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COMMUNITIES AND COLLEGES:
UTILIZING PUBLIC RELATIONS TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES
TO SOLVE CHRONIC TOWN-GOWN PROBLEMS

By

Kristin M. Leavey

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
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at
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Approved by: _____
Thesis Advisor

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ABSTRACT

Kristin M. Leavey
COMMUNITIES AND COLLEGES: UTILIZING PUBLIC RELATIONS
TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES TO SOLVE
CHRONIC TOWN-GOWN PROBLEMS
2003/2004
Dr. Suzanne Sparks FitzGerald
Master of Arts - Public Relations

The purpose of this thesis was to determine what public relations techniques and strategies that could be utilized to alleviate or even solve the five most prevalent problems faced by colleges and their communities. This researcher also verified that the top five problems as determined in a 1998 study still reign as the major problems in 2004.

An extensive literature review was conducted in conjunction with in-depth interviews with three college relations directors, surveys sent via email to over 1,000 college relations personnel, and intercept studies within the communities of the three chosen colleges.

It was concluded that the top five problems in 1998 still dominate in 2004. There was an apparent lack of two-way communication between the colleges and their communities that often led to hostility. The survey and in-depth interviews helped this researcher to gain several public relations strategies and techniques to apply to the five major problems, thus helping to alleviate problems for colleges and universities in the future.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter I Introduction

According to University of Massachusetts at Amherst Chancellor David Scott, University of Massachusetts and neighboring communities tend to arrive at town-gown relations much the same way motorists arrive at a four-way stop sign: "trying to work out the right-of-way without collisions, obscene gestures, or extreme road rage." Scott's explanation, though humorous, illustrates what thousands of schools across the nation actually struggle with each year.

Town-gown relations, the relationship between a university and the community in which it exists, has been a delicate area for decades. College-community relations have been frequently characterized by mutual disdain, hostility, suspicion, segregation, and isolation or, at best, conflict and tension. Thomas O. Selland, author of "The College Town: Some Effects of College Community Tensions", believes that although these relations may have moderated in recent years, there still remains a significant lack of mutual understanding between town and

gown and, more importantly, a lack of academic understanding of college-community interaction.

Poor town-gown relations cause negative media attention and unfavorable publicity for a school. A positive relationship with the community can benefit a college in terms of marketing and image. This is why it is important for universities and colleges to focus a tremendous amount of attention on the relationship with the community in which they exist. This relationship, if strained, causes many problems for the success of the school and its financial standing.

The responsibility does not rest solely on the university or college. The community also plays a significant part in developing a working relationship with the school. Nicole Spagnolia, author of "Universities and Communities: What Fosters Positive Town-Gown Relations?" believes that schools with town-gown problems should try to improve the situation by using a two-way symmetric model of communication based on mutual understanding and benefit. *Managing Public Relations* authors James Grunig and Todd Hunt, describe the two-way symmetric model as a process in which practitioners use research to discover how publics view the organization. Then, they use the information learned to change the publics' attitudes and behaviors,

alter the organization's attitude and behavior, or both. This requires cooperation between the community and institution, which need to listen to each other and work together. In doing this, both the school and the community can profit from the many benefits that a healthy and mutual relationship can offer.

Statement of the Problem

Every year, the *Princeton Review* ranks universities and colleges across the nation according to how well the college and its surrounding community interacts. Last year, Joan Severe of *The Connecticut Post* reported that the *Princeton Review* ranked Fairfield University, a Jesuit university in Connecticut, worst in the country for town-gown relations because of its extreme beach location partying, excessive noise, and alcohol. Though Fairfield ranked among the worst in the nation it is accompanied by thousands of other colleges and universities that struggle with the same problems year after year.

Town-gown relations have been a problem that many schools have struggled with for decades. This study asks the question: Using public relations techniques and strategies how can colleges and communities alleviate the top five problems that are encountered year after year?

These top five problems have been derived from a 1998 study conducted by Nicole Spagnolia.

Take Fairfield University for example. Upon discovering its ranking in the *Princeton Review* survey the university took immediate action to begin correcting the problem. It instituted a stricter judicial process for student noise violators and harsher fines. The university also called upon its student government to assist in gaining the students' support on making a relationship with the community work. The result has yielded significant benefits for both the town and school. Slowly but surely the school and community are reinstating a relationship with each other and learning that each is an important asset to the other's success.

Delimitations

Due to the vast number of colleges and universities that are in the United States, this study has been limited to three universities in the Delaware Valley Region. These schools are Rowan University (New Jersey), University of Delaware (Delaware), and the University of Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania). This study does not include single-sex universities, 2-year colleges, vocational or technical schools, or colleges outside of the United States. It also

does not compare public and private schools and the conflicts each encounter.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze the top five conflicts between schools and the host communities as determined in Nicole Spagnolia's 1998 study and designate what solutions work best to solve these conflicts. This researcher also explores what options did not work in the past and the problems officials can avoid in the future from sabotaging a well-executed public relations plan.

Also, according to the *Princeton Review's* 2003 ranking, only 351 of the 4,182 colleges and universities that currently operate in the United States have "good to excellent" town-gown relations. This means that 91.6 percent of the colleges and universities in the United States suffer from poor town-gown relations. The significance of this study is that this researcher can find what techniques and strategies will work in solving the top town-gown problems. This researcher plans to make this study available to all college or university relations officials and public relations practitioners in colleges

and universities around the nation so that they can enact the public relations techniques offered in resolving these common town-gown conflicts.

Hypotheses

This study was necessary to test the following town-gown hypotheses:

Hypothesis I - It is expected that most colleges and universities still find the following five areas most problematic: parking, housing, Greek Life (parties and noise), alcohol (unacceptable behavior), and objection to a school's tax-exempt status.

This researcher uses the problems determined in Nicole Spagnolia's 1998 study as a basis for the top five problems that exist between colleges and the host communities. Peter Clavelle's article, "Progressive Approaches to University-Community Relations," states that many of these problems occur at University of Vermont in Burlington. Clavelle says, "City concerns and tensions grew about student pressure on the housing market, neighborhoods, and on parking and traffic congestion peaked in the 1980s and 1990s as University of Vermont's enrollment grew

dramatically." This researcher plans to conduct extensive research to distinguish what public relations tactics and strategies can be used by university relations personnel, such as the University of Vermont, to solve these top problems and prevent them in the future.

Hypothesis II - It is expected that urban locations will be more accepting of colleges and universities existing in the area than rural locations.

