

Making PRSSA Leadership Work for Students: Role Satisfaction, Educational Success, and Career Readiness for the PR Profession

Amanda J. Weed, Kennesaw State University
Lauren Nye, Kennesaw State University

ABSTRACT

Pre-professional student organizations are known to complement undergraduate university studies and propel students into their professional careers. The mission of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) is to support students by enhancing education, broadening networks, and launching careers of students in the public relations industry. While PRSSA membership peaked at more than 10,000 members in 2018, membership has declined 41.6%, or more than 4,000 members, to a little more than 6,000 members in 2022. PRSSA student leaders can serve as the “canary in the coal mine” to pinpoint critical challenges in chapter recruitment, engagement, and day-to-day management. This study, through the theoretical lens of Self-Determination Theory, aims to measure how PRSSA student leadership satisfies needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness; and explores intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to serve as chapter leaders. From the study findings, the authors propose a PRSSA leadership strategy that integrates extrinsic motivation in the form of a class credit model that better aligns the PRSSA mission to the evolving needs of students.

Keywords: PRSSA, Public Relations Student Society of America, CPRE, self-determination theory, student leadership, student organizations, experiential learning

Pre-professional student organizations are known to complement undergraduate university studies and propel students into their professional careers. The mission of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) is “To provide exceptional service to our members by enhancing their education, broadening their professional network and helping launch their careers after graduation” (PRSSA, n.d.). Students commonly use PRSSA to leverage their public relations knowledge, leadership skills, and networking abilities to support career readiness. PRSSA chapters help students take a deeper dive into the public relations industry by inviting industry professionals to speak to student members at chapter meetings and events, hosting or sending students to industry conferences, and providing experiential learning for students (Andrews, 2007).

PRSSA has experienced a 41.6% reduction in membership over the past four years, from 10,348 members in 2018 (PRSSA, 2018) to 6,050 members in 2022 (PRSSA, 2022a). One study found that when PRSSA chapters largely shifted to online programming, due to COVID-19, executive board members felt that membership recruitment and retention were of deep concern (Weed et al., 2021a). As PRSSA chapters move forward, this research aims to measure how well PRSSA chapters currently meet the needs of student leaders and provide insight into how to motivate and satisfy the educational and professional development needs of PRSSA chapter leaders.

Literature Review

Student organizations come in many forms, such as pre-professional student organizations, extra-curricular activities, co-curricular activities, and more. These types of student organizations have been a part of the college experience for a long time, and tend to exercise consistent organizational values that are important to universities (Nadler, 1997). Pre-professional student organizations complement classroom education by creating an additional level of understanding around a certain profession

that allows the student to get further ahead in their desired career.

Needs Satisfaction in Organizational Leadership

The theoretical framework for this study is the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT identifies three basic needs used to evaluate and determine human motivations, behaviors, and experiences. The three basic needs of SDT are competence, autonomy, and relatedness, (Davidson & Beck, 2019; Filak & Pritchard, 2007; Landry et al., 2022, Ryan & Deci, 2000; Weed et al., 2021a). Davidson and Beck (2019) break down these three basic needs, explaining that competency is what leads people to seek challenges and opportunities that maintain and enhance one's own capacities; autonomy as the feelings of freedom and independence that are the source of one's own actions; and relatedness as the feelings of belongingness and connecting with others. SDT is a useful lens for examining pre-professional student organizations because the theory can help explain why organization members are motivated, or even unmotivated, to actively participate, which is essential in helping pre-pre-professional organizations like PRSSA to achieve positive organizational outcomes (Filak & Pritchard, 2007; Pritchard et al., 2006; Weed et al., 2021a).

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations to Serve in Organizational Leadership

With SDT in mind, it can be understood that PRSSA student leadership must successfully satisfy students' needs to be supported in their autonomy, competency, and relatedness. Needs can also be further classified into intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivation stems from the individual's pure enjoyment of the activity, while extrinsic motivations come from outside factors such as emotional-based coercion or tangible outcomes or rewards (Filak & Pritchard, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Intrinsic Motivations

Within the scope of intrinsic motivations, PRSSA is known to attract students by providing members with the opportunity to network with industry professionals, gain practical experience in the public relations field, develop their portfolio materials, apply for scholarships, and compete in regional and national award competitions (Pohl & Butler, 1994). When leadership experience is cultivated in an organization dedicated to a professional pathway, it can propel student leaders into their professional careers with an enhanced understanding of the industry. PRSSA and other student organizations can be stepping stones for all student members' professional development and leadership development. PRSSA student leaders likely have a greater advantage in honing important skills relative to the public relations industry when compared to general members of PRSSA chapters (Dadario & Sanner, 2022).

One study found that general student members of a professional organization, located within one university's business school, were more inclined to participate for two leading reasons: a) to network with industry professionals and b) to partake in professional development opportunities that could improve skills, further industry knowledge, and strengthen students' resumes (Munoz et al., 2016). Similarly, another study found that executive board members in academic clubs showed increased perceptions of emotional control and public speaking ability, in turn, increased their chances of getting an interview in their desired field as opposed to general members of academic clubs (Dadario & Sanner, 2022).

Extrinsic Motivations

Weed et al. (2021a) noted that the majority of PRSSA student leaders rarely receive tangible personal rewards or compensation (financial compensation and/or class credit) as forms of extrinsic motivation and, therefore, must find their sole motivation through intrinsic means such as

fulfilling the three basic needs outlined in SDT. Extrinsic motivations can increase the attractiveness of organizations (Vanderstukken et al., 2016) and, in turn, hold potential for improved recruitment of organizational leaders. The lack of extrinsic motivations and rewards can also place a barrier to poor and working-class students (Houze, 2021) who might need to prioritize other activities that offer extrinsic benefits (such as a part-time job), and can increase burnout for students with high intrinsic motivation who commit more personal resources to participation in voluntary activities (Fathepure, 2023; Kappelides et al., 2023; Li et al., 2022; Zhang & Jiang, 2023).

In some cases, student organizations, student-run agencies (SRAs), and internships may provide some form of compensation to student leaders. For example, in a study on SRAs that mirror public relations agencies, 43% of SRA faculty advisers indicated that some student workers received monetary compensation for work done at the firm (Ranta et al., 2021). Similarly, if PRSSA chapters seek to model leadership structures after workplace environments, it may be worth considering how workplaces utilize a variety of tangible and intangible rewards. One example of this could be providing incentives or bonuses such as gift cards (Landry et al., 2022) to show appreciation for student leadership efforts.

From another lens, one study asked student internship advisers how strongly they believe that academic credit is an appropriate substitute for monetary compensation, and 34.7% of participants believed that academic credit was appropriate in most cases for student internships (Senat et al., 2020). Though PRSSA is not an SRA or internship, it can be argued that PRSSA student leaders produce a comparable level of work, professionalism, and skills-based learning in chapter management. That posits a question as to whether PRSSA student leaders would be more motivated to serve if their roles were treated comparably to that of an SRA or internship, including similar compensation and/or incentives.

Satisfying Needs through Career Preparedness

Satisfaction of competence, autonomy, and relatedness needs play an important role in understanding the motivations and satisfactions of membership in PRSSA (Filak & Pritchard, 2008; Weed et al., 2021a), student organizations across university disciplines (Cletzer et al., 2023; Peltier et al., 2008; Rosch et al., 2023), related co-curricular experiences such as student-run agencies (Bush, 2009). These tangible outcomes can foster self-directed learning and peer-teaching in a flipped classroom model (Hodgson & Kwok, 2015) to enhance development of knowledge, skills, abilities, and traits that students carry with them into their future classes (Douglass & Morris, 2014) and meet the expectations for entry-level practitioners in the public relations industry (CPRE, 2018).

