

2005 Bateman Case Study Competition

Project Brief

Project Brief: Advancing Ethical Behavior in Academic Performance by Students

According to the research by the Gallup Organization, two leading problems facing U.S. society are education and ethics.

Conjunction of the two issues occurs every day on campuses of U.S. colleges and universities. The institutions seek to prepare students for a literate, productive lifetime of contributions to society, of personal achievement and success in chosen careers.

Those expectations are shared by students – and their parents as well. The attainment of those goals is grounded in such ethical values as honesty, fairness, and respect for oneself and for others. Thus their academic studies test not only their knowledge, skills and intelligence, but also their character.

The erosion of ethical performance on campuses has been documented in research and reports of increased cheating by students and – equally disturbing – increasing acceptance of such peer behavior by students who do not cheat. The problem is also manifest in plagiarism, which is thriving on the misuse of computer technology, and often abetted by those who employ it in cheating-for-profit.

The problem is receiving headline attention by national and local media and escalating concern by future employers and the public, as well as by educators.

WHO HAS A MAJOR STAKE IN THIS ISSUE?

- Schools and its groups vested with responsibility for adherence to and enforcement of Honor Codes;
- Students who do not cheat but those ethics - and grades - may be influenced by those who do;
- Students who cheat and who future abilities to perform are thus compromised;
- Parents;
- Alumni who have a vested interest in and loyalty to their alma mater and its reputation;
- Future employees who may hire graduates bringing unethical behaviors to the workplace, risking penalty to other employers, customers, owners and to the corporate reputation;
- Professional organizations and other groups depending on the ethical behavior of its members, and;
- The public-at-large and a democratic society based on trust.

WHO IS THE "CLIENT"?

In this case problem, the most logical and immediate client is the school itself and those responsible for adherence to and enforcement of a Code or Principles of behavior by students. An appointed administrative or faculty group? Student government? Some other group organized specifically for this purpose?

Teams are strongly encouraged to seek out and enlist such a pro bono client – the school itself or its designated group – to support and compliment efforts already in place and in –progress. You offer two unique advantages: 1) the strategies and tactics of sound public relations, and 2) the ability to understand the motivations and to talk the language of fellow students. Both can bring new initiatives, insights, and persuasion to your school’s table of concern.

However –

Is such a client-of-record required for participation in this national competition? No. You can participate in the name of your own PRSSA Chapter, whose parent organization and sponsoring PRSA Chapter also consider ethical behavior to be fundamental to the professional practice and the sine qua non of membership. PRSA members also champion ethical behavior by all their employees and clients.

A SPECIAL RESOURCE

In that connection, you are encouraged to contact the Ethics Officer of your sponsoring PRSA Chapter. This person has special knowledge of the ethical standards of the professional organization and will understand the critical importance of ethical behavior during the college experience. (His or her name will be sent to each team.)

Also, that officer will automatically be advised of your PRSSA Chapter plans to participate in the 2005 Bateman Competition and prepared to offer information and counsel.

Following the selection of the three finalists by the national judges, that officer – or other PRSA Chapter designate – will have a special role associated with the final rankings. He or she will help to arrange a 30-minute presentation by a winning team before a group of PRSA Chapter members. The videotape of each of those three presentations will then be sent to PRSA headquarters for judging of the first, second and third place winners.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Addressing this issue on your campus involves the most fundamental challenge to public relations: to understand and effect change in human behavior. The process should engage –

- Research to define and determine the extent of the problem and the reasons for such unacceptable behavior;
- Planning to identify objectives and primary audiences, how to motivate change as needed;
- A campaign to intensify attention to the problem and its potential outcomes, to assert remedial attitudes and behaviors, and to strengthen the school’s position and goals;
- Evaluation to determine the impact of the campaign on key audiences.

The judges will understand that a short-term campaign will not and cannot resolve the issue. But they will assess its initial progress and the promise it holds for future remediation.

our PRSSA Chapter and its team can make an important contribution to your school, the education and the future of your fellow students. Submit your Intent-To-Enter form now and become a part of this very significant 2005 Bateman Competition!