Tony Tysome, author of "Universities Must Heed Their Civic Responsibilities" reports that large towns and cities tend to cry out for universities, understanding the economic benefits schools can confer, while most communities in existing smaller university towns rue the social impact of an influx of students. This researcher explores why cities may be more accepting of colleges existing in the area and ways that university and college officials can influence rural town communities to be more accepting of the possibility of the future existence of a higher education institute in the area.

Hypothesis III - It is expected that the following public relations techniques will aid in alleviating the top five problems of town-gown relations:

- School & Community Planning & Policy Meetings
- Newsletters from school to townspeople and from town to school officials and students
- Economic Impact Studies
- Special town events conducted by school to include town or better town-gown relations

Nicole Spagnolia cited in Chapter V of her study on town-gown relations that the preceding techniques and strategies were among the top suggestions offered by university and college relations' officials to alleviate problems between the school they worked for and its surrounding community. It can be assumed that these techniques and strategies will succeed in solving town-gown relations in communities across the nation. For example, Dr. Marlow Ediger, author of "Effective School Public Relations," agrees with Spagnolia and stresses the significance and importance of school newsletters. Ediger says, "The school needs to inform students and the town of relevant dates in newsletter form. Events that are significant should be forthcoming in due time as to provide

students and the town with easy scheduling, attendance, and expected involvement."

Procedure

To research these hypotheses, this author gathered information about college and university relations programs from around the country through newspapers, online databases, periodical research, and Internet search engines. This researcher looked into public relations strategies that have been used in the past by schools in efforts to develop a good relationship with the surrounding community and of these strategies, which have been successful and which have not. Then, in-depth one-hour interviews with college relations' representatives from the three colleges selected were conducted. Participants were questioned about public relations strategies and events they have used in the past and presently in dealing with the community. They were asked about how they view the university's current relationship with the community and about problems they have encountered and the solutions they have used.

Next, this researcher conducted surveys of college and university relations' officials from schools across the United States via email about what they believe to be to

solutions for each of the top five problems. From this, the author was able to discover techniques that have and have not worked in schools in different areas of the country.

Finally, intercept studies were conducted in the communities of the three schools being studied to find out what solutions the community believes can be employed to correct the top five problems and a general overview of the communities' population and demographics.

Summary

According to Judith Steinkamp, writer for *Connection: New England's Journal of Higher Education and Economic Development*, relationships between colleges and universities and the host communities have been sufficiently strained over the past few years. The same public relations tactics have been employed year after year in hopes of alleviating the conflicts, but still manage to fail. This study plans to gain research that can assist towns and universities that share a common location to become assets to each other instead of models of town-gown dysfunction.

In Chapter 2, this researcher reviews studies and research previously conducted that exemplifies the

importance of this study to both university and community success. Past conflicts and issues are examined and detailed literature is analyzed to give the reader a broader understanding of town-gown relations and the conflicts that exist.

Terminology

The following terminologies are used throughout this thesis by the author. To help the reader gain a better understanding of this study, it is necessary to define the following terms:

Attitude - An enduring and dynamic organization of beliefs about objects or situations; can be positive or negative.

City - A metropolitan area that constitutes of a population over 50,000 citizens

College, School, or University - Establishment for further or higher education, when used in this study refers to a four year process, students can commute or live on campus; other words for college in this study school, university, higher education institution

Community - A body of people living in one locale

Delaware Valley Region - Area of the United States that includes the northern region of Delaware, the southern

region of New Jersey, and the southeast region of Pennsylvania; area centered around the southern Delaware River

Higher Education Institution - Refers to college or university

Rural - A less populated area, country, secluded under 10,000 people in the population

Town - A small area that consists of less than 10,000 people

Town-Gown Relations - The relationship between a college and the community where the school is located

University or College Relations - The department in a college or university that deals with the relationship between a school and its community (could also be Community Relations)

Urban - A highly populated area, existing within the boundaries of metropolitan cities with over a 50,000 population.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The following analysis of literature demonstrates that this researcher's study highly contributes to the understanding and knowledge in the field of public relations and may provide for further refining of the topic.

University or College Relations

It takes an entire campus to foster a good or bad relationship with the larger community. James Grunig in *Managing Public Relations* explains, "University or college relations programs are specialized public relations programs that facilitate communication between an organization and the publics in its geographic locality." *Patriot News* writer Bill Cathert displays both sides of an "uneasy equation." First, he explains that towns and cities that have colleges enjoy an economic boom. The schools pump millions of dollars into the local economy and create hundreds of jobs. However, Cathert also points out that colleges also can usher in parking and housing

headaches, as well as problems with student conduct that range from loud parties to full-scale riots.

Peter Hollister, author of "Neighborly Advice," acknowledges that every institution is unique and must consider different factors when dealing with university and college relations. However, he also believes that every college or university's ultimate solution revolves around developing a successful university or college relations program.

Community Relations

Faculty members and students often conduct their own brand of community relations in ways that may delight or dismay the Community Relations Office, most likely the latter. Christine McKenna, writer for *Connection: New England's Journal of Higher Education & Economic Development*, explains, "Managing community relations is like doing tango with a jellyfish. You can get stung." She goes on to explain a few realizations community relations departments are starting to have. McKenna stresses that housing college students in apartments alongside long-time neighborhood residents is a "recipe for community relations disaster." Alcohol at late-night student parties leads to yelling and possible fighting in a

neighbor's front yard. Campus and town police arrive to round up unruly students. Angry neighbors offer eyewitness accounts to police and even local reports thus causing major tension.

McKenna also points out that Community Relations offices are learning the benefits of compromise. For example, UMass-Lowell Chancellor William T. Logan saw an opportunity to help the town when it was experiencing a tough financial period. He proposed the construction of a Barnes & Noble franchise to be built in downtown Lowell that would serve as the university bookstore. The community loved the idea, however, students did not. They complained that the location was too far off-campus for them to access. To compromise, Hogan worked with his Community Relations office to design a proposal to make both the community and the students happy. In the end, the franchise Barnes & Noble was constructed downtown carrying general books and UMass clothing and insignia items. Textbooks, however, would still be sold at a smaller branch on-campus store. According to McKenna, in the end, because of the college relations department, everyone won.

Town-Gown Relations

Campus disturbances coupled with vastly increased costs of higher education have contributed to the deterioration of town-gown relations according to Louis Heilbron, author of "Relevance for Town and Gown." The implication is that colleges and universities can't co-exist easily within cities and towns. Basically, town and gown are two very different institutions serving two very different purposes.

