Public Affairs standpoint the function of recruitment of outstanding students is assigned to the officer responsible for media relations. This function at the office of Public Affairs compliments what the Faculties, Departments, Office of the Registrar and Students Awards does. The Public Affairs's involvement is at the generalist level while the Registrar's Office and Students Awards is at a specialized level. Asked how the recruitment of outstanding students fits into the domain of Public Affairs or public relations, one respondent explained,

> *We do primarily the recruitment of outstanding students not just the recruitment of women and male students. One way is we will get names of all the major scholarship winners, perhaps the deans scholarship, and prepare a news release and send it to their home town newspaper, so that their newspaper gives them coverage. This is done with the hope of encouraging others to follow up. Depending on the level of student, we may call a specific reporter with the Journal or Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), or whomever, to do a feature on the student. ... The student has to be more than just a scholarship winner. He or she may happen to be a superb athlete in addition to being a good student.* (Barb (2) 31–32, 35–45, 1997)

Among the strategies for student recruitment highlighted by the respondents were the use of mass media by reporting awards to students as widely as possible, but especially to the award winner's home town newspapers. This strategy in itself publicizes the university and the caliber of its students, and encourages competition for the same university awards by other prospective students.

The other strategy concerns the use of university publications to emphasize outstanding qualities of the university students. Specifically, the publication *"Report to community"* plays a key role in this respect. This report circulates over 600,000 copies to the community, primarily in Alberta and surrounding provinces. Already there are plans to expand circulation to include new cities in other parts of Canada and for this to be the primary

"Annual Report" for the university. Target cities include those to which recruitment efforts have been extended over the past few years. It is anticipated that the outstanding student profiles, together with other university stories, would influence prospective students, their parents and others in a position to influence prospective students, to cause them to choose to come to the university. Similarly, a number of publications that are student oriented such as the calendar are circulated to sites to which students, parents and others are likely to influence students have access.

Other strategies currently employed include working with Faculties in designing model recruitment procedures to increase the number of applications to certain programs. One respondent in reference to the nursing program which has been experiencing swings in enrollments observed that,

> *Not every approach works for every Faculty. Not every Faculty is in need or has the same need in terms of communicating their story. For a long time, our Nursing Faculty was very stable environmentally It had more candidates than available places, so there wasn't a need to promote in a very focused way. That field has experienced profound changes to health care delivery and the role of Nurses has also changed. We believe that our Nursing Faculty continues to have a viable role to play, and that graduates will continue to be primary care-givers in our society. We have to communicate to prospective students that Nursing is an attractive option. The Faculty of Nursing is aware of the need to change and we have to communicate those changes to prospective students so they can see that it is a field that offers both academic and career opportunity.* (Ben (5–6) 175–189).

A marketing model is also being piloted between the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and the Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences to attract students to their graduate programs (External Affairs Goals and Actions. (1997), 98, p. 1).

Other strategies expressed by respondents includes the use of video materials, multi-media kinds of presentations, and website information. Beyond that, one respondent explained that creating a recruitment scholarship and a student friendly inquiry mechanism in the registration and application process assists in recruitment of students. This include prompt response to student inquiries in both written and electronic mail, as well as participating in community programs, especially school fairs, where staff participate in displays and presentations. These activities have expanded internationally, especially to the Pacific rim. On the internationalization, one participant explained

> *We have been attending education fairs in those areas that are supported by Canadian Education Centers. These are offices that the federal government mandates to help institutions to spread their message by making institutional materials readily available to prospective students. Governments are realizing that higher education is a "marketable product."* (Ben (5) 166–171)

There has therefore been a systematic use of government education sponsored programs to expand their publicity base and educational programs to attract students internationally. Respondents recounted visits to the pacific region by staff in their units on such government assisted programs to recruit students.

From Alumni Affairs standpoint, Alumni branches are instrumental in reaching out to prospective students. One respondent elaborated as follows

> *We work more closely now than ever before with the Registrar's Office because the Alumni Association is getting more involved in student recruitment. What we have been doing is asking our alumni branches throughout the world to participate in recruitment fairs ... an alumni can tell prospective*

> *students about their actual experiences from being a student of the University, and the Registrar's Office will follow through with the technical detail.* (Margie (4) 98–104)

The strategy here involves direct participation of alumni throughout the world with back up from the Registrar's Office. The respondent felt strongly that first hand experiences and information from alumni is influential especially where students are being drawn from across cultures. He narrated how information gathered by his office from international students revealed that their choice to come to the university was greatly influenced by alumni. This is a powerful strategy, as social aspect of life, as well as living conditions are huge considerations when contemplating going to live in a new place.

The use of special events was another strategy identified by respondents. A number of projects and programs organized under community relations outreach programs fall in this category. An example described by one respondent involves one office organizing a two day event on campus called "University Preview Days." He explains that this affords an opportunity for prospective students to come on campus and experience the university, attend sample lectures, see displays, talk to members of faculty and student representatives. So, before they come to university officially as students they get a sample of what the place is like.

In summary, strategies identified for students recruitment by participants include,

- Media publicity, such as awards to students publicized in various newspapers and media in a number of places
- Publications, such as the use of brochures on recruitment and reports to the community

- Specific approaches and models of communications, such as specific and targeted programs like Nursing and Pharmacy
- The use of friendly recruitment processes and procedures
- Government programs such as Canadian Education centers
- Expanding the scholarship base to attract more applicants
- Events, such as attending school fairs and university preview days
- Alumni mobilization nationally and internationally
- The use of multi-media as well as all forms of electronic devices.

Besides the above strategies being cited in interviews, the *Public Affairs Strategic Plan, 1997/98,* identifies 12 initiatives (strategies). Among them are those discussed by respondents. However, others not mentioned by respondents but in progress include,

- Seeking support funding for spot advertising opportunities that highlight and promote university accomplishments
- Developing a comprehensive strategy in dealing with Maclean's magazine in its ranking of Canadian universities
- Working with the Deans of Faculties to target stories every month which profile the university as a desirable location for outstanding students and dividing the coverage between local, provincial and national media
- Work with Registrar's office to identify international Baccalaureate schools and specifically invite those schools and their students to Super Saturday
- Working with Registrar's Office in assisting them to hold focus groups with first year students in order to evaluate current first-year experiences and recruitment activities.

All the above strategies are designed and implemented in a manner to influence prospective students and their parents and guardians to have these students choose to come to the university.

3. Recruitment and Retention of Outstanding Members of Faculty and Staff

These Are the Days (1996) states that the ability of the university to meet its stated vision depends ultimately on the quality of its staff (p. 6). This is because excellence in teaching and research is found in talented academics and members of non-academic staff. According to the document some of the challenges facing Canadian universities are "increasing competition from American universities for faculty in the next decade." This challenge is aggravated by "the relatively localized nature of the university reputation and the need to disseminate information about [the] many areas of strengths; the absence of overall financial support for the technical expertise and infrastructure required for highly specialized areas; and the high start-up costs associated with establishing scholars in their field of study" (p. 6).

Faced with these challenges, the university has instituted a series of strategies designed to achieve the goal of acquiring qualified staff. From the Public Affairs structure, this functions rests with the officer in charge of community relations. This function also is complimentary to functions of the Office of Vice-President Academic Affairs, which is responsible for staff recruitment. The main strategy used by the Public Affairs Office in conjunction with the above office in the recruitment of staff is in the production of publications. One respondent articulated this strategy as follows:

> *[We] undertake the production of campaign material for faculty recruitment. ... Actually it's the Vice-President, Academic that deals with the faculty recruitment. But we help them provide the necessary communication tools. So what that means is we provide publications such as "Here and Now"* *(Cheryl (4) 101–105).

Many of the publications provided by this department complement what individual academic departments will have produced for mailing to prospective staff. Most respondents were unanimous on the use of publications to provide details or brief facts about the university, that are meant to inform prospective staff about the university and to entice them join. The publications give information beyond the university, information about the city, the province, living conditions, people etc. These publications include: *Report to community,* brochures for special events functions, and brochures for enclosing in application packages sent to potential members of staff, and joint publications on specific programs with academic departments.

Four respondents also spoke of the use of web sites to provide detailed information for prospective members of staff giving detailed information about all faculties. Others emphasized the use of *Folio* in reporting the achievements of staff in terms of research and teaching.

Similarly, special events like Super Saturday and Open Houses were deemed opportunities for the university to showcase staff excellence in research and teaching which would translate into attraction of potential members of staff.

---

* "Here and Now" is one of the Public Affairs publications that the office of the Public Affairs produces for the purpose of recruiting both staff and students. It highlights the university's achievements in research and innovation, showcase some of the achievements of staff and students, details the university environment and provides information on facilities and services available in and around the city of Edmonton.

Besides efforts to attract staff, respondents also viewed strategies used in retaining them as instrumental in recruiting others. One respondent explained,

> *The other thing, is that once we get the faculty here, we want to keep them because its hard to get them so we have to do whatever we can. The main things that keep them are lab space, or other kinds of things in the department. ... Once they are aware of what we are offering, then they can choose to come.* (Cheryll (4) 109–113)

Implicit in this statement is that the provision of facilities, space and good working environment assures staff retention. According to the above respondent, making known to prospective members of staff about the available facilities on campus is in itself a strategy for attracting staff. Such information is offered through brochures, open days and other special functions.

Respondents also talked of the provision of facilities that are aimed at creating collegiality through constant dialogue among professors. This has taken the form of creation of internet news groups which provides them with what one respondent termed "an avenue to chat informally and an opportunity to meet each other." Similarly, a sense of belonging and acceptability is instilled in new members of staff when each year, during the Fall, the president hosts a session for new faculty. One participant recalled, "We bring them together and introduce them to the president. We did this for the 75 new full-time faculty members in 1996."
(Cheryll (4) 98-99).

In summary, based on the interviews, the strategies which the public Affairs Office uses to attract and retain academics and members of staff could be categorized as,

- Publications, targeted at prospective members of staff and circulated at vantage points as well as being mailed to those interested. These publications include facts brochures, *Folio, Report to Community* etc.
- The use of various media highlighting achievements of staff at all levels provincially, nationally and internationally
- Events, to showcase university teaching and research initiatives and achievements notably during open days and community relations programs
- The use of electronic mail, internet information and news group discussions
- The use of incentives such as provision of facilities and resources for scholarly work
- Providing recognition such as, a session with the president, hosting teaching and research achievement awards and having them publicized.

Other strategies laid down in the Strategic Plan of the Public Affairs Office and which are already taking place, but not mentioned by participants in the interview include,

- Working with the Vice President Research and External Affairs, to develop and stage a special event called "The celebration of teaching and learning." This event will celebrate the achievements of students and current members of faculty and emphasize the importance of teaching to the larger community
- Offer a media training program to key members of faculty and staff to develop and increase their knowledge of how to establish effective media partnerships to tell their story.

4. Attraction and Provision of Outstanding Resources

View held among respondents was that to attract the best students and staff members, the university needs outstanding resources. The university vision as spelled out in *These are the days* (1996) is that it "must diversify and expand sources of funding. This include seeking increased contributions from research grants, contracts and industrial investments" (p. 8). The document states that increased support from private sources for interdisciplinary, inter-institutional and international collaborative research is cardinal. How then has this been done?

As reported by the respondents, the key initiatives and strategies for achieving this are designed and implemented primarily by the Development Office which is one of the key portfolios in External Affairs. However, there are offices within Public Affairs and Alumni Affairs that are established to offer complimentary service to fund raising initiatives. Among them is the Public Affairs portfolio that deals with *Folio*. It should be noted here that at the point of conducting this research, the department was at the point of launching one of the biggest fundraising campaigns in Canada. It was intended to raise $144.65 million.

While fundraising campaigns have been an on-going undertaking, responses regarding attracting resources mainly dwelt on the then upcoming campaign and laying out strategies to ensure the target is reached. One respondent articulated the various strategies and initiatives being taken in the Development Office as taking the form of planning and research, client identification, design of communication plans, contact, and post-contribution public relations activities referred to as stewardship.

As far as planning and research is concerned, the respondent indicated that public relations activity for fundraising starts from the planning stage and the identification of the client. This applies to the point where decisions are made on what the objectives are for a particular campaign, who to approach and through what means. The research element, according to the respondent, involves "obtaining necessary information on prospective donors before meeting and asking them for gifts." The respondent remarked:

> *[We] need to know a little bit about the donors, what they have given to, what they would like to give to, what they hate, etc. ... So we arrange a worthwhile meeting with some preparation. If I am going to meet with, say, a wealthy philanthropists from Kenya, I need to know what their interests are.* (Bill(4)91–96)

This component was viewed an important strategy as it enhances worthwhile personal interactions between university officials and the donors.

The other strategy would be the identification of clients relevant to a particular program or project. This strategy is expected to ensure maximum benefits as it would only target relevant donors.

The next strategy would be the development of communication plans for reaching identified audiences. On the development of communication plans as a strategy, the respondent remarked,

> *We identify first of all what the audiences are that we want to affect. We then identify what key messages are that we want to deliver. We then identify what behavior we want them to do as a result of the message -- and so that's what drives our vehicle.* (Bill (5–6)177–180)

Other respondents who identified communication plans as a strategy, also identified tools that are employed. Publications of varied nature with varied purpose or aims and targets were again identified as a tool for communication. Some of the publications cited include "Research Works";

"Discoveries"; "Making Sense"; and "Breaking Through." According to the respondents they are basically published with the aim of describing and promotion of research undertaking and researchers on campus. Publications were viewed as both a strategy as well as a tool for bringing the university 's worth to the attention of prospective donors. A number of the above publications detail the research part of the university and are targeted at the industry, corporations research institutions. This it is hoped would translate into donor support.

The other strategy identified is the sponsorship and participation in special events such as Super Saturday, Annual General Meeting, Reunions so as to increase public awareness of the university as a viable resource in the community. Additionally, he cites the use of direct contact or communication through the use of telephone such as in student calling program, or university officers approaching those deemed to be able and have interest in research and the development of the university. The student calling program as one respondent explains is an on going program coordinated throughout the year from Development office. This program alongside that done by the alumni also serves as a forum for building rapport with current donors and prospective donors. The respondent explained that alumni and student callers call to thank donors and to solicit for gifts, and in the process are told what donors and other audiences would like to see from the university or what they do not like. Hence constant rapport building and relationships are cultivated. The students are viewed as major stakeholders and actors in university life and hence their participation is fundamental. Their initiatives are then well covered in *Folio* and other publications and students who excel in raising gifts are honored. This acts is a powerful motivating factor for student participation.

