Skills and Competencies

The ability to write well is an absolutely crucial skill for a career in public relations, so be sure to strengthen and develop your writing skills. In fact, many employers seek students who have a college major in English, Journalism, Public Relations, Advertising, or Communications. NMU's liberal studies program will help you fine-tune these skills, as will your public relations course work. Additionally helpful skills for the public relations field include creativity, initiative, good judgment, and the ability to express thoughts clearly and simply. Decision-making, problem solving, and research skills are also important. People who choose public relations as a career would also benefit from having self-confidence, an understanding of human psychology, and an enthusiasm for motivating people. They should also be competitive, yet flexible and able to function as part of a team.

Career Development

Although there are no defined standards for entry into a public relations career, a college education combined with public relations experience (usually gained through an internship) is considered excellent preparation for public relations work. In fact, because the public relations field is so competitive (there are approximately six graduates for every entry-level position), an internship can help keep you ahead of the competition. These positions often lead to future job placements, and can help you build important networks in which you get to know people in various settings who do hiring or know of possible openings. Also, be sure to collect a portfolio of writing samples, audio and video tapes, and copies of reports and group projects to showcase your talents. NMU is also here to help you. The Academic and Career Advisement Center can provide you with career planning help, while Career Services will help you fine-tune your resume. Your professors, too, can be an invaluable tool in your job search.

Additional Resources and Info

For Career Planning and Opportunities:

Academic & Career Advisement Center
3302 C.B. Hedgcock
906-227-2971
www.nmu.edu/acac

Department of Communication and Performance Studies (CAPS)
203 Thomas Fine Arts
906- 227-2045
www.nmu.edu/caps

For Job Search, Resume and Career Information:

Career Services
3502 C.B. Hedgcock
906-227-2800
www.nmu.edu/careers

For Information about NMU Student Organizations Associated with this Major Contact:

Center for Student Enrichment
1206 University Center
906-227-2439
www.nmu.edu/cse

Internet Resource Links:

www.careers.org
www.careerresource.net
www.bls.gov/oco Occupational Outlook Handbook

For Career Information with National Organizations:

www.prsa.org Public Relations Society of America

www.prssa.org Public Relations Student Society of America

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The Academic & Career Advisement Center

What To Do With A Major In....

Public Relations

Northern Michigan University

Public Relations

An organization's reputation, profitability, and continued existence can depend on the degree to which its goals and policies are supported by targeted "publics." Public relations specialists serve as advocates for businesses, governments, universities, hospitals, and other organizations, and strive to build and maintain positive relationships with the public. The Public Relations degree offered by NMU's Communication and Performance Studies Department (CAPS) will help develop necessary skills in students to perform in such capacities.

Effective writing is essential if you decide to pursue Public Relations, so be sure that your writing skills are top-notch.

Some introductory courses available to help you decide whether public relations is the right major for you include: BC 165 Introduction to Mass Communications, SP 110 Interpersonal Communication, PR 231 Introduction to Public Relations, and PR 250 Research in Public Relations which must be taken during the same semester.

Potential Careers

NMU's Public Relations prepares students for employment in the following careers:

Occupations

- Advertising/Marketing Specialist
- Campaign Director
- Corporate Communication Director
- Graduate School Business Administration
- Graduate School Journalism
- Graduate School Law
- Graduate School Public Administration
- Graduate School Public Relations
- Industrial/Labor Relations Representative
- Legislative Assistant
- Lobbyist
- Market Research Analyst
- Media Analyst/Planner
- News Writer
- Press Agent
- Press Secretary
- Public Affairs Officer
- Public Affairs Specialist
- Public Information Officer
- Public Opinion Researcher
- Publicity Manager
- Research Assistant
- Research Specialist
- Sales Representative
- Speech Writer
- University Professor

Additional Considerations

You can gain excellent experience in the government field by finding an internship related to your interests. Experience in public speaking or oral communication, as well as in persuasion and argumentation may be helpful.

A business minor or second major may prove beneficial when looking for positions in the business or industry fields.

Course work in public speaking, writing, audience analysis, listening, and interviewing will be crucial.

Remember to take any necessary exams early; it can take six weeks for results to be sent to the school to which you applied. Foreign language competency (sometimes in two languages) is required in many graduate programs.

Job Outlook

Starting salaries are contingent upon geographic location and the individual applicants work experience and initiative, and usually range from $30,000 to $50,000. Overall, the field will grow faster than average, expanding at an 18% rate.