However, despite town-gown relations being viewed as a give and take relationship, some, such as Tony Tysome, author of "Universities Must Heed Their Civic Responsibilities," believe that universities must "live up to social responsibilities, as well as economic ones, for the partnership to be judged as a success."

Others such as Erin Duggan, staff writer for the *Times Union* in Albany, New York, believe that a lot of problems that occur in college towns are just that: problems. Duggan says, "Town-gown is an appropriate enough phrase to describe more esoteric or innocuous affairs such as a university's building and expansion plans or its contributions to the civic life and social fabric of the larger community. Criminal behavior by people of college age, though, is just that: criminal behavior." Duggan

explains that she believes that crime, especially the kind of crime that makes victims out of people simply because they choose to live in a college neighborhood, shouldn't be tolerated anywhere.

Judith Steinkamp, writer for *Connection: New England's Journal for Higher Education & Economic Development* believes that both parties need to be involved for successful town-gown relations. She also believes that all problems dealing with university or community individuals are potential problems in achieving successful town-gown relations. Steinkamp has even developed her own method of improving town-gown relations called the "**Five C's**." "First," Steinkamp explains, "you must develop a comprehensive strategy, then achieve consensus and commitment from all parties, ensure continuity through changes in leadership and administration, and finally, find a champion for change to provide the quality of leadership to make the project a reality."

Educational (or School) Public Relations

Educational Public Relations professionals say that the time has come for educators and other reform advocates to focus on better communicating their proposals and goals to parents of students and to the public. Members of the

National School Public Relations Association agree. They believe that many reform proposals have been defeated because education advocates have not taken the time and effort to explain them in a language that the public can understand. Richard Bagin, the executive director of the Arlington, Virginia association explains by saying, "Unfortunately, most educational leaders, such as principals, superintendents, and board members, still think marketing is a four-letter word and not part of their jobs. We provide a professional way of doing it. The days of 'winging it' are over. There is a court of public opinion, and school leaders need professional counsel there."

Dr. Marlow Ediger, author of "Effective School Public Relations," explains that an effective school public relations program is planned, systematic, and on going. Ediger believes that teachers, administrators, support personnel, and workers within the school setting need to be actively involved in "developing, implementing, and maintaining quality in the field of educational public relations." Ediger cites newsletters, local newspaper articles, television and radio reports, PTA or PTO meetings, open houses, parent-teacher conferences, and upkeep of the physical environment as important links

between the school and the parents/community that should be recognized and exercised.

George Pawlas, author of "Working Magic on the School Image," believes that a quality public relations program should stress definite objectives to bring a closer working relationship between the school and the home. The school needs the backing of the parents as well as parents need the backing of the school. Both must work in a cooperative manner to assist pupils and educational public relations to achieve as optimally as possible.

Town-Gown Problems and Solutions

Parking/Traffic

Parking and traffic congestion are two of the major problems that exist on college campuses all across the nation. The lack of sufficient on-campus parking forces many students, staff, and faculty to park along the streets of surrounding neighborhoods and cause major traffic congestion.

According to Steve Peterson, reporter for *The Forum* and author of "New Zoning Restrictions Will Affect Westminster Campus Parking," Westminster College, of Salt Lake City, Utah, is a school that has parking problems with

its surrounding residents. Prior to October 2003, the residents surrounding Westminster, frustrated by the numerous cars continually parking in front of and around their homes, gathered together to petition the Salt Lake City Division of Transportation to evaluate the impact of Westminster College students and faculty parking on the neighborhood streets. The petition cites the following: "excessive amounts of traffic on the streets, high rates of speed, impaired visibility around the corners, and lack of access to the sidewalks from the roads." As a result, in January 2004, the Salt Lake City Division of Transportation plans to put into effect a parking ordinance that will create a zoned area around campus restricting parking along the surrounding neighborhood streets.

Another school that has been struggling with this problem is the University of Florida, according to Kristin Johnson, writer for *The Gainesville Sun*. In her article, "Changes Part of Revitalization Project," she explains that residents here believe that the area is becoming an "automobile slum" and few people want to permanently live there. In an effort to limit on-street parking in the residential neighborhoods bordering the University of Florida campus, city officials, neighborhood associations, and homeowners have worked together to redesign the

procedures for obtaining neighborhood-parking permits. Depending on what zone a home occupies will warrant the number of decals a family receives for their property.

Then there are schools that face opposition toward planned construction because of the tremendous amounts of traffic congestion and parking problems the erection of the site will cause. For example, Max Rust, staff reporter for *The Minnesota Daily*, states in his article, "Mixed Feelings Surface With New Apartments," that residents are concerned about the added parking needs and increased traffic a new five-story, 370-bedroom complex being erected in the West Bank neighborhood is going to cause. The only solution offered by developers and school officials was to ask that students and residents only use their cars on weekends. This only aggravated the community more.

According to Konstadinos Goulias, a traffic engineer and engineering professor at the University of Pennsylvania there's only one way to prevent parking problems and traffic congestion around colleges and universities. He explains, "The best way to resolve traffic congestion is by better land-use planning, which primarily, has to happen before the fact."

Housing

"Studentification" a term coined loosely based on the term "Gentrification" (the colonization of formerly run-down areas by the middle classes, and the subsequent displacement of the working classes) is being used presently to describe the conditions due to the massive expansion of higher education institutes.

"Studentification" is described in the University of Brighton newsletter as being "where students invade distinct areas of university towns - giving rise to notions of a 'student ghetto' and the proliferation of houses in multiple occupation." The article explains how student settlement can have a positive impact on an area, but if allowed to proceed unchecked, can become the opposite of gentrification - "the flight of middle class owner-occupiers and rapid decay of the housing stock."

Craig Raborn, writer for *Zoning News* and author of "Coping with Colleges: How Communities Address the Problems of Students Living Off-Campus," points out that many college and university campuses are located in the heart of the host communities. He explains that there is often little room for additional housing construction for students to live on-campus. Students then migrate to find off-campus housing options where they cause a negative

impact on the community. Some of the impact Raborn cites are: "rising rental rates, loss of affordable housing, major shifts in property values, increased nuisance and noise complaints, increased traffic congestion, and reduced parking availability."

