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**TO:** Monica Hand, Debra Hawkins – U.S. Postal Service  
**FROM:** Saptosa Foster, Shante Bacon - 135<sup>th</sup> Street Agency  
**DATE:** May 26, 2006  
**SUBJECT:** P.R. Professional Experience Media Report

### P.R. Professional Experience Media Recap

**Start Date of Work:** November 15, 2005

**Campaign Period:** February 1, 2006 – May 15, 2006

#### Tools:

- Print ads
- PRPE website ([www.usps.com/communications/prpe](http://www.usps.com/communications/prpe))
- Flyers
- Brochure
- Pitch letter
- Press releases
- PRPE pocket folder
- 18x24 posters

**Summary:** The P.R. Professional Experience (PRPE) is a public relations contest that challenges college students to devise a public relations campaign that best promotes the online Postal Service products NetPost, Click-N-Ship and Direct Mail to the 18-30 year old demographic. Students majoring in Communications, Public Relations, Advertising, Marketing, Public Affairs, Broadcasting, Journalism or English form a team of two to six members to represent their school. Each member of the Grand Prize-winning team receives prizes (sponsored by Microsoft, JetBlue Airways and Travel Pro) valued over \$2500, including an Xbox 360, a roundtrip ticket anywhere JetBlue Airways flies and Travel Pro luggage. The winning team also earns the possibility of having their campaign used as part of a future Postal Service Public Relations promotion.



The goals of this project were to:

1. understand and influence college students
2. increase college students' familiarity with online Postal Service products and services
3. learn more about the communications channels through which college students receive information
4. drive college students to usps.com for their personal and business transactions

Piloted in the Tri-State area (New York, New Jersey and Connecticut), the campaign officially launched in February 1, 2006. Over 300 four year schools and community colleges in the Tri-State were mailed pitch letters and Participation Forms inviting them to participate in the contest. The mass mailing was followed up by a series of phone calls to the college presidents, deans of students, student activities offices and communications departments.

To enter the P.R. Professional Experience contest, student teams had to complete a Participation Form and mail it to the P.R. Professional Experience, P.O. Box 1981, Hartford, CT 06144-1981 or fax it to (860)285-7396 by February 15, 2006. A one-page synopsis of the team's proposed PR campaign along with an Official Entry and Release Form also had to be postmarked by March 1, 2006 and received by March 6, 2006.

We received 13 entries, which were narrowed down by an independent panel of judges to six semi-finalists: Dowling College, Fairleigh Dickinson, Montclair State University, New York University, Quinnipiac University and SUNY New Paltz. 135<sup>th</sup> Street traveled to each semi-finalist school from March 27 – March 30 and instructed the teams on how to prepare for the next round and the subsequent final presentation.

The semi-finalist teams fleshed out their synopses and developed a full-scale Public Relations campaign which had to be postmarked by April 10, 2006 and received by April 14, 2006. The judges scored each campaign and advanced all six teams to the finals round in which each team would present their campaigns to the judges and the public at an Awards Ceremony on May 15.

Taking place at the NYC Postal Service Headquarters, James A. Farley Building, 380 W. 33rd Street (between 8th and 9th Avenues), the Awards Ceremony kicked off at 11:00am. Each team presented their P.R. ideas via PowerPoint presentations, commercials, websites, storyboards, and printed materials. Proposed campaign slogans included “Don’t Wait in Line, Surf Online,” “Think Outside the Stamp,” to “E to the 3: Expose, Entertain, Expand” and “Growing your Business with E’s.”

The winning team was Montclair State University. The team members were Jessica Del Guercio, 21, Alexander Schumann, 21, and Jeff O’Keefe, 22. Their campaign slogan was “When you want it done quick do it Click-ity Split!” and they developed a “Mr. Click-ity” “spokes-stamp” icon to go along with their proposal. Montclair’s presentation featured a commercial that used film footage from *The Wizard of Oz* to illustrate how Dorothy was trying to get to the post office before it closed. They wore t-shirts with the Mr. Click-ity icon on them. They also created a profile on Myspace for their Mr. Click-ity campaign, displayed screenshots of a proposed new online services website on mounted 3-panel poster board, and made coupon cards that required the user to activate an account for online postal services/products.

**2006 P.R. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE GRAND PRIZE WINNER - MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY**



Photo 1: P.R. Professional Experience Winners, Montclair State University (from left to right) – Jessica Del Guercio, Jeff O’Keefe, Alexandra Schuman.