Another strategy developed by the annual fund section of development is that of direct contact. One respondent explains, "we write direct mail and design scripts for telephone, we write brief notes for any of our officers when they are meeting face to face with prospective donors" (Bill (8)196–99). Before meeting the donor, research will have been done to establish key issues relevant to the donor, then emphasized on during such meetings.

Another strategy for fundraising is that which one respondent referred to as stewardship. These are post-donations activities that are supposed to maintain a healthy and on-going relationships with the donors. He states,

> *. . . after somebody has give us money, they want to make a difference, they want to come to the university and see. May be they want to be invited to the research project or an annual meeting. -- Stewardship over time evolves into collaboration that leads into asking.*
> (Bill (5) 122–126)

He notes that one problem that ails North American fund-raisers is that stewardship gets forgotten. And so once one makes a donation, he or she gets no contact from the university until another campaign. This according to him, from a public relations point of view does not cultivate good relationship and thus will not expect more gifts from those individuals. Hence donors have to be invited to meetings, send copies of development brochures, invited to meet with the President or chancellor, provided with press coverage etc. All these acts constitute good stewardship that may with time yield more donations or gifts as donor confidence is enhanced.

From the Alumni Affairs point of view, the alumni through reunion weekends and other functions and programs are able to identify donors, and also make donor profiles from which the development office could use do the asking. Alumni themselves have been known to give back to the university after being approached or out of their own volition or after attending one of the alumni functions. On alumni and giving, one respondent remarked, "We know that people who attend reunion weekends or people who actually participate in an event have a higher percentage of giving. 86 per cent of people who attend reunion weekend give financially to the university." (Margie (6) 151–153) The respondent further asserts,

> *... what we have found and the assumptions that we are making from our findings is that, if people know about the University, if they know what the needs of the institutions are, if they feel are valued, they will actually give when you ask.* (Margie (6) 157–160)

It is clear therefore that information to donors, identification, proper approach to asking, and good stewardship are strategies if well applied would lead to giving. It is for this reason that various units such as Development Office, Public Affairs, Alumni Affairs, Registrar and Government relations have developed relevant documentation that will identify university strengths in research, teaching and other areas that donor can be informed about and encouraged to support.

Internally, the staff and students are being encouraged to join in fundraising campaigns. Hence use of Staff Associations and Student Groups participation in fundraising is also a strategy.

Synopsis of Strategies

In reflecting on the strategies, discussed in each of the three university strategic goals, several issues emerge. That for every strategy,

- There first need to be a goal and the will from the top echelons of the organization (leadership and sponsorship).
- There needs to be a structure to operate within (infrastructure)
- There needs to be tools and resources to follow through (investment).

From the foregoing discussion it suggests that the External Affairs offices in the university offices have developed public relations strategies and followed them through while being guided by their respective strategic plans. In other words all activities done in raising friendship, resources and relationships were clearly spelt out in the plans. Similarly, offices had established structures that the goals would be pursued from. Hence all initiatives and strategies were planned from specific offices with specific and corresponding functions all leading towards attainment of the three university goals and objectives

That while several offices performed separate and yet specific functions, it was also observed that there were common and frequently used strategies than others. The fact that all used almost the same strategies and tools was attributed to the fact they perform joint projects and programs. Consequently it can be concluded that while respondents provided a variety of strategies based on their understanding, and participation, a number were found to be common, even though they were pursuing different goals. It was also respondent's view that no one specific strategy could be said to be more effective than the other but were all seen to be complementary. It could also be observed that not all goals could elicit similar strategies. Consequently, before a strategy could be used, a number of options or determinants have to be considered. What then influences or determines the use of specific strategies?

Overall Determinants of Strategies

From the interviews, a host of strategies were identified, that provide a number of options or combination of options for practitioners to choose from to reach their identified publics and audiences. It was identified that some strategies were used more often than others, while projects and programs did not necessarily use the same strategies to achieve the same goal. For example different projects from one of the portfolios aimed at recruitment of outstanding students could elicit different strategies. Asked what influenced the use of one strategy over the other, one respondent remarked, "What influences that is 1) the message we need to send, 2) who we are sending the message to, 3) what the best way of reaching the audience is and , 4) what is economically viable." (Peter (9) 314–317) These determinants are issues also considered when drawing up a communications plan. Three other participants concurred with the notion that determinants were found in the communications plan. One emphasized on audience as one of the key determinants. She states, "We try and target groups of people that we feel would be most interested in coming or supporting the university." (Joy (5) 119–121)

Another respondent added that after identifying the audience and the key message, the next consideration is to "identify what behavior we want them to do as a result of our message. From there we develop our tools" (Bill (9) 220–222). Hence end result, is a fundamental consideration when drawing up a strategy, designing and identifying tools to go with.

Another determinant of strategy identified relates to the needs of the medium to be used and its convenience. One respondent indicated that different media channels have different needs. For instance, it would be easier to use print than obtaining coverage from TV. Hence type of media available plays an important role in choice of strategy.

Another category that would determine strategy for use is what one respondent termed as "issue and situation". She explained that depending on the issue, and the event, a strategy could be arrived at. In reference to a situation in which the university is expected to respond to a situation, she remarked "It certainly depends on the issue and the situation. Sometimes we wouldn't do anything , and that would be a strategy." (Barb (1) 18–20).

There is therefore a great deal of issue evaluation to determine the extent to which it may affect the university if pursued in a particular manner. Once all options and perceived consequences are exhausted, then one is used. In which case "doing nothing" would be one of the strategies.

Overall, determinants identified are, the message to be sent, who the message is aimed at, available channels, convenience, resources, issue and situation and intended outcomes.

Summary

Public relations strategies that the Public Relations Office and the sister offices in the Office of External Affairs were examined in this chapter. Each strategic priority of the university exhibited distinct strategies for achieving their goal. The above offices demonstrated how the use of the media relations, publications, community relations activities, special projects organized by the university, government aided programs, and alumni enhance the university's strategic priorities.

The chapter also identifies the need to have a goal and the will from the top, a structure to operate with, tools and resources for a strategy to be implemented. Factors that determined the use of a particular strategy were the message to be send, the target recipient, available channels, resources and the intended outcomes.

Chapter 7

Factors Influencing Public Relations Activities at the University

Introduction

This chapter is divided into 3 parts. Issues identified in this chapter were elicited in response to the second category of questions posed in the interviews that were conducted and were classified as "views." The first part identifies factors that have had a great influence on public relations activities as well as on the practitioners in the university. The part links these factors with how and why certain activities are undertaken the way they are. While certain questions readily identified a number of external factors such as funding, a number of other issues were brought up by the respondents. A long list of issues can be inferred from the interviews, but a few key issues stood out as these were mentioned by the majority of respondents. Beside external funding, other factors included attitudes of the internal publics notably the professors and the senior administration, technological changes, the *Macleans* magazine, the role of leadership, perceived crisis situations, public inputs, and internationalization. Since technological changes and internationalization are also discussed elsewhere under the topic "challenges," they are not covered in this section but are acknowledged as factors influencing the current trend of public relations at the university. These two factors were identified both as influencing as well as a challenge facing public relations in universities. University public relations activities like those of other departments on campus keep abreast of the rapid changes in technology and competing with other universities world wide for researchers and in the recruitment of students internationally. The issues identified are broadly discussed under two headings, namely, environmental factors and internal factors.

The second part of the chapter the university's publics. This will look into issues of identification and prioritization. The third part examines what practitioners perceive as challenges facing public relations in the university, and ingredients to successful public relations. In relations to challenges, a number of tips from respondents are offered on changes deemed necessary for a successful public relations program in a university.

A. External Factors

As mentioned above, environmental factors refer to elements external to university that are presently impacting on the university's public relations activities. Three types of environmental factors are addressed below: (1) decreased funding from the provincial government, (2) the role of publics in public relations, and (3) the effect of the annual *Macleans* rating of Canadian universities.

1. Funding

The issue of funding as presented here sought to determine, from the practitioners' perspectives, the extend to which funding changes to the institution from the provincial government has affected public relations and public affairs activities. In discussing funding, it is worth noting that it was beyond the scope of this study to establish the optimum level of funding for the public relations activities in the university as well as level of cutbacks in terms of actual figures. Hence, respondents' sentiments on the issue are given weight in judging perspectives and in evaluating the effects of funding.

Respondents were asked whether the cutbacks in funding had affected their operations. The general consensus was that there had been minimal negative effects, and that instead the cutbacks had worked to the benefit of the entire Office of External Affairs in terms of helping the operations to stay focused. Among the specific responses were

> *Cutbacks have been a tremendous benefit. They have forced us to focus exactly on what it is we are supposed to do. They have forced us to think more strategically and ... to realize that we need to be more generalists supported by specific areas of expertise. I think cutbacks have been extremely beneficial, They forced us to use resources responsibly. I think we are less wasteful, more focused today, we work longer, harder and smarter than we used to.* (Peter (13)462–468)

This respondent felt that the decreased funding created an avenue for creativity and increased fiscal responsibility. He felt they were less wasteful presently, with the limited resources, than before. The situation meant they had to do more and work better with less money. With fewer funds available than before, this called for careful choices of public relations activities and strategies.

Another practitioner remarked;

> *....We went through three years of cutbacks at the university, the first year with a 6% cut, the second year with a 6-7% cut, the third year a 3% cut. Certainly that was felt by the University and was felt by our department. ... It is interesting because we are not feeling that crunch any more. But we surely felt the crunch for those three years. ...So with cutbacks we are looking at more innovative ways to get things done such as bringing in more revenue for publications. We produced a number of publications when we got sponsorship for them from corporations. That will give us a certain amount of money. ... That is how we try to be more creative in how we do things.*

> *We do creative things on our web that does not cost us money, as well as re-use our resources ... .* (Joy (10–13) 257–267, 317–322, 341–343)

Like the first respondent, the second acknowledges the positive effects of cutbacks but also concedes that the hard times appear to have caused a period of adjustment to new realities. The second respondent stated that by the end of the three years of cutbacks the department had developed ways and strategies that turned out to be creative and in fact some were revenue generating which assisted them in producing certain publications.

However, while others shared this view, One respondent argued strongly that the whole funding-effect relationship is largely a question of attitude. While acknowledging the importance of funding to support public relations practitioners and their activities this respondent believed that the issue should not be how much money is cut or increased, but whether the funds are being used to attain goals set or just to accomplish set of activities scheduled for a given year. She contented

> *I don't want to underplay the importance of stable funding and the fact that these are difficult times and we deserve better funding, but I do also think that this is an excuse and I don't really think it's a matter of money. I think it's a matter of attitude. Where you have the positive effort and when you believe it's going to happen, the resources will be found. ... And I think its doing things smarter. .... So the real issue here is looking at your activities, being strategic in your activities and we had a lot of things that were not advancing our mission.* (Linda (9) 228–241)

Allied to these sentiments is the idea that the office of Public Affairs and other external affairs offices were engaging in many activities that were not focused on, or crafted to advance, the university mission. Funds were therefore tied up in activities that needed redrafting and by implication, huge sums in the view of some participants, were being ineffectively utilized. There has been a shift in the thinking and on the use of funds by the External Affairs office towards programs and projects, to obtain full dollar value. The respondent talked of the recent shift in direction of operations as being not necessarily an effect of reduced funding, but of a deliberate shift in focus of the institutions priorities and vision.

One respondent further drew a parallel between the US universities that are hugely endowed and the pre-cutbacks years at the university under study to illustrate the point. She observed that public relations still remains a key concern area in the US universities despite their huge endowments. She also observed that at this university, as well as at other Canadian universities, public relations were not flawless or necessarily better when more funds were available. She argues,

> *Lets turn it around, eight to ten years ago, this university was one of the best funded Universities in the country. Did that mean our Public Affairs office was better than everybody else's' then? No! Does it mean we were number one in academic programming and research and teaching? No! You know, some of our competitors if you call them competitors or sister universities who were much less well funded than we were doing better than we were. So I don't think funding is always the issue.* (Linda (9-10) 246–255).

To this respondent, inasmuch as cutbacks are acknowledged to a reasonable extend as a trigger to many new developments, the issue lies not in the fact that there are less funds but in the degree of relevance of activities that were being undertaken before the cutbacks versus what is being done presently. Additionally the fact that the blame is being heaped on the cutbacks is basically attitudinal as many well endowed public relations departments are not necessarily better than those that are less well endowed.

Five respondents also reported various "negative" effects of cutbacks on public relations activities. They respondents blamed cutbacks on the freezing or non-funding of certain positions in the department as well as on the loss of staff. This according to them has meant increased work load on their part as well as the inability to perform certain duties effectively due to lack of staff. The same respondents also talked about the effect on morale due to increased workload and the 5% cut in their wages. Four respondents told of how operations have been restricted due to insufficient funds. This include reduced travel votes, entertainment expenses, number of publications produced and circulation numbers. It is important to note that not all publications were reduced, and some have now increased and new areas for circulation added. However, some publications like *Folio* had a reduction in the number of issues per year. Most respondents did not attribute this to decreased funding but rather to a deliberate choice by the department after assessing and considering its practicality of producing an issue every fortnight instead of weekly. Part of the reasons why the number of issues of *Folio* were reduced from 42 issues of 8 pages each to 20 issues of 12 pages were, time commitment on staff, the fact that they did not need to publish it on weekly basis, and the fact that most universities do not.

The above sentiments are reflected in the following remarks by several of the respondents. One remarked,

> *You see, the other thing that happened was that we took a cut in our wages. The university cut our wages by 5%. So, not only were we getting cuts in the money available to do things in our office, we also our wages cut. And so that did a lot to affect our morale.* (Joy (10) 271–275)

Others remarked,

We used to have a graphic designer... and that position got cut. (Bruce(11)276–280)

In this office they have axed people. ...We used to have a secretary. There used to be a position in graphics. That one has gone too. (cheryl (11) 191–193)

Well, we did basically lose staff who execute these responsibilities. We had fewer resources to enable staff to travel, to visit schools and this had an effect on the number of communications that we could produce. The communications budgets for mailing were diminished so we couldn't get the materials as far dispersed as we would have liked to. (Ben (10) 344–349)

We had to cut our national clipping service. We just couldn't afford it any more. (Barb 6 160–161)

Besides the above effects seen by many to be negative, some respondents told of the increased used of contract workers in the department which they attribute to cutbacks. It was not clear whether the respondent were critical of this phenomenon or not. One remarked,

So instead of hiring in terms of full time, we hired in terms of "as need be basis." We had contract writers and staff like that come in. ... And we started to have our operations move in a different direction so that we hired more contract workers that came into projects as we needed them. (Joy (11) 281–286)

The study also revealed that funding cuts did not affect all departments in the External Affairs Office as such. Some respondents indicated that financial allocation increased in some areas during the period of cutbacks. Development Office was one such office. The reason behind this was that the office was gearing to mount a very ambitious fund raising campaign which meant that money had to be injected into the office rather than cut. Not only did they obtain financial support and commitment from the university, but, according to the respondent, they were also able to hire key staff for effective coordination of the campaign.