Another school, the University College Worcester has received much coverage in the newspapers about how wonderful its plans are to expand and accept over 3,000 more students next year. However, the citizens of Worcester have not been consulted and feel otherwise. The citizens have realized that all of these extra students have to live somewhere and since the university does not have enough housing to accommodate them, Worcester itself would have to do so. This is where landlords come in. Worcester landlords spotted this potential bonanza years ago and have been quick to snatch up houses, often block-buying them in strategically placed areas. Landlords have realized that students are "sheep-like." They want to live where there are other students. So houses in popular zones, no matter how rundown and dilapidated, become huge moneymakers. Meanwhile, neighboring families unable to stand the noise, litter, and general deterioration of the area usually end up leaving.

Today, many universities now provide on-campus housing for only half or fewer of their enrolled students, and enrollments continue to increase each year according to Bob Karrow, writer for *Planetizen*.

Universities are starting to realize that when you take the "town" out of "college town" what's left is a campus in deteriorating surroundings. Karrow points out that many universities, such as the acclaimed Georgetown University in Washington, DC, are actively protecting and revitalizing adjacent neighborhoods. University/Community partnerships are on the rise. These include a wide range of programs, from student service learning projects with neighborhood groups, to mortgage programs directed at drawing faculty and staff back to near-campus homes. Karrow believes that cities and institutions must increase joint efforts, examining and employing the additional options for on and off-campus housing now available. Through creative university and community partnerships, college and university communities can work together to keep the "town" in "college town."

Parties/Alcohol/Noise

"Parties, noise, and alcohol, would most likely qualify as the most significant problems that universities

and their communities face," according to Georgia County Commissioner Tom Chasteen. Chasteen believes that his hometown, Athens, Georgia, home of the University of Georgia, could be a nearly perfect locale, except for one chronic problem: "scattered across the neighborhood are student rental homes, along with road-clogging lines of cars and trucks, overflowing trash bins, speeding traffic, and noisy parties that awaken neighbors at all hours."

Another different example that ended more tragically was an incident at Ball State University that involved an intoxicated student and a town resident that ended fatally with the student being shot and killed. Keith Roysdon, of *The Star Press*, explains in his article "College Drinking Culture Has An Impact on Neighborhoods," the student, who had been bar-hopping was walking alone along West North Street in Muncie, Indiana and was looking for his friend's house to crash for the night. He mistakenly ended up at a neighbor's door, trying to push his way inside, while the frightened owner made a frantic call to 911. Michael McKinney, a 21-year-old Ball State University student, was shot and killed by a rookie university police officer that had responded to the 911 call. Frank Puzzullo, a Muncie resident, who had been involved in a similar incident that ended in the student's arrest replied to the incidents

saying, "Somebody else is going to get shot. Either a neighbor is going to shoot a student or a police officer will." These aren't the only problems for Ball State University. Roysdon reports that neighbors complain about students who party in once quiet residential areas "spill out into yards and streets damaging property, lowering real-estate values, and forcing long-time residents to move."

Nationally, 61.5 percent of the 16.5 million college graduates live off-campus, but not with relatives, according to a *USA Today* report from March 2003, a 4.5 percent increase since 1995. Citizens in Iowa City find themselves dealing with a new group of tenants every fall and say that it only seems to get worse. *The Iowa City Press* reports that the citizens have finally decided to take a stand and plan to create a Neighborhood Committee that will take charge in enforcing laws that may be unpopular to students, but they feel that a committee is the best way to progressively act.

Other steps communities are making to confine parties and drinking to a minimum are stiffer penalties and fines, both university and town police involvement, and in St. Paul, Minnesota at St. Thomas College, a program it has designed called the ZAP (Zero Adult Providers) Program.

According to Doug Hennes, Director of University Relations at St. Thomas, the ZAP program has been working very well in deterring college students from becoming rowdy and violent at off-campus parties. Under the ZAP laws, police can enter and search a house with probable cause, fines can go as high as \$3,000 for a provider and \$700 for a minor, providers are always arrested, and they can face a felony if death is involved. Hennes says, "We don't tolerate alcohol abuse on-campus, so why should we tolerate it off-campus? We feel that we have a responsibility to the neighborhood to make the students behave appropriately."

Taxes and Tax Exemption

According to Rowan University public relations director, Ed Ziegler, a serious problem that plagues colleges is defending their tax-exempt status. Jeffery S. Tenenbaum, author of "The Difference Between Nonprofit and Tax-Exempt Status," describes tax-exempt status as being "that an organization is exempt from paying federal corporate income tax on income generated from activities that are substantially related to the purposes for which the entity was organized." The organization must, however, pay federal corporate income tax on income that is

unrelated to its tax-exempt purposes, called unrelated business income.

Legally, cities cannot impose property taxes on universities and colleges that are shielded under law. Adam Stella, writer for *The Brown Daily Herald*, cites that many past legislative attempts to coax more funding from colleges and universities have failed. Cities try to distinguish universities from other non-profits in hopes that they will be able to gain additional revenue.

Rhode Island School of Design Director of External Relations, Ann Hudner, commented about the dispute concerning tax-exempt status saying, "Any discussion of taxing non-profits must include colleges and universities, preparatory schools, hospitals, and churches."

Others believe that colleges and universities are significantly different from other non-profits, such as hospitals. These people believe that colleges and universities are businesses that provide a service and are clearly discernible from shelters, hospitals, and other non-profits.

Providence Mayor, David Cicilline, who deals with Brown University on a daily basis, believes that another issue to be resolved while reevaluating the relationship between universities and the city is whether universities

are in complete compliance with existing tax statutes. Most states' tax laws provide universities tax-exempt status for property used for an academic purpose, but not other holdings.

Colleges can use economic impact studies in the tax fight to calculate just how much the school contributes to the community. Joye Mercer, author of "In Dollars and Cents: Colleges Measure What They Contribute To Their Communities," explains that in economic impact studies, colleges "break down how much they spend on payroll, supplies and services. It lists sources of revenue, including tuition, gifts, federal and state support and investment income. It then calculates how much students, visitors, and employees spend locally." The college is able to compare the two numbers visually and ease criticism from the community if it's able to see that the school makes a tremendous contribution towards the bettering of the town or city.

Summary

It is evident after reviewing numerous sources that the top five problems Nicole Spagnolia cited in her 1998 thesis "Universities and Their Communities: What Fosters Positive Town-Gown Relations?" as the most common for town-

gown conflicts still exist as the top problems today. This researcher found hundreds of articles and books that discussed the issue of town-gown relations and the problems schools and communities face and was able to gain a broader understanding of the subject that will carry through to the primary research.

