



## Origins of Strategic Communication at TCU



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When I joined the faculty in 1968 as an adjunct I was working full-time in public relations with two large clients and the Trinity River in between them. The adjunct faculty member I replaced was public relations officer for a local bank planning its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He thought he just couldn't handle teaching a night class too.

No full-time faculty member was teaching PR, and there were only two courses, public relations principles and public relations cases. I taught principles in the fall and cases in the spring.

Advertising was taught by a full-time faculty member who also oversaw advertising in the then weekly Skiff. When the department was founded in 1927, advertising was listed in the curriculum, but was only taught in business. As the journalism department grew, one of the three full-time faculty taught advertising.

The 1959 department chair, D. Wayne Rowland, adjusted all advertising courses to serve both business and journalism majors. The advertising courses were principles and practices, ad copy and layout, ad sales and promotion and advanced advertising. Advertising majors also took a marketing course in business. The merger of journalism's ad courses with business strengthened the discipline. After Rowland left for a position at Syracuse, Bob J. Carrell, whose field of study was advertising, added classes in media analysis and research and graphic arts fundamentals. Two electives he added also helped students interested in public relations: a press, public opinion and propaganda class as well as one called magazines and the specialized press. It was Carrell who introduced photography to the unit and built a darkroom under the stairwell.

It is important to mention the underpinnings put in place by journalism department chairs who were aware of changes in the job market for majors.

In 1969, while Carrell was chair, he brought me to TCU to meet his Dean, Jerome Moore, journalism being in AddRan College at the time. Moore took me to meet Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs James Newcomer, who offered a full-time position, which I first declined due to the pay cut I would have to take. The compromise was that I would keep my Dallas client and spend eight hours a week there. Of course, being member of the Public Relations Society of America that only had a Dallas chapter then, such an arrangement was a good fit. After a year, I began suggesting curriculum changes to the new department chair, Cliff Lawhorne.

When Jack Raskopf joined the faculty in 1973, at last the department had two full-time faculty members, each with 20 years professional experience and both still active in their professional organizations—Raskopf in Ad Club and me in PRSA. It was time to put together something that would prepare students for careers in a field that was gradually moving in that direction. Raskopf's



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strength was advertising and mine was PR, but we both had experience handling both in our jobs. Raskopf's had been Ad/PR director at Rockwell, and for years I was comfortable handling both in my various jobs.

At the time we had no idea that we were doing something dramatically different academically with our Ad/PR sequence. Our only major concern was accreditation. TCU's news-editorial sequence was accredited by the American Council on Education for Journalism (ACEJMC) in 1967, the only private university in Texas with that designation. Requiring too many professional courses versus those in liberal arts could put accreditation at risk when it came time to include Ad/PR in the accreditation.

The original Ad/PR sequence had two tracks each with a different emphasis, 136-hours required for research and 132-hours for media. After our proposal was accepted by the University, I thought to look at the ACEJMC directory to see how many other such majors were being offered. There were three, but not really combined. A public relations track or an advertising track had to be chosen. We had the only real combination. When ACEJMC reaccredited the department in 1979 only the news editorial major was examined because Ad/PR was too new to be considered.

At this time, though, our initiative brought withering criticism in public forums. Only in the 1990s did the view begin to shift somewhat, if slightly, in our favor. Now social media, for lack of a better, more serious designation, has arrested most criticism. Strategic communication is generally well received.

I have been left to wonder, though, why Paul O. Ridings, son of the department's founder, J. Willard Ridings, didn't push for more public relations courses when he followed his father in leading the department. In 1944, Paul Ridings was director of public relations for the Minneapolis office of McCann-Erickson, Inc., one of the largest advertising agencies in the country at that time and later founded his own public relations agency in Chicago. After returning to Fort Worth, he established a public relations agency in town, after turning over the department chair to Warren Agee in 1950.

The Newsom-Raskopf creation of Ad/PR was to prepare students to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world with polished skills and principled professionalism.

*The name of the Ad/PR program developed by Newsom and Raskopf was changed to Strategic Communication in 2008. Since that time, seven new full-time faculty members have joined the faculty, bringing the number of faculty to 12. On June 1, 2014, the program became its own Department of Strategic Communication, serving nearly 400 students.*