> *We are finding that most of our priorities are being met, dollars are being found for key things that we need. When we identified that we needed to have an officer in Calgary and one on this floor, we had them within a month. ...So there are priorities shifted our way.* (Bill (14–15) 379–384)

One further remarked

> *We are now actually one of the few units on campus that are receiving increases because we are about to ask people for 145.6 Million dollars. And in order to do that the University has seen it fit to pay. We have to spend money to make money.* (Bruce 9 226 –230)

Overall, while cutbacks did cause a number of setbacks in terms of operations and morale, as outlined above, the general consensus was that they are better off as a department now than they were before the cutbacks despite the fact that they are much busier and that much more is expected from them. And, as discussed elsewhere, this level of effectiveness is attributed to a combination of factors such as leadership, refocusing of mission and funding trends.

2. Role of the Publics in Public Relations Activities

Public relations from its very definition denotes reciprocal relationships between universities and their publics. It is always assumed that universities being complex entities, often with organized public relations strategies and agendas, have an upper hand over the many little groups or particular publics and therefore benefit most from such relationships. Discussions on this relationships reveal a great degree of influence by the public on public relations programs that the university pursue.

From the study, it revealed that publics do play a part and in influencing the way certain programs or projects are conducted as well as its content. While this happened, it was also evident that the participation was largely indirect, mostly by way of feedback after specific functions. All respondents noted that community input into their programs were crucial. Notable areas where input from the publics were evident were in community relations programs and some Alumni projects. Asked how the community or the publics influence or get involved in public relations programs, one respondent remarked,

> *We do try and evaluate our major projects to try and see whether we realize our goals and objectives ... We also do survey work. So every 18 months we survey the university and the public to determine the reputation. ...In the end, we have been successful in evaluating the public opinion in doing public perception surveys and thoroughly extensive ones.* (Peter (12) 405–414)

Two others remarked,

> *... Like with the visiting committee we involve the public in many of our projects The second year we often involve people who were there the first year to plan for the following year.* (Cheryl (7) 173–176)

> *Certainly we get feedback from the public on what they want to see. ... [With] a lot of our programs that are community outreach programs, a lot of our alumni, ... will give us feedback as to what they want. Often times people get to call in and they say "Why doesn't the university do this?" and so we explore the possibilities. ... So it's a wealth of information that the university gets. ... Another example is say "Super Saturday," We distribute questionnaires during the day. We ask what else they would like to see, what other programs they could suggest.* (Bruce (6) 312–318)

From the above statements it is evident that most involvement is indirect though with some degree of direct participation such as in planning of certain events such as visiting committees. Feedback is the key form of participation. This includes provision of feedback on *Folio* articles, students calling programs, special events through questionnaires for all the programs undertaken.

At another level, the public act as a pool of university image watchers. This entails ensuring that they inform the university of any dissatisfaction or general concerns. One respondent explained that while they get instant feedback from the public on what they like, they also act as the single largest intelligence gathering unit on campus. He remarked,

> *When we call, we use our student calling program at the end of the year, and to call our donors, alumni and public to thank them. ... And while on the phone, we get a lot of feedback. They say "Oh how nice you called to thank me, let me tell you what I think of your University." We are the largest single intelligence gathering sector in the university because we get tones of opinions and feedback. We pass them on to Public Affairs, pass them to the university President and that affects our output.* (Bill (11) 288–296)

Overall, feedback forms the largest form of community participation in setting the university public relations program direction and activities. There was agreement among the respondents on the fact that opinions and proposals from the public were integrated into the projects. This fits into the reciprocal concept of public relations being an exchange of information for purposes of building a positive relationship. This affirms the idea held strongly in the literature that both the university and its publics need each other.

3. Macleans Magazine and Accountability

Macleans is a weekly "national" magazine published in Toronto that deals with current and topical issues. But perhaps what it is mostly known for from the perspective of universities and university public relations, in particular, is its annual ranking of universities in Canada. In its ranking, the magazine measures various (quality) performance indicators that it claims reflect excellence in major disciplines and fields in all universities in Canada and that are used to produce an overall ranking of Canadian universities. The ranking issue has in effect generated a lot of contention in terms of what is measured, how it is measured, who is doing the measuring, for what purpose and whether it serves certain interests. While legitimate concerns are raised by universities over the general ranking process, the magazine has undoubtedly remained one of the single most influential magazines for the publics and stakeholders to "judge" universities in Canada.

The university under study has not ignored the magazine because of the influence it has on potential students, staff and donors. Consequently, the university through the Office of External Affairs and specifically Public Affairs laid down strategies for dealing with *Macleans* issues with the purpose of projecting the university's image and continuously providing the magazine with factual information that may be needed for the ranking. In the 1996 strategic initiatives document of the office of the vice-president, Research and External Affairs, dubbed *"These are the days"* and the 1996 strategic communications initiatives for the Office of Public Affairs document entitled *"Making sense," Macleans* magazine is specifically mentioned for targeted communications. The section read in part

> .... A cohesive set of communication strategies will be developed by fall 1996, and will highlight the university's accomplishments, its unique educational and research programs, its large and diverse base of knowledge and information resources, its world class collaboration, and its stature. Specific attention will be given to Maclean's magazine, and to ensure that the university is known for its accomplishments beyond data submitted for the magazines annual survey of universities in Canada. (*These are the days*, 1996, pp. 5–6)

So, as an environmental factor, the magazine has had a lot of influence in the manner in which public relations activities are conducted

The impact of *Macleans* magazine was talked about by four respondents. They admitted that the magazine was a powerful influence in the lives of potential students, parents and interested faculty in selecting universities. Two respondents had this to say about the formidable power of *Macleans* and its influence on public relations and public affairs activities,

> *There is one major player in this country in the recruitment of students and that is "Macleans." What Macleans says every year on the Public Affairs side is powerful message to potential students. ... The Public Affairs department should have a Macleans strategy. ... Instead of saying, "Oh gee! Macleans is coming out", I guess we should do something to check out Macleans. ... [We should ask] "Who are the three or four key players in the recruitment of students? Let us have a long and short term strategy for Macleans." Not so that we can change the ratings overnight, but over a five year period. Potential students reading Macleans, parents reading Macleans will begin to have a different vision of the university.* (Linda (6–7) 152–170)

> *We look at Macleans I guess with mixed reaction. The institutional position is that the public is talking and thinking about universities, and this is good. ... Whether we actually believe that indicators used by Macleans are particularly helpful or not is another issue. In fact, there are a number of indicators that we find serious flaws in ... and we think are not particularly*

> *useful. So, some of our efforts each year go to trying to refine the Macleans process. We try and make changes and we have been particularly successful in doing that, but we also look at what they are measuring and engage in comparison with sister institutions, and participate in a reasonable fashion. So I think yes, Macleans is a powerful instrument and they have filled a niche in terms of satisfying public curiosity. A good part of our effort here goes towards compiling statistical profiles of our students, and we share those with Macleans ... to help them tell our story.* (Ben (9) 294–307, 315–318)

From the perspective of these respondents, *Macleans* was deemed to be a powerful instrument in the eyes of the public which the university cannot afford to ignore. Instead it has designed strategies to refine its survey process. As mentioned earlier, the university has identified three strategic goals, and the attainment of all is crucial to the university attaining its mission. But the manner of attainment is threatened by factors such as *Macleans*. Students, staff and donors would want to be associated with high ranking or best institutions. It is for this reason that the university has seen fit to participate in refining the ranking and survey process over a period of time in order for their mission to be achieved. *Macleans* has therefore been a great influence in what strategies the Office of Public Affairs has adopted in order to achieve its mission. It has, according to the participants made the office forward looking.

B. Internal Factors

Internal factors as discussed by the participants were perceived to comprise issues internal to the university which influence the public relations activities. The factors addressed include: (1) attitudes and perceptions of the status of public relations, (2) the role of leadership, and (3) perceived crisis situations.

1. Attitudes and Perceptions of the Status of Public Relations

From the literature, it is apparent that writers believe public relations in universities is gaining prominence due to its potential in fundraising and in the establishment of relationships with various publics. This study endeavored to establish as to whether the participants held the same view as that expressed in the literature stemming from their working in a public relations environment. Respondents in this study viewed increased level of prominence of public relations as portrayed by increased participation in decision making and in the overall university's planning process.

The study also indicated that there existed two different perspectives on the prominence or status of public relations and Public Affairs Office. These perspectives were embodied in what the respondents regarded as the views of the faculty and those of the senior administration. Respondents had mixed feelings over their role as viewed by others. Some felt that the offices that deal with external constituents such as Public Affairs, Development and Alumni Affairs had been given prominence judged from levels of funding. Others felt the talk of prominence was merely rhetorical, while still others felt that certain quarters had not given them any prominence. These views are expressed in the following remarks,

> *I think in rhetoric they are [they are giving us prominence], I am not sure in reality they are. I guess senior administration, you know - the president, the vice presidents, etc., are beginning to recognize that there is something there and attention has to be given. ... We are still at the level of saying it is important but not necessarily doing anything about it.* (Linda (10) 260–267)

This respondent further explores attitudinal stands as contained in the following remarks,

> *The second level is academic. ...I would imagine it is spotty within the academic community. ...There are many academics*

> *who don't believe in that function of Public Affairs... that if you put money there, it is money that should go into classrooms. ...And I think the tension has grown because of the heightened awareness of the importance, of the power of the external community.* (Linda (10–11) 268–281)

The statements indicate that the status of public relations in the university is viewed from different lenses by some members of the faculty and by senior administration. Members of the senior administration recognize and acknowledge the importance of public relations activities in terms of fund raising as well as accountability to the public. A section of academics feel that resources are being misdirected from what they regard as central to the mission of the university to a "service function." Another respondent also remarked

> *Over the last five years, senior people have realized the growing importance of public affairs. At the lower levels there is some hostility and resistance because there are cutbacks. So the lower levels are saying, "Hold it! Why are they spending so much money on public affairs?" and they are saying, "Put the money into teaching and research."* (Bruce (10) 259–266)

These observations on status or prominence of public relations at the university were echoed by five respondents. The perceptions and attitudes displayed by key cadres of staff in the university had a great influence on a number of public relations activities. It first signaled the need to obtain a common perception of their role by all internal publics. In other words many internal relations interactions are done with this situation in mind. Hence, internal relationships are designed to try and change or influence attitudes towards them. In a sense, the public affairs activities are set to instill new and positive attitudes and to create a new culture in the faculty and administration.

Status and its relationship to funding. At another level, those who believed that there was prominence accorded to the practice of public relations were asked whether, as claimed in literature, it is attributed to financial cutbacks and if not why? This also elicited a number of reasons for the increased prominence, among them the cutbacks, leadership in the university, appreciation of their work by other departments, accountability to the public, and the general trend of the post secondary model of financing. One respondent affirmed,

> *Well, I think it's not so much money. That may be the trigger, but it's accountability. I mean you can look at the universities in the US. They are very well endowed and they haven't got government cutbacks because they are privately funded. So whether Harvard, Stanford or whatever, they are recognizing the same thing. This has nothing to do with funding.* (Linda (11) 287–293)

For this respondent, cutbacks aren't the reason for the increased prominence but accountability is. Cutbacks just acted as a trigger. Another, while acknowledging accountability as central, also credits cutbacks as a reason for the new prominence. Asked whether cutbacks were responsible for renewed prominence, this respondent remarked,

> *Certainly yes. I think that senior administration are now forced to realize that the publics are a watchdog via the media. And they want to know where their money is going.* (Barb (7) 189–192).

One respondent did not feel the office has had increased prominence or status. This individual acknowledged the increased workload and an increase in the number of departments soliciting their assistance. But that to her did not necessarily add up to increased prominence. She remarked,

> *I can tell that we have been busier than we have ever been in our lives up here. However, I am not sure whether our office has increased [its status] because of that. I know the workload has increased, but I am not sure whether our status has increased.* (Joy (13) 353–358)

A number of those who did not attribute what they perceived to be an increased prominence to the cutbacks in funding did attribute increased prominence largely to leadership. Notable in this category are the President and the former Vice-President, Research and External Affairs. Two individuals remarked,

> *But it also depends on the who the executive of the university is and what they stand for.* (Peter (13) 441–442)

> *I think the university has realized the importance of public relations and public affairs. But I think that happened as a result of the former Vice-President, Research and External Affairs and the leadership she shown over the last couple of years. So our office has benefited from her. ... I attribute this prominence to her leadership.*
> (Bruce (10) 268–275)

The fourth reason mentioned by three respondents is the trend in financing of postsecondary education in Canada. They observed that the trend is now more than before is to move toward the American model where public education is funded from private funds. They observed that the university is going to get most of its revenue from the private sector and students and less from the provincial coffers than it has in the past. One respondent explains that it was one of the university's long term missions to raise a third of the money from private sources. He states,

> *The long range goal of the university as outlined by the president is that we are moving to an environment where one third of funding to the university will come from the government, one third will come from tuition and one third from other.* (Bill (10) 58–62)

"Other" was explained to mean private sources. This trend in financing was seen to call for greater public relations activities. Efforts toward achieving this goal have, according to some participants, caused public relations and public affairs to receive greater recognition and therefore given it improved status on campus. The Public Affairs Office, supports the Development Office in spearheading the acquisition of finances from private sources. Hence they have in essence gained greater visibility as their work has been given greater recognition and been appreciated by other departments on campus.