In Chapter III, this researcher describes the methodologies chosen to explore what solutions would work best in solving the top five most common problems. This researcher will explain the procedures that will be used and the questions employed in the research. Results and explanation will be covered in Chapters IV and V respectively.

Chapter III Methodologies

To test the hypotheses, this researcher examined town-gown relations across the country to find out how college relations personnel have handled the top five problems encountered by colleges and host communities in the past and where its went wrong.

After extensive secondary research and literature review of the numerous articles, newspapers, and books uncovered, this researcher was able to yield a vast number of examples and situations that exemplified how and why colleges and communities still manage to struggle with town-gown relations.

According to Nicole Spagnolia's 1998 study, parking, housing, off-campus parties, opposition to a college's tax-exempt status and alcohol are the five major problems that exist between colleges and communities.

To verify that this information is still accurate and to gain further understanding of how these problems were dealt with, in-depth, in-person interviews were conducted with college/university relations personnel from the three

Delaware Valley Region schools: Joe Cardona from Rowan University (New Jersey), Sharon Dorr from University of Delaware (Delaware), and Rob Skomoroucha St. Joseph's University (Pennsylvania.)

Questions such as "What specific problems have your University Relations office encountered over the past few years?" "How did you deal with these problems?" and "What methods do you believe are most efficient when dealing with the community?" were asked.

The in-depth interviews yielded a tremendous amount of qualitative research that displayed an in-depth analysis of how each institution deals with problems that it encounters, what has and hasn't worked for it, and why it believes these problems have been abundant for so many years.

Instrument Design

After the in-depth interviews were conducted, a survey instrument was constructed from the information that interviews yielded.

The survey design included opinion and demographic questions in the form of response sets, Likert scale questions, and closed-ended questions.

Questions focused on demographics about the individual and qualities of the school, the five major problems, how the respondent has or would deal with a conflict, events and contributions made by the school to the community, communication channels between the school and community, and some brief examples of the school's most major problems.

Questions such as these helped the researcher to better understand the school's outlook on conflicts with the community and what actions present-day colleges facilitate to correct the situation.

This researcher chose to distribute the survey via email through SurveyMonkey.com. An Internet email survey was chosen over both a phone and mail survey because of cost. Emailing the survey would save expenses on long distance calls to schools across the nation, and individual stamps and envelopes.

The survey was sent to over 700 college relations personnel across the country. These individuals could benefit from the results and were considered an interested audience who would most likely respond.

Sample

The survey was pre-tested at Rowan University and then sent via email to randomly chosen college and university relations personnel throughout the United States. College/University Relations representatives email addresses were found by visiting the website <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/CLAS/american-universities.html> which listed approximately 2,000 American colleges and universities that keep current web pages. College and university relations representatives' contact information was found by visiting selected individual school websites. Every third school was marked and if it met the necessary criteria (A co-ed, four-year college, not including vocational or technical schools), then it was selected. Seven hundred and sixty eight college relations personnel from the list received a survey. This researcher hopes to have a minimum of 384 surveys returned. This would produce a 50 percent response rate and a +/- 5% margin of error within a 95 percent confidence level.

Data Collection

A brief paragraph introduced the researcher and explained the purpose of the study. Respondents had the option to request the collected data and results for their

own reference and school once the data was compiled and the study was completed. Respondents were asked to return the survey via email within two weeks. Surveys that were returned after the due date were not included in the study.

Validity/Reliability

A statistical analysis produced the results of the survey in percentages. This type of research is quantitative and evaluative. The survey can be considered reliable because it was pre-tested. Plus, all school officials received the same survey to maintain consistency. Two hundred and twenty four surveys were returned creating a +/- 6.7% margin of error within a 95 percent confidence level. This means the results of the survey can be generalized to the entire population of colleges in the United States. The email survey achieved a 22.4% response rate.

Summary

This study is unlike others conducted because it yields more than just what problems exist in town-gown relations. It offers solutions to alleviating these problems both now and for prevention in the future. Very

few researchers go deep enough to suggest solutions to specific problems involving town-gown relations.

In Chapter IV, this researcher presents the results of both the qualitative and the quantitative research methods and provides explanation of statistics and illustrative graphs and charts.

Discussion and interpretation of the results and data is reviewed in Chapter V. This researcher will individually analyze and interpret the results that were produced and deduce conclusions about the proposed hypotheses. Chapter V also contains limitations to the study and ideas for further research.

Chapter IV

Findings

As stated in Chapter III, this researcher conducted three separate types of research (two quantitative and one qualitative) in order to find conclusions to either support or not support the presented hypotheses. The methodologies conducted, three personal interviews with three separate college relations directors, email surveys to over 1,000 college relations personnel, and intercept studies within the three selected communities all yielded a great deal of valuable information that will lead this researcher to conclude whether assumptions made can be deemed true or false.

Some interesting discoveries made were the differences in opinion of a strained relationship existing between the college and community. Only 28.6 percent of all college relations personnel believe that they have a strained relationship with the community, while 86 percent of the community members believe the relationship is strained. (See Figures 1.0 and 1.1)

Figure 1.0:

**College Relations
Practitioners:
Strained Relationship?**

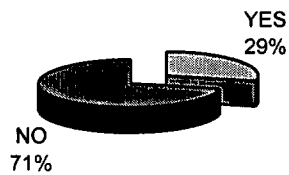
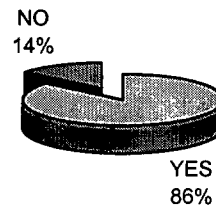


Figure 1.1:

**Community Residents:
Strained Relationship?**



These differences in opinion also existed when asked whether they felt their counterpart was very involved when it came to solving town-gown problems. Only 22.1 percent of all community members felt that the college or university was very involved, while 59.7 percent of college relations personnel believed the same about community members. (See Figures 2.0 and 2.1)

Figure 2.0:

**College Relations
Practitioners: Community
Involved?**

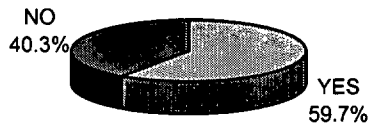
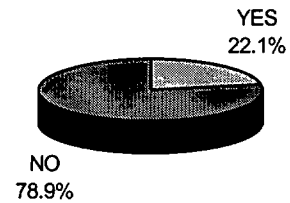


Figure 2.1:

**Community Residents:
College Involved?**



The following section reveals the remainder of the research results as it pertains to each hypothesis:

Hypothesis I: SUPPORTED

It is expected that most colleges and universities still find the following five areas most problematic: parking, housing, Greek Life (parties and noise), alcohol (unacceptable behavior), and objection to a school's tax-exempt status.