Career-specific skills are likely to be most important to pre-professional student organization leaders, as well as to hiring managers, and PRSSA “should be seen as an integral component for student development, with a particular focus on leadership skills” (CPRE, 2018, p. 20). One study suggests that co-curricular activities, which are similar in nature to pre-professional organizations, positively impact students’ leadership development and multicultural competence by giving students the opportunity to lead through administrative, social, and creative tasks relative to the organization (Soria et al., 2019). Among other skills that pre-professional organizations such as PRSSA can offer students are communication skills, interpersonal skills, self-confidence, and self-awareness, which were identified as top qualities and skills that were crucial to securing a job after graduation (Clark et al., 2015).

There is some skepticism among industry professionals about how well the average PR education aligns with PR industry practices (Neill, 2007; Todd, 2009). The Commission on Public Relations Education “Fast Forward” report (2018) analyzed the knowledge, skills, abilities, and traits areas that public relations professionals and practitioners deemed

necessary for entry-level practitioners. The report identified 12 knowledge areas (p. 47), 13 skills (p. 47), five abilities (p. 47), and six traits (p. 52) that were most desired of entry-level PR practitioners (CPRE, 2018). However, based on educators' and practitioners' responses, there was "a striking lack of agreement about the 'ideal' preparation for an entry-level position in public relations" (CPRE, 2018, p. 25). PRSSA can offer the opportunity for universities to close the gap between the industry and academy related to the effectiveness of PR education. In 2006, the PRSA (Public Relations Society of American) organization updated the requirements for PRSSA chapter chartership to include a requirement that universities that hosted a PRSSA chapter must offer courses in five subject areas that aligned with recommendations from CPRE's "The Professional Bond" report (CPRE, 2018; CPRE, 2006).

RQ1: How does the PRSSA chapter leadership experience satisfy student leaders' needs related to competence, autonomy, and relatedness?

RQ2: Which intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are important to students when considering whether to serve in PRSSA leadership?

Method

Study Design

This study surveyed 2023 PRSSA student leaders—executive board and committee members—of PRSSA chapters at U.S. universities. PRSSA student leaders were selected as the focus of study as they were likely to be the most vested members of PRSSA chapters in terms of organizational management tasks, time commitment, adherence to chapter requirements, and professional development benefits. The study was approved by the authors' university IRB office.

Survey

The survey consisted of 38 multiple-choice and Likert scale questions and was created using Qualtrics. No personally identifying

information was collected in the study survey. Participants could voluntarily enter a \$25 Amazon gift card drawing hosted through a separate survey link, with one winner selected for every 20 participants.

Qualifying questions. Participants were first required to answer qualifying questions that ensured participants a) were at least 18 years old, b) currently served as a PRSSA student leader, and c) were a member of a U.S. PRSSA chapter. If participants answered no to any qualifying questions, they were taken to the end of the survey. After completing three qualifying questions, 40 participants were eliminated, primarily due to not being a current PRSSA student leader ($n = 34$).

Demographics. Researchers collected personal demographic questions regarding participants' gender, class standing, number of classes enrolled in, hours per week spent on class tasks, hours spent per week in an internship, hours per week spent in a non-internship job.

Chapter information. General information was collected about the participants' PRSSA chapter such as (but not limited to) chapter size, executive board size, how many members served on committees, and frequency of chapter events. Participants were asked questions about the personal leadership role comprised of their leadership position, months spent as a PRSSA leader, how they were selected as a leader, term length for their leadership position, how many hours per week spent in chapter meetings and on chapter tasks. In addition, general questions were asked about chapter leadership comprised of how easily the chapter can recruit executive board members and how easily the chapter can recruit committee members.

Needs Satisfaction. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with questions related to satisfaction needs met in competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

Competence. To measure competence, or the sense of personal effectiveness, participants were asked: a) how frequently used most-valued

knowledge, skills, abilities, and traits identified by CPRE (2018) and b) their level of agreement about how PRSSA leadership helped them prepare for a PR internship of entry-level job after graduation.

Autonomy. To measure autonomy, or the ability to self-direct one's contributions, participants were asked how strongly they agreed with whether they: a) personal control over their leadership responsibilities, and b) had input in how they contributed to their chapter.

Relatedness. To measure relatedness, or the need to feel personal connection with others in the organization, participants were asked how strongly they agreed with whether they: a) enjoyed serving as a PRSSA leader; b) received training for their role from a faculty adviser, other PRSSA chapter leaders, and PRSSA National representatives, and c) felt their ideas and concerns about the chapter were valued by their faculty adviser and other chapter leaders

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations. To measure intrinsic motivations, participants were asked multiple-response questions to indicate why they were motivated to become a PRSSA leader, and a second question that asked if participants were asked what types of compensation they received for being a PRSSA leader and how the actual amount of work as a PRSSA leader compared to their expectations. To assess extrinsic motivations, participants were asked how their PRSSA work compared to class and internship (activities with extrinsic motivations to class credit or financial compensation). Participants were asked four Likert scale questions that rated their level of agreement for: a) whether PRSSA student leaders should receive compensation, and b) rating level of agreement for nine possible types of student compensation ranging from class credit to monetary payment. To bring in further connection with Self-Determination Theory, participants were also asked whether compensation would: a) improve chapter member recruitment (relatedness), or b) compensation would improve productivity of PRSSA

student leaders (competence and autonomy). In addition to motivations, demotivation was explored by asking participants their level of agreement with: a) a statement that they had considered resigning from their PRSSA leadership position, and b) four reasons why they considered resigning.

Participant Recruitment

To invite current PRSSA student leaders to participate in the study, the researchers sent study invitations plus two reminder emails to chapter faculty advisers as they were most likely to have an accurate roster of student leaders. Previously, the PRSSA National website included a chapter directory that contained contact information for faculty advisers and chapter leaders but, in early 2023, the format of the chapter directory changed to only provide links to a chapter website or a social media account. To have the greatest likelihood of reaching current faculty advisers, the research found a September 30, 2022, archived webpage of the chapter directory (PRSSA, 2022b) from the Wayback Machine. When faculty adviser contact information was not available in the archived directory, the researchers called the university department which hosted the PRSSA chapter to acquire the faculty adviser's name and email address.

Of 369 U.S. PRSSA chapters identified for this study, contact information could not be found for 10 faculty advisers, 16 email invitations to faculty advisers were returned, and three faculty advisers or university departments indicated their PRSSA chapter was inactive or disbanded. Two rounds of emails were sent to faculty advisers to request that they share the survey invitation with their PRSSA student leaders. Student leaders from at least 53 chapters participated in the study.