2. The Role of Leadership

As discussed earlier, the mission and vision of the university was identified as the source and major influence of the functions and strategies of the offices under study. Similarly, the study indicated that for the activities to achieve these goals to be on track, good leadership was crucial. From the discussions, the study show that the present form and direction of the External Affairs Office is as a result of leadership change spanning periods between 1995 through 1997. Many respondents charged that before then, the offices within the External Affairs were not as focused as they are now and that in many respects they had been ineffective in meeting university goals, since a number of their activities did not connect well with the university's strategic goals. Leadership change brought a shift of philosophy and hence made leadership a central ingredient to successful public relations and public affairs activities.

It was evident from interview discussions that the role of good leadership was acknowledged at all levels. However, leadership roles discussed by respondents mainly centered on the visionary leadership of the President, and of the former Vice-President, Research and External Affairs. This is not to say that other offices especially those of the directors were not acknowledged. A number of respondents talked of contributions of all the directors as well as the Associate Vice-President, External Affairs and Associate Vice-President, Government Relations. One respondent simply characterized them all as a "team with the same philosophy."

In elaborating on the role of leadership in public relations activities in the university, respondents provided perspectives that detailed the changes that have occurred since 1995, when the current president took office and the appointments of the former Vice-President, Research and External Affairs and other officers in the External Affairs Office were made. In the view of many respondents, the offices have established a definite focus as a result of the roles these leaders have played. One respondent indicates that as of now "everybody knows where they are going." The direction of the office is clear.

The study revealed that leadership roles in public relations activities exhibited a number of features. Among them are that they mapped out directions for the offices (planning), boosted the morale of staff, increased relationships with internal constituents, boosted team activity, continuously managed the change process and elevated role of public affairs and public relations activities.

Mapping out directions. The present structure of the offices within External Affairs were formulated about three years ago. One responded observed as follows,

> *You know, about a year and a half ago I was struck with how very few of the people who were working in external affairs could articulate the vision of the university and beyond that, what they were doing in their day-to-day activities that was working towards achieving that mission. ...They could tell you what they were doing but they couldn't link it with the goals that were set as a university.* (Linda (2) 32–40)

This respondent further explained,

> *I brought in the view that external affairs had to understand, had to be part of, has to believe in the vision and had to craft all of its activities in line with that vision. ... If you walked down there today and asked "What are the three goals of the university?" they could tell you. ... And so when they come up with a strategic plan or whatever activities of the year, they are thinking -recruitment of students, staff and resources.* (Linda (3) 48–56)

Examination of strategic plans documents of the external affairs offices reveals the above statements to be true. Similarly, all respondents crafted their responses to many of the questions asked around the three university strategic priorities. Respondents attribute this change to the role of both the President and the former Vice-President, Research and External Affairs. Hence the importance of leadership and sponsorship.

Morale booster. Another feature of the role of leadership is how staff morale has been enhanced. Respondents explained how their morale had been affected due to lack of definite goals by earlier leaders as well as what they perceived to be the university's lukewarm attitude toward their role in university affairs. A number conceded that presently morale is high and there is a much more positive attitude toward work since they now feel valued and their role perceived as more integral to university affairs. In reference to the change in morale, one observed,

> *... I am sure you may be aware that this was a very demoralized group. This group a year and a half ago had little morale, felt like they had been thrown from pillar to post, had no sense of well being, were skeptical [of me], they had had lots of leaders.* (Linda (4) 90–95)

Alluded to in the above remarks is the sense that staff in these departments had lost quite a great deal of morale due to earlier leadership styles. The respondents also felt that this state of low morale was partly due to the attitudes that exist in a general sense between academic departments and what are regarded as service departments such as the Public Affairs Office. The same observer continued,

> *I found this when I came in ... that too often, what we call service units, units that are not seen as the academic cadres of employees don't feel they are part of the academic mission. They think they are tangential. And I think that the critical part is to get each of those people to feel that they are just as important and just as valuable to the academic mission as the professors in the classroom.* (Linda (4) 70–79)

With this background, the respondents felt that attitudes have changed with the new leadership. A good number felt the directors have instilled a great deal of value, collective responsibility and self-worth in members of the respective departments. According to one, members now "take some sense of accomplishment and pride when things happen." Public relations activities seem to be executed with a great deal of efficiency due to the positive work attitudes.

Improved internal relationships. Among the activities encouraged by the new leadership are the constant interactions between external affairs offices and academic units. According to some respondents, there are closer working relationships with many academic departments. This situation has in the process exposed the Public Affairs activities making them understood and valued on campus among members of the academic staff. Respondents talked about the constant links that they have with deans, department chairs and vice-presidents. Together they develop communications materials for student and staff recruitment as well as plan for faculty or department functions. This relationship as one respondent explained was forged through the directors going round to meet the faculty deans and department chairs and to explain what it is they do, and to solicit feedback. Fruits of such relationships, as another points out are reflected in the way the academic units have responded to the fund raising initiatives.

Managing change. Four respondents indicated that the university has within the last few years undergone a whole range of socio-economic and environmental changes. Among them are increased fundraising activities on campus, staff and student demographics, technological changes, social attitudes and political influences. These according to a number of respondents have been managed well due to leadership that is receptive to change. One respondent pointed out that change is "always one of the issues that people in senior positions are uncomfortable to confront either because of uncertainty in results or because they are ill-equipped to deal with." Another pointed out that public relations activities have increased to the benefit of the institution due the fact that senior administration and those in pubic relations-related activities have harnessed the change process. The above two respondents for instance mentioned the rapid adoption of new technologies such as internet to tell the university's story internationally.

Another talked of the recognition of the need for private resources for university growth. A respondent explained how the earlier leadership did not recognize fundraising as one of university's responsibilities. He states;

> *Well, the president of this university years ago ... publicly announced that it is not the responsibility of the university to raise money. ... But now our leaders are talking about it. If you listen to our president or any of our senior administration talk now, you will hear t[hem express] the need. That is driven by the fact that the vision has changed, culture has changed, some external factors, and our internal leadership, all of these are driven by the fact that we are now changing.* (Bill (9-10) 313–324)

In summary, the study revealed that high levels of public relations effectiveness can apparently be achieved with proper leadership. That leadership sets directions, motivates staff, ensures a good working atmosphere, builds necessary internal relationships and harnesses change and resources, all towards achieving university-set goals.

3. Perceived Crisis Situations

Perceived crisis situations have in a number of instances influenced public relations activities and the manner in which they are undertaken. Among the functions outlined by a number of respondents that the Public Affairs and other External Affairs offices perform is issues or crisis management. The matter of issues and crisis management was largely deemed to be in the domain of public affairs rather than public relations. One respondent remarked, " That is really public affairs". In discussing crisis management, most respondents provided instances where the office had to deal with a crisis situation and how they handled it. So while issues management is not solely dealing with crises, most saw the function from that perspective.

What is issues/crisis management? In executing this function, the office provides counseling advice to senior administration on the management of particular issues. It is a common tendency according to some respondents for the public to generalize or associate every crisis situation with the entire university even though the perceived crisis may be in or relate to a specific department. For instance, according to some respondents, the public seems to expect the President, the Chancellor or other high ranking university administrator to comment on every issue they may have concerns about even when it is a relatively small departmental issue. Since senior administration is not always at arms length with respect to every issue, the Public Affairs Office takes the responsibility of collecting and summing up facts and advising senior administration or even lower management on how to handle the issue and inform them on potential consequences. One respondent explained,

> *If there is an issue that is really hot, we try and provide counseling advice to senior administration on how to manage that issue. Or, in fact, it may be junior administrators ...* (Peter (4) 137–140)

Implicit in these sentiments is that the university's image is always in jeopardy whenever a crisis is perceived to exist. Consequently, a concerted effort is always made to ensure that it is handled responsibly, swiftly and with full information. A major input from Public Affairs is therefore provided through counseling and consulting. This mainly relates to media relations as most of what it takes to diffuse a crisis ends up with the media, since members of the public frequently rely on the media to inform them about such issues. The crisis management function is central to image projection and information as most crises however minor attract media attention. One respondent joked "You know a small issue if not well managed can turn into a ten part series with the press." The Office of Public Affairs has therefore had to design ways and means of ensuring that any perceived crisis is met with corresponding public relations action. One respondent explained that the diffusion of a crisis is facilitated through understanding and applying the models that exist for issues management at the university.

Models for issues management. The study revealed the existence of three models for issues management in the university though all were based on "ownership." One respondents outlined them as follows:

> *One model is when Public Affairs owns it, the second model is when it is owned by a department and the third model is a combination of each. And I think that at this university, we look at the third model...that we each take responsibility for components that are going to emerge in an issue.* (Peter (5) 142–146)

The notion of corporate responsibility was high in these sentiments. Issues or crisis management involved each affected party taking responsibility for resolution rather than for assigning blame. However, a number of respondents stressed the idea of ownership as key to resolving issues. That is it must be made clear as to who the owner of the issue or crisis is, and given the leading role in its resolution. One respondent states,

> *When push comes to shove, at this university, ultimately the issue is owned by the issue owner. We don't take ownership. If it belongs to the president, he takes it. We provide advice. If it belongs to the board chair, he takes it. We provide advice and counseling and assist them in managing it.* (Peter (5) 150–155)

Another remarked in relation to ownership and resolution,

> *Most times it is the highest ranking university person who is closest to the situation, who is the most knowledgeable. It is normally the president or in that case [referring to a particular crisis-details withheld] it was the chancellor because the senate [that the chancellor chairs] ...is confers honorary degrees.* (Barb (4) 85–89)

Ideally, top senior administrative officers must be notified as they are expected to be the university's spokespersons. In many circumstances most people according to participants do take responses from such high level as the official university stand on the issue. It is for this reason that the press and other interested parties always seek statements from them.

Steps to managing crisis. While respondents acknowledged to the importance of having a crisis management program in place, a number argued that it was not possible to stick to such a program since not all crisis situations and issues are the same. Asked whether, crisis management programs existed in the department, one respondent remarked,

> *Yes, we have a way of tackling it and it's based on experience rather than based on a given recipe -- I start by looking at it from the other "guys" point of view. And I would provide advice that would indicate the consequences for the university or official of the university ... the consequences of their behavior.* (Peter (5) 157–158)

This perspective embodies a position where a crisis is in a stage that requires resolving and strategies of resolving being mapped out. Other respondents provided steps that are taken from the point of the crisis being first identified. One respondent noted that the most influential element in the management of a perceived crisis in the university as well as in all other organizations is the media. Consequently, all the issues and activities associated with managing a crisis largely relate to how the crisis will be handled and reported to the public through the media.

In managing a crisis one respondent stressed the importance of elements such as speed, consistency to the story, openness, honesty and truthfulness in terms of facts associated with the issue. Another stressed non-interference and less censorship to regain trust and credibility.

Asked how they would and have dealt or managed a crisis situation one of these respondents remarked,

> *... Honestly and quickly. What you do is you have a response straight away. What that means is that you sit there with whomever is the spokesperson ... and you establish a pattern line so that the same thing is said to every reporter who calls. And you do that quickly, as quickly as you can get them together in the same room and you determine one spokesperson, one statement that [will be made] all the time.* (Barb (3) 75–81)

Embodied in this statement is a consistent and honest story need be given out as quickly as possible to avoid speculations that may be picked up by the media and in the process confuse the issue. It is also important in the sense that contradictory statements are avoided that may distort the truth and damage the university's image. The appointment of a spokesperson which as we have seen earlier is frequently the most senior administrator of the university or the one closest to the crisis provides a credible crisis contacts source of in function for both internal and external publics as well as media. The preparation of a statement usually released to the media is also important so that relevant, pertinent and appropriate facts and information are provided.

Another form of management expounded by one respondent takes the form of open discussion among constituents and especially the internal publics through relevant university channels such as *Folio*. This respondent remarked,

> *We are certainly a forum for letter writers but we also set up directions for people. ... We are constantly a university. We are here to educate people so we are not going to crush ideas.* (Bruce (13) 348–351)

In elaborating, this respondent indicated that since the official statements to the press on a number of issues are released by senior personnel closest to the crisis, part of any resolution involves listening to the opinions of other parties affected such as faculty and staff as well as students. Their opinions, regardless of their inclinations, are carried in university publications such as *Folio*. Hence, crisis management was reported as involving a campus-wide exchange of opinions and suggestions in order to achieve solutions.

C. The University's Publics

This section of the chapter explores a fundamental aspect of public relations, namely, the university's publics. One of the research questions for the study sought to determine who the university's publics were and how they are identified and reached. Specifically, the question asked was "Who are the university's publics and how are they identified?"

Public relations, by its very definition, involves relationships between an organization (in this case a university) and its publics. From the study, it was revealed that the focal university, like all other large universities, deals with diverse publics and audiences. It was also revealed that the university in its very relationships sought to inform, to influence and to build reciprocal relationships. If one examines the university's relationships from the standpoint of its mission, it is clear that the university will ultimately be seeking through its public relations program to influence public attitudes and opinions for specific purposes. For instance, public relations activities and strategies are directed towards high school students so that they can know about the university's academic programs and research, and to influence these individuals to enroll in the university as opposed to enrolling elsewhere. The same is true for all other public relations or audiences that are associated with the three goals of the university.

From the interviews, several categories of audiences or publics emerged. Broadly speaking, they comprised two main categories, namely internal and external publics. Internal publics were explained by respondents to mean all those who work or study or are associated with the university in a specific way. External publics were understood to refer to all individuals, groups of individuals, organizations, interests and pressure groups external to the university and to which the university seeks to establish relationships.

One of the research problems was to determine who the publics were, and how they were identified or determined by Public Affairs and other related External Affairs offices. Several terms were used in reference to these groups, often interchangeably, even though the literature distinguishes between them. The terms used were publics, clients, customers, constituents, audiences, community and donor community. Most of the business toned terms such as clients, customers and donor community, were commonly used by members of the with the Development Office and were associated with its fundraising functions. Three respondents also used the terms, "customers" and "clients" in reference to the student body. Other more general terms such as publics, audiences, constituents and community were often used in no particular reference but in most instances were treated as synonyms. Publics is adopted here as the most all-inclusive term. Specific terms will be mentioned where a distinction is necessary.

Identification

On being asked who their publics were, respondents enumerated long lists for both internal and external publics. Among them were the following:

Internal Publics

- Teaching staff
- Non-teaching staff
- The Board
- Students.