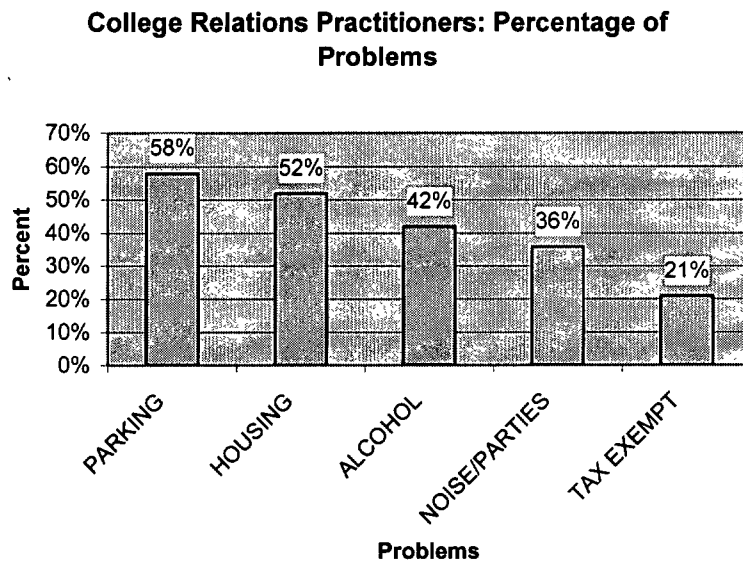
Survey results support this hypothesis. In the survey conducted, college/university relations practitioners were

asked to mark all responses that they felt were a problem at their school. According to the survey this researcher distributed via email to over 1,000 college relations personnel the top five problems ranked accordingly. (See Figure 3.0)

Percentages of Colleges Experiencing These Problems:

Parking (lack of)	58%
Off-campus Housing Issues	52%
Alcohol	42%
Noise Complaints/Parties	36%
Objection to Tax Exemption	21%

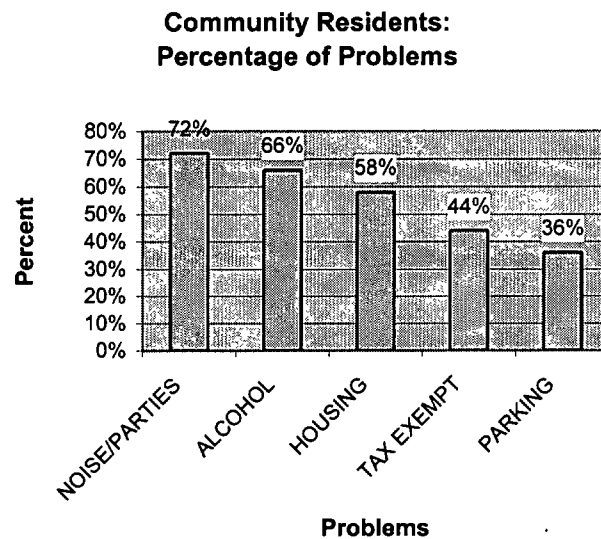
Figure 3.0:



In contrast, however, when community members were asked a series of intercept study questions their answers did not rank the same way, although they did agree on the same top five problems. The top five problems according to community members ranked as the following (See Figure 4.0)

Noise Complaints/Parties	72%
Alcohol	66%
Off-campus Housing Issues	58%
Objection to Tax Exemption	44%
Parking (lack of)	36%

Figure 4.0:



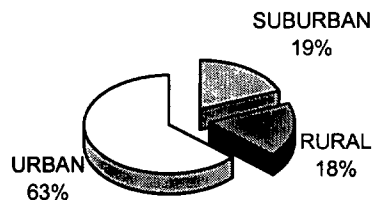
Hypothesis II: SUPPORTED

It is expected that urban locations will be more accepting of colleges and universities existing in the area than rural or suburban locations.

In each survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether their school existed in an urban, rural, or suburban location. To analyze which respondents were most accepting of the school in their type of community, this researcher broke each respondent up separately and tallied their answers according to survey results. Survey results indicated that 63 percent of colleges/universities existing in urban locations were widely accepted, while only 18 percent of rural schools and 19 percent of suburban schools. (See Figure 5.0)

Figure 5.0:

Areas Most Accepting of Colleges?



Hypothesis III: SUPPORTED

It is expected that the following public relations techniques will aid in alleviating the top five problems of town-gown relations:

- School & Community Planning & Policy Meetings
- Newsletters from school to townspeople and from town to school officials and students
- Economic Impact Studies
- Special town events conducted by school to include town or better town-gown relations

This section was the most detailed of the surveys and personal interviews. According to survey results and information this researcher gathered from personal interviews, these four techniques proved to be among the top ways public relations professionals can alleviate town-gown problems. Other suggested methods included:

FOR PARKING PROBLEMS/ISSUES:

- Students do not pay for parking on campus and are more likely to park on campus than in local neighborhood streets. In addition, provide a crossing guard on the main

street outside of campus to provide efficient crossing of our students to and from classes.

- Make campus more accessible to bike riders and speak with area government officials on a region wide bicycle path system. Publicize benefits and offer incentives for bike riders.

- Offer efficient shuttle bus service during winter months or a city-university bus service year-round.

- Encourage incentives and car-pools.

- Set up town meetings to discuss the problem and appoint a task force comprised of town people and academic leaders, as well as students, to explore the problem and root causes.

- Communicate clearly with students about parking regulations, including off-campus parking regulations.

- Stress the steps the university takes to work within the best needs of the community and the school. For example, staggered class times, more evening classes, etc.

- A 24-hr campus hotline to assist students with parking problems. For example, identifying available parking on campus.

- Meetings with planning/zoning officials and residents in affected neighborhoods.

- Include the community in transportation planning.

- Keep the community informed about university plans, efforts the university is making to solve the problems

- Build more parking lots/garages, scheduling classes to spread out parking, enforcing parking regulations, etc.)

- Stress the benefits that the college/university brings to the community in terms of economic, social and cultural, academic and sports influences.

- Develop campaigns to encourage students to walk; use busses, or perhaps using an environmental protection message. Make campus transportation free and convenient.

FOR OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING ISSUES:

- Conduct focus group interviews to develop solutions that work for all groups involved.

- Set up a public forum to discuss the problem inviting, residents, landlords, and students.

- Appoint a task force comprised of town people, academic leaders, and students to explore the problem and root causes and to help students find appropriate local housing.