Sample Demographics

In total, 139 PRSSA student leaders met the qualifying conditions to participate in the study. Of the 137 participants who indicated their class rank, 49.6% (n = 68) were seniors, 32.8% (n = 45) were juniors, 10.9%

(n = 15) were sophomores, 3.6% (n = 5) were freshmen, and 2.9% (n = 4) were graduate students. Of the participants who indicated their gender (n = 137), 90.5% (n = 124) identified as female and 9.5% (n = 13) identified as male, and no students indicated a non-binary gender. Of the participants, 130 chose to indicate their leadership role for the Spring 2023 semester. The participants represented executive board positions that were noted in the PRSSA Chapter Handbook (PRSSA, 2023), comprised of president at 27.7% (n = 36), vice president at 16.9% (n = 22), secretary at 10.0% (n = 13), treasurer at 6.9% (n = 9), PR directors at 6.9% (n = 9), and one historian. The remaining participants represented other board positions that were unique to individual chapters but included leadership roles related to membership (n = 8), communication (n = 7), events (n = 6), and professional development (n = 6). Additionally, four participants indicated that they served as chapter committee members. Nine participants declined to provide their leadership position.

At the chapter level, 135 participants identified the size of their PRSSA chapter by the number of dues-paid members, with 17.8% (n = 24) representing micro-chapters of one to nine members, 25.2% (n = 34) for small chapters of 10 to 19 members, 25.2% (n = 34) for mid-size chapters of 20 to 49 members, 14.8% (n = 20) for large chapters of 50-99 members, 8.9% (n = 12) represented extra-large chapters of 100 members or more. The remaining 5.2% (n = 7) of participants reported that they did not know how many dues-paid members belonged to their PRSSA chapter.

Of participants who indicated how they were selected for the PRSSA leadership position (n = 129), most participants came into their PRSSA leadership role through appointment, with 37.2% (n = 48) appointed by their chapter's executive board and 20.2% (n = 26) appointed by their faculty adviser. Participants who indicated they were elected to their position accounted for 41.0% (n = 53). Most participants joined PRSSA leadership within the last year, with 37.7% (n = 49) serving 1-6

months, 33.1% (n = 43) serving 7-12 months, 20.0% (n = 26) serving 13-24 months, 6.9% (n = 9) serving 25-36 months, and 1.5% (n = 2) serving 36+ months. One respondent served less than one month. Participants most often serve on an executive board comprised of 6-10 members at 49.6% (n = 67), followed by 1-5 members at 44.4% (n = 60), 11-15 members at 5.2% (n = 7), and one respondent didn't know the size of their executive board. There was a positive correlation between chapter size and how many members served on the executive board, $r(132) = .228$, $p = .008$. The greatest percentage of participants indicated their PRSSA chapter did not have leadership committees at 43.7% (n = 53), followed by 1-5 members serving on committees at 24.4% (n = 33), 6-10 members at 17.8% (n = 24), and 11+ members at 14.1% (n = 19). Most participants indicated that their PRSSA chapter hosted events (meetings, socials, workshops, etc.) every two weeks at 57.8% (n = 78), followed by once per month at 20.7% (n = 28), once per week at 16.3% (n = 22), more than once per week at 2.2% (n = 3), and once per academic term at 2.2% (n = 3).

Results

Needs Satisfaction in PRSSA Leadership

Competence

Participants were asked about their level of agreement about whether they felt prepared to take on a PR internship or entry-level PR job because of their experience as a PRSSA leader (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Overall, students agreed that PRSSA leadership prepared them for a PR internship ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.003$) or entry-level job ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.038$). A significant difference was found between PRSSA leadership roles and preparedness for an entry-level PR job [$F(7, 115) = 2.386$, $p = .025$], with presidents indicating the greatest agreement that their leadership role prepared them for an entry-level PR job ($M = 4.42$, $SD = .806$).

Further analysis was conducted to determine what factors of PRSSA leadership could positively influence participants' sense of preparedness to take on an entry-level PR job. In terms of role engagement, a positive correlation was found with how many hours per week were spent on PRSSA tasks, $r(121) = .242$, $p = .007$, and how the amount of work compared with a traditional class, $r(121) = .205$, $p = .023$. The perception of job preparedness was also positively correlated with training from the PRSSA faculty adviser, $r(120) = .455$, $p < .001$, other chapter leaders, $r(120) = .307$, $p < .001$, and PRSSA National representatives, $r(120) = .213$, $p = .018$.

Connection to Curricular Learning Objectives. Participants were asked how often they used highly ranked knowledge, skills, abilities, and traits (KSATs) from CPRE's "Fast Forward" report as part of their PRSSA leadership role (1 = Never, 2 = 1-2 times per term, 3 = Once per month, 4 = Once per week, and 5 = More than once per week) (see Table 1).

Table 1*PRSSA leadership role and CPRE KSATs used at least once per week*

	Knowledge used at least once per week	Skills used at least once per week	Abilities used at least once per week	Traits used at least once per week
President (n = 36)	None	Writing Communication Listening Networking SMM ^b Research & Analytics Editing Storytelling Speechwriting	Creative Thinking Problem Solving Analytical Thinking Strategic Planning Conflict Resolution	Curiosity/Desire to Learn Creativity Collaboration/Teamwork Hard Work Initiative Time Management
Vice President (n = 18)	None	Communication Listening Networking	Creative Thinking Problem Solving Strategic Planning	Curiosity/Desire to Learn Creativity Collaboration/Teamwork Hard Work Initiative Time Management
Public Relations Director (n = 9)	IEC ^a	Writing Communication Listening Networking SMM ^b Editing Graphic Design	Creative Thinking Analytical Thinking Critical Thinking Strategic Planning	Curiosity/Desire to Learn Creativity Collaboration/Teamwork Hard Work Initiative Time Management
Secretary (n = 12)	None	Communication Listening	None	Curiosity/Desire to Learn Creativity Collaboration/Teamwork Initiative Time Management
Treasurer (n = 9)	None	Communication Listening Networking	Creative Thinking Problem Solving Critical Thinking	Curiosity/Desire to Learn Creativity Collaboration/Teamwork Hard Work Initiative Time Management
Committee Member (n = 4)	None	Communication Listening Networking SMM ^b Research & Analytics Media Relations	Creative Thinking Problem Solving Analytical Thinking Critical Thinking Strategic Planning Conflict Resolution	Curiosity/Desire to Learn Creativity Collaboration/Teamwork Hard Work Initiative Time Management

	Knowledge used at least once per week	Skills used at least once per week	Abilities used at least once per week	Traits used at least once per week
Other (n = 33)	None	Writing Communication Listening	Creative Thinking Problem Solving Analytical Thinking Critical Thinking Strategic Planning	Curiosity/Desire to Learn Creativity Collaboration/Teamwork Hard Work Initiative Time Management

a Internal or Employee Communication

b Social Media Management

Knowledge. On average, participants indicated that they used several knowledge areas once per month, specifically ethics ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.281$), diversity & inclusion ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.339$), business acumen ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.271$), cultural perspective ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.305$), social issues ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.327$), internal/employee communication ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.202$), and management ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.307$). Other knowledge used less frequently were PR laws & regulation ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.272$), PR theory ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.423$), global perspectives ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.299$), crisis management ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.291$), and PR history ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.252$). No significant difference was found between the PRSSA leadership role and how often knowledge areas were used.

There was a positive correlation between participants feeling prepared for an entry-level PR job and how frequently they used almost all the knowledge areas. The strongest correlation was found with business acumen, $r(121) = .422$, $p < .001$, followed by ethics, $r(120) = .278$, $p = .002$, and PR laws & regulation, $r(119) = .270$, $p = .003$ (see Table 2).