External Publics

- Decision makers and policy makers at both provincial and federal levels
- Politicians
- Potential students both nationally and internationally
- Potential staff both nationally and internationally
- Advisors of potential students

- Parents of students
- Alumni
- Business community, industry, corporations, foundations
- Research institutes
- Other universities, and the entire K-12 school system
- Potential employees, both faculty and support staff
- Professional associations such as the Alberta Teacher Association (ATA).

This list above does not however signify any form of priority nor is it an exhaustive one. The list forms the basic categories of audiences that various respondents identified.

How are they identified? The basic criteria for identification according to the respondents is how they each or collectively fit into the three university strategic priorities. In other words, each category of publics is identified on the basis of how it is perceived to contribute to the attainment of these priorities. Pursuit of these priorities, as explained elsewhere, is done in most cases through specific programs and projects. It is through these programs and projects that respondents identified their publics. One respondent on being asked how the audiences were identified remarked,

> *It depends on the project. If we want to recruit students, and I am putting together a brochure for students, then the public is the students. If I am doing a brochure for some major donors, then the public is the major donors. So ... because of the size of the university, our publications are usually so specific that our publics become obvious probably even before we start.* (Peter (11) 375–381)

Another respondent emphasized as follows:

> *...Yes, it depends on the project. That's one thing our communications aim at. ... Its very important to define who the group that you really want to communicate with and to*

> *ensure that whatever you're doing should reach that particular audience. ... So we direct it or focus at a specific public for each program we do. The public for the faculty recruitment communication program is potential faculty across North America, or it might be broader, to faculty in English speaking countries.* (Cheryl (5) 134–142)

Yet another respondent had this to say in reference to audiences that are approached for fundraising,

> *We have identified our audiences in a number of ways. First of all we break them by general constituency within which they fall. re they individuals? Are they corporations? Are they foundations or organizations set to give money? Those are the four general groupings we have here.* (Bill (9) 227–232)

This kind of categorization was found to be consistent with the notion that not all communications materials or approaches to negotiation are relevant to all. Hence, the need for distinction among publics. The third respondent above further explained that for fund raising, projects that target a specific group are further broken down into various categories for ease of administration. In reference to alumni as a category of audience, he states,

> *Another way is we break them up by i) the year they graduated or by the ii) geographic area.* (Bill (9) 234–235)

Geographic location and graduates of the same year could be criteria for targeting a specific audience.

Overall, audience identification was evidently linked to whatever goal a particular office wanted to accomplish. For every goal it was apparent that specifying or identifying an audience was pretty straight forward. For instance, in the case of broad university goals like attracting outstanding students, the audience would be potential students in high schools, career counselors, parents and other influences of students. Fundraising goals would find their audiences among the corporations, foundations, philanthropists, politicians and policy makers. However, as indicated from the above quotes and other responses, the audiences or publics were very much project specific. It was also noted that audiences could overlap from program to program. For instance alumni could be the target for student recruitment as well as fundraising.

Prioritization

This item deals with how each goal or program determines the relative importance of each audience vis. a vis. other audiences for every project. All respondents agreed that the publics were prioritized in some way. This did not mean that the other audiences were of no consequence. Criteria imposed by specific programs or projects showed that certain publics were more crucial than others and even accorded different treatment. Hence, the greater the degree to which a particular public can propel the university toward its goals the more important it is.

While audience prioritization was evident in relation to all of the goals, individual programs or projects had their own form of prioritization. It was therefore possible to find that two or three projects had the same audiences yet these were prioritized differently. There were certain notions that respondents linked prioritization to. These includes interest in the university, their relevance to the university, in other words how crucial they are ability, resource availability for reaching them, and linkage to the university.

On interest in the university, one respondent remarked,

> *We try and target the groups of people that we feel would be most interested in coming to the university's events whatever they may be. ... So for Super Saturday, we send a letter of invitation to all outstanding students who have applied for scholarships or who did get scholarships to this university. ... so that they all know what is going on and feel a part of the group.* (Joy (5) 119–125)

On the notion of relevance or how crucial a public is, respondents asserted that for each goal there were obvious priorities in terms of audience. For instance, huge corporations were a high priority audience for programs aimed at resource attraction.

Ability to participate was also critical in the prioritization process. This notion was also ranking high in terms of fundraising. An important reason for prioritization was related to the limited resources that the university could commit to certain programs and projects. Due to fiscal restraint, some projects have to cut out certain publics and concentrate on those they deem more crucial and relevant to the attainment of university goals. One respondent explained how the above notions combine to create an elaborate prioritization technique.

> *I will give you an acronym that we use here: LAI, and this acronym is used to prioritize who we speak to. "L" deals with linkage to the university. What is somebody's past linkage to us? We rate this 1-5. "A" is ability to give, what they think they can give. We rate that 1-5. "I" is interest. What interest do they have in the university? We rate that 1-5 also. ... So a company like t[Name withheld] they have an overall LAI of 13/15. The ability to give is 5/5, etc. This helps us to give a [precise] measurement to our priority setting. Right now we are focusing on LAIs of 10 and up.* (Bill (6-7) 209–220).

According to this respondent, this formula is used to rank and prioritize a variety of potential donors in the community. Priority is then given to those whose LAIs are high.

In summary, the publics or audiences for the university are varied but prioritized. Each is given importance depending on how it is expected to fulfill specific goal. With prioritization, the university public relations allocates resources where it is to have the best results.

D. Challenges Facing Public Relations in the University and Ingredients to Successful Public Relations

The study also endeavored to identify challenges that public relations as a practice, and its practitioners face in the university, as well as to provide what participants see as the key ingredients to a successful public relations office. The perspectives presented point to a number things: (i) that there are challenges that face specific section(s) in the department, (ii) that there are challenges that face the university in general, and (iii) that challenges occur in terms of short and long term. Short term challenges were those that focused on on-going activities such as the funds drive and student recruitment. Long term challenges related to the attainment of the university's mission and acquiring the resources that go with it.

The respondents provided a long list of challenges, of which six types are discussed as follows:

- Financial and other forms of resources
- Environmental factors
- Managerial challenges
- Attitudinal challenges
- Technological changes
- Personal experiences

Financial and Other Resources

Respondents blamed the limited finances for the university's inability to pursue other open avenues that would enhance the university's image. It was established that the offices that make up the Office of External Affairs comprise a powerful consultant pool. Many departments currently approach them on matters of communication and publications but as one respondent explained, "We provide the blue-print but cannot follow up because of [limited] resources, both human and financial."

Other challenges created by resource constraints are those already covered in the section dealing with effects of reduced funding. They include restricted image monitoring in the national media, limited alumni programming, reduced publications, diminished circulation, and decreased traveling . The challenge therefore is to consolidate a financial base that would enable External Affairs Office and the university to follow up on these shortcomings.

Environmental Factors

Environmental factors that provide challenges to the practice at the university are: economic trends, political trends, public attitudes, and change in the work place.

Economic trends. This was explained to mean the challenges that the changes in the economy of the province of Alberta presented to the university and the implications these have had on student recruitment. One respondent contended that the up and down trends in the economy affected student tuition which in turn affected how the public affairs office as well as the registrar's office crafted their communications materials to students. It is therefore a challenge for the office in that they are constantly scanning the economic environment and determining the consequences or implications for the university's goals, and in then communicate them widely.

Political trends. A case pointed out by three respondents are the current political debates and changes experienced in health care delivery and the influence this has had on admission of students into the Nursing program. The university finds itself a victim of such political activity and has to contend and design ways of combating the potential negative effects on the university, such as reduced applications to its programs.

Public attitudes. The university and its Public Affairs Office is faced with meeting public expectations as manifested in the effects created by the *Macleans* surveys and rankings. The university is compelled to adopt a *Macleans* marketing strategy in its communications activity.

Change in work environment. Respondents acknowledged the changes that constantly occur in their work environment as new challenges they face almost daily. One respondent remarked that "the new environment dictates that there is only work to be done and not jobs." There are therefore the constant challenges posed by the changing work techniques, teamwork for projects and the constant learning process that requires more generalists who cross-train to handle multiple tasks.

Managerial Challenges

Managing people was identified as a major challenge for all in leadership roles. This challenge involves keeping staff focused on goals, and keeping them motivated in the face of burn-out conditions, restricted budgets and limited numbers of staff. Others talked of the task of ensuring that staff overcome complacency.

Reconciling the needs of the community to know versus the university's reputation also posed a challenge especially to those who dealt will constant communication with the many publics and with situation where the university's image is potentially at stake. Hence, respondents felt that ethical and professional conduct was demanded at all times.

Visibility was mentioned as a function of aggressive programs and that invisibility was unhealthy for the public relations and the university, in general. Some expressed the need for increased visibility by alumni in areas such as student recruitment and lobbying in government circles.

Attitudinal Challenges

There currently exists a great challenge for philosophical change in thinking, and in the culture of the university. A case in point mentioned frequently is the adoption of the new fundraising culture and its place in the university. The challenge is how to influence acceptance of the idea in the face of widespread beliefs that it is an American ideal and practice.

Credibility. Respondents reported disagreement among the internal publics concerning the role of public affairs and public relations in the university, and about whether these units deserve the budgets they currently enjoy. As a result these respondents felt a need to justify their budgets with more work and results.

Accountability. There was a general perception of public demands to know what it is they are spending their dollars on in the university and that the university has to satisfy all publics through various media so as to maintain positive relations and trust with these publics and a positive image for the university.

Staff have to meet the high expectations set by the senior university administrators, the faculty and the publics, resulting in a great challenge for them.

Technological Changes

New equipment and constant updates to existing equipment are needed for staff to be able to operate in the context of multiple and changing technologies. There is pressure to harness the newest technologies and adopt the latest software in the effort of publicizing the university nationally and internationally.

Respondents reported a need for the university to respond to new forms of prompt reporting especially since that technology, as explained by one respondent, "is moving towards being wired direct to the news room." The increased use of the internet is one area that is now revolutionizing the communication field as a whole. This has had a great impact on people's communication patterns. Consequently, the internet has influenced the focus of public relations activity in the university, while at the same time providing a great challenge to the department in terms of trying to cope with the constant updates and changes.

Personal Experiences

Respondents reported that due to the limited number of staff and the increased amount of work, staff have been pushed to what some felt was a burn out level. That staff challenge now is to maintain personal health and motivation to cope with the many and varied work pressures.

Ingredients to Successful Public Relations

This final part of section D (challenges facing Public Relations in the University and ingredients to successful public relations) deals with the perceived ingredients of a successful public relations program.

Based on their experiences of working in a public relations environment, respondents were asked to share these experiences and to describe what they felt were the key ingredients for a successful public relations program in a university. As with the responses to all other questions, a variety of perspectives to this question emerged. Below is a list of what respondents identified as key ingredients for successful public relations practice in a university.

- Acquire adequate financial resources
- Have necessary and competent staff in place
- Encourage teamwork because no one person is complete
- Have a high degree of support from senior administrators on initiatives
  that reinforce positive aspects of the university
- Know your many publics and prioritize them
- Respect clients and staff
- Be relevant to both the university and the public
- Have programs linked to the strategic goals of the university
- Be focused and have one vision with the academic departments
- Have a communications plan in place
- Listen but filter information
- Set up a network on campus for information gathering
- Communicate success stories widely and quickly
- Be simple and interesting when communicating

- Promote the university not self
- Respond to issues instantly
- Get involved with activities on campus
- Set targets and deadlines

The list above is a summary of the many suggestions that the nine respondents provided. However, they indicated that public relations success would require a combination of numerous factors such as: financial, human and material resources, communication plans and goals, planning, and proper attitude and environment.

Summary

This chapter discussed a number of issues in four distinct sections. The first section identified both environmental and internal factors that have had a great influence in the practice of public relations. Environmental factors were identified as the influence of shifts in funding to universities, the role of the publics , and the impact of the rankings of Canadian universities by the *Macleans* magazine. Shifts in funding were perceived to have had both positive and negative effects. Some perceived it as having helped the office to remain focused, and be fiscally responsible while others felt a number of activities and positions were curtailed and their morale affected. Public participation was perceived to influence the practice through direct participation in program and project formulation, feedback, and contribution of ideas. *Macleans* magazine rankings have according the participants made the university strive to climb the ranking ladder through active participation in the survey process. This has made the departments operate in specific ways to meet *Macleans* ranking process.

The second part looks at who the publics of the university are. The publics, were broadly categorized into external and internal publics. The publics were identified mainly on the basis of programs and projects run by the operational units of the Public Affairs Office. The publics that these offices dealt with were prioritized for each project and program.

The third section examines the challenges that the participants who are in themselves practitioners face. The participants relayed varying experiences and challenges depending on what section they worked. Six types of challenges were noted and discussed. They were: limited financial and other forms of resources, environmental factors, managerial challenges, attitudinal challenges, technological and personal experiences.

The final section presented what participants felt were ingredients to a successful public relations department. The study identified a number of ingredients which the participants viewed as necessary. These ingredients were summed up as being human, financial and material resources, good planning and communications plans, identifiable goals, proper attitude to work and good working environment.

Chapter 8

Summary, Contribution to Theory and Reflections

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part provides an overview of the study, its purpose, research methodology and design. The second outlines the major findings of the study, while the third part looks at implications for research, and provides personal reflections and conclusions.

Overview of the Study

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the public relations functions and strategies that one university in Canada uses to achieve its goals and objectives. The study also sought to examine external and internal factors that shape the practice at the university and, to a certain extent, the responses and adaptations to the challenges posed by these factors. It was hoped that the study would highlight the importance of the public relations practice in educational settings, as well as its potential for the advancement of education and development of universities.

Specifically, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. What strategies does the Public Affairs Office use to ensure that the image of the university is portrayed positively and to achieve university's stated objectives?
2. What is the mandate of the Public Affairs Office and how are its functions linked to the overall mission and goals of the university?

3. Who are the university's publics and how are they identified?
4. How are the public relations programs and strategies evaluated?
5. How has the reduced funding from the Provincial Government affected the public relations activities in the Public Affairs Office?
6. What have been the major environmental factors influencing the public relations activities and strategies adapted?
7. What have been the challenges facing public relations and practitioners at the university?
8. What are the necessary ingredients for a successful public relations program in a university?

Research Methodology and Design

A qualitative research approach employing a case study method was adopted for the study. The study focused on the public relations functions and activities in an office within the External Affairs Office. It examined and described the various issues arising from the practice. Public relations practice in any organization is basically an organization-wide undertaking. Large universities like the one under study acknowledge that both academic and non-academic departments engage in public relations independent of the central university office assigned to carry out such practices. Recognizing this complex arrangement, the researcher chose to study a particular office rather than attempt a campus-wide survey of public relations practices.

