

Anthony Fulginiti retiring from teaching. His influence continues

Over the years, Tony changed the public relations landscape. His regular APR classes, Professional Nights, pr curriculum, PRSSA activities and his groundbreaking work on ethics has strongly influenced and elevated the profession regionally and nationally.

By Jack Gillespie

When **Tony Fulginiti** joined the then-Glassboro State College (now Rowan University) communication department in 1976, the PR program had only two major courses and no PRSSA chapter. That situation was about to change dramatically and would continue to do so, largely through Tony's influence on the PR major and with it, the profession.

"One of my first tasks was to work with other department members to create a five-course model," Tony noted, "in part to satisfy the Public Relations Student Society of America's requirement to charter a PRSSA chapter at the college."

In the first year he joined the faculty, Tony, aided by **Anne Klein** of Anne Klein Communication Group in Mount Laurel, NJ, founded the chapter that now bears his name and has 1,000 alumni nationwide. "Since receiving its charter in spring 1977," Tony said, "the chapter has earned more than 250 regional and national honors, including eight Outstanding Chapter awards—more than any chapter in the country—and provided several national PRSSA presidents."

In 1993, the chapter began "Organ Donor Day" following Tony's 1992 kidney transplant. That led to a national organ donor day, cash-award competition for all U.S. chapters, which is still in place.

Unselfish mentoring and guidance

Anne Klein, who sponsored the chapter, signed its charter and served as its PRSSA advisor for 32 years, views Tony's devotion to PRSSA as his greatest contribution to the PR profession. "He has provided outstanding leadership and unselfish mentoring to students since he founded the chapter," Anne said. "And

because of the students' high achievement levels under Tony's guidance, they have set the standard for other student chapters, earned the respect of professionals and pioneered the pathway for future generations to follow."

Tony's influence has also improved the graduate PR program. Acting on requests from Philadelphia PRSA members, he sparked a change that led to offering "modules," courses of less than three graduate credits. The change allowed many more PRSA members to get the education they wanted for a more reasonable fee and time investment.

Two years ago, he developed and is teaching a new graduate writing course. "The course, advanced communication techniques, provides a real-world teamwork experience by imitating an agency setting in which students work as account executives and team members. They respond to RFPs, write proposals and create four other deliverables for each team."

In 2005, Tony recommended and supervised certification of Rowan's PR program by PRSA/PRSSA, making it one of only 22 schools to receive the six-year certification. Recertification is underway this semester. "The certification committee recommended that Rowan add an ethics component to our program," Tony said. "I opted for the Potter Model (Harvard) ethical decision-making process and required it in both the case studies and PR planning courses."

'Ethic Court' experience

Also, partly to satisfy PRSA/PRSSA certification recommendation, Tony this year developed a public relations/advertising ethics course, which he teaches. "The course includes an 'Ethics Court' experience," he explained. "The court



will examine a case involving polar-opposite ethical decisions. Students will present and defend their views, with faculty serving as judges."

Tony has also influenced PR education nationwide with *Practical Public Relations: Theories and Techniques That Make a Difference*, the textbook he co-authored with the late **Dr. Don Bagin**. Many colleges and universities use the text in their PR programs. "The book is used at Rowan for all sections of introduction to PR, graduate public relations overview and to some degree in upper level undergraduate courses," Tony noted.

Still another widespread influence involves "Seven Professional Evenings," a program designed to prepare practitioners for the APR (*Accredited in Public Relations*.) "I initiated the evenings when I was PRSA accreditation chair," Tony explained, "and they have since morphed into three Saturdays."

Because the sessions are now videotaped, Tony's brainchild will continue to influence beyond the sessions by allowing those who could not attend or want additional professional development to view them later. "In fact," he noted, "many outstanding professionals attribute their professional development and current practice to those sessions."

communication briefings

Another of his influences on the PR profession was his work with *communication briefings*, the business communication publication founded by Tony and some of his communication department colleagues.

As the newsletter's public relations editor, Tony contributed dozens of articles to improve personal and business communication. He also wrote, with others, a series of special reports, including *Power-Packed PR*. In addition, he wrote scripts for and appeared in training videos, one of which, "Powerful Ways to Persuade People," dealt with his recognized area of expertise.

"My *briefings* work also included evaluating more than 100 subscriber publications for design and writing and presenting writing, publication and public relations workshops in 15 major U.S. cities," Tony added.

Along the way, Tony has, of course, earned numerous well-deserved awards. They include a PRSA award naming him the Outstanding Educator in the Nation

and the dozen or so he has received to recognize his outstanding work as the PRSA chapter advisor. They also include PRSA Pepperpot awards and others for significant achievement and excellence in public relations education. In 1987, the Philadelphia PRSA Chapter inaugurated the annual Anthony J. Fulginiti Award for Contribution to Public Relations Education. He has been inducted into the PRSA College of Fellow, recognizing his lifetime achievement.

"Looking back," Tony said, "I know I've placed more than 300 graduate and undergraduate students in internships; hosted dozens of conferences, graduation and induction dinners and in 31 different courses, taught more than 3,000 students how to think, write and speak effectively." (Of Tony's many interns, among those he placed in 1975 is a current commissioner on the New Jersey Casino Control Commission who also served as immediate past chief administrator of the state's Motor Vehicle Commission.)

Another student was **Lisa Patten**

Schuler, who graduated in 1985 with a B.A. and in 1989 with an M.A. in public relations. Lisa, who owns and operates Dandelion Communications, a strategic communication firm she founded in Gaithersburg, MD, after nearly 25 years as a corporate executive and management consultant, had this to say: "Insightful. Motivating. Encouraging. These are just a few of the words that come to mind when I think of Tony Fulginiti. From my days as an undergraduate nearly 30 years ago, to my most recent career decisions, Tony has been there to share ideas and make me think. I am proud to call him my teacher for life, but more so to call him friend."

A teacher for life? No doubt about that.

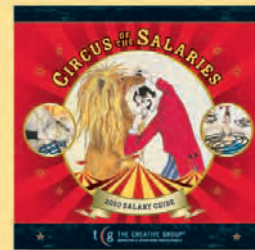
(To wish Tony the best, send emails to: tonyprof@verizon.net)

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