

Raymond Simon:  
Public Relations Educational Pioneer

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This article was funded in part by a leadership grant from Utica College.

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### Abstract

Raymond Simon, professor emeritus of public relations at Utica College, whose teaching career spanned nearly four decades, was among *PRWeek's* 100 most influential 20<sup>th</sup> century people in public relations. Simon's contributions to education include developing one of the first full-fledged public relations undergraduate curriculums; authoring the first public relations-specific classroom textbooks for writing and case studies, in addition to a textbook for the principles course; and developing student potential through national student organizations and mentoring.

*Keywords:* Raymond Simon, public relations, education, Utica College

### Introduction

When *PRWeek* published its list of the most influential public relations people for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, among the corporate and agency legends were the preeminent educators and academic scholars Scott Cutlip, James and Larissa Grunig, and Rex Harlow (*The 100 Most Influential PR*, 1999).

Also listed on *PRWeek's* "Roll of Honor" was Raymond Simon, professor emeritus of public relations at Utica College. Simon was Public Relations Society of America's sixth outstanding PR educator in the country. *Public Relations News'* 40 leaders in the field worldwide (Public Relations Teaching Legend, 2005) and *PR Reporter* named him one of the most respected educators in public relations (Many New Role Models, 1987).

While rankings, awards and honors are indicators of achievement and status, they don't definitively determine the importance of one's contributions to an industry. A closer examination of Simon's work will help arbitrate his significance and further illuminate public relations' early educational development.

At 101 years old, Simon (1915 - 2017 ) is one of the last surviving early public relations educators in the United States. Born and raised in Union City, New Jersey, he attended night classes at City College, New York, during the height of the Great Depression. He graduated in 1938 from the University of North Carolina with a degree in advertising. With few job prospects, he operated a book store until enrolling in Northwestern University's graduate journalism program. After graduating, he joined the U.S. Army and served in Europe. From 1945-48, he was a public information officer with the "Berlin Brigade," which administered the American sector in postwar Berlin. He returned home only to find another tight job market and took a job as a shoes salesman at Macy's in New York City. Concurrently, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, the "G.I. bill," was fueling a nationwide demand for educational programs. In 1946,

Syracuse University founded Utica College, an extension campus created to meet the surging demand for local veteran education.

With a master's degree in journalism and practical experience as a reporter for the U.S. Army's *The Berlin Sentinel*, and his public affairs work for the U.S. State Department in Berlin, Simon was hired in 1949 by Utica College to develop a newly established experimental undergraduate vocational program in public relations. It was one of the first undergraduate public relations majors in the country, established in 1948 (Utica College, 1948). During his 36 years at Utica College, Simon would contribute significantly to the development of public relations education and the profession before retiring in 1985.

### **The Public Relations Profession**

Scholars have traced the beginnings of public relations to ancient Egypt (Wilcox, Cameron & Reber, 2014). In more recent history, modern public relations' forerunners developed with mass media from press agents like businessman P.T. Barnum in the mid-1800s to more recognizable business counselors like Ivy Lee in the early 20th century. Lee's use of the public information model helped businesses like Pennsylvania Railroad and business titans like John D. Rockefeller promote and protect their relationships with the public (Broom & Sha, 2012). President Woodrow Wilson's World War I Creel Committee, which helped garner public support for the war, magnified the possibilities of public opinion management and publicity,

Public relations as a professional occupation with a recognizable identity developed in the late 1930s. The first national organizations for publicists and public relations practitioners, the National Association of Accredited Publicity Directors and the American Council on Public

Relations, were established in 1936 and 1937 respectively, merging in 1947 to form the Public Relations Society of America (Harlow, 1980).

Not only was public relations maturing, but advertising was about to enter its Madison Avenue era. After more than a decade of pinching pennies and rationing from the Great Depression and a world war, Americans wanted things – cars, apparel, home appliances and much more. Businesses, looking to rake in on pent-up consumer demand, touted their products with advertising and publicity (History: 1950s, 2003).