Data were collected over a three month period, from January to March 1997. During that period, nine participants were interviewed. All the interviews were audio-recorded, the recordings were transcribed and later coded for analysis. Interview transcripts were returned to participants for verification. In a few instances further verification was solicited through e-mail. In one case, the researcher discussed with a participant matters that had been discussed in the interview to ensure correct usage and meaning. While other sources, including written documents and internet web pages, were used, perceptions and interpretation from interviews formed the major source of research data.

Data analysis was done through open coding, category development and subsequently deriving major themes from the categories established. This process was influenced by steps outlined in Bogdan and Bilken (1992), and Lincoln and Guba (1985). Information from the interviews was coded separately from that taken from other sources though both were integrated in the presentation. Before the main information gathering and analysis was done, a search of related literature had been undertaken as well as two pilot studies.

Summary of Major Findings

Findings of the study are described in three chapters, 5, 6 and 7. In this section, findings in summary form are reported following the research questions set for the study.

1. What public relations strategies does the Public Affairs Office use for the university to attain its goals?

Based on the interviews, the term strategy was defined differently from the way it was used in documents, specifically the strategic plans documents. The documents presented strategy as a set of goals that must be pursued for the university to achieve its vision. The second level of strategy, taken mostly from the interviews, refers to all options of activities that each unit office undertakes to achieve the three strategic goals that the university has set. The three strategic goals are: the recruitment and training of outstanding students, the recruitment and retention of outstanding faculty and members of staff, and the attraction of outstanding resources. The two levels of strategy are an extension of each other. In other words, to attain the university vision, the strategy is to pursue the three strategic goals. These three goals were outlined by the current President in 1995. To achieve each strategic goal the Public Affairs Office through its operational offices designs initiatives for each. Among the strategies discussed were the use of media to publicize the positive aspects of the students, staff members and major breakthroughs and innovation, circulation of information and targeted publications, community relations programs such as Super Saturday, open days, visiting committees, user friendly registration and information procedures, recruitment fairs, alumni branches, and use of electronic media.

Besides the three strategic goals, the Public Affairs Office has identified another strategy aimed at creating a distinct identity and image for the university. This is found in the extensive promotion and usage of the overall university theme. The theme is key to creating a corporate identity reflecting key and outstanding features of the university.

From the respondents, for a strategy to be formulated or adopted, there must be a goal, a structure in place to operate with, will from the top, and tools, financial, human and material resources to enable a follow through. Two important components that shaped the strategies were the university vision and mission. The university's vision is to enter the 21st century undisputedly recognized as one of Canada's finest universities. The mission or mandate is to teach, conduct research and perform community service. It is in these two areas that the study identified strategies.

For the attainment of the mandate, strategies adopted are those that would propel the university to realize the three strategic goals. For this, the study identified a series of strategic activities or strategies that each operational unit in the office of Public Affairs as well as sister offices in External Affairs have adapted in order to achieve them.

The study also revealed that there were factors that determined or influenced the choice of particular strategy. They were identified as the type of message to be sent. There are messages specific to certain publics. If there were messages relating to student recruitment, then strategies best suited to communicating to students would be used. In other words, strategy could be influenced by who the message is aimed at, available channels, convenience of the strategy, available resources, the situation being communicated, and anticipated end results.

Other findings from the study indicate that strategies were mainly program based. While separate operational units such as media relations, and community relations in the Public Affairs Office were pursuing similar goals, they organized different projects or programs. These programs and projects did not necessarily employ similar strategies. These findings led to the conclusion that not all strategies are applicable to all projects. Also, the study revealed that no single strategy was thought to be more effective than others but rather that most programs and projects employed a combination of strategies.

Strategies were reported to be organized across departments. For instance recruitment of students could be a joint endeavor between the Public Affairs Office, the Office of Alumni Affairs and the Registrar's Office. Hence a multi-departmental approach to strategy design was not uncommon.

2. What is the mandate of the Public Affairs Office and how are its functions linked to the overall mission and goals of the university?

The study pointed out that the Public Affairs Office as well as the other two offices within the External Affairs Office draw their mandates and missions from the overall university mission. Hence the mandate of the Public Affairs Office according to respondents is to support the university mission. What this has apparently done is to confine or commit the office to pursue specified goals and nothing outside them. All their pronouncements, as spelled out in their mission statements, reflect their commitment to pursuing the overall mission of the university.

According to the participants, the functions performed in the Public Affairs Office are brought together by the above relationships. In other words, all the functions carried out in the office are reported to be deliberately designed to achieve the university strategic goals and vision. Keen and Greenall (1987) in support of this premise argue that the basis for any public relations program is found in the mission of the university. They contend,

> If there is a difference between the college's stated mission and what it is doing, then senior management must be alert: either the mission statement is out of date and needs revising, or else the college's operations need to be brought to line. (p. 63)

Major functions cited by the respondents are, media relations, publications and communication, and community relations. These functions are built into the office's operational units, each under a manager.

Other important functions not assigned to any specific unit include issues management, and consulting.

Media relations was perceived to be instrumental in disseminating information, monitoring the image of the university, publicizing university achievements, crisis resolution, recruitment of both outstanding students and staff, and attracting resources through the media coverage.

Media reporting was also reported to follow ethical guidelines of fair and factual reporting. Reporting was also reported to be free from interference by senior administrative personnel and enjoyed good working relationship with journalists and media persons in general.

The study revealed that most publications were aimed at specific publics. There were publications for specific programs falling within the three strategic goals. These publications besides providing information, were deemed helpful in planning next stages of activity as well as being important historical records about the university.

While some publications are "once off" productions, others are produced at regular intervals. The most crucial publication mentioned is *Folio*. It reports on developments associated with the three strategic goals as well as helps maintain the university's image through highlighting important break-throughs. It is also a forum for exchange of ideas and opinion from among the internal publics. The primary audience for this publication was reported to be the internal publics.

The community relations function was perceived to be crucial in regard to the university's relationships with its community. The study revealed a lot of interactions between the university and the community around it and the province at large. The community was reported to participate meaningfully in university functions though the university also was seen as participating nominally in community organized functions. All activities such as Super Saturday, visiting committees and Annual General Meetings were seen by respondents and reported in documents as aimed at furthering goals of the university.

3. Who are the university publics and how are they identified?

The study revealed that all activities performed by operational units of the Public Affairs Office are meant to influence, by fair means, the attitudes, opinions and subsequently actions of people or groups of people to act towards the university in a manner that supports the university's mission. Identification of these people, groups and organizations, according to the study respondents, was specific to individual programs. In other words for every project or program specific publics were targeted. For the three goals, the study identified categories of publics. They were summarized as internal publics which comprised staff, students and the Board of Governors, and, external publics comprising notable individuals, organizations, policy makers, foundations, interest and pressure groups.

Respondents also indicate that the basic criteria for identifying publics were how they fitted into the three strategic goals. Publics were also prioritized according to projects or programs. Different programs prioritized their publics differently. Major projects such as fundraising run by the Development Office has for instance developed a criterion using an acronym dubbed LAI which stands for L-linkage to the university, A-ability to give and I-interest in the university, all rated on a scale of one to five.

The study revealed that the university has a lot of interactions with its publics. Based on the nature of interactions and feedback received from the publics, it revealed that both Grundig and Hunt (1984) asymmetrical and symmetrical model of public relations could applied to understand the practice at the focal university.

4. How are public relations functions and strategies evaluated?

The study revealed that an evaluation component is built in for every function and strategy. There were distinct evaluation processes and procedures for specific functions. The basic measure for each function and strategy was the degree to which objectives were met.

The study further showed that beside goal attainment, evaluation processes and procedures took into consideration other issues such as evaluation of the process of every project implementation, who is doing the evaluation, whether evaluation is externally or internally conducted, and the criteria for measuring achievement or effectiveness.

Evaluation, according to the respondents has helped the functions and strategies remain focused. Constant evaluation provides room for remodeling of strategies as well as discarding those that may not be working.

5. How has the reduced funding from the provincial government affected the public relations activities in the Public Affairs Office?

Interview respondents and the review of documents exhibited interesting viewpoints. Besides the negative and positive effects of the reduced funding mentioned, there were participants who felt that money wasn't an issue in what the office has grown to be.

First, there were those who felt that cutbacks have had more far-reaching positive effects than negative. Several talked of the creation of avenues for creativity and fiscal responsibility. As a result of fewer available resources, respondents felt the office has become less wasteful and has made careful choices of public relations activities. These activities have thus became more focused.

This has also led to a change in philosophy in the sense that all activities unlike before were crafted only towards the three strategic goals rather than pursuing a whole array of diverse functions and activities.

Second, a number of negative effects to both practice and practitioners were revealed. Among them are un-funded positions, layoffs, travel cuts, restricted publications and circulation, and wage cuts. These were deemed to have implications for lower staff morale as the cutbacks not only affected their salary but meant increased workloads. Thus, while less money was provided, workload increased and so did expectations for better service. However, a number of respondents felt that the crunch was over as more money has recently been made available for the department to run the new fund-raising campaign.

Third, a small number of respondents felt that cutbacks have not been responsible for the current form and activities of the Public Affairs Office. They argued that endowments are not the key to an effective and efficient public relations department. This argument was supported by drawing comparison with well-endowed US universities which still have concerns over public relations and the contention that the department is now more focused than it was before the cutbacks. Hence, these views suggested that the funding cutbacks were not necessarily responsible for the refocussing of the department but may have acted as a trigger for the department to reform its activities.

Unlike literature which proposes that public relations has now gained prominence or status due to cutbacks, and need for fundraising, most respondents do attribute the change to other factors. While the role of cutbacks was acknowledged there was no consensus as to whether there had been any change in status. Some felt there had been increased awareness of the potential of the department. Others felt that there had been no change in status prominence but increased workload. Still others felt that the prominence often referred to is basically rhetorical as two key publics within the university namely, the professors and senior administrators, held mixed positions about public relations activities.

6. What have been the major environmental factors influencing public relations activities and strategies adopted?

Factors external and internal to the university were found to influence the nature of public relations activities. Respondents demonstrated that the office was sensitive to shifts in certain aspects of the socio-economic sphere that were likely to affect their goal attainment. They related that every effort was made to respond to such threats, and in fact these shifts were harnessed for the benefit of the department.

Environmental factors identified from the discussions were divided into external and internal. External factors perceived by respondents were shifts in funding to the university, technological changes, attitudes of both internal and the external publics, the *Macleans* magazine rating of the university, internationalization of the university, public input and participation. Internal factors were the role of university leadership, attitudes of internal publics towards the role and status of public relations, and perceived crisis situations.

The respondents perceived the university as having responded to these changes through direct participation and to some extent policy redirection. Participation was perceived in the area of attempts to influence the *Macleans* ranking process, adoption of friendly recruitment procedures and technologies and recruitment fairs overseas. Policy redirection include mounting of fund raising from external and internal private sources. This has increased following reduction of funding from the government. Other policy re-direction was in programming, especially in areas where shifts in recruitment are experienced, and in areas relating to publications and their circulation.

7. What have been the challenges facing public relations at the university?

The study manifested a diverse cross-section of challenges from different perspectives associated each operational unit. Not all participants were concerned with the same challenges. Several of these challenges tended to be sectional challenges rather than ones facing public relations or the university as a whole. However, a number of challenges perceived by the respondents as affecting the entire office were provided. These were financial challenges in that more resources were needed to expand operations as well as acquire personnel; attitudes from major cadres of staff in the university, such as members of the faculty and senior administration and the way they feel about public relations; technological changes that require constant adaptation to new ways of operating; changes in the social environment where the practitioners have to read social trends in the environment and respond accordingly; personal experiences in the office such as complacency and burnout due to workload; and managerial challenges in terms of managing people.

These challenges in a sense highlighted what the respondents considered to be areas that needed efforts to rectify. Based on these challenges, respondents presented what they perceived as ingredients to successful public relations programs.

8. What are the necessary ingredients for a successful public relations program in a university?

A combination of financial, human and material resources, good planning and research, proper communication plans, attainable goals, proper attitude to work and working environment were considered key ingredients to successful public relations. However, it was acknowledged that since universities were not homogenous organizations, other factors specific to each institution were equally important considerations. Among them is what the respondents termed as a public relations practitioners with some professionalism. The literature is succinct on the importance of effective public relations practitioners as central in the success of public relations programs. Keen and Greenall (1987) contend that,

> public relations practitioners should study the world around them, holding up a finger for changes in the climate; they should assess the opportunities the changes might present, while advising how the [university] might avoid dangers. They are monitors and prophets of external change and instigators of internal change. (p.18)

According to Grunig (1992) it is the public relations practitioner who must marshal all the ingredients together, and secure resources, coordinate all activities, and provide advice for effective public relations. For this reason writers, such as Grunig and Hunt (1984), Kowalski (1996), Keen and Greenall (1987), advocate for professional public relations practitioners to occupy public relations decision making positions in any organization.

Respondents felt that having a clear communications plan was key to all relationships with both internal and external publics. This would contain all pertinent issues such as what the message is, the target publics, the channels for communication, the time frame, resources to go with the plan, and anticipated results.

In summary, the findings associated with the research questions of the study demonstrated the existence of a generally dynamic, adaptive, focused and communicative office, at least from the perspectives of the respondents. Over a short period following a change in leadership, the practitioners have reported turning the office around, so that it is now a focal point in the university capable of organizing and running enormous projects and campaigns. From the afore-mentioned, it appears that an effective and workable public relations program is in place, and the probability is high that if current trends continue and existing plans are followed, the university could attain its goals, mission, and ultimately the vision.

Implications for Research and Practice

From the review of literature and the interview discussions, there were indications that public relations in Canadian educational institutions was still a field not well researched. Somewhat to the dismay of the researcher, most of the research done in the area, as it relates to universities and higher education in general, is either American, Australian or European. There is therefore need for more research in Canadian universities focusing on the practice of public relations as it would offer the Canadian perspective. Research on public relations in universities is critical, especially now that there is a shift in postsecondary financing necessitating a lot of interactions with the public.

Similarly, public relations practice has over time been shrouded by poorly defined boundaries vis-a-vis other related functions on campus. Already there is a danger of it being overshadowed by marketing and fundraising functions. There is therefore need to examine further what role public relations plays in relation to marketing the university and fundraising for it.