- Look for alternative, university-sponsored housing that removes students from residential areas such as a local apartment complex or town-homes to allow students to live there maybe at a discounted rate.

- Provide information to all students annually about their rights and responsibilities as members of the community. Have university and community police officers go door to door in campus neighborhoods dropping off informational packets.

- Develop student code that can be applied to extreme off-campus behavior, and apply it.

- Have university police work with town police to provide regular patrols of the off-campus housing area.

- Annual fair to provide info about housing opportunities, laws and services.

- Establish a hotline for neighbors to call when students are causing problems.

- Work with neighborhood organizations to integrate students into the community. Help residents understand that students living in the community can be good for the community economically; set up programs where students work side by side with community members in volunteer efforts (clean-up days, community centers, etc.) Be sure to publicize these programs.

- Get student government involved in developing a panel to work with local business people who own rentals.

- Appoint an ombudsman with real authority to address community issues and will serve as a good avenue for people to voice their concerns and someone to follow up with complaints. Make them available 24 hours a day via mobile

telephone for rapid response. Organize monthly meetings with the leadership of area civic associations and elected officials. Never go to a meeting without the participation of the police, license & inspection and other code officers. Pour information into the community. Send local residents copies of major university publications. Come to meetings with handouts. Develop a hot list of 200+ community and elected leaders who receive a weekly report. In our instance, it is simply a copy of the University's staff and faculty newsletter.

- Create an Off-Campus Housing and Commuter Services Director and have them appoint a staff.

- Emphasize the amount of \$ being spent by the students in the neighborhoods and their community contributions.

- Partner with the city to develop a master plan for preserving neighborhoods while accommodating growth in the student body.

FOR ALCOHOL/PARTIES/NOISE ISSUES:

- Hold students living off campus to the same conduct codes as those living on campus and make those codes known to students and the community.

- Work with outside community group or student organizations that promote safety or women's rights (self defense or date rape) or alcohol awareness. Make these connections visible.

- Have groups representing student government go door-to-door before likely party weekends to caution the residents and act as a liaison group if problems arise.

- Let community/neighborhood groups know how to reach college/university campus safety at any time of the day or night for off-campus problems affecting them.

- Establish a hot line for complaints

- Work with community members to draw up guidelines and then enforce policies.

- Move Greeks to on-campus housing arrangements.

- Develop plans/activities with local bars and alcohol distributors to promote responsible drinking.

- Work with Greek leadership/council on responsible citizenship issues; Inspire greatness in Greek Life and involvement in college activities; Ensure Greeks have ongoing positive relationships with law enforcement and town before issues arise.

- Develop social-norms advertising and promotional campaigns; develop community service mentality and advocate for good citizenship for all students.

- Describe social norms programs run through the school that attempt to educate students about drinking.

- Have the Dean of Students regularly join police patrols on weekends. If off-campus parties involve alcohol and under-age student participants, the Dean often is with the police when a party is raided. Those students who are apprehended by the police have a meeting with the Dean.

- Have the Health and Wellness center offer an alcohol EDU program that is mandatory for all freshmen and Greeks. Have

the Director of this program appear on television and be interviewed by the local press about our efforts and the positive results.

- Work with student organizations to self-police.

- Develop a strong inter-fraternity/sorority council with clear sanctions and enforceable policies and public proceedings to ensure fair and balanced due process.

- Create more on-campus activities for students to participate in without having to leave the campus.

- Create a position that oversees and works with the Greek system to help integrate them into the community.

FOR TAX EXEMPTIONS STATUS ISSUES:

- Conduct an economic impact study. Develop and distribute this information about the institution's economic contribution to the community outside of taxes, including payment of other community fees. Basically, prove that the community gets far more back from the institution than it would receive from taxes.

- Conduct a public forum with key leaders.

- Develop positive message commercial(s) for local cable channels showing benefits/reasons for tax-exempt status. Go on local cable access talk shows, if your community has one. Meet with editorial board of local newspapers.

- Help community find revenue sources other than taxing university housing/buildings, etc.

- Demonstrate the university's value to the community in terms of economic development, role in making the community more attractive to potential businesses, cultural benefits. Particularly for research institutions, demonstrate the return of federal and other research dollars, patents, licenses, etc., in creating jobs and added to the tax base of the community.

- Minimize/eliminate all off-campus advertising for such campus services as the bookstore, travel services, food services, etc.

- Offer an annual donation to the community's main development organization such as the Economic Development

Corporation in lieu of taxes. Organizations such as the Economic Development Corporation are often comprised of local business, residential and governmental agencies.

Summary

In conclusion, it can be stated that all three hypotheses were supported by the research conducted. For Hypothesis I, the top five problems as stated in Nicole Spagnolia's 1998 thesis study still reign as the top five problems five years later in 2004. In Hypothesis II, there was a significant gap between the number of urban schools and rural/suburban schools that felt there was a strained relationship between the school and town. And finally, Hypothesis III was supported by input derived from both the surveys distributed and from the personal interviews. The techniques offered were among the top suggestions along with a multitude of others that the researcher felt were important to include.

In Chapter V, these findings will be discussed, interpreted, and conclusions will be made. Also, this researcher will offer recommendations for future research.

Chapter V

Discussion

Summary and Interpretation of Results

The purpose of this study was to analyze the top five problems that colleges and communities experience when existing side by side and to establish several different techniques for alleviating these problems. Through surveys, personal interviews, and intercept studies at three separate locations, this researcher was able to determine that the top five problems as determined by Nicole Spagnolia's 1998 study still exist as the top five today in 2004. This researcher also gained much insight into how college and university top public relations professionals deal with the most prominent public relations problems, and what does and doesn't work for them. Many shared professional experience and offered advice for other public relations practitioners. In the end, this researcher was able to address each separate hypothesis made and come to a series of conclusions.

Conclusions

After analyzing the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

- 1) Nicole Spagnolia's top five problems (1998) that occur between colleges and communities (parking, noise, alcohol, housing, and objection to a school's tax-exempt status) still reign as the top five problems presently in 2004.
- 2) Urban schools are more accepted than rural or suburban schools despite experiencing the same type of problems.
- 3) There was a significant difference in opinion as to whether or not a strained relationship existed between the college and the community in which they existed. Eighty six percent of community members felt that a strained relationship existed, while only 28.6 percent of college relations professionals felt that a strained relationship existed. It is apparent that there is an extreme lack of communication between the colleges and communities if they feel differently about the status quo of their relationship.