Table 2*Entry-level PR job preparedness and frequency of PR knowledge use*

How frequently do you use the following knowledge areas as a PRSSA student leaders? ^a		I feel prepared to take on an entry-level PR job because of my experience as a PRSSA leader. ^b
Ethics	Pearson Correlation	.278**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	122
Diversity & Inclusion	Pearson Correlation	.254**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005
	N	123
Cultural Perspective	Pearson Correlation	.223*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013
	N	123
Business Acumen	Pearson Correlation	.422**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	123
Social Issues	Pearson Correlation	.246**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006
	N	122
PR Laws & Regulations	Pearson Correlation	.270**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	N	121
PR Theory	Pearson Correlation	.161
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.076
	N	123
Global Perspectives	Pearson Correlation	.187*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039
	N	123
Internal or Employee Communication	Pearson Correlation	.169
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.062
	N	122
Crisis Management	Pearson Correlation	.257**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
	N	122
Management	Pearson Correlation	.239**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008
		123

How frequently do you use the following knowledge areas as a PRSSA student leaders? ^a		I feel prepared to take on an entry-level PR job because of my experience as a PRSSA leader. ^b
PR History	Pearson Correlation	.210*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020
	N	123

^a 1 = never, 2 = once per term, 3 = once per month, 4 = once per week, 5 = more than once per week

^b 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$

Skills. Participants indicated that they used several skill areas once per week, specifically writing ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.056$), communication ($M = 4.60$, $SD = .686$), listening ($M = 4.54$, $SD = .692$), and networking ($M = 4.14$, $SD = .956$). Other skills used once per month were editing ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.359$), social media management ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.425$), public speaking ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.276$), storytelling ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.377$), graphic design ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.385$), media relations ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.436$), and research & analytics ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.282$). Skills used once per term or less were speechwriting ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.427$), website development ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 1.276$), audio/video production ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.225$), and app development ($M = 1.38$, $SD = .994$). One significant difference was found between the PRSSA leadership role and how often social media management skills were used [$F(7,114) = 2.325$, $p = .030$], with PR directors most likely to use that skill more than once per week ($M = 5.00$, $p = .000$).

There was a positive correlation between participants feeling prepared for an entry-level PR job and how frequently they used six skills areas comprised of public speaking, $r(121) = .409$, $p < .001$, followed by writing, $r(121) = .362$, $p < .001$, storytelling, $r(119) = .347$, $p < .001$, networking, $r(120) = .275$, $p = .002$, communication, $r(121) = .267$, $p = .003$, and editing, $r(121) = .244$, $p = .006$, (see Table 3).

Table 3*Entry-level PR job preparedness and frequency of PR skills use*

How frequently do you use the following skills areas as a PRSSA student leaders? ^a		I feel prepared to take on an entry-level PR job because of my experience as a PRSSA leader. ^b
Writing	Pearson Correlation	.278**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	122
Communication	Pearson Correlation	.254**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005
	N	123
Listening	Pearson Correlation	.223*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013
	N	123
Networking	Pearson Correlation	.422**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	123
Social Media Management	Pearson Correlation	.246**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006
	N	122
Research & Analytics	Pearson Correlation	.270**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	N	121
Editing	Pearson Correlation	.161
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.076
	N	123
Media Relations	Pearson Correlation	.187*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039
	N	123
Storytelling	Pearson Correlation	.169
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.062
	N	122
Speechwriting	Pearson Correlation	.257**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
	N	122
Public Speaking	Pearson Correlation	.239**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008
	N	123

How frequently do you use the following skills areas as a PRSSA student leaders? ^a		I feel prepared to take on an entry-level PR job because of my experience as a PRSSA leader. ^b
Graphic Design	Pearson Correlation	.278**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	122
Audio/Visual Production	Pearson Correlation	.254**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005
	N	123
Website Development	Pearson Correlation	.223*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013
	N	123
App Development	Pearson Correlation	.422**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	123

^a 1 = never, 2 = once per term, 3 = once per month, 4 = once per week, 5 = more than once per week

^b 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$

Abilities. Participants indicated that they used several ability areas once per week including creative thinking ($M = 4.25$, $SD = .986$), problem solving ($M = 4.21$, $SD = .986$), strategic planning ($M = 4.20$, $SD = .930$), critical thinking ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.029$), and analytical thinking ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 1.076$). Conflict resolution was used once per month ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.323$). No significant differences were found between PRSSA leadership roles and how frequently abilities were used.

There was a positive correlation between participants feeling prepared for an entry-level PR job and how frequently they used four ability areas comprised of strategic planning, $r(119) = .457$, $p < .001$, followed by critical thinking, $r(118) = .359$, $p < .001$, analytical thinking, $r(118) = .293$, $p = .001$, and problem solving, $r(118) = .226$, $p = .013$ (see Table 4).

Table 3*Entry-level PR job preparedness and frequency of PR abilities use*

How frequently do you use the following abilities areas as a PRSSA student leaders? ^a		I feel prepared to take on an entry-level PR job because of my experience as a PRSSA leader. ^b
Creative Thinking	Pearson Correlation	.164
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.072
	N	121
Problem Solving	Pearson Correlation	.226**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013
	N	120
Analytical Thinking	Pearson Correlation	.293*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	120
Critical Thinking	Pearson Correlation	.359**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	120
Strategic Planning	Pearson Correlation	.457**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	121

^a 1 = never, 2 = once per term, 3 = once per month, 4 = once per week, 5 = more than once per week

^b 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$

Traits. Participants indicated that they used all trait areas once per week, comprised of collaboration/teamwork ($M = 4.54$, $SD = .739$), time management ($M = 4.50$, $SD = .803$), creativity ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .870$), hard work ($M = 4.44$, $SD = .841$), curiosity/desire to learn ($M = 4.43$, $SD = .869$), and initiative ($M = 4.39$, $SD = .887$). No significant differences were found between PRSSA leadership roles and how frequently traits were used.

There was a positive correlation between participants feeling prepared for an entry-level PR job and how frequently they used all

six traits, including initiative, $r(120) = .361$, $p < .001$, followed by collaboration/teamwork, $r(121) = .318$, $p < .001$, hard work, $r(121) = .286$, $p = .001$, time management, $r(121) = .285$, $p = .001$, and curiosity/desire to learn, $r(121) = .278$, $p = .002$ (see Table 5).

Table 5

Entry-level PR job preparedness and frequency of PR traits use

How frequently do you use the following abilities areas as a PRSSA student leaders? ^a		I feel prepared to take on an entry-level PR job because of my experience as a PRSSA leader. ^b
Curiosity/Desire to Learn	Pearson Correlation	.278**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	123
Creativity	Pearson Correlation	.267**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	N	120
Collaboration/Teamwork	Pearson Correlation	.318**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	123
Hard Work	Pearson Correlation	.286**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	123
Initiative	Pearson Correlation	.361**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	122
Time Management	Pearson Correlation	.285**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	123

^a 1 = never, 2 = once per term, 3 = once per month, 4 = once per week, 5 = more than once per week

^b 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$

Participants agreed that they had complete control over their PRSSA leadership responsibilities ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.011$). In terms of time commitment, 40.8% ($n = 53$) of participants spent 1-2 hours per week on PRSSA tasks, followed by less than one hour per week at 26.9% ($n = 35$), 3-4 hours per week at 20.0% ($n = 26$), 5+ hours per week at 10.0% ($n = 13$), and three participants spent no time on PRSSA tasks. An ANOVA found a level approaching significance between the time spent per week on PRSSA tasks and PRSSA leadership role [$F(7,122) = 2.076$, $p = .51$], with 38.8% ($n = 14$) of participants who were presidents spending 3+ hours per week on chapter tasks, while 27.7% ($n = 6$) of vice presidents, 33.3% ($n = 3$) of public relations directors, 23.1% ($n = 3$) of secretaries, and 11.1% ($n = 1$) of treasurers indicated a comparable level of time commitment. Overall, participants ($n = 122$) enjoyed serving as a PRSSA leader ($M = 4.50$, $SD = .785$).