Perhaps what is pressing at the moment is that a number of socio-economic, technological, and a host of environmental factors have influenced the direction and pace of public relations. Detailed examination, specifically on the changes in public relations as a result of technological change, needs to be undertaken.

Finally, the study has revealed that public relations offers a lot of potential for the development of educational institutions and higher education in general. There is an opportunity for Canadian institutions to re-examine why public relations programs are not offered by the majority of Canadian universities. Literature reveals that this is slow in happening despite recognition of the importance of public relations in universities, and the recognition that all universities employ public relations practitioners.

Contribution to Theory

The study was influenced by the ideas found in the writings and elsewhere that the reason for continued mistrust and misunderstanding of universities by the public is the lack of communication between the universities and their the publics. For this reason, theories relevant to the practice of public relations were examined such as behavioral and communication theories to assist in bringing understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the practice. Based on this review, a contextual background and conceptual framework for the practice as it operates at the university were drawn to help guide the study. Reflecting on the model presented in chapter 2, figure 3, it is apparent that public relations practice at the university fits into the model. However, a few other aspects not earlier envisaged manifested themselves as key influences of the practice. Consequently a revised model is provided below as figure 5. Though they may be implied in the earlier model, special mention of the role of leadership, of administrative mechanisms, of interest groups, and of power relations within the internal environment are worth recognizing and including in the model.

The model helps conceptualize of the various relationships, while identifying the key influencing factors, key players and results of the relationships. From the aforementioned premise, the basic intention behind all interactions of the university with its publics is the pursuit of the university goals. The university's intention is to influence its publics, both external and internal, to support it in its endeavor to fulfill its mission. This is done as reflected in the model, through the university identifying and designing its mission and goals, constituting structures that will effect pursuit of the goals, and designing and implementing strategies for communicating effectively with the various publics, with the intention to influence them towards desired actions and outcomes. The model also identifies the actors and the factors that come into play in the public relations process. Efforts by External Affairs and Public Relations Offices are directed with the intention that the publics targeted will strengthen their support for the university. The revised model identifies specific internal factors that influence the public relations activity in the university. These include factors such as the role of leadership, power relations in the university and internal administrative capability to adapt and harness environmental forces. These were identified as key factors in the success of any public relations program.

The study examined interactions between the university and its publics and demonstrated that these conform to the open system perspective on organizations. Respondents explained that the university interacted with its environment and that the university responded to the stimuli from the environment. Two types of environments, internal and external, were evident. Contrary to the notion that universities do not communicate with their publics, the study revealed extensive communication by the university with its diverse publics, suggesting that should there be any misconceptions about the university, then they are most likely to be the result of factors other than mere lack of communication. According to Mishra (1986) an organization makes reactive internal or structural adjustments in response to its environments. Alternatively, it responds by trying to influence the environment through managerial strategies used. The Public Affairs Office did engage in a number of such reactions and tried to influence important external forces such as the *Macleans* survey process. The key to combating such situations lies in what many respondents referred to as adapting proactive strategies rather than waiting for issues before taking action. This stand is consistent with the university ethos of research and pursuit of new knowledge which encourages all, including public relations practitioners, to experiment with new ways which will enable them to be at the forefront of their profession and to deal with unanticipated situations.

In terms of theory, the study portrayed the relevance of a number of theories, paradigms and models presented in the literature review. As exemplified in this study, university public relations cannot be fully explained by a single theory, nor defined by single paradigm or communication model. Aspects of a variety of theories, paradigms and models are evident in the study. Public relations practice is therefore still open to many perspectives in terms of definition, theory and practice.

As indicated earlier, the study has a number of limitations by virtue of its being a case study and therefore the findings may not be generalizable. Secondly, the study is time specific. However, some findings may be of benefit to practitioners especially those who are establishing public relations departments. It offers insights into what structures should be in place, as well as some issues that may arise. Also, the strategic goals pursued by the focal university are ones that seem to have relevance for other universities. Any new public relations department would need to understand the importance of concentrating efforts on these key strategic areas.

The figure below depicts the public relations as practiced at the focal university with all the interacting variables, influences and anticipated results.

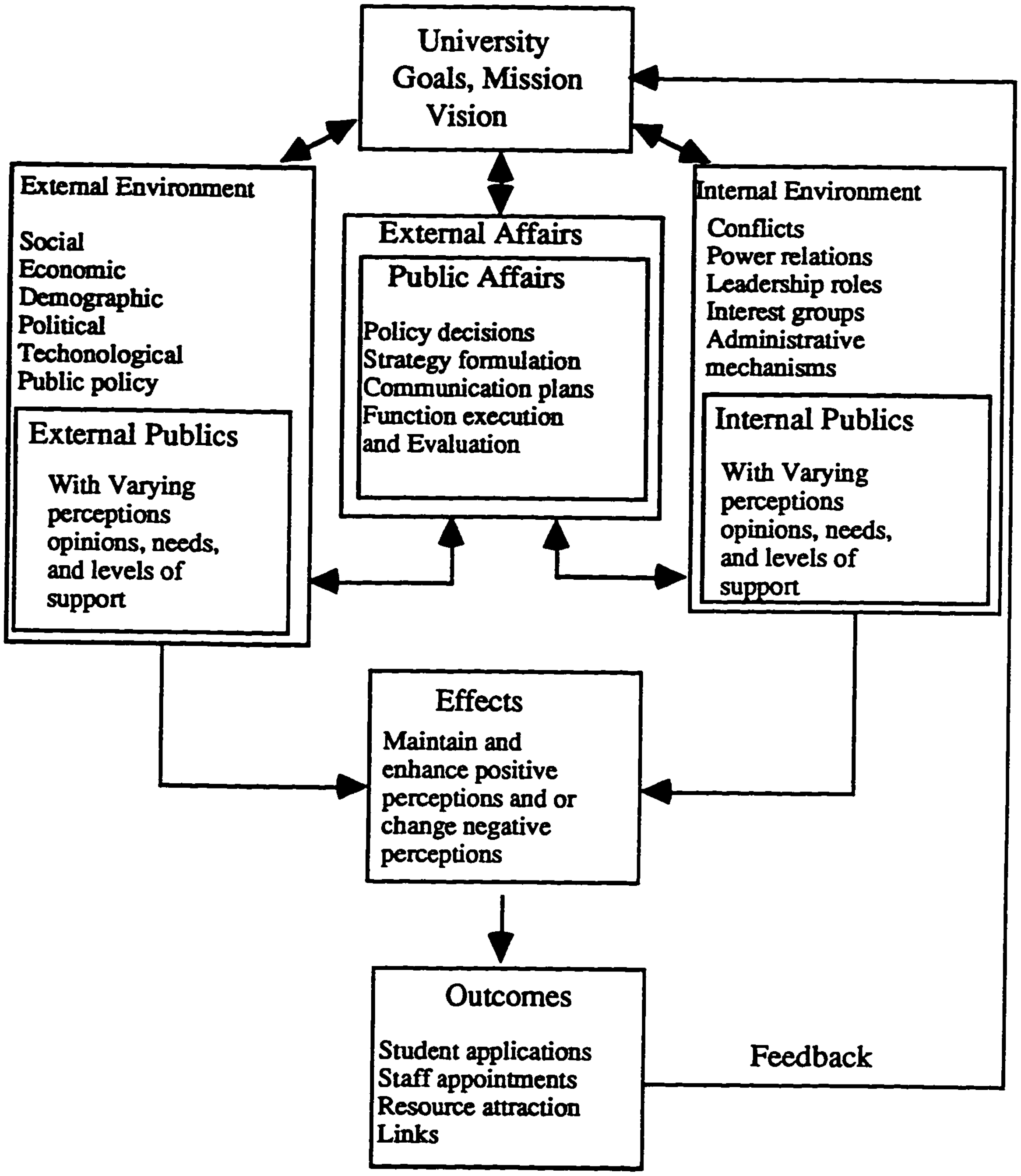

Figure 5. A revised framework for understanding university public relations

Reflections

As an outsider looking in, the research opportunity was an enormous learning experience for me. Having had previous experience working in a university public relations department in a different system, country and continent, the perspective provided by the Canadian context was invaluable. The differences in approach, structure, depth and focus were instrumental in broadening understanding of the practice, its importance and its potential.

In the study a great deal of emphasis was placed on external factors and external constituents and how they affect public relations practices in the university. While external constituents are crucial in the public relations process, it is the researcher's contention that sound internal relationships appear to be a prerequisite to the success of external relationships. Universities are dynamic institutions that comprise individuals from diverse fields and backgrounds, and who have differing attitudes, interests, power relations, and view points. Satisfying the perspectives and demands of these diverse publics is a difficult undertaking for public relations practitioners. Unfortunately, in many circles it is the ability or inability of the public relations practitioner to reconcile all these internal dynamics on the basis of which their effectiveness is judged. Poor internal relationships are more likely to affect how external constituents view the university. This may have negative effects on the image of the university, erasing confidence among its personnel, and ultimately may have negative effects on goal attainment. What this implies is that public relations practitioners need to be conversant with organizational theories and behavior to be able to manage internal circumstances effectively.

Based on the limited experiences in this study the researcher has come to see the benefit of universities having their own public relations professionals. These people need to be highly skilled in interpersonal relationships since public relations in universities involves ability to relate effectively both to the university's internal and external publics. With the current wave of technological, social and economic changes, enlightened public relations management appears key to the university's successful relationships with its many publics.

One other key variable in the public relations equation seems to be the role that the President and senior administrators play in public relations activities on campus. It is key because heads of institutions are typically the university's most visible public relations officers. In any issue they seem to be the final spokespersons for the institution. They are viewed as setting the pace and the tune for the university. It is for this reason that one policy maker remarked, "We all sing from the president's song sheet."

References

Aldrich, J. (1976). *Organizations and environment.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Alfred, R. L., & Weisman J. (1987). *Higher education and the public trust: Improving stature in colleges and universities.* ASHE Texas A&M University.

Bailey, K.D. (1982). *Methods of social research.* New York: Free Press.

Balcom, G.R. (1975). *Public relations in recreation administration.* Unpublished project, University of Alberta.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory.* Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Benjamin, B. T. (1993). Public perceptions of higher education. *Oxford review of education,* Vol. 19(1), 47 - 63.

Berg, B. L. (1989). *Qualitative research methods for social sciences.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Bogdan, R.C. & Biklen, S. K. (1982). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon Inc.

Bok, D. (1982). *Beyond the ivory tower: Social responsibility of the modern university.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bok, D. (1993). Reclaiming the public trust. *CASE Currents* .Washington DC.

Borg, W. R. & Gall, M.D. (1989). *Educational research: An introduction* (5th ed.). Longman: New York & London.

Botan, C. (1993). Introduction to the paradigm struggle in public relations. *Public relations review*, 19(2): 107 - 110.

Brown, G. D. (1984). *A brief history and review of public relations in Canada in Public relations in Canada: Some perspectives*. Ontario. Fitzhenry & Whiteside Ltd.

Burell, G. & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological paradigms and organizational analysis: Elements of the sociology of corporate life*. London: Heinemann.

Burgess, R. G. (1993). *Educational research and evaluation: For policy and practice?* London: The Falmer press.

Burgess, R. G. (ed) (1988). *Studies in qualitative methodology: Conducting qualitative research* (vol. 1) Greenwich: Connecticut: JAI Press.

Byerly, G. M. (1993. August). *Toward a comprehensive history of public relations*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Kansas City, MO.

Covington, W. Jr., & Others. (1995, April). *An exploratory study of relationships, news releases and news media*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Central States Communication Association, Indianapolis, IN .

Cutlip, S. M. (1995). *Public relations history from the 17th to the 20th century: The antecedents*. New Jersey, Hove, UK. Lawrence Earlbaum Assoc. Publishers.

Cutlip, S.M. & Center. AH. (1971). *Effective public relations* (4th Ed). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Deborah, W. (1984, March). *Listening to the public: The key to constructive debate about higher education*. Paper presented at the American Association for Higher Education, Chicago IL.

Dennison, J. D. (1995). *Challenge and opportunity: Canada's community : Canada's community colleges at the crossroads.* Vancouver: UBC Press.

Don, W. S. (1995, November). *Political communication: Contribution to the study of public relations.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, San Antonio TX.

Dyson, K. (1989). Managing university public relations: Theory and practice. *Higher education review* Vol. 21 pp. 21 - 40.

Einsiedel, E. F. & Piekos, J. M. (1989, August). *Gender and decision making among Canadian public relations practitioners.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Washington, DC.

Elaine, E. E. & Evans. D. (1994). Lies, deception, and public relations. in *Public relations review,* 20(3): 249 - 266.

Fearn-Banks, K. (1996). *Crisis communications: A casebook approach.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Association, Publications.

Fraser, R. (January 20, 1995). *"Alberta Bound",* Speech on his installation as the 11th President of the University of Alberta.

Gabriel, V.M. & Maureen, T. (1994, New Orleans). *A cultural approach to public relations research: An extension of Hofstede's variables to Grunig's models of public relations.* A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, New Orleans, LA.

Goetz, J. P. & LeCompte, M. D. (1984). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research.* Orlando, FL: Academic press.

Grunig, E. J. (1992). *Excellence in public relations and communication management.* Hillsdale, New Jersey. Hove, London, Lawrence Earlbaum Association, publishers.

Grunig, J. E. & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. Orlando Florida. Harcourt Brace Jovanivich College publishers.

Guth, D. W. (1995). Organizational crisis experience and public relations roles. *Public relation's review*, 21(2): 123 - 136.

Hallahan, K. (1993). The paradigm struggle and public relations practice. *Public relations review*, 19(2), 197 - 205.

Halstead, C. P. (1993) Effective public relations and communication strategies. In *winning strategies in challenging times for advancing small colleges*. Weslry W, (ed) CASE:Washington.

Hanson, E. M. (1991). *Educational administration and organizational behavior*. (3rd Ed) Boston: Allyn & Bacon Inc.

Harral, S. (1942). *Public relations for higher education*.. Norman University press of Oklahoma.

Harvey, K.; Marrienne, S. & Dave, O. (1995). *Baseline study of public perceptions of the University of Alberta: Final report*. Population Research Laboratory, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta.

Herbert, W. B. & Jenkins J. R. G. (1984). *Public relations in Canada: Some perspectives*. Ontario. Fitzhenry & Whiteside Ltd.

