

EDUCATE INSPIRE DISCOVER INVEST LEARN  
ENGAGE CULTIVATE EMPOWER DEVOTE  
DEVELOP INFORM INFLUENCE ENCOURAGE  
MOTIVATE IMPACT ADVISE DIRECT INSTILL  
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# EDUCATE & ELEVATE

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AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO  
EMPOWER OTHERS TO  
CHANGE THE WORLD



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**THE PLANK CENTER**  
FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

## Dear Educator,

From the classroom to the boardroom, leaders play crucial roles in all groups and at all organizational levels, and The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations wants to empower, elevate and inspire you and your students.

As the leading international resource for those passionate about advancing their careers and the public relations profession, The Plank Center is pleased to offer you free resources to develop and strengthen your and your students' leadership skills.

This toolkit is filled with best practices in leadership, mentorship, and diversity and inclusion; lessons from leaders; classroom activities; and much more.

We thank you for teaching the future of the public relations profession and hope this toolkit serves as a resource to educate and elevate the future leaders.



Karla K. Gower, Ph.D.  
Director, The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations



Shaping the future of the  
public relations profession through  
leadership and mentorship.

## **ABOUT THE PLANK CENTER**

The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations seeks to bridge the gap between education and practice through its research, programs and initiatives, and offers a variety of free resources for public relations educators.



### **LESSONS FROM LEADERS**

From interviews with PR legends and leaders to speeches and written tributes, more than 100 leaders have shared personal messages of counsel and experience with countless generations of PR pros.



### **WEBINARS**

With more than 15 on-demand webinars, the time to discover and explore relevant topics and the latest trends is now.



### **RESOURCE GUIDES**

From beginners tips to more niche, tailored topics, The Plank Center offers a series of tactical, skill-based guides.



### **PLATFORM MAGAZINE**

An online, student-run publication focused on the discussion & advancement of the public relations industry. Pitch your article or blog post to Platform Magazine.



### **AP STYLE QUIZZES**

Platform Magazine offers a series of more than 20 10-question AP Style quizzes to test your students' knowledge.



### **PR TERMS QUIZZES**

From freshmen to graduate students, these quizzes from Platform Magazine will test students' knowledge of public relations terms.



### **RESEARCH**

Focused on leadership, mentorship, and diversity and inclusion, more than 35 completed studies explore the truths of the PR industry through a global lens.



### **SCHOLARSHIP**

An opportunity for students to gain professional insights and to see, hear from and network with successful professionals.

*This program is specifically designed with you in mind...*



### **EDUCATOR FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

A two-week summer fellowship matching educators to world-class public relations agencies and corporations to bridge the gap between academia and practice.

## **LESSONS FROM LEADERS**

From the classroom to the boardroom, leaders are needed at all organizational levels. More than 100 public relations leaders have shared lessons on leadership, mentorship, diversity and inclusion, ethics, and more.

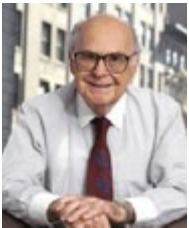
### **INTERVIEWS WITH PR LEGENDS & LEADERS**

More than 25 video interviews with distinguished PR leaders have been conducted to highlight their views on leadership qualities, practices and experiences. We hope you find inspiration from the legends and current leaders. These interviews remind us to keep learning, dreaming and, of course, leading. Below is a snippet of the lessons you can learn and share from these interviews:



#### **DR. NILANJANA BARDHAN**

Nilanjana Bardhan, a recognized, awarded educator and researcher, says it's important "not to judge people based on differences but to understand how to build relationships despite differences."



#### **HAROLD BURSON**

Harold Burson is one of the most influential practitioners in the world and the founding chairman of one of the largest PR agencies in the world today. Burson stresses the importance of having the ability to "get along with all kinds of people, and an adaptability in all kinds of situations."



#### **BRIDGET COFFING**

Bridget Coffing has more than 35 years of experience working in public affairs, issues management, corporate marketing communications and public relations and advertising agencies. When reflecting on leadership characteristics, Coffing says that "one of the primary things is to be a great listener."