Photo 2 (from left to right): Debra Hawkins (U.S. Postal Service), Jessica Del Guercio (Montclair State), Jeff O’Keefe (Montclair State), Alexandra Schuman (Montclair State), Monica Hand (U.S. Postal Service)

**Media Coverage:** The following press coverage was secured during the PRPE campaign. Please see hard copy clippings of press in printed PRPE Media Recap.

## PRINT

- **PR Week**, news brief – 2/8 online news brief announcing launch of PRPE; 2/13 print
- **AUC Magazine (Atlanta University Center)** - Feb 2006 – feature on 135<sup>th</sup> St that included discussion of PRPE
- **Poughkeepsie Journal** – article on SUNY New Paltz’s participation in PRPE - 4/11 - <http://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060411/NEWS02/604110310/1007>
- **Times Herald** – article on SUNY New Paltz’s participation in PRPE - 4/13 - <http://www.recordonline.com/archive/2006/04/13/5.html>
- **Hamden Journal** – feature article describing Quinnipiac’s participation in PRPE - 4/13 - [http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?BRD=1345&dept\\_id=432723&newsid=16475447&PAG=461&rfi=9](http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?BRD=1345&dept_id=432723&newsid=16475447&PAG=461&rfi=9)
- **The Lion’s Voice** (Dowling College student newspaper) – 4/17
- **Odwyer’s PR** – news brief on PRPE, 5/3
- **The Alaska Star** – blurb on Alaska native Jessica Dunn, a PRPE finalist from Quinnipiac- 5/11 - [http://www.alaskastar.com/stories/051106/peo\\_20060511036.shtml](http://www.alaskastar.com/stories/051106/peo_20060511036.shtml)
- **The Washington Square News** (NYU) – article describing NYU’s participation in PRPE - 5/15 [http://www.nyunews.com/vnews/display.v?TARGET=printable&article\\_id=446806ce700e2](http://www.nyunews.com/vnews/display.v?TARGET=printable&article_id=446806ce700e2)
- **Syracuse Post-Standard** – short item describing Syracuse native Leila Karkia as a PRPE participant at NYU - 5/16 - [http://www.syracuse.com/weblogs/print.ssf?/mtlogs/syr\\_poststandard/archives/print141522.html](http://www.syracuse.com/weblogs/print.ssf?/mtlogs/syr_poststandard/archives/print141522.html)
- **Suffolk County News** – feature article on Dowling College’s participation in PRPE - 5/18
- **The Amsterdam News** – feature article describing how Monica Hand and Debra Hawkins were able to make PRPE a reality - 5/18-5/24
- **NY Beacon** – 5/18 – 5/24 issue
- **21<sup>st</sup> Century Hustle** (urban business publication) - 5/29; premiere issue

## ONLINE

- **BulldogReporter.com** – “Daily Dog” (PR trade publication) - 5/19 - [http://www.bulldogreporter.com/dailydog/issues/1\\_1/dailydog\\_agency\\_news/4055-1.html#label%202](http://www.bulldogreporter.com/dailydog/issues/1_1/dailydog_agency_news/4055-1.html#label%202)
- **NewPaltz.edu** - <http://www.newpaltz.edu/news/release.cfm?item=751>
- **Dowling.edu** - <http://www.dowling.edu/mydowling/pics/archive/index.html>
- **FDU.edu** (Fairleigh Dickinson) - [http://inside.fdu.edu/prpt/postal\\_service.html](http://inside.fdu.edu/prpt/postal_service.html)
- **Quinnipiac.edu** - <http://www.quinnipiac.edu/x18821.xml>
- **KFVS 12 (UPN)** – Missouri-based TV station - <http://www.kfvs12.com/Global/story.asp?S=4908327>
- **Netscape News** - <http://webcenters.netscape.comuserve.com/celebrity/story.jsp?idq=/ff/story/0122/20060515/2024275592.htm>

**Evaluation:** Below please find a summary of PRPE's strengths and weaknesses in execution and effectiveness.

**STRENGTHS:**

- PRPE planted the seed of awareness of online postal products/services among Tri-State college students
- Based on the depth of their campaign proposals, the PRPE teams really understood NetPost, Click-N-SHIP and Direct Mail and how those products can be used in their daily lives
- College teams not only visited [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com) but many of the teams developed ideas to redesign the site to better serve their age group
- The Postal Service learned about the different tools of communication that college students use including Facebook.com, Myspace.com, and Youtube.
- The Awards Ceremony featured quality team presentations; Attendees remarked at how smooth and professional the program was and how they enjoyed themselves.