Hergenhahn, B. R. & Olson, M. H. (1997). *An introduction to theories of learning* . (5th Ed) Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Hills, E. G. (1994). *Marketing & entreprenuership: Research ideas and opportunities*. Westport, Connecticutt. London, Quorum books.

Kathleen, F.B. (1996). *Crisis communication: A casebook approach*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Associate Publishers.

Kathleen, K. S. (1992, August). *Potential of the public relations department as a deterrent to fundraising encroachment.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Montreal, Canada.

Keen, C, & Greenall, J., (1987). *Public relations management in colleges, polytechnics and universities.* Banbury, HEIST publications.

Koech, J.K. (1995). *A case study of university-industry partnerships.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Alberta.

Kowalski, T. J. (1996). *Public relations in educational organizations: Practice in an age of iinformation and reform.* New Jersey, Prentice-Hall Inc.

Kruckeberg, D. (1995, April). *Public relations as ideology.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Communication Association, Pittsburg, PA

Landsberg, M. (1993). Smart staffing: Public relations office. *CASE Currents.* pp. 41 - 43.

Leichty, G. & Springton, J. (1993). Reconsidering public relations models. *Public relations review,* 19(4), 327 - 339.

Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Lubertkin, J. G. (1992). If I'd only known: Seven management lessons for public relations pros on campus, from corporate pros who've been there. *CASE Currents* pp. 38 - 42.

Macleans, (1995, November). The fifth annual ranking. pp.17-62.

Marsh, J. H. (ed) (1988). *The Canadian encyclopedia* (vols. 1-4) AB: Hurtig publishers.

Marston, J. E. (1963). *The nature of public relations.* Michigan: New York; MaGraw-Hill.

McMillan, J. H. & Schumacher, S. (1989). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction* (2nd Ed). Harper Collins Publishers.

McNamara, W. (1994). Diminishing returns of educational marketing. *Educational Horizon.*

Merrian, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Michael, S. O (1991). *Marketing higher education: Responding to a changing environment.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Alberta.

Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: A source book of new methods.* Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Mishra, K. (1986). *Adaptation to environmental pressures in a teacher education organization.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Alberta.

Moore, H. R. & Canfield, B. R. (1977). *Public relations: Principles, cases and problems* (7th Ed). Georgetown, Ontario: Irwin-Dorsey.

Nager, N. R. & Allen, T.H. (1984) *public relations management by objectives.* New York. NY: Longman Inc.

Nessman, K. (1995). Public relations in Europe: A comparison with the US. *Public relations review,* 21(2): 151 -160).

Netherton, R. (1996). Two views from the trenches: How the public sees higher education, and how higher education is responding. *CASE Currents,* pp. 10-16.

Omrod, J. E. (1990). *Human learning: Theories, principles, and educational applications*. Colombus: Merrill Publishing Company.

Osborne, J. H. (1984). *Current Canadian public relations educational programs in Public relations in Canada: Some perspectives.* Ontario. Fitzhenry & Whiteside Ltd.

Osborne, J. H. (1984). *The Canadian demand for public relations education and professional development in Public relations in Canada: Some perspectives.* Ontario. Fitzhenry & Whiteside ltd.

Oshkamp, S. (1977). *Attitudes and opinions.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Owens, R. G. (1992). Methodological perspective: Methodological rigor in naturalistic inquiry: Some issues and answers. *Educational administration quaterly* 18(2), 1 - 21.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed) Newsbury Park, CA: Sage publications.

Pelletier, S. G. (1994). Marketing higher education. *Educational horizon.*

Persons, E. C. (1945). *Public relations for colleges and universities: A manual of practical procedures.* Stanford, California. Stanford University Press.

Pisesky, S. R. V. (1992). *Changing the high school graduation requirements in Alberta: A policy implementation case study.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Alberta.

Poulin, J. B. (1989). *Strategies required for an effective public relations program.* Unpublished Masters Project, University of Alberta.

Ralp, D.B & Jay, B. (1994). Ethics and professional persuasive communications. *Public relations review.* 20(3) pp. 233–248.

Robinson, E. J. (1969). *Public relations and survey research: Achieving organizational goals in a communication context.* New York NY. Appleton - Century–Crofts, Meredith Corporation.

Rockey , E.H. (1987). *Communicating in Organizations.* Cambridge, Massachussets. Winthrop Management Publishers Inc.

Rockey, E. H. (1977). *Communicating in Organizations.* Cambridge, MA: Winthrop Publishers Inc.

Rodgers, J. E. (1996). Professors and public relations. *CASE Currents* Washington, DC.

Rogers, W. H. (1977). School public relations: What it's really all about: Thrust of leadership. *Public relations review.* (6) 6-8.

Ryans, C. C. & Shanklin, W. C. (1986). *Strategic planning, marketing and public relations, and fundraising in higher education: Perspectives, readings and annotated bibliography.* Metuchen, New Jersey & London. The scarecrow press Inc.

Shoemaker, D. (1993). They pledge allegiance: public relations people and their presidents. *CASE Currents* pp. 20 - 23.

Small, J. M. (1995). Reform in higher education in Canada. *Higher education Quarterly,* 49 (2), 113-127.

Sowell, E.J. & Casey, R.J. (1982). *Analyzing educational research,* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth publishing Co.

Staff structures: Details of how three campus public relations offices are organized. (1994). *CASE Currents,* pp. 44 - 46.

University Of Alberta. (1994-95). *Our future together.* Edmonton: Author.

University of Alberta (1996). *The strategic plan of the University of Alberta Development Office,* Edmonton: Author.

University of Alberta (1996). *These are the days: The strategic initiatives of the Office of the Vice-President (Research and External Affairs).* Edmonton: Author.

University of Alberta (1997-1998). *External Affairs: Goals and action.* Edmonton: Author.

University of Alberta, (1995, December). *President's Newsletter.* Edmonton, Author.

University of Alberta, *Calendar* 1995-6., 1996/97, 1997/98.

University of Alberta. (1995). *Alumni Association strategic plan 1995-1998.* Edmonton: Author.

University of Alberta. (1995/96). *Community report.* Edmonton: Author.

University of Alberta. (1996). *Indisputably recognized: Strategic plan for the Office of Public Affairs.* Edmonton: Author.

University of Alberta. (1996). *Making sense: Strategic communications initiatives for the University of Alberta.* Edmonton: Author.

University of Alberta. (1996). *University of Alberta campaign.* Edmonton: Author.

Walling, D. R. (1982). *Complete book of school public relations: An administrators manual and guide.* Englewood Cliffs. NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Wesley, W. K. (ed) (1993). Winning strategies in challenging times for advancing small colleges. *CASE: Washington DC.*

West, P. T. (1985). *Educational public relations.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Wherry, J. H. (1986). A public relations secret. Enlist entire staff for public relations effectiveness. *NASSP Bulletin* 70(474), 3–13.

White, J. & Mazur, L. (1994) *Strategic communications management: Making public relations work.* Addison-Wesley Publishing Company: New York

Wills, S.J.A. (1987). *Currents develoments in public relations and review of their implications in public relations curriculum in Canada.* Unpublished Masters thesis. Concordia University, Montreal, Canada.

Winnet, R. A. (1986). *Information and behavior: Systems of influence.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Association, Publishers.

Woodrum, R. (1995). The public relations officer's survival kit. *CASE Currents* Washington, DC.

Wylie, F. W. (1994). Ethics in college and university public relation. *Public relations review* pp. 63–67.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Department of
Educational Policy
Studies
7-104 Education North

15 - 12 - 1996.

Dear ....

Re: Introduction to Carry Out Research

This letter is to introduce Mr. Nicholas Lang'at, a masters student in the department of educational policy studies who is carrying out a study under my supervision on "University public relations strategies: A case study ". His proposal has been considered and approved by the University Ethics Review Committee. Anonymity, confidentiality and other ethical considerations will therefore be adhered to.

Mr. Lang'at's study focuses on the various public relations strategies used by the university to fulfill their mandates. He will also among other issues investigate and describe the administrative structures in which the public relations activities operate, internal and external factors influencing choice of strategies or programs, determination of the publics, challenges and program evaluation procedures. The study will utilize interviews and documentary data as main sources of information. It is expected that the interviews will last for about 40 minutes and will be recorded.

I am writing to seek your consent to be interviewed by Mr. Lang'at and where possible to provide him with documents relevant to his study. Mr. Lang'at will be getting in touch with you soon to discuss possible dates of interviews and other forms of assistance. I appreciate the demands made on administrative staff, but I hope that you will be able to fit in an interview. Please contact me at ... should you have any concerns or questions.

Yours sincerely,

Professor and Supervisor

Appendix B

Department of
Educational Policy
Studies
7-104 Education
North

January 8, 1997

The Director, Public Affairs Office
Athabasca Hall
University of Alberta

Dear ....

<u>Re. Request to interview staff in your department.</u>

The intent of this letter is to seek your approval to interview staff within your department. I am a Master's student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies (from Moi University, Kenya) and currently undertaking a study entitled "University public relations strategies: A case study ". The study has been approved by the Department's Ethics Review Committee.

The study will focus on how this University has under the direction of the Public Affairs Office engaged in public relations activities to fulfill its mandate. Part of the study will focus on issues of office size, staff tittles, structure and functions, internal and external influences to strategies used, the determination of publics and challenges faced. To enable me accomplish this task, I will need the participation of members of staff in your various sections. I plan to conduct these interviews in the month of January.

I have enclosed a copy of the letter with which I intend to invite your staff to participate in my study. As indicated in the letter, all information will remain confidential as well as participants anonymous. Your assistance with this study will be greatly appreciated. Should you require any information please contact me at 492-1157 or 439-8557, or my supervisor Dr. E. Ratsoy at 492-3373. Thank you for your consideration of this matter and for your anticipated approval.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix C

Sample Interview Guide

Sec A: Office Structure and Operations

1. Because my interview will focus on the functioning of the Office of the...over a period of time, could you please indicate how long you have worked with this Office?

2. As the.............. office, I believe your operations are heavily public relations oriented. How does this department define or c onceptualize Public Relations (PR)? (how do you differentiate between PR. and PA.?

3. What is the mandate of the .... office? Does the office have a mission statement/policy statement. Would you outline what it says?.

4. How does your mission statement/mandate relate to the overall mission of the university?

5. What are the functions of the ... Office? (Operational areas within the office.

   *What structures has this institution established for the management and coordination of PR activities within the .... office? (Administrative structure)

   *What PR strategies have your office been using to execute the above functions and to achieve desired results?

   * What is the relationship between the .... office and other offices or organs of the University ; e.g. President's Office, Alumni, Public Affairs and the Board of Directors; and FGC and who provides the linkage.

6. PR. offices employ various strategies to achieve their goals. What influences your choice of strategy for a particular program?
   * What PR mediums do you use in your campaign programs.

7. Much of PR work is hinged on communication. Do you have a policy statement on communication? Who develops communications plans for your recruitment campaigns / programs ?

8. What role do the public play in your program formulation, if any?
*Do your programs reflect the information collected from your publics? please provide an example.
* Do you get involved in community activities? e.g.. visit schools? Please explain.

9. Are your programs evaluated? How ? How often? and by whom?

10. How are your programs funded? Have cutbacks affected your operations? please give specific examples.
*How has the department responded to this challenge?
*Does your department get involved with fund raising? (If yes, how?)

Sec B: Views on Issues Regarding Public Relations in the University.

11. A wealth of literature suggests that the prominence currently accorded to PR activities in universities is the product of cutbacks and of a changing environment. What are your views on this with reference to this university?

    *What other factors influence your programs and strategies?

12. How would you characterize the nature of the environment both, internal and external, with which your institution interacts.

13. What do you see as the major problems/challenges facing the office of .... and what could be done to alleviate them?

    *What do you see as the necessary ingredients to successful PR. programs in universities in general and your office ?
    *What do you see as the future of PR in universities?

14. What are some of your memorable challenging experiences in carrying out your role as ....
*What would be your advice to others in the same role and facing the same challenges?

15. Are there any other major issues/points/concerns/suggestions that you have regarding PR in universities that we have not covered in our discussion?

Appendix D

Interviewee Consent Form

I consent to participate in the study conducted by Mr. Lang'at as part of his requirements for the degree of Master of Education at this University. I also understand that the study is being conducted in accordance with the university's guidelines on ethics in human research with the approval of the Department of Educational Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee.

It has been explained to me and I understand that:

1. The interview will be recorded.

2. I am guaranteed anonymity at all times. My identity (name and position) will not be disclosed at any time.

3. The tape will be kept only by the researcher (Mr. Lang'at).

4. Should the researcher wish to use my name or position in association with any quotations from the transcript of my interview, I will be asked for permission to do so, and in addition will be given an opportunity to verify the quotation, and to make any additions or deletions to ensure that the content is an accurate reflection of the proceedings.

5. I may be asked to verify portions of the transcript if the meaning of what I said is not clear to the researcher.

6. I will be free to ask further information and clarification.

7. My involvement in the study is voluntary and that I may opt out at any time during the study.

______________________ Interviewee Signature

______________________ Researcher Signature

Date ___________

Date ________________

CURRICULUM VITAE

Nicholas Kipkorir Lang'at

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

1995 – 1997	University of Alberta	M.Ed
1984 -1987	University of Nairobi	Bachelor of Arts
1981 – 1982	Kabianga High School	"A" Level
1977– 1980	Kabianga High School	"O" Level
1970 – 1976	Highland Primary School	Certificate of Primary

Education

WORK EXPERIENCE

1988 – Present	Administrative Officer (Assistant Registrar) Moi University, Kenya
1983 – 1984	Teacher, Kericho Day Secondary School, Kenya

AWARDS

1995 – 1997	World Bank/Kenya Government Scholarship

SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES ATTENDED

1995	Senior university administrators workshop, Kenya
1997	Educating in global times, University of Alberta.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY

PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Overseeing the publication of the university newsletter
- Monitoring the university's image in the media
- Organizing receptions for university visitors and media coverage of university functions
- Production of brochures and compiling statistics and information fro the Vice-Chancellor's meetings.

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

- Supervising staff members in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor
- Secretary to the Vice-Chancellor's Committee, Moi University Management Committee, Publicity Committee, and Graduation and Ceremonies Committee
- Day to day office administration under the direction of the Vice-Chancellor.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

High School - Prefect and Hockey Vice Captain

Kericho secondary School - Patron Wildlife Club.