Beyond economics, there was a growing interest from academic researchers trying to unravel the workings of persuasion and Nazi Germany's propaganda machine. Edward Bernays's prescient 1923 classic *Crystalizing Public Opinion* (Bernays, 1961) and *The Engineering of Consent* (Bernays, 1955), were just the tip of the iceberg of publications and research on persuasion. The top journal on public opinion, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, published many articles about advertising and public relations long before academic journals emerged to explore these disciplines. By 1937, POQ was regularly publishing public relations and publicity articles, among them: "Recent Trends in Public Relations" (Bernays, 1937) and "Current Trends in Public Relations" (Roat, 1939). Possibly the first public relations case study appeared in PPQ in 1937, entitled "Public Relations Steel" (Stratton, 1937).

### **Public Relations Education**

Journalism programs flourished in higher education in the 1940s, but public relations was a newcomer with a big future.

The first publicity and public relations course offerings date back to the 1920s (Wright, 2011), but it is difficult to pinpoint what institution offered the first undergraduate public

relations major. By the 1940s, several colleges and universities were offering public relations courses (Krimel, 1947). One public relations education study in 1947 reported that 30 colleges and universities had 47 courses labeled “public relations” and five courses listed as “publicity” (Lee, 1947). In another article about public relations training, the author noted his own institution, Ohio University, had been trying out a new approach to public relations education for two years (Krimel, 1947). This author also mentioned Wayne University’s public relations program. Neither Donald Krimel’s (1947) nor Alfred Lee’s articles articulate whether these programs were undergraduate majors in public relations. Still, it appears that The School of Politics of the New School of Social Research in New York had “the most extensive array of courses specifically labeled ‘public relations’ and ‘publicity,’ ten in number” by 1947 (Krimel, 1947, p. 87). However, The New School did not offer a bachelor’s degree but rather a certificate of proficiency in public relations, according to a PRSA 1951 study (Report on a Survey, 1952). Boston University had the first master’s degree program in 1947 (Wright, 2011).

By 1951, PRSA research identified Boston University, University of Maryland, The New School for Social Research, Bethany College and Pacific University had established a school, department or division of public relations (Report on a Survey, 1952). In addition, five other schools reported offering degrees in public relations – American University, George Washington University, Goddard College, San Jose State College and Utica College. Utica College established its public relations major in 1948 (Utica College, 1948).

Most institutions, which offered public relations courses only – but no major – were in writing, publicity, publicity/media and specialized courses such as public relations for hospitals. Just one institution reported a case study course in public relations (Report on a Survey, 1952b). Most schools offered just one public relations course. Six reported offering three public relations

courses, another six offered four courses, and five institutions offered five or more courses in public relations (Report on a Survey, 1952a.)

PRSA's Foundation for Public Relations Education 1956 study of public relations education noted that 136 schools offered some form of public relations education, 14 offered a major and 29 offered a sequence (Simon, 1957). It wasn't until 1975 that a co-sponsored report from the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and the PRSA recommended a four-course curriculum including: introduction to public relations, publicity media and campaigns, public relations case problems, and internship or practicum (Commission on Public Relations Education, 1975). A 1981 report recommended seven courses (Smith, 1982).

### **Simon's Educational Contributions**

Simon's contributions to education include developing one of the first full-fledged public relations undergraduate curriculums; authoring the first publicity/writing and management case study textbooks for the public relations curriculum, in addition to a textbook for public relations concepts and principles; developing student potential through his early support of national student organizations and mentoring; and his contributions to the development of the Accreditation Public Relations (APR) test. Simon did this and more as a one-person program on a small university extension campus with few resources.

### **Public Relations Curriculum**

Utica College's public relations major, established in 1948, remained an "experimental" vocational undergraduate program with probationary status until Syracuse University's Faculty Senate approved it as a regular offering in 1951 (Crisafulli, 2000). Despite its probationary

status, the program functioned as a normal college major with specific academic requirements. Based on Simon's own experiences in public affairs during WWII, he anticipated a steady demand for students wanting training in public relations. If colleges could train journalists, he posited, why not train public relations practitioners?