#### **RON CULP**

Before joining the world of academia, Ron Culp held senior public relations positions at four Fortune 500 corporations and two major agencies. To develop leadership skills as a student, Culp suggests you "have to find ways to get involved. And if you just stick to the coursework, it's not going to happen."



#### **OFIELD DUKES**

With a passion for advocacy, Ofield Dukes organized the first congressional caucus and served on the boards of the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Non-Violent Change and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. Dukes explained the importance of "developing a passion, not to be good, not to be outstanding, but to be excellent, not once a week, but every day."



#### **ALICIA THOMPSON**

Alicia Thompson has more than 20 years of experience developing and implementing marketing, corporate and crisis/issues management communications strategy. Thompson believes that young professionals should "first and foremost become students of leadership."

## **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: REACTION PAPER**

Students will view **two** of the 20-minute video interviews of public relations practitioners found online at the [Plank Center website](#) and write a two-page reaction paper to the interviews watched.

[Click here to download the assignment.](#)

### **LEGACIES FROM LEGENDS**

In 2007, The Plank Center, with direction from Betsy Plank, began work to recognize PRSSA's milestone year of 2007-2008. We asked legendary professional honorees to write brief personal messages of counsel, wisdom and experience for publication as a gift to students. Thirty-four of those honorees answered that first call – a remarkable response and reflection of caring for students.

The success of the first edition of “Legacies from Legends in PR” prompted this edition as an ongoing and unique project that captures messages and insights. It's a proud roster of respected leaders whose work has strengthened the public relations practice and education. To continue Betsy's legacy, [The Plank Center is offering a complimentary download \(PDF\)](#). We hope this book informs and inspires those who will shape the next generation of public relations leaders.



[Continue learning valuable lessons from more leaders on the Center's website.](#)

## **WEBINARS**

The Plank Center hosts a series of free webinars and continues to add to its collection each year. Below are four popular webinars:

### **GETTING A JOB IN PR**

Are your students ready to get a job in public relations? Are they hungry to set themselves apart from the thousands of applicants? Featured experts examine the characteristics and traits in demand for public relations positions, offer helpful tips on how to stand out from the competition in job searches and provide insights on how managers attract, retain and develop top performers.

### **THINGS I WISH I KNEW BEFORE ENTERING THE WORKFORCE**

Are your students eager to graduate and begin their career? Position them for even greater success by listening to industry professionals discuss their own experiences and what they wish they'd known when beginning their first job.

### **WOMEN & LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Being successful in the public relations field is still challenging for women—the pay gap is real; the opportunity gap is real; and the being-heard-and-respected-gap is real. Those gaps are explored, including action items for current leaders at all organizational levels.

### **HIDDEN FIGURES IN PR: PUTTING A LONG-OVERDUE SPOTLIGHT ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN PR PIONEERS**

Who comes to mind when you think of the pioneers of the public relations profession? Our textbooks taught us the pioneers of our profession—Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays—but this webinar shines a light on those the

textbooks missed, the “Hidden Figures in PR,” and provides deeper insight and understanding of the history of our profession.

The webinar series can be found on [The Plank Center’s website](#).

## **RESOURCE GUIDES**

From beginner tips to more niche, tailored topics, The Plank Center offers a series of tactical, skill-based resource guides on leadership and mentorship.



### **MENTORSHIP GUIDE**

Backed by collegiate white papers, top industry professionals and researchers, the Mentorship Guide offers a living series of tips on how to get the most out of a mentorship relationship. This guide was made to supplement mentorship programs, lesson plans, and/or professional relationships.

### **LEAD WITH PURPOSE** \*Coming Soon

Not only does this interactive toolkit include free resources with the individual student in mind, it offers a variety of ways to incorporate these resources throughout campus and community organizations to provide lessons and learnings for all to find the leader within.

## **PLATFORM MAGAZINE**

**PLATFORM MAGAZINE** is an online, student-run publication focused on the discussion and advancement of the public relations industry.