Further analysis was conducted to determine how commitment to their role impacted relatedness satisfaction. Several significant positive correlations were found between enjoyment in PRSSA leadership and a) how many hours per week were spent in PRSSA chapter and leadership meetings, $r(120) = .255$, $p = .005$, b) hours spent per week on PRSSA tasks, $r(120) = .214$, $p = .018$, c) how often the chapter hosts events, $r(120) = .234$, $p = .009$, and d) how the amount of PRSSA work compared to a traditional class, $r(120) = .262$, $p = .004$ (see Table 6).

Table 6*Chapter engagement and enjoyment of PRSSA leadership*

		How many hours per week do you spend in PRSSA chapter and leadership meetings? ^a	How many hours do you spend on PRSSA tasks (excluding meetings)? ^a	How often does your PRSSA chapter host member events? ^b	How does the amount of work you do as a PRSSA leader compare to a traditional class? ^c
I enjoy serving as a PRSSA leader. ^a	Pearson Correlation	.255**	.214**	.234**	.262**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.005	.018	.009	.004
	N	122	122	122	122

^a 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree
^b 1 = none, 2 = less than one hour, 3 = 1-2 hours, 4 = 3-4 hours, 5 = 5-6 hours, 6 = 7-9 hours, 7 = 9+ hours
^c 1 = significantly less, 2 = somewhat less, 3 = equivalent, 4 = somewhat more, 5 = significantly more
 *p<.05 **p<.001

Relatedness

Participants agreed that a) they felt other PRSSA student leaders valued their ideas and concerns about the chapter ($M = 4.43$, $SD = .881$), their faculty adviser valued their ideas and concerns about the chapter ($M = 4.48$, $SD = .929$), and they felt like they had a lot of input in deciding how to contribute to their chapter ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 1.056$). Further analysis found numerous significant correlations of relatedness between various forms of engagement between PRSSA leaders at various levels and participants' level of enjoyment in serving in leadership. A strong correlation was found between enjoyment and agreement that participants felt their fellow PRSSA chapter leaders valued their ideas and concerns about the chapter, $r(122) = .718$, $p < .001$. Moderate correlations were found between enjoyment and agreement that participant felt their faculty adviser valued their ideas and concerns about the chapter, $r(122) = .527$, $p < .001$, and whether they received training from their faculty adviser,

$r(122) = .413, p < .001$, or other PRSSA leaders, $r(122) = .528, p < .001$. A weak correlation was found between enjoyment and training from PRSSA National representatives, $r(122) = .196, p < .001$.

In addition to enjoyment in PRSSA leadership, training from various sources was explored as a form of relatedness. Overall, participants ($n = 122$) neither agreed nor disagreed that they received training from their faculty adviser ($M = 3.30, SD = 1.337$) or other PRSSA student leaders ($M = 3.53, SD = 1.455$), and disagreed that PRSSA National representatives provided training for leadership roles ($M = 2.03, SD = 1.185$) (see Table 7). An ANOVA found no significant difference between chapter size and training for PRSSA leadership roles from other PRSSA student leaders, faculty advisers, or PRSSA National representatives. There were moderate positive correlations between participants' level of agreement that they received training from other PRSSA student leaders and whether they felt their ideas and concerns about the chapter were valued by their fellow PRSSA chapter leaders, $r(122) = .476, p < .001$ or faculty adviser, $r(122) = .343, p < .001$. Conversely, moderate correlations were also found between participants level of agreement that they received training from their faculty adviser and whether they felt their ideas and concerns about the chapter were valued by their fellow PRSSA chapter leaders, $r(122) = .373, p < .001$, or faculty adviser, $r(122) = .521, p < .001$. A weaker, but still significant, correlation was found between participants' level of agreement that they received training from PRSSA National representatives and whether they felt their ideas and concerns about the chapter were valued by their faculty adviser, $r(122) = .233, p < .001$. No significant difference was found between participants' level of agreement that they received training from PRSSA National representatives and whether they felt their ideas and concerns about the chapter were valued by fellow PRSSA chapter leaders, $r(122) = .169, p < .063$.

Table 7*PRSSA leadership enjoyment and relatedness with other PRSSA members*

		I enjoy serving as a PRSSA leader.	I receive training from my PRSSA faculty adviser for my leadership role.	I receive training from other PRSSA student leaders for my leadership role.	I receive training from PRSSA National representatives for my leadership role.	I feel that my fellow PRSSA chapter leaders value my ideas and concerns regarding our chapter.	I feel that my faculty adviser values my ideas and concerns regarding our chapter.
I enjoy serving as a PRSSA leader. ^a	Pearson Correlation	1	.413**	.528**	.196**	.718**	.527**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	.031	<.001	<.001
	N	122	122	122	122	122	122
I receive train- ing from my PRSSA faculty adviser for my leadership role.	Pearson Correlation	.413**	1	.518**	.389**	.373**	.521**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	122	122	122	122	122	122
I receive training from other PRSSA student leaders for my leadership role.	Pearson Correlation	.528**	.518**	1	.172	.476**	.343**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		.059	<.001	<.001
	N	122	122	122	122	122	122
I receive training from PRSSA National representatives for my leadership role.	Pearson Correlation	.196*	.389**	.172	1	.169	.233**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	<.001	.059		.063	.010
	N	122	122	122	122	122	122
I feel that my fellow PRSSA chapter leaders value my ideas and concerns regarding our chapter.	Pearson Correlation	.718**	.373**	.476**	.169	1	.645**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	.063		<.001
	N	122	122	122	122	122	122
I feel that my faculty adviser values my ideas and concerns regarding our chapter.	Pearson Correlation	.527**	.521**	.343**	.233**	.645**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	.010	<.001	
	N	122	122	122	122	122	122

1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

*p<.05 **p<.001

Motivating Students to Serve in PRSSA Chapter Leadership*Intrinsic Motivations*

There were 122 participants who indicated their level of agreement (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) with nine statements regarding reasons for serving PRSSA chapter leadership comprised of a) improve my resume, b) improve my networking skills, c) gain leadership experience, d) continue my public relations education outside the classroom, e) increase my chances of securing a better internship, f) increase my chance of securing a better entry-level job, g) be more involved with my PRSSA chapter, h) positively change my PRSSA chapter's operations, i) better advocate for my PRSSA chapter members, and j) an other category. While participants agreed with each of the nine motivations to serve as a PRSSA leader, they most strongly agreed that they served to "gain leadership experience" ($M = 4.85$, $SD = .589$), followed by "continue my public relations education outside the classroom" ($M = 4.81$, $SD = .550$), and "improving my networking skills" ($M = 4.75$, $SD = .637$) (see Table 7). An analysis of variance (ANOVA) found no significant differences in responses between PRSSA leaders from different chapter sizes. Presidents were significantly more likely to serve to positively change their PRSSA chapter's operations [$F(7, 113) = 2.407$, $p < .025$] (see Table 8).

