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FALL 2021

MCPRSSA Members Attend ICON



by Christina Rella

In October, two members of Manhattan College's Public Relations Student Society of America chapter were sponsored by Student Government and Student Engagement to attend the international conference for the Public Relations Society of America, "ICON." Like last year, the conference was held virtually.

Conference attendees have traveled to Florida for the in-person conference prior to COVID-19, however, members John O'Connor and Mike Ficaro were able to attend the conference virtually.

"As someone going into the workplace in a post-COVID world, I definitely wanted to use ICON to hear information on jobs that have changed in a post-COVID world and how they continue to change," said junior member John O'Connor. "While we may not be in the height of COVID right now, many panelists described the importance of remote work and how it changed the game entirely. Attending ICON virtually was definitely a unique experience. While I do wish I was in sunny Florida, it was very nice to be able to join each panel in my pajamas."

Club members were honored to have the opportunity to attend the event, but the virtual format did come with some negatives. O'Connor said that if the event were in-person there would have been more networking opportunities for students and the personable aspect of the in-person conference is something that really only could have happened in person.

"Human connection is very important, especially for an industry based on communication, so it was very hard to form relationships and connections with others attending ICON," O'Connor said. "This being said, I did have a very good experience at ICON, but I do believe that in-person ICON would be way more beneficial."

Although members faced some negatives due to the online format, O'Connor was still able to find positive and beneficial aspects to the event.

"During ICON, they offer many opportunities for mock interview/mock podcasts/ etc., and hearing the notes given after each mock interview definitely made me feel more confident for this internship application season," O'Connor said.

The conference offered many opportunities and provided members with various knowledgeable aspects of working in the industry during the post-COVID world.

"One major takeaway from my experience was from the discussion 'From TV 2 Twitter: Media Training for a Post-COVID World' with Brad Ritter," O'Connor said. "His presentation was about adapting to a post-COVID workplace. In his presentation, he mentioned something that I would like to keep in my 'tool belt' as I continue to apply for jobs and start working, which is: the seven Traits of the Savvy Spokesperson. These traits are one, connects with the journalist, two, responds rapidly, three, tells stories, four, creates a character, five, adapts to different platforms, six, performs well on camera, and seven, manages attacks effectively."



Upon hearing this, O'Connor shared that he felt more prepared for his upcoming job hunt in the post-COVID world.

After attending the conference, O'Connor was inspired to make more connections.

"The most beneficial part from my experience would be with Brad Ritter," O'Connor said. "In his presentation, he [also] discussed the importance of connecting as a human and not like a business robot. I feel like many people lose themselves in their work and, especially post-COVID, it is so important to make human connections."

The PRSA ICON provided members with the opportunity to expand their knowledge, even, and specifically, during the COVID era that we're living through. With so much uncertainty ahead, focusing on making connections in a post-COVID world was especially beneficial to students who will be entering the industry soon. ★

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