### **CONTRIBUTE**

Platform encourages PR students, educators and professionals to become part of the team! The process of contributing to Platform Magazine is simple. Begin by pitching your article idea to the student editorial team for consideration. The article or blog will be reviewed by the editorial team, and topics should focus on industry trends, timely news reports, or pieces that represent leadership, ethics or creative perspectives. To pitch your story, email [platformmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:platformmagazine@gmail.com). A representative will be in touch within a week.

### **QUIZZES**

Along with content creation opportunities, Platform Magazine offers free online quizzes so everyone can be an eternal student.

#### **AP STYLE QUIZZES**

With more than 20 AP Style quizzes, test your students’ knowledge with a series of 10-question quizzes.

#### **PR TERMS QUIZZES**

From freshman to graduate student, test your students’ knowledge of public relations terms.

## **RESEARCH**

Leaders exert significant influence on the success, future and image of the profession. One goal of the Center is to build a research-based foundation of knowledge regarding the values, qualities and dimensions of excellent leadership, mentorship, and diversity and inclusion in public relations. Here is a snapshot of the Center’s research:

## LEADERSHIP

How would you grade yourself as a leader? [The Plank Center's Report Card](#) suggests leadership in the public relations industry is average. However, you can start your journey to becoming an outstanding leader right now. Dr. Bruce Berger, professor emeritus at The University of Alabama, shares five things that you can do to improve both your leadership skills and those of your team.

1. **Humanize:** Small changes in your language and behavior can help personalize your leadership style. Leadership is about “we,” not “I.” Dr. Marshall Goldsmith, author, teacher and executive coach to Fortune 500 CEOs, advises leaders to stop saying “no” and “however” when responding to others’ ideas.
2. **Equalize:** As a leader you have the power to eliminate inequalities, especially among people of diverse backgrounds. The extent to which equality is practiced and perceived strongly influences trust, engagement, productivity and retention.
3. **Self-reflect:** Self-awareness stemming from reflection is the foundation of great leadership. To continuously improve as a leader, take a few minutes each day to think about your communication and behaviors: what you did, why, how and to what effect on others. Could you have done it better or involved others?
4. **Listen:** Becoming a more active listener is hard work and takes time. However, the less we listen, the more we misunderstand, weaken relationships, impair engagement and tilt toward poor decisions. Attend a workshop or webinar on active listening. Ask trusted colleagues for candid feedback. Practice, practice, practice.
5. **Enrich:** You can enrich your team’s attitude, work and growth in many ways. Share performance feedback regularly. Celebrate, reward and recognize accomplishments. Bring positive energy that inspires, motivates and builds commitment. If you don’t do this, then don’t expect your team to do so either.

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: LEADERSHIP**

#### *What’s Your Leadership Style?*

Learn and cultivate your leadership skills. [Skills You Need](#) helps you identify personal, interpersonal, leadership and learning skills, along with much more. Read articles and take quizzes to help classify your leadership style. Have your students take these quizzes to better understand their leadership style! Try using the [Myers-Briggs Type Indicator](#) to discover your own personality type.

#### *Understand Preferences in Group Work*

Presented by the School Reform Initiative, this exercise uses a set of preferences that relate not to individual but to group behaviors, helping us to understand how preferences affect our group work.

[Click here to download the assignment.](#)

#### *Be A Leader*

From self-reflection to identifying the leader within, you will connect your students to leadership by [“getting the conversation going” with this activity from Trainers Warehouse!](#)

#### *50 Communications Activities, Icebreakers, and Exercises*

Communication plays such a big part in our lives today. This book helps us increase participants’ awareness of how they communicate; helps them build expertise in a variety of essential skills and competencies; and, prepares them to deal effectively with the many types of communication challenges they face every day.

[Click here to download the assignment.](#)

Reproduced from *50 Communications Activities, Icebreakers, and Exercises*, by Peter R. Garber. Amherst, MA, HRD Press, 2008.

## BRIDGE TO CAREER

According to The Center's co-sponsored research study on [Millennial Communication Professionals](#), millennials have a passion for strong leadership, are digital savvy, and place a high emphasis on diversity, social corporate responsibility and transparency. Making the transition from student to young professional can be exciting and terrifying at the same time. When making that transition, here are a few things to remember when entering the workforce.

