

# Strategic Planning in Public Relations as Community Engaged Learning: What are They up to This semester?

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The Strategic Planning in Public Relations course teaches students to develop an understanding of the process of strategic planning within the field of public relations. This includes writing public relations plans, furthering strategic relationships with management, and forming relationships with the media for mutual advantage.



Since 2016, this class has been taught by Arshia Anwer, PhD, assistant professor teaching public relations courses in the communication department, and starting in 2017, Anwer has taught this class every year as a community engaged learning course.

“The objective of teaching this class as a community engaged learning course is to show students that public relations is not just about red carpets, high profile events or celebrity PR. Public relations professionals can also give back to their communities by working for smaller organizations that make a difference in the lives of everyday people,” Anwer said.

This semester, the students in the Strategic Planning in Public Relations class are working with the University Neighborhood Housing Program (UNHP), a community-based nonprofit organization based in the Northwest Bronx. The mission of this organization is to create, preserve, and improve affordable housing for families in the Northwest Bronx. It provides people in the community with resources for financial education, free tax preparation, foreclosure prevention, access to benefits and health insurance, and eviction prevention assistance.

There are two key components to this class: individual personal branding exercises, and a semester-long group assignment in which students create a strategic plan for an organization in the local Bronx community.

The personal branding exercises include five assignments geared towards allowing each student to create their own personal brand and online identity that can be used as they navigate their career in public relations. These assignments include a personal brand story, a blog post, a video resume, a Facebook/Twitter profile, and a LinkedIn profile.

The real heart of the course though, is the strategic plan project, where students complete weekly assignments in groups of four or five throughout the duration of the semester. These are then compiled at the end of the semester to complete a strategic plan for a local Bronx community client, which this semester is UNHP. Through this project, students get to model a real-life public relations agency by creating a nine-step PR strategic plan for the client. At the end of the semester, student groups give a professional pitch to the client to showcase the plan they created.