Table 8*Intrinsic motivations for becoming a PRSSA student leader*

I serve as a PRSSA leader to...	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Improve my resume	4.57	.749
Improve my networking skills	4.75	.637
Gain leadership experience	4.84	.589
Continue my public relations education outside of the classroom	4.81	.550
Increase my chances of securing a better internship	4.38	1.063
Increase my chances of securing a better entry-level job	4.58	.857
Be more involved with my PRSSA chapter	4.57	.899
Positively change my PRSSA chapter's operations	4.52	.828
Better advocate for my PRSSA chapter members	4.51	.816
Other	4.14	1.195

1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

Extrinsic Motivations

Participants (n = 129) answered whether they received compensation for the role. While 84.5% (n = 109) received no compensation for PRSSA leadership, a small segment received compensation in the form of class credit at 1.6% (n = 2), independent study credit at 1.6% (n = 2), reduced PRSSA membership at 1.6% (n = 2), and free PRSSA membership at 5.4% (n = 7). Another 5.4% (n = 7) indicated other forms of compensation such as meeting a service requirement (n = 4). An ANOVA found no significant difference between whether participants received compensation and enjoyment from serving as a PRSSA leader.

Overall, participants neither agreed nor disagreed that PRSSA student leaders should receive compensation ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.097$), but the size of the respondent's PRSSA chapter significantly influenced whether they believed PRSSA student leaders should receive compensation [$F(8,121) = 3.490$, $p = .001$]. When looking at participants

from chapters that met the minimum of at least 10 members as noted in the PRSSA National Chapter Handbook, they were more likely to agree that PRSSA student leaders should receive compensation as the chapter size increased from 10-19 members ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.097$), to 20-49 members ($M = 3.56$, $SD = .982$), 50-99 members ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .900$), and 100+ members ($M = 3.91$, $SD = .950$) (see Table 9).

Table 9

Should PRSSA leaders be compensated?

Approximately how many dues-paid members belong to your chapter?		PRSSA leaders should receive compensation for their work. ^a	Our PRSSA chapter would recruit more members if student leaders were compensated. ^a	PRSSA leaders would be more productive in their roles if they received compensation. ^a
None	Mean	3.67	4.33	4.33
	N	3	3	3
	SD	1.528	.577	.577
1-9 members	Mean	4.00	4.24	4.24
	N	21	21	21
	SD	.775	.944	.944
10-19 members	Mean	2.80	3.70	3.47
	N	30	30	30
	SD	1.095	1.022	1.137
20-49 members	Mean	3.56	3.91	4.16
	N	32	32	32
	SD	.982	1.118	.884
50-99 members	Mean	3.89	4.12	3.83
	N	18	17	18
	SD	.900	.781	1.098
100+ members	Mean	3.91	4.00	4.19
	N	11	11	11
	SD	.950	.996	.774
I don't know	Mean	3.67	4.33	4.17
	N	6	6	6
	SD	1.033	.816	.408
Total	Mean	3.54	3.98	3.96
	N	121	120	121
	SD	1.057	.987	.978

^a 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

Class rank also significantly influenced whether participants were more likely to agree that PRSSA leadership should receive compensation [$F(5,115) = 3.297, p = .008$]. While freshmen were an outlier with three participants, they indicated the greatest level of agreement ($M = 5.00, SD = .000$). As the class rank of the remaining participants increased, so did their level of agreement, from sophomores ($M = 2.85, SD = .987$), to juniors ($M = 3.48, SD = 1.065$), seniors ($M = 3.63, SD = 1.001$), and graduate students ($M = 4.00, SD = .816$).

When looking at possible motivations for participants to support compensation, a positive correlation was found with the perception that compensation would increase member recruitment, $r(118) = .370, p < .001$, and compensation would improve productivity of PRSSA student leaders, $r(119) = .571, p < .001$. Another positive correlation found that participants were more likely to agree that PRSSA student leaders should receive compensation in relations to the amount of weekly time spent in chapter meetings/events $r(121) = .221, p < .001$, and individually engaged chapter tasks $r(121) = .311, p < .001$.

Types of Compensation

Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with eight types of compensation PRSSA student leaders might receive. Significant positive correlations were found with all identified types of compensation, with the strongest being free PRSSA membership, $r(119) = .520, p < .001$, followed by independent study credit, $r(116) = .395, p < .001$, monetary payment, $r(117) = .389, p < .001$, reduced PRSSA membership, $r(119) = .384, p < .001$, PRSSA leadership class, $r(117) = .323, p < .001$, internship credit, $r(117) = .256, p < .001$, and class substitution, $r(117) = .242, p < .001$ (see Table 10).

Table 10*Types of compensation PRSSA student leaders desire*

What types of compensation PRSSA student leaders might receive.		PRSSA leaders should receive compensation for their work.	Our PRSSA chapter would recruit more members if student leaders were compensated.	PRSSA leaders would be more productive in their roles if they received compensation.
PRSSA leadership class	Pearson Correlation	.323**	.179	.216**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.053	.019
	N	122	122	122
Independent study credit	Pearson Correlation	.395**	.244**	.369**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.008	<.001
	N	118	117	118
Class substitution (ex: PR campaigns)	Pearson Correlation	.242**	.090	.242**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.331	.008
	N	120	119	120
Internship credit	Pearson Correlation	.256**	.100	.289
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.283	.001
	N	119	118	119
Reduced PRSSA membership	Pearson Correlation	.384**	.189*	.332**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.039	<.001
	N	121	120	121
Free PRSSA membership	Pearson Correlation	.520**	.229*	.462**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.12	<.001
	N	121	120	121
Monetary payment	Pearson Correlation	.389**	.185*	.409**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.45	<.001
	N	119	118	119
Other	Pearson Correlation	.143	.184	.193
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.675	.588	.570
	N	11	11	11

1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

*p<.05 **p<.001

A significant difference was found between chapter sizes and level of agreement that PRSSA leaders should receive free PRSSA membership [$F(8,112) = 2.756, p = .008$], with agreement increase from participants of chapters with 10-19 members ($M = 3.70, SD = 1.137$), 20-49 members ($M = 4.41, SD = .875$), 50-99 members ($M = 4.33, SD = 1.138$), and 100+ members ($M = 4.81, SD = .463$). Another significant difference was found between PRSSA leadership position and the level of agreement that student leaders should receive independent study credit [$F(7,109) = 2.180, p = .041$], with presidents ($M = 4.28, SD = .701$) most likely to support that option.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Demotivations

To examine what factors demotivated students from serving in PRSSA leadership, 17.3% ($n = 21$) of participants indicated that they considered resigning from their position, including 19.4% ($n = 7$) of participants who were presidents and 33.3% ($n = 6$) of vice presidents. As a follow-up question, participants were asked why they considered resigning and could select one or more reasons comprised of a) too much time/effort, b) work/internship conflict, c) personal commitment conflict, d) did not feel supported, e) expectations too high, f) benefits didn't meet expectations, g) personality conflicts, h) other reasons, i) more than one reason, and j) prefer not to say. Of participants who identified a reason they considered resigning ($n = 34$), the greatest percentage indicated more than one reason at 41.1% ($n = 14$), followed by the benefits did not meet expectations at 14.7% ($n = 5$), and they did not feel supported at 8.2% ($n = 3$). Participants who indicated another reason for resigning comprised 20.5% ($n = 7$), with a small chapter/executive board being the most common reason. That finding was further supported by a negative correlation between whether the respondent considered resigning and their PRSSA chapter's ability to easily recruit executive board members, $r(120) = -.423, p < .001$. In addition, negative correlations were found between whether the respondent considered resigning and receiving training from their PRSSA faculty adviser, $r(120) = -.236, p = .009$ or other PRSSA student leaders, $r(120) = -.346, p < .001$ (see Table 11).

