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## Grand Valley PRSSA chapter implements diversity initiative to spark change in chapter, PR industry

**ALLENDALE, Mich.** – For many public relations students at Grand Valley State University, the classroom looks the same – white females are greatly overrepresented compared to any other group. GVSU’s chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (GV PRSSA) is taking action to diversify both GV PRSSA and the public relations industry.

According to GVSU’s Office of Institutional Analysis, nearly three-quarters of GVSU public relations emphases are female and 82 percent are white or Caucasian. These numbers reflect national trends. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 61 percent of public relations specialists are female and 88 percent are white or Caucasian.

To better understand their chapter’s demographics, GV PRSSA surveyed their members only to find similar results.

“This is a big problem,” said GV PRSSA’s Vice President of Chapter Development Trevor Bryan, “In an industry that heavily depends on communication and cultural awareness, having a monolithic group is problematic.”

“We are just one PRSSA chapter out of 300 chapters in the nation,” said GV PRSSA’s Chapter President Bri Olson, “Our national award-winning chapter is passionate about making our presence known outside of West Michigan in more ways than one. After evaluating the outcomes of this diversity initiative within our chapter, we will take our findings and insight to the upcoming PRSSA National Conference to educate the future PR industry.”

GV PRSSA has partnered with the Office of Multicultural Affairs to learn ways to attract more diverse students into the field. GV PRSSA is currently reaching out to students in a broader range of classes including hospitality/tourism management, communications, writing, English, and digital studies.

Bryan also gave a diversity presentation to current GV PRSSA members during the group's last meeting. Topics discussed included the importance of diversity, microaggressions, and how to advocate for change.

"The goal of this campaign is not only to increase the diversity within GV PRSSA and the public relations major," said Bryan, "but to inspire change across the industry. If we all do our part, we can make sure that everyone feels included in the great industry of public relations."

#### About GV PRSSA

[GV PRSSA](#) is the pre-professional organization preparing GVSU students for their future careers in the public relations industry through speakers, workshops, agency tours, PRSSA national trips, and the student-run firm GrandPR.

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