Utica College's public relations program developed quickly under Simon. By 1950, the major had four discipline-specific public relations courses: principles and problems, publicity and graphic arts in public relations, and field work in public relations, in addition to public opinion, journalism and writing classes (Utica College, 1950). These courses were supplemented with journalism and media courses. By 1954, the major had five specific public relations courses, with the addition of editing in public relations.

### **Simon's Public Relations Textbooks**

Simon was the most prolific textbook author in early public relations education. He wrote three textbooks, including multiple editions or new titles of each, between 1959 and 1994. These works were designed for the publicity/writing course, the introductory public relations course, and the case study/management course; in all, covering the basic curriculum needs of early public relations programs. Simon also edited a volume of public relations essays by leading practitioners, *Perspectives in Public Relations* (Simon, 1966), but no evidence exists that it was intended for classroom adoption, so it will not be examined here.

### **Publicity and Writing Textbooks**

Simon's first textbook was designed for the publicity campaign and writing techniques course, one of two frequently offered core classes in most early public relations programs. It was

the first of its kind to offer a “worktext” for use in the classroom and writing lab. The *Casebook in Publicity and Public Relations* (1959, 1968, 1972) was followed by two editions of *Publicity and Public Relations Worktext*, (1978, 1983); and later *Public Relations Workbook Writing & Techniques* (2001) co-written with Joseph Zappala.

Later editions had units divided into a three-part arrangement for instructional purposes: an explanation of the writing technique, the case and case assignment and the research, and writing and discussion assignments. The 1978 worktext contained 47 “cases” and 160 writing assignments. (Faith, 1983). Simon, although print-oriented by experience, stayed current with media trends. By its fourth edition, the book’s radio and television section was more prominent.

In a book review for the 1978 worktext, James Grunig noted that *Publicity and Public Relations Worktext* was the “only workbook-type text available for laboratory courses in publicity and public relations writing” since its inception 20 years earlier (1979). While Grunig noted that earlier editions lacked sophisticated professional design and some of the assignments were “potboiler” fare (p. 51), he found favor with the text’s overall merits: “I would use this book and recommend it to others. It’s an example of what we need in public relations education: books tailored for our courses and not something written for another purpose which we must interpret for our courses” (p. 52).

Another review of the 1978 edition echoed Grunig’s concern about the need for more books beyond the entry level principles class (Wright, 1978). The book’s fifty “case studies” of campaign techniques included the basics, from news releases and headline writing to “writing and distributing the news, media analysis, publication editing...and other aspects of the ‘action stage’ of a communication program” (Wright, 1978, p. 46).

### **Public Relations Case Study Textbooks**

One of the first case study books was “Public Relations in Action” (Lesly, 1947), which featured winning entries from PRSA’s first awards competition. A decade later, Allen Center published “Public Relations: Ideas in Action,” which featured 500 case studies (Center, 1957). Both of these publications were intended as source books for practitioners but may have also been used in classrooms. They are not mentioned in the educational literature as commonly adopted textbooks. Center would later publish *Public Relations Practices: Case Studies* (1975), a textbook containing 29 cases with introductory materials.

The first case study book intended for the public relations classroom was Simon’s case studies/management book, *Public Relations Management: Cases & Simulations* (1973, 1977); it was followed by *Public Relations Management: A Casebook* (1986), and *Cases in Public Relations Management* (1994) co-authored with Frank Wylie. These books were designed for the upper-level undergraduate and graduate public relations courses; not only did they stress public relations principles, concepts, and techniques, but also management counseling and critical thinking.

Simon decided his case book would be based on public relations problems that needed to be solved, rather than prize-winning cases neatly laid out and explained. His cases had no single, definitive solution; instead, they encouraged students to critically analyze each case and defend an action or set of actions.