Table 11

Recruitment and training on whether PRSSA student leaders considered resigning

		My PRSSA chapter can easily recruit members to serve on the executive board.	I receive training from my PRSSA faculty adviser for my leadership role.	I receive training from other PRSSA student leaders for my leadership role.	I receive training from other PRSSA National representatives for my leadership role.
I have considered resigning from my PRSSA leadership position.	Pearson Correlation	-.423**	-.236**	-.346**	-.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.009	<.001	.928
	N	122	122	122	122

1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

*p<.05 **p<.001

Discussion

In the past five years, PRSSA membership has dropped more than 40%, which could also result in diminished motivation among students to serve in organizational leadership. The results of this study found that PRSSA chapter leadership, in general, does satisfy the SDT needs of student leaders in the context of competence, autonomy, and relatedness once they are in those roles, but extrinsic motivation in the form of class credit opportunity hold promise to provide greater alignment with learning objectives, career readiness, and equal opportunity for all PRSSA members who wish to serve in leadership.

Enhancing Needs Satisfaction in PRSSA Leadership

Competence

PRSSA chapter leadership complements most knowledge areas, skills, abilities, and traits used in the public relations industry, and participants agreed that PRSSA leadership helped prepare them for an internship or entry-level job. The results showed that chapter presidents

indicated the highest level of agreement for feeling that PRSSA leadership has prepared them for an entry-level job. That is likely because a PRSSA chapter president commonly oversee all chapter operations, has more chapter experience, and is often a front-facing position for the chapter.

Application of Industry-Valued Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Traits in PRSSA Leadership

One interesting finding from this study is that the more that student leaders are using knowledge areas, the more prepared they feel for an entry-level job in public relations. However, reported knowledge areas were not used as frequently as skills, abilities, and traits in terms of the overall mean. That pinpoints an opportunity that if PRSSA leadership was structured more similarly to a class, perhaps student leaders could make a greater connection to knowledge areas that will better prepare them for their PR career.

The most common skills used by PRSSA leaders were writing, communication, listening, and networking, which aligns with CPRE's "Fast Forward" report. Though students were most likely to indicate those four skills as skills they used in PRSSA at least once per week, it is important to acknowledge that some leadership roles required additional skills identified by CPRE such as the frequent use of social media management by PR Directors.

While PRSSA student leaders agreed that they used all abilities identified by CPRE as most important for entry-level PR practitioners at once per week, the terminology leaves room for broad interpretation, which could be a confounding factor in explaining why participants indicated a high-frequency use. That being said, PRSSA chapter leaders are bound to use the five abilities (creative thinking, problem solving, analytical thinking, critical thinking, strategic planning) in day-to-day organization management, event planning, chapter communication, and membership recruitment/retention.

PRSSA student leaders were likely to use all of the traits most desired by entry-level PR practitioners at least once per week. The natural structure of PRSSA organizational management lends itself to integrating traits such as teamwork, time management, and creativity. That could indicate that student leaders are integrating desirable industry traits through their leadership tasks, regardless of the specific role.

Autonomy

Chapter engagement appears to have a positive impact on how much students enjoy serving in a PRSSA leadership position. The majority of student leaders agreed that they feel like they have a lot of input in, and control over, their PRSSA leadership role, indicating the need for autonomy is being satisfied. While more than 40% of PRSSA student leaders spent two hours or less per week on role-specific tasks, the more time they spent engaged in their leadership tasks, the more they enjoyed their role. In addition, PRSSA student leaders found greater enjoyment in their work when it was comparable to a traditional class. When it comes to enjoyment, increased personal engagement of student leaders in their PRSSA chapter, in both time and quality, yields positive results.

Relatedness

Relatedness factors within PRSSA chapters leaders appears to have exponential reinforcing effect. While PRSSA student leaders neither agreed nor disagreed that they received training from other student leaders, their faculty adviser, or PRSSA National representatives, they did agree that their ideas and concerns about their chapter are valued by other student leaders and by their chapter's faculty adviser. PRSSA leadership role training from other PRSSA student leaders and the faculty adviser has an important effect on relatedness, though, as enjoyment in chapter leaders, as PRSSA student leaders' perceptions that their ideas and concerns about the chapter were valued, increased significantly when

training occurred from those sources. Training from PRSSA National representatives had a positive, though weaker, influence on enjoyment and student leaders' perception that their ideas and concerns were valued. Further exploration of these variables found no significant differences between chapter sizes. The results of this study indicate that PRSSA chapter leadership generally fosters relatedness by supporting individual success through training and building community consensus at the individual chapter level.

Motivating PRSSA Members to Serve in Leadership

As 84.5% of PRSSA current chapter leaders do not currently receive compensation for their leadership efforts, they are solely reliant on intrinsic motivations to serve, not only for personal benefits such as educational and career development but also for altruistic needs to benefit their chapter. The unspoken question is whether those intrinsic motivations are enough to keep PRSSA student leaders in their roles and to motivate future members to serve in leadership if PRSSA membership continues to decline.

Overall, PRSSA student leaders shared a mixed level of agreement toward compensation as a form of extrinsic motivation, but as time commitment to the role increased, so did participants' agreement that PRSSA student leader should be compensated. Several additional factors increased support for PRSSA leadership compensation including chapter size, class rank, hours per week spent on leadership tasks, length of leadership tenure, and leadership role. Since PRSSA student leaders lean toward agreement as role responsibilities increase, it is important to understand the forms of compensation that student leaders feel are the most appropriate for their work. The forms of compensation that student leaders most desired for PRSSA leadership were a free PRSSA membership, independent study credit, monetary payment, or reduced

PRSSA membership. While free/reduced PRSSA membership was supported by student leaders, that could put a significant financial burden on the PRSSA organization and/or host universities. That could have a detrimental impact on an organization that has already experienced a decrease of more than 40% of its members since 2018. At the same time, a barrier exists for poor and working-class students who do not have resources to serve in a leadership role for a student organization when that role demands not only a financial commitment for annual dues, but a time commitment that could conflict with employment to cover tuition and cost-of-living expenses.

While most PRSSA student leaders enjoyed their role, more than 1-in-6 (17.3%) considered resigning their position, and that figure was higher for presidents and vice-presidents. More than half of participants were appointed to their positions either by the executive board or faculty adviser rather than through an election process that is noted as required in the PRSSA national chapter handbook (PRSSAb, n.d.). That could lead to a lack of understanding about the responsibilities, expectations, and commitment needed for those leadership positions, which might affect motivation and need satisfaction in PRSSA leadership. Of those who considered resigning, more than 60% were presidents and vice presidents. Though the research indicates that multiple reasons can play a role in PRSSA chapter leaders considering resignation, the strongest singular reason presented in the data was that the benefits of PRSSA chapter leadership did not meet student leaders' expectations. Other common reasons for considering resignation were that students did not feel supported in their chapter leadership and that their chapter membership and/or leadership was too small. Knowing that chapter presidents tend to carry the most workload in PRSSA, it is possible that PRSSA chapter presidents may be taking on more work than they can handle

without seeing positive results, especially in chapters where leadership recruitment is difficult. The results of this study point to a model of an at-risk executive leaders, who put in significant hours but are struggling with recruitment efforts and not receiving support from other PRSSA leadership team members or their faculty adviser. It is understandable why a dissatisfied and (potentially) burned-out executive board member might consider resigning from PRSSA leadership.

