



In this edition:

- From the President
- Remembering Diane Davis, APR
- 2008 PRSA Boston Board
- PRSA Boston Scholarship Kick-off

**FROM THE PRESIDENT**

**Doing What We Do Best: Hosting Great Programs**  
*Tom Nutile*

If you're like most of us, you've probably begun this new year with some reflection and a resolution or two. What did I do that worked well in the past year? What do I resolve to accomplish in the new year? How can I best achieve this goal or goals?

As we begin a new year for PRSA Boston, it's time for some reflection on the chapter, what we have done well, and what we can do better. Perhaps I'm biased, as new president of PRSA Boston and as a member for many years, but I think the chapter does many things well. Some of the things we do well include supporting students through PRSSA, speaking out on national issues and helping craft a national public relations agenda through PRSA National, awarding a scholarship each year to a deserving student, and mentoring those studying for the APR (Accredited in Public Relations) exam.

We are perhaps best known, however, for the programs we put on each month. The programs are a great opportunity to network with our peers, to swap a little gossip, and to exchange ideas and best practices. They also are an opportunity to learn about what is truly new and innovative in our profession.

We have bolstered our Program Committee this year, expanding it from two people to four, and have vowed to put on programs that deal with some of the newest and most central issues in public relations. The group is headed by Darlene Hollywood, of Darlene Hollywood Public Relations, with Diego Sanchez, director of communications for the AIDS Action Committee, as assistant chair. The two members of the committee are Laura Kempke, a vice president at Schwartz Communications, and Todd Van Hoosear, social media guru at Topaz Partners. Our first program, largely the work of Todd Van Hoosear, held on January 10, was "Beyond Blogging: PR and Today's Social Media Revolution." The program was incredibly successful – so much so that we needed to move to a larger venue at Bentley College to accommodate the overflow crowd. An audience of well over 100 found the program so compelling that Todd had to remind the crowd that it was 9 p.m., beyond the time we normally conclude monthly programs, and

that it was time to retire to Watch City Brewery for a little more social networking.

Our nationally renowned panelists included Mike Prosceno, vice president of communications at SAP; Ian Lamont, senior editor, new media, Computerworld; Lois Kelly, partner, Foghound Communications; and Laura Fitton, principal, Pistachio Consulting. C.C. Chapman, co-founder and partner of The Advance Guard, was moderator.

The panelists told us what was hot and what was not, gave us glossaries of techniques, devices and sites, including blackhatting (bad), twittering (good, unless it's in front of the client during the client meeting), Strumpette (depends upon your point of view), etc. etc.

The audience seemed to find the program fascinating. This middle-aged president of PRSA Boston came away with plenty of new information, although he found one comment by a panelist a bit naïve. The point was made that if one has a great story, client, or news item, one only has to do a little posting or twittering on the right blogs, web sites, etc., and the media, including the Mainstream Media (MSM) will come to you.

Most other type of pitching, or so it seemed from the comments of that panelist, were old-style, phony, offensive, and probably wouldn't work as well as her viral approach to getting the news out. Sorry panelist, but as someone who has spent more than two dozen years, mostly as an MSM reporter and editor and now as a public relations practitioner, I have to tell you it doesn't yet work that way. Perhaps some day, but not now. Yes, the best campaigns are viral, where the MSM comes to you. But there are times you simply have to get out there, call up journalists, send out e-mails, talking to radio and television commentators, reporters, producers or news directors, prep your executives with the right sound bites, put a release out

*Continued on page 2*

**PRSA Toolbox:**

PRSA Boston's online home, [www.prsaboston.org](http://www.prsaboston.org) is full of member resources, whether you are just starting out or are a seasoned practitioner.

Looking for a job? Check out PRSA Boston's online job back at [www.prsaboston.org/jobbank.asp](http://www.prsaboston.org/jobbank.asp)

on wire services, and work, work, work. Not all of our good stories just fly out of us onto web sites and blogs, and then get discovered by our large circle of media friends, who then tell the world. If one doesn't understand and use the social media now available, one is bound to fail. But if one thinks that a social-media-only campaign is always the way to go, then one is likely to fail – as will our clients' messages.