Simon’s success in case study management was due to a desire to recreate the dynamic nature of public relations practice when dealing with problems or issues (Simon, 1973, p. 2). Placing students in the real world as much as possible was important preparation for their future jobs. In the 1980s, the public relations classroom at Utica College, for example, was constructed

in a horseshoe shape allowing Simon to interact with individual students during discussions and role playing.

*Public Relations Management: Cases and Simulations* (Simon, 1973) was an outgrowth of case studies Simon had created for the PRSA's advanced professional "upgrading" courses and conferences (Advanced Professional Course...1967). Simon was an early contributor to the development of the Accreditation in Public Relations exam, and these case studies supplemented the professional training courses (L. Simon, personal communication, March 24, 2017). Each case came from actual situations involving specific public relations and communication issues.

Scott Cutlip acknowledged what others had said about the need for a "basic casebook" for the increasingly popular "case problems" course (Cutlip, 1975, p. 161), in his review of Simon's first edition:

[Cases] found in public relations publications are usually superficial sweet success stories. Professor Simon has given us fourteen definitive case studies, with sufficient facts to give students a meaningful and practical workout. He also has five simulations that should provide spirited role playing in a public relations class. By using actual cases, in many cases with the cast of characters identified, he has run the risk of having his text appear 'dated.' But this is a small price to pay for this much-needed casebook. (p. 161)

Another reviewer, R.L. Bishop from the University of Michigan (1973), said the first edition would be "strengthened by more material on politics and government, real measures of effective, and PR planning instead of reaction" (p. 600).

The book was widely adopted in public relations programs. Its first edition was used by at least 50 colleges and universities (Simon, 1973), a figure that doubled to more than 100 with the

second edition (Simon, 1986). These figures, cited in the book's introductions, were most likely based on Simon's royalty statements. If accurate, it would mean that more than one third of colleges with public relations programs were using this textbook.

The pedagogical approach of Simon's case books was student-centered, active learning in what is now called problem-based learning. No student could sit back in his or her chair passively during a class. Students were presented with a "set of facts" that real practitioners had encountered and handled. The book's "simulations" were unfolding situations designed for role playing. "Those playing roles in the simulations will be required to make statements, engage in conversations, and either take action or state what action they intend to take in handling a specific set of public relations problems."

In a review for the second edition, Otis Baskin noted that Simon's book was "a serious attempt to meet the need many instructors of such advanced courses have long felt [the need] for well-organized real life situations which could be applied to illustrated various aspects of PR practice" (Baskin, 1977, p. 47-48).

In the 1970s, when males outnumbered females in public relations classrooms and boardrooms, Simon was taken to task for his lack of positive female role models in his case studies. In one example, a female practitioner is allowed "to make guest appearances on local radio and TV talk shows, but she must not react to calls from the media without checking first with her (male) public relations counsel" (Reed, 1979). A reviewer noted other missed opportunities to provide more positive female role models.

The third edition, reviewed by Dean Kruckeberg (1986), noted the "underlying concern about ethics" throughout the text (p. 60) and the book's focus on underlying social science and management principles. The realism of the cases, which were drawn from actual practice,

included a good dose of office politics and the application of business acumen, providing challenges for students, Kruckeberg observed.

The final case book edition, *Cases in Public Relations Management* (Simon & Wylie, 1994), coauthored with Frank Wylie, former Dodge public relations manager and educator, began with an overview from Harold Burson, chairman and founder of Burson-Marsteller. And one reviewer explained the value of open-ended cases with no provided solutions: “I have used several of the cases with groups of senior students, and found that the cases are very conducive to using role-playing techniques. Each case I tried effectively stimulated unbridled discussions” (Barker, 1994, p. 32).

Doug Newsom also found Simon and Wylie’s emphasis on critical thinking an important benefit (Newsom, 1994, 1996). It provided the opportunity for students to “explore and think their way through these cases. It will allow them to appreciate the diversity of possible solutions as they hear their classmates’ answers that may differ from theirs. Of course some students who want to ‘learn’ material in a course instead of learning how to think will not appreciate this approach” (Newsom, 1994, p.98).