- The habits developed during college are the same habits you exhibit in the workforce.
- Establish a routine to help you get and stay on schedule.
- The real world is ever-changing, so follow Betsy Plank's advice: "public relations people need to be eternal students."
- Similar to communication, interviews are two-way. You are interviewing the organization just as much as the organization is interviewing you.
- Find a company culture that aligns with your moral compass.
- Don't be afraid to seek out mentors and mentor others.

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: COMPANY CULTURE**

How do you determine if a company culture is a good fit? **Leadercast** offers several questions to ask the interviewer, tips on interviewing for culture fit and how to use them next time you're seeking a new job or internship opportunity.

## MENTORSHIP

Did you know that Betsy Plank's mentor directed her to pursue a public relations position? Years later Betsy said, "mentoring is one of the strongest ways to spell success in public relations." Her legacy is most visible in the countless public relations professionals, educators and students who credit her with taking the time to mentor them. Take a page out of Betsy's book: mentor and be mentored.

Mentorship is when a mentor, or someone with experience in a certain field, creates a bond or relationship with a mentee, an individual looking to grow his or her expertise in that field. Whether it be a personal or professional setting, mentors are encouraged to be a guide and advocate for their mentees, while the mentees provide a different perspective for their mentors.

### **DOWNLOAD THE PLANK CENTER'S MENTORSHIP GUIDE**

Mentorship programs can allow mentees to advance in their fields faster, earn higher salaries and develop more satisfaction in their jobs than individuals who don't have mentors. In addition, employers get better performance from employees and have greater success in recruiting, training and keeping top talent.

The [Center-sponsored research suggest 10 best practices to develop a mentorship program](#):

1. Identify the purpose and available resources, then set clear goals and expectations
2. Demonstrate management's support
3. Provide training
4. Hold all parties accountable
5. Provide time for mentees to watch, do, interact and learn
6. Encourage mentors to model professionalism
7. Be helpful, transparent and honest
8. Maintain consistency and know that mentoring takes time
9. Don't forget to mentor leaders
10. Provide an "out" for mentoring relationships that do not work



## **DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

The Plank Center is a catalyst for other professional organizations to help identify and bridge gaps and assist organizations seeking to adopt best-in-class practices in the area of diversity and inclusion. Through its diversity and inclusion [research](#), The Center has identified ways to incorporate diversity and inclusion into the classroom, boardroom and workplace. Take these lessons, ideas and values and incorporate them into all aspects of your leadership now and throughout your career.

- Hire qualified employees who are diverse based on race/ethnicity, and include them, as well as Caucasian women, at top levels.
- Create a mentorship program and other opportunities to advance the careers of diverse practitioners.
- Establish a multicultural group that can work on improving diversity in the classroom and workplace.
- Inspire a culture that promotes micro-affirmations and discourages micro-inequities.
- Change attitudes toward diversity in the classroom and workplace. Build alliances across identity groups. People from all backgrounds should understand the importance of diversity.
- Promote diverse, qualified practitioners to senior positions.
- Ensure equal workload despite identity markers.
- Intermix work to get a better understanding of cultures.

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

In order to understand one another, we need to place our self in each other's shoes. [This classroom activity, brought to you by Trainers Warehouse](#), will have your students sharing their "experiences of feeling different or excluded and identifying ways to create a more welcoming, diverse and compassionate community."

## **SCHOLARSHIPS**

The Plank Center encourages students nationwide to apply for this travel scholarship.

### **THE PLANK CENTER SUMMIT SCHOLARSHIP**

The Plank Center's Summit is an annual event that is held in Chicago each fall. The purpose of The Summit is to help students, professionals and educators gain a deeper understanding of the profession and learn best practices within the field. It offers a unique opportunity for public relations students to gain professional insights and to see, hear from and network with successful professionals and their peers. The scholarship includes roundtrip air travel (or other transportation), a one-night stay at the Union League Club, one ticket to the Milestones in Mentoring Gala and one ticket to the Plank Summit, totaling an estimated \$1,500.

