

# The Relay

*A publication for PR students*

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## New PR professor on campus

*By Merritt Whitley*

Eastern Illinois University's Communications Department has a brand new Public Relations teacher this semester.

Molly Niesen, a former professor at University of Illinois is now teaching a Public Relations course at Eastern.

Niesen is currently working on her Ph.D. and plans to finish it next month. Niesen has also had previous experience teaching public relations, consumer culture, media studies, and advertising courses in her teaching career.

"I like PR and advertising, it fascinates me. It is one of the most powerful forces politically and socially of our time, it is not only interesting to me, but I can tell the students also pay attention," Niesen said.

One of the main reasons Niesen decided to teach at Eastern was because she really liked her colleagues, the department and students.

"I like the smaller class sizes," Niesen said. "I know my students names, they come to my office. I never had this teaching experience at the



*Molly Niesen sits in her office during her office hours in the communication department. This is the first year Niesen is teaching at EIU.*

***Photo by Emily McInerney***

University of Illinois. I like being able to mentor my students closely."

Besides having more time with the students, Niesen also mentioned how engaged the students are in class.

"The students seem more interested in learning the material and concepts at Eastern, they are very intellectually curious, and they care about their grades," Niesen said.

sen said.

The transition has been fairly easy according to Niesen. She said her biggest challenges lately have been trying to figure out the copier and working with Web-CT, however, her colleagues have helped her out along the way. Niesen has been here just a few weeks, but says she is excited to continue her teaching journey at EIU.



# Students head to PRSSA National Conference

By Chad Grimm

Public Relations Student Society of America will be hosting its national conference in San Francisco this October, and four EIU students are biting at the bit to make the journey to the West coast.

“One of the big selling points for the conference was that it’s in San Francisco, which is awesome. Another big thing is that it’s now my senior year, and I need to start buckling down and doing a lot more networking than I already have,” said Geoffrey ZuHone, senior, journalism major.

ZuHone will be making the trip with fellow seniors Kelly Johnson, Andre Haynes and Lindsey Bly, senior, communication studies major. Johnson is also the sitting president of Eastern’s PRSSA chapter.

“Every year PRSSA puts together a big conference. Last year it was in Orlando, this year it’s in San Francisco, and all different chapters from around the country come together,” Johnson said. “We’re going just hoping to network and get to know other PRSSA chapters and just have a good time and learn new things.”

This year’s theme, “Bridging the Gap,” is aimed at giving students the chance to connect with both their peers and mentors while also gaining insight from some distinguished speakers. Hosted by Sacramento State, the conference will offer a variety of workshops to help develop attendee’s public re-



PRSSA members attending the PRSSA National Conference discuss issues of their upcoming trip to San Francisco. From left: Kelly Johnson, Andre Haynes and Geoffrey ZuHone. Lindsey Bly will join them.

Photo by Emily McInerney

lations skills.

There is only one downfall: price. It won’t be cheap, but these students are willing to make the sacrifice because they know it could be vital to their futures.

“I’m a senior so kind of a big incentive to go is because I do want to have a job when I graduate. I see this as a perfect opportunity to try to reach out and show how much I care about my future career,” Johnson said.

PRSSA is trying to take some of the financial burden off of its members so the money isn’t a deciding factor in making the trip.

“It’s pretty costly so what we’re trying to do is come up with creative ways to fundraise,” Johnson said. “I just finished writing a sponsorship letter that we’re going to send out to different people

in [Public Relations Society of America] to try and see if they would want to help sponsor us and pay for our trip.” Growmark has already responded with a donation.

Haynes was the only one of the students to attend last year’s conference in Orlando, Florida. He feels it is an extremely rewarding experience for students considering the public relations field.

“It was definitely worth it,” Haynes said. “After going to it I was trying to get everyone to go, but people were still feeling iffy like I was. I hope we can get more people to go this year. It’ll be cool to see a lot of the people that I met last year, too.”

Haynes also had another warning for his classmates. Just grabbing a degree doesn’t cut it these days.

“You can’t get anything just

by going to school, doing the homework and things like that. At the end of the day all you really have is a piece of paper saying you graduated from a university, so you need to go out there and make [contacts.]”

The conference will be October 12–16. While the conference also offers the students a look into one of the most culture-rich cities in America, they are fully aware the purpose of this trip is business.

“I already have an internship under my belt and some contacts in the field, but I want to make sure to solidify that in a way that might produce a job or future internship,” ZuHone said. “It’s about who you know these days, and the more people you know just through events like these, the better.”

# Students take on summer PR internships

By Kelly Johnson

Over the summer many students attain internships. These internships help students apply what they learn in class to real life. Terryne McClurge, Mike Wolbers and Elizabeth Edwards attained summer internships in the public relations field.

McClurge, a senior communication studies major, was the social media intern for Chicago University. She was in charge of managing the university’s Facebook and Twitter. She had to make sure the social media platforms were constantly updated with all the events on campus.