Overall, however, the message was of moderation. Good advice was given on how to get started—"lurk," said panelist Mike Prosceno. Start by reading PR and industry blogs and listening to podcasts. Mike encouraged attendees not to be afraid to make mistakes—yes they're more visible in a social media world, but then so are the corrections that you make. He also reminded the technologists in the room that social media is not about the technology, it's about the people. To that end, Lois Kelly demonstrated how your most vocal online detractors can be converted into your best evangelists, and urged communicators to rethink their organizational structures to reflect the changing landscape.

Laura Fitton introduced a new term to all of us: "accelerated serendipity," which describes how social networks can help speed connections between people and the exchange of thoughts. Ian Lamont explained the benefits of not ignoring your competition as you plan your messaging and outreach. And Mike brought everyone back to reality by reminding us of the importance of measuring the success of every program.

Attendees then got a chance to get more individualized attention from the panelists in breakout sessions that focused on some of the hot topics and technologies. The end result was an interesting but still grounded exploration of the new technologies shaping our PR world. An audio recording of the event is available from the Topaz blog at <http://topazpartners.blogspot.com/2008/01/audio-from-yesterday-prsa-smc-event-on.html>. A quick primer on social media was put together by Laura—with input from all the panelists—and is available at <http://pistachioconsulting.com/blog/?p=173>.

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### Remembering Diane Davis, APR, Fellow PRSA



Diane Davis, one of the first women to head a public relations agency in Boston and a former president of the Boston Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), died unexpectedly of a massive heart attack on Saturday, January 5, 2008.

"Diane was an inspiration and a leader and she paved the way for other women to achieve their goals in the business world. We will always be indebted to her for her relentless efforts both in business and community. Together we will celebrate her life as she was loved and cherished by so many including her three sisters and entire family," said Fern Davis Nissim of Shrewsbury, one of her sisters.

"This is a tragic loss of a wonderful woman who was an outstanding practitioner, an inspiration for a generation of public relations professionals, and a loyal friend to so many," said Barry Wanger, a colleague of Ms. Davis for more than two decades.

Ms. Davis, a Boston native who headed Diane Davis & Associates for more than 30 years, represented hundreds of clients over the years, including such companies and nonprofit organizations as The Colonnade Hotel, The New England College of Optometry, and Boston Partners.

"Diane was a great partner," said Liz Siladi, director of institutional advancement at The Bancroft School. "We enjoyed her diligence, her insights and her warm smile and sense of humor and we very much appreciated her many efforts for Bancroft. Our school clearly has greater visibility today on account of her work on our behalf."

Ms. Davis was elected to PRSA's College of Fellows in 1994, one of the highest honors in the profession. Fellows are elected based on professional achievement, ethical conduct, and service to the profession. There are less than 450 Fellows nationwide.

She was an active member of Temple Beth Am in Framingham where she served on the worship committee and also is a past member of the Board of Directors of the Boston Chamber of Commerce.

She is a graduate of Brandeis University and is survived by her sisters, Fern Davis Nissim, Shrewsbury; Judith I Selleck, Cape Cod; Luran Thompson, Washington, D.C.; and a number of nephews and nieces.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that a donation be made to the American Heart Association. in Natick, Mass.

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<b>PRSSA</b>	Steve Quigley, APR
<b>Website</b>	Beth Bryant, APR

**ADMINISTRATION**

<b>Chapter Administrator</b>	Beth Bryant, APR
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**Chapter kicks off 8<sup>th</sup> annual scholarship grant program**

PRSA Boston is accepting applications for its 2008-09 Scholarship Grant, which provides financial support – on the basis of financial need and academic merit – to worthy college students or researchers in the communications field. The amount of this year’s grant is \$2,000.

Undergraduate and graduate students attending a college or university in eastern Massachusetts are eligible, as are individuals conducting communications or public relations research. Students working in an unpaid internship at a nonprofit organization are also eligible to apply.

The winner of the 2007-2008 grant, Jennifer Stark, is a Bentley College senior majoring in information design and corporate communications with a concentration in public relations. Her minor is management and her professional goal is to pursue a career in investor relations.

Grant applications are available now by contacting Chapter Administrator Beth Bryant at (508) 786-3013 or [bbwrites@verizon.net](mailto:bbwrites@verizon.net). The deadline for accepting completed applications is April 15, 2008. The winner will be announced at a chapter meeting during the summer.

Have an idea for an article? Know about news of interest to your fellow PR colleagues?  
Contact Christopher Ranjitkar, News & Views Editor at [Christopher.ranjitkar@gmail.com](mailto:Christopher.ranjitkar@gmail.com)