*This program is specifically designed with you in mind...*

## **EDUCATOR FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

Our namesake, the legendary Betsy Plank, had a life-long dream of facilitating a relationship between educators and professionals so both would grow together. In 2010, Betsy's vision would be transformed into the [Educator Fellowship Program](#). Since its inception, more than 65 educators have been selected for the program.

The Center acts as the convener of the program, matching educators to their hosts based on specific areas of interest, expertise and geographic preference. The program consists of an intensive, two-week summer fellowship

developed specifically for public relations educators, which allows the fellows to develop or enhance skills in:

#### *Professional Development*

Fellows will experience the current day-to-day operations of the public relations function and help create an exchange of information and ideas that will enhance the professional development of both the educators and their host organizations.

#### *Leadership*

Fellows will develop greater knowledge of the skills necessary for today's public relations work. Key beneficiaries are public relations students. They can be assured their professors are knowledgeable in the current practices and issues facing practitioners and that practitioners have a greater appreciation for the value of theory and research in their classrooms.

#### *Networking*

Fellows will interact closely with public relations professionals, becoming part of the team during the fellowship. The host will agree to spend up to two days on the educator's college or university campus with faculty, administrators and students.

To learn more about the program and application process, please visit [the Center's webpage dedicated to the Educator Fellowship Program](#).

## **ABOUT BETSY PLANK**



Known as the First Lady of Public Relations, Betsy Plank created a legacy during her 63-year career as a professional who inspired, educated and advocated. Betsy spent the majority of her professional life in Chicago, discovering the importance of mentorship, leadership and eternal learning through her career in the corporate, agency and nonprofit settings. In May 2010, Betsy passed away, but her legacy spans the countless generations she mentored along the way and continues on through The Plank Center's programs and initiatives to develop public relations leaders and advance the profession.

Betsy gave many speeches and her insight is as relevant today as it was 30 and 40 years ago.

### **BETSY PLANK'S BAKER'S DOZEN FOR PR STUDENTS**

Betsy was a pioneer for public relations education — she was the co-chair of the 1987 Commission on Public Relations Education to develop guidelines for the undergraduate public relations curriculum, served on accrediting teams at many universities and spoke to numerous student groups and classes. In several speeches, she referenced her “Baker's Dozen for Public Relations Students.”

**[Download infographic](#)**

### **BETSY'S LESSONS LEARNED**

Betsy referred to her lessons learned, stating, “if I were starting my career all over, these are the lessons that would have the most currency.”

**[Download infographic](#)**

## **BETSY PLANK DAY**

To honor her life and legacy, The Plank Center honors Betsy by hosting a national celebration, #BetsyPlank Day, on the first Thursday of April. Since the programs' inception in 2014, more than 100 PRSSA Chapters, student-run firms and organizations have joined us in on the celebration.

Here's how you and your students [can get involved with #BetsyPlank Day!](#) You may just be crowned the #BetsyPlank Champions.

Step 1: Watch the Betsy Plank four-minute documentary to learn more about the legend. Snap a selfie, share and tag @PlankCenterPR on Twitter and/or Instagram using #BetsyPlank.

Step 2: Betsy believed “volunteering was good for the soul.” There is no better way to celebrate #BetsyPlank than by giving back to your local campus or community. So volunteer between now and #BetsyPlank Day.

- Share it on #BetsyPlank Day by tagging us, @PlankCenterPR on Twitter or Instagram using #BetsyPlank.
- Email The Plank Center a summary of how your class helped the community by honoring Betsy. Send your submissions to [plankcenter@gmail.com](mailto:plankcenter@gmail.com). The deadline is the Friday after #BetsyPlank Day.

The winners will be announced the last week of April.

## **STAY UPDATED**

Get the latest research, professional development opportunities and upcoming events straight to your inbox! [Sign up for our newsletter.](#)

Also, connect with us on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

## **WHAT'S MISSING?**

If you have a moment, please let me know what resources you would like to see that would help you accomplish your goals. **What can we do to help you moving forward?** Email us at [plankcenter@gmail.com](mailto:plankcenter@gmail.com).

THANK YOU FOR EMPOWERING OTHERS  
TO CHANGE THE WORLD