Simon’s management case studies provided an important and exciting alternative to traditional classroom lecture-style teaching. His approach to public relations management curriculum is popular even today. As one reviewer said, “Because each case does not pretend to provide the ideal, students are forced to analyze situations and develop constructive criticisms” (Gordon, 1996, p. 97).

## **Principles of Public Relations Textbooks**

Simon's last textbook addressed public relations principles. *Public Relations: Concepts and Practice* (1976, 1980, and 1984), which included three editions, was also a popular adoption with more than 100 colleges and universities using the 1980 edition (New Edition of Ray Simon's Text, 1980). When the book debuted in 1976, one book reviewer in *Public Relations Review* said that *Public Relations: Concepts and Practice* addressed the notion that public relations was more than "fire fighting tactical capabilities" (Wolter, 1976, p.58). It emphasized the "dynamics of the organization communication problem-solving process (p. 58). The book stressed public relations' role as "a management-centered, internally and externally-oriented, multifaceted communications function of the enterprise it serves" (p.59).

Donald Wright's review of the first edition praised Simon's "excellent" treatment of social responsibility and the contemporary communication landscape, while noting that the book lacked a history of public relations and communication methods chapters (1979, p. 52). The lack of a techniques section, the reviewer noted, would not hamper public relations majors who likely would receive a full course in public relations techniques. Simon's book, Wright said, arrived in a crowded market of new and established principles course textbooks: H. Frasier Moore and Bertrand Canfield (1977) would soon release their seventh edition of their book; Scott Cutlip and Allen Center (1978) had its fifth edition and Doug Newsom and Alan Scott had just published their principles text in 1976.

Simon's principles text, like his case study textbooks, was written to put the student close to the practitioner's world. An omnibus review of public relations textbooks in 1984 noted that Simon approached his writing in a "practical, realistic manner through situational applications. Within this framework, he includes a great deal of workable advice, from reporting and

presenting research and evaluation findings to agency fee structuring and billing – all subjects typically absent from PR texts” (Martin, Wasche & Measell, 1984).

In another round-up review of introductory textbooks, the reviewers noted that Simon’s text emphasized “a basic body of knowledge to be found within the public relations field, a discernible pattern of core concepts, activities and procedures” (Turk & Snedeker, 1986 p. 50). The process of public relations, standard material in the beginning chapters of introductory public relations textbooks today, was less common in 1986. *Effective Public Relations*, (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 1986), the acclaimed introductory textbook, and Simon’s textbook were singled out for devoting the most space to this foundational information.

A reviewer of the first edition found the concise book “a pleasure to read” (Bishop, 1976, p. 573) but said that it was too brief in parts: just 42 pages for communication theory. Other topics that needed attention were “race, civil rights, alienation from the political and economic process and international relations” (p. 573).

Book reviewers mentioned Simon’s use of “minis” that “brought students face to face with reality, as students come to grips with examples, situations, and problems that demand their active participation in the learning and teaching experience” (Simon, 1976, preface). This approach embodies Simon’s overall approach to teaching – keep the learning active. Students encounter their first “mini” in the book’s second page, a “Mini Survey: Public Relations as Seen by Your Peers” (Simon, 1976, p. 2), directing students to survey seven non-majors and ask them to define public relations. A few pages later, the first “Mini-Case” entitled “Byoir and the A&P” (Simon, 1976, p. 2) with a reproduction of institutional advertising is provided to examine a potential legislative threat to a company. Other “minis” are scattered throughout the first chapter

to provide active learning opportunities. By the third edition, the minis were grouped with assignments at the end of each chapter.