**WEAKNESSES:**

- Contest launched too late – this did not give the 135<sup>th</sup> St Agency and the Postal Service enough time to promote the contest on the college campuses. The delay can be attributed to unforeseen red-tape in trying to get things like design/artwork, literature, and rules/criteria approved.
- Low college participation – this is because there was not enough time to thoroughly promote the contest on college campuses
- No promotional media partner – this would have helped get the word out about the contest
- Needed a higher value prize package – this would have motivated more students to make the effort to participate at such a short notice
- No celebrity judges – this would have added to the attractiveness of the contest and have been a great media/promotional tool; however, trying to convince busy industry “celebrities” to spend time judging the competition was a challenge
- No clear picture or details on if and when the Postal Service will implement the winning college team's campaign into a future postal promotion – it weakens the value of the prize package if it can't be guaranteed that the postal service will use the winning team's campaign.

**Financial Analysis:**

The budget for the execution of PRPE was \$102,270. This included labor, travel, cost of design and printing, and expenses associated with coordinating the project. The fee per billable hour was \$110. Overall, only \$68,925.71 was used, leaving a **budget surplus of \$33,345.**

<b><u>Expense Categories</u></b>	<b><u>Dates of Invoices</u></b>								<b>Total Hrs/\$ Used</b>	<b>Available Hrs/\$</b>	<b>Surplus (+)/Deficit (-)</b>
	<b>11/2</b>	<b>1/6</b>	<b>2/7</b>	<b>2/28</b>	<b>3/30</b>	<b>5/1</b>	<b>5/24</b>				
<b>PRPE Wrap-UP</b>							50	<b>50</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>+30</b>	
<b>Present Contest Packet to Teams</b>				13				<b>13</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>+19</b>	
<b>Coordinate Judging of Final Competition</b>						10		<b>10</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>+15</b>	
<b>Supervise Student Projects</b>					40			<b>40</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>+8</b>	
<b>Pitch Celebrity Judges</b>				4		4		<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>+8</b>	
<b>Coordinate with College Presidents to Choose Final Team</b>					12			<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>+4</b>	
<b>Weekly Press Awareness</b>			15	6		94	45	<b>157</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>+3</b>	
<b>Organize Awards Ceremony</b>					3	5	150	<b>158</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>+2</b>	
<b>Travel</b>			\$50	\$53.50	\$267.49			<b>\$370.99</b>	<b>\$8,000</b>	<b>\$7629.01</b>	
<b>Awards/Trophies</b>							\$194.86		<b>\$500</b>	<b>\$305.14</b>	
<b>Partner with College Presidents to Choose Competitors</b>				15				<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>Create Contest Packet</b>	7	43						<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>Pitching Schools</b>	30		25	52				<b>107</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>-43</b>	

<b>Miscellaneous</b>							\$354.72	<b>\$354.72</b>	<b>\$1897.95</b>	<b>\$1543.23</b>

Total Available Hours = 857 @ \$110/hr  
 Total Available Expenses = \$10,200  
**Funds Available = \$102,270**

Total Hours Billed = 620 @ \$110/hr  
 Total Expenses Billed = \$725.71  
**Funds Used = \$68,925.71**

**Budget Surplus = \$33,345**

**Recommendations:**

Going forward, we would like to make the following recommendations on how to improve upon the execution and accomplishments of PRPE next year.

- Begin organizing execution team and plan and produce promotional materials in June – this is so that you will be able to make your initial outreach to college staff in July
- Set up campus promotions in September – colleges should have flyers, posters, participation forms, etc posted in common areas and at communications departments.
- Secure promotional media partners – outlets like MTV-U or other college-oriented media will deliver the PRPE message to a regional or national audience in order to boost participation in the contest
- Offer a sizable prize package – college students will be more motivated to enter a contest that offers a scholarship or cash prize in the tens of thousands
- Secure “celebrity” judges – in order to attract celebrity judges, the contest needs to feature reputable sponsors and media partners and have a sizable prize package
- Create a new domain name for PRPE – for more effective branding, use [www.prprofessionalexperience.com](http://www.prprofessionalexperience.com) instead of [www.usps.com/communications/prpe](http://www.usps.com/communications/prpe).

**Conclusion:**

The P.R. Professional Experience Contest overall achieved the goal of providing the Postal Service with valuable information about the 18-30 year old demographic. The weaknesses and mistakes made during this year’s campaign will only serve to make next year’s contest much stronger and more impactful. With proper planning, lead time and promotional support, the P.R. Professional Experience 2007 will be phenomenal!