Proposing a New Model of Extrinsic Motivation for PRSSA Leadership

The researchers recommend that if PRSSA chapters are struggling to recruit student leader satisfaction as well as attract new members and leaders to PRSSA, then they might consider how leadership compensation in the form of class credit could be increase needs satisfaction of competence in the form KSAT development, autonomy in the ability to dedicate class-assigned time to complete chapter tasks, and relatedness through an organizational structure that formalizes the relationships within the leadership team.

Knowing that some PRSSA student leaders might feel like they are putting as much work into PRSSA as a class, internship, or job, an alternative form of compensation could come in the form of class credit such as a dedicated PRSSA class, independent study, or class substitution, which was supported by study participants who agreed student leaders should be compensated. The credit model of compensation is also supported by PRSSA leaders because participants expressed greater enjoyment in their roles and feeling more prepared for an entry-level PR job when their work compared to that of a traditional class. The class model also offers more structure to the PRSSA leadership experience that allows for purposeful integration of formal learning objectives that support the SDT needs of students, as well as faculty advisers (Weed et. al., 2021b).

Class credit compensation could make a difference in improving overall PRSSA leadership satisfaction, especially chapter leaders who are at risk for from a volunteer role that has little to no tangible forms of compensation for their work (Kao, 2009). While the development of a class credit model will likely be dependent on the individual needs of the PRSSA chapter and its host university, integrating PRSSA leadership in class curriculum literally gives students leaders credit for their work and reinforces the PRSSA mission to enhance education, build networks, and launch careers in the PR industry.

The class model. PRSSA leadership can take several paths depending on the needs of the individual chapter and policies of the host university. In essence, the PRSSA chapter becomes a service-learning client, similar to working with a university-based department/program or community partner. That also holds the potential to shift the perception of PRSSA as a social club to the view of it as an industry organization. Most logically, a capstone class such as PR Campaigns integrates KSATs that PRSSA student leaders use regularly and class learning outcomes — research, planning, implementation, and evaluation — that align with the work necessary to manage a successful PRSSA chapter. In addition, specialized classes such as Event Planning or PR Management also align with the KSATs utilized in the everyday tasks of PRSSA student leadership.

The agency model. SRAs are gaining popularity at more than 150 universities across the U.S (Swanson, 2017) as an outlet for students that integrate KSATs learned from the classroom with practical application for a real-world client (Bush et al., 2018; Kim, 2015, Ranta et al., 2021; Swanson, 2011). PRSSA mirrors an SRA as it is a student-run organization with faculty and professional advisers. Adoption of PRSSA in the agency model can offer several benefits. First, it sets the scope of PRSSA student

leadership in the context of professional practice, which can increase the sense of shared ownership and commitment to organizational outcomes. Second, the agency model aligns PRSSA within experiential learning rather than extracurricular activities that are often perceived as social in nature. Third, the PRSSA agency model can complement, rather than compete, with a traditional SRA. That can be achieved by envisioning PRSSA leadership and an SRA as a progressive two-stage experience. A PRSSA agency become the introduction to an SRA by working for an internal client (the PRSSA chapter) to hone the KSATs necessary for client work. After the PRSSA agency experience is complete, then students can advance to external client work in the traditional SRA.

The internship model. CPRE's "Fast Forward" report (2018, p. 63) recommended that supervised work experience or internship should be included as part of a six-course minimum for a public relations program. The report also noted that only 40% of educator respondents stated their academic unit offered a training program to prepare students for an internship experience (CPRE, 2018, p. 128). That provides a unique opportunity for PRSSA to serve as pre-requisite training program that must be completed before beginning an internship with an external employer. Through the internship model, PRSSA faculty and professional advisers can familiarize student leaders with common issues/practices of internships such as legal standards for internship work, project management and documentation, team communication and collaboration, and performance reviews. That training can provide enhanced success outcomes for students and internship employers, and advance the PRSSA mission "to serve the public relations profession by helping to develop highly qualified, well-prepared professionals" (PRSSA, 2022a, p. 4).

Conclusion

This study provides greater insight into how PRSSA can make

the most of the student leadership experience. This study represents an initial step in understanding how SDT needs and motivations are met in the current model of PRSSA student leadership. PRSSA student leaders can be seen as the “canary in the coal mine” for long-term challenges that could further membership decline. Though the known literature regarding PRSSA leadership is limited, this study addresses challenges that PRSSA chapters are facing and offers solutions for how chapters can motivate, satisfy, and compensate student leaders for their efforts. The tangible outcomes that student leaders receive from serving in a PRSSA leadership role indicate that the PRSSA leadership experience is equipping students with the necessary knowledge areas, skills, abilities, and traits necessary to a career in public relations. However, there is still room for improvement, especially in increasing students’ knowledge of public relations. That creates an opportunity for PRSSA to be structured within a for-credit curricular design to maximize students’ practice of industry KSATs that enhance career preparedness.

Study Limitations

One critical limitation of this study was participant recruitment as PRSSA National no longer publishes a chapter directory with leadership contact information, though a membership of PRSA continues to publish a directory for its members. To conduct broad and accurate participant recruitment, the researchers conducted extensive research to compile a contact list of current faculty advisers. Even with a robust contact list, the researchers were dependent on the advisers to share the survey invitation with their chapter leaders and the willingness of student leaders to participate in the study even with a participation incentive. The timing of the study also proved to be a challenge as many universities were on spring break at some point during the recruitment timeline. To allow for the greatest number of participants, the researchers extended the survey completion deadline by one week.

Future Research

The study of PRSSA as an integral part of the public relations curriculum should continue to be explored in the future. The authors propose three key studies that will expand the body of knowledge in how PRSSA can enhance academic and career success. First, the current study of PRSSA student leadership should follow a five-year longitudinal study cycle to continually explore how PRSSA leadership meets the evolving SDT needs of students and best practices to motivate students to serve in chapter leader roles. Second, expand the scope of the current research to explore SDT needs satisfaction and motivation in general membership recruitment for PRSSA. Finally, a study of PRSSA alumni should explore long-term benefits of, and recommendations for improving, the PRSSA leadership experience.

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Appendix A

CPRE “Fast Forward” KSATs that PR practitioners agree entry-level PR practitioners should have

Knowledge (p. 46) ^a	M	Skills (p. 46) ^a	M	Abilities (p. 47) ^a	M	Traits (p. 52) ^b	N
Ethics	4.51	Writing	4.85	Creative Thinking	4.53	Curiosity/ Desire to Learn	149
Diversity & Inclusion	3.95	Communication	4.75	Problem Solving	4.49	Creativity	101
Cultural Perspective	3.83	Social Media Management	4.39	Critical Thinking	4.45	Collaborative/ Team Player	92
Business Acumen	3.76	Research & Analytics	4.16	Analytical Thinking	4.38	Hardworking	76
Social Issues	3.73	Editing	4.11	Strategic Planning	3.58	Initiative	68
PR Laws & Regulation	3.60	Media Relations	4.01			Time Management/ Punctuality	63
PR Theory	3.44	Storytelling	3.98				
Global Perspectives	3.41	Public Speaking	3.54				
Internal or Employee Communication	3.59	Graphic Design	3.00				
Crisis Management	2.86	Audio/Video Production	2.94				
Management	2.79	Website Development	2.93				
PR History	2.33	Speechwriting	2.89				
		App Development	2.07				

^a 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

^b Noted in open-ended question