### **Beyond the Classroom**

Simon's influence extended beyond his textbooks and small campus environs. He was an active member of the Public Relations Society of America and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication serving on numerous advisory committees and foundations. Some of these included PRSA's first Education Advisory Committee (Simon, 1965), the PRSA Committee on Student Organization (Forum, 1969), the Association for Education in Journalism's (later AEJMC) Council on Public Relations Education and the Institute for Public Relations Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education. He also was the first recipient of the annual Carl Byoir Fellowship, which provided a summer residency at Byoir headquarters in New York City (Root, 1958).

### **Student Organizations**

Simon supported efforts to develop national organizations that supported student growth and professionalism. Utica College joined Boston University in 1952 as a beta chapter of Tau Mu Epsilon, an honorary fraternity for public relations students (Utica College Tau Mu Epsilon Constitution, n.d.). This organization recognized students' academic achievement as well as character and professional commitment.

Simon was instrumental in helping found PRSA's student organization, the Public Relations Student Society of America. He was one of several educators at the 1968 PRSA Assembly in Philadelphia that approved PRSSA's creation (Teahan, Gonders & DeSanto, 2007).

Utica College's Raymond Simon Chapter was one of nine PRSSA charter chapters established in 1968. Utica College's chapter was active with the organization and developed the organization's first national newsletter, the *Forum* (1969).

### **Raymond Simon Institute**

Raymond Simon Institute for Public Relations at Utica College was created in 1986, after Simon's retirement, to promote public relations education and student achievement. Its first trustees included Harold Burson, CEO of Burson-Marsteller; Sherwood Boehlert, a member of Congress and Utica College alumnus; David D'Alessandro, senior vice president of corporate communication at John Hancock (later its CEO) and Utica College alumnus; Ann Higbee, vice president-public relations, Eric Mower & Associates; and Duncan McCully, UC alumnus and vice president, Sketchley Services (Retired? Ray Simon, 1986).

The Simon Institute has fostered alumni relations and has brought some of the industry's top thought leaders to the classroom to share their experiences and mentor the next generation of public relations practitioners. It has provided more than \$250,000 in student awards and scholarships.

### **Conclusion**

Simon's accomplishments on their own merits are significant in the development of public relations education. He was the first to recognize and address the dearth of public relations specific textbooks. He is the father of public relations educational textbooks on publicity and writing and his case study management. His textbooks covered the entirety of most public relations curriculums – the principles, writing/publicity/campaigns and case problems

management courses. These books and their numerous editions influenced the first quarter-century of public relations education in the United States.

In addition to his prolific writing, Simon devoted significant time to the major public relations organizations (AEJMC, PRSA and PRSSA) focusing on education and students. When one considers that these accomplishments were the result of a one-man program at a small college extension campus with few resources, Simon's endeavors are even more remarkable.

All of Simon's published work sought to bridge academics to the practitioner's world (Simon, 1966). He believed that teachers and students should "gain first-hand insight into the operations" of public relations counseling firms and departments to "exchange valuable ideas and theories about public relations practice and teaching" (p. 75). He embraced research and its ensuing body of knowledge as important cornerstones in the nascent development of a new discipline. Research was important in order to be "'respectable' in academic circles" but to also help professionalize the field (p. 75). In the 1950s and 1960s, Simon wrote a quarterly column in the *Journalism Quarterly* (Teaching Forum) and *Public Relations Quarterly* (Research and Education) to link public relations educational and research efforts.

This article does not focus on the rich classroom environment Simon created and the countless field trips and community service research projects that his students engaged in as they learned about public relations from the inside out. Legions of alumni refer to their educational experience as being "Simonized" and recall his tough grading standards. Students who didn't meet the standard received the "68 nice try" grade which was Simon's way of prodding a student to meet his or her potential. Many alumni did meet their potential – Rob Flaherty, a 1981 graduate, is chairman and CEO of Ketchum, one of the largest public relations firms in the world.

Simon's contributions to public relations education can be felt today particularly in public relations classrooms. His textbooks influenced generations of public relations students, and those books helped develop an active and applied teaching pedagogy that is alive and well today.

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