Wolbers, a junior journalism major, was an intern at High Gear, a business specializing in motorcycle parts. He was in charge of writing news releases about the company, including information about new partners and High Gear products.

Edwards, a senior journalism major, interned with C. Green Associates, a small public relations firm near St. Louis. Edwards was treated as a partner in her internship. She was involved in many different aspects of the firm ranging from assembling a newsletter, to making a radio news release.

**How did you like your experience?**

Edwards: “I really like my internship and boss. In most internships, you are treated like a student, but my boss treated me like I was her equal. We were a really good team together. And plus, it

was right on top of a coffee shop so I got some everyday”

Wolbers: “It was a good way for me to keep up the skills I learned in class. I also learned some things about different industries that you don’t learn in class.”

**What was enjoyable about it?**

McClurge: “Working in the public relations office was just an enjoyable experience in itself. Everybody was able to just be themselves and bring creative thoughts to the table any time. The fact I was able to tweet and update statuses, something that I am passionate about, was also enjoyable.”

**What was difficult?**

Wolbers: What I found difficult was the jargon. I had to research the technical names and what’s acceptable, because there are a lot of technical names that I did not know.”

**How are you applying what you learned to your classes?**

Edwards: “I have learned to set my own deadlines in classes. In my PR classes I have learned how to write press releases, and I have also learned how to research. This applies to all of my classes and my position in the Daily Eastern News.”

**How have your classes helped you with the internship?**

McClurge: “My classes helped a lot. I considered some theories and principles I learned in everything I did.”

Wolbers: “My classes have helped me get AP Style

down. And it has helped me understand how to concisely write news releases. You want to know how to write concisely because you don’t want the reporter to go through a lot of puffery.”

**Would you recommend other students to apply for summer internships?**

McClurge: “Yes! Experience is needed before entering the field.”

Wolbers: Definitely, it looks great on a resume. Most employers will not take you without numerous internships, and the experience of working with other professionals that are not your teachers is essential.”

**Why did you choose yours?**

McClurge: “A family friend encouraged me to apply. She is going to school for PR as well and said this would be beneficial.”

Edwards: “I wanted to have an internship to teach me

about PR because I originally went to school thinking I wanted to do journalism. And after this summer I definitely want a job in public relations.”

Wolbers: “It was close to home and I could work it into my schedule, and it fit my work schedule. It was also what I was looking for.”

Internships are a great way to gain experience in the PR field. “Even if it’s an unpaid internship, take it! The experience is a payment of itself,” Wolbers said. Many students fall in love with their internships. “It was a great opportunity. I loved it,” Edwards said.

“These students’ experiences demonstrate how internships benefit the learning process,” Terri Johnson, journalism professor and PRSSA co-adviser said. “The more students intern, the better prepared they are and the better their résumé.”



Terryne McClurge interned with Chicago University in media relations. McClurge’s internship lasted through summer of 2012.

Photo supplied by Terryne McClurge



# PRSSA chapter starts off a new year

By Michael Wolbers

The Daniel Thornburgh chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America began planning for the upcoming semester at its meeting September 10.

PRSSA is a national professional organization that allows students to network within the public relations field and learn more about the profession.

The meeting began with nominations for the open service chair position on the executive board. This position is in charge of handling nonprofit fundraisers and communications.

Senior communication studies major Erica Loring was chosen to fill this position. Loring said her previous work with nonprofits such as the Hope Center and the Sexual Assault Counseling and Information Service would help her perform her duties.

"I'm actually excited because I've worked with nonprofits before, and I always love fundraising, because I



*Above, Terri Johnson, journalism, addresses the PRSSA members at one of its weekly meeting in Buzzard Hall at Eastern Illinois University. To her right is her PRSSA co-adviser, Dr. Brian Sowa, communication studies.*

**Photo by Emily McInerney**

know how hard it is for them to get money," Loring said.

With Loring elected, the group discussed chapter fundraising as well as service fundraising. President Kelly Johnson mentioned possible fundraisers that had been discussed. Johnson said PRSSA is hoping to partner with Colleges Against Cancer to sell T-shirts during Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October. The group would

also like to hold a garage sale to help raise funds.

Johnson said she also sent out a letter to Public Relations Society of America members, in order to gain sponsorship, as well as funds for PRSSA.

These funds go toward bringing in professional speakers and putting on programs for PRSSA, as well as sending students to events such as PRSA Hoosier Chapters meetings and Central Illinois Chapter meetings like one in Peoria Sept. 27 and one in Springfield Nov. 29.

Members of PRSSA will also be attending the International PRSSA conference in San Francisco, Oct. 12-16, where they will have even more networking opportunities and chances to grow in the field.

PRSSA meets Mondays at 6 p.m. in Buzzard Hall, room 2434.

*PRSSA members look over notes and plans for the upcoming year. The chapter hopes to take on many fundraising campaigns to fund upcoming events.*



**Photo by  
Emily  
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## General Information

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