4) There was also a significant difference in opinion as to how involved each felt their counterpart was when it came to solving problems that existed between the two. Once again the communities felt that only 22.1 percent of colleges made an effort to become involved in solving town-gown problems, while the colleges felt that 59.7 percent of communities were highly involved. This once again points out a major communication problem as to what is going wrong between colleges and community members.

5) Finally, colleges and communities also disagreed on what qualified as the number one problem. Colleges felt that the number one problem was parking, while community members felt that noise/parties were the number one problem. Each was angry for different reasons and made it hard for the two to once again communicate clearly. The most important finding that this researcher discovered was that colleges that communicate openly with the community have the most successful town-gown relations.

Limitations

Due to the vast number of colleges and universities that are in the United States, this study was limited to three universities in the Delaware Valley Region. These

schools were Rowan University (New Jersey), University of Delaware (Delaware), and the University of Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania). This study did not include single-sex universities, 2-year colleges, vocational or technical schools, or colleges outside of the United States. It also does not compare public and private schools and the conflicts each encounter.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following are suggested research ideas to be conducted in the future. This researcher recommends:

- 1) A study focusing on the town-gown problems experienced by schools in suburban areas or single-sex institutions.
- 2) An in-depth case study of two separate colleges (one urban, one rural) and the public relations problems they have encountered.
- 3) An examination of the various contributions that colleges make to the community to discover if colleges that offer more resources have fewer problems.

4) A study to determine if urban and rural schools each contributes different resources to the community.

5) An international study could be done to see if United States counterparts in other countries have similar problems and how they resolve these issues.

In conclusion, town-gown issues have plagued and frustrated colleges for decades. Since colleges will continue to exist in communities, studies like this one are necessary so that college personnel can learn to improve communication methods and discover what techniques and strategies can be employed for effective town-gown relations. An open dialogue between the town and the college will allow both sides to peacefully co-exist and perhaps one day even reap the benefits of the relationship they possess.

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APPENDIX A

University/College & Community Relations Survey [Exit this survey >>](#)**1. Welcome!**

Welcome and thank you for taking time to complete my quick survey!
Please check the appropriate responses as it relates to your experience at your college and community. Thank you so much once again for your time and cooperation.

Also, if you would like results of the study for reference at your school please feel free to email me at Kristin1018@aol.com, and I will send them to you no later than May 1st. Thank you!

[Next >>](#)

University/College & Community Relations Survey [Exit this survey >>](#)

*** 1. The college/university at which you are employed is located in which of the following environments?**

- Urban (in a city of over 50,000)
- Rural (open country, farm, away from city)
- Suburban (surrounding area directly outside of a city of over 50,000)

*** 2. The college/university you work for has a strained relationship with its surrounding community:**

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly
Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly
Disagree |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

*** 3. Which of the following problems have been most prominent between your college/university and its surrounding community? (Please check all that apply)**

- Parking (lack of)
- Off-campus housing issues (ex: Greek Life, parties)
- Alcohol (causing disruptive behavior)
- Objection to the school's tax-exempt status (The school doesn't have to pay taxes)
- Noise Complaints
- Vandalism
- Traffic congestion due to construction
- Other (please specify)

*** 4. What public relations strategies/solutions would you offer to a college/university experiencing parking/traffic problems?**

*** 5. What public relations strategies/solutions would you offer to a college/university experiencing off-campus housing problems?**

*** 6. What public relations strategies/solutions would you offer to a college/university experiencing problems with off-campus parties and alcohol, Greek Life, and noise complaints?**

*** 7. What public relations strategies/solutions would you offer to a college/university that are dealing with a community that objects to a college/university's tax-exempt status?**

*** 8. Your school becomes aware of problems with the community by which form(s) of communication? (Please check all that apply)**

- The media
- Publications
- Students
- Administration
- Town meetings
- No communication
- Other (please specify) _____

*** 9. How does your college/university communicate information to the community/public? (Please check all that apply)**

- The media
- Publications
- Students
- Administration
- Town meetings
- No communication
- Other (please specify)

*** 10. The community is very involved in resolving problems between the school and community.**

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

*** 11. Does your school offer opportunities for the community to take advantage of any of the following resources/events available at the college/university? (Please check all that apply)**

- Cultural Events
- Student Volunteers/Interns
- Guest speakers, lectures, workshops
- Recreation Center/Gym
- Athletic Events
- The library
- Other (please specify)

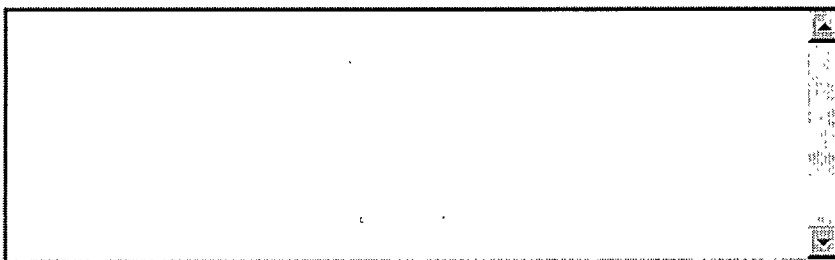
*** 12. Does the community take advantage of these opportunities?**

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Always | Sometimes | Rarely | Never | Don't know |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

*** 13. Has your college/university ever conducted an economic impact study?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

14. If yes, how did your school benefit from the study?



*** 15. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female
- No response

*** 16. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

- High School
- Some college
- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate degree
- Post-Graduate degree
- No response

*** 17. How long have you been employed at your current position at the college/university?**

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 5 years
- 6 to 15 years
- 16 to 20 years
- More than 20 years
- No response

<< Prev Next >>

University/College & Community Relations Survey Exit this survey >>

3. THANK YOU!!

Thank you once again for your time! If you would like a copy of results/strategies that I uncover from this study, feel free to email me at Kristin1018@aol.com simply with your email address and I will be more than happy to send you a detailed account by May 1st.

Thank you,
Kristin Leavey

[<< Prev](#) [Done >>](#)

Town-Gown Relations Personal Interviews

Personal interviews were conducted with the university relations directors from each of the three universities chosen in the Delaware Valley Region: Rowan University (New Jersey), University of Delaware (Delaware), and St. Joseph's University (Pennsylvania.) These interviews were both on the phone and in-person depending on the location of the representative.

The following questions were asked in the personal interviews:

- 1) How do you view your school's relationship with the surrounding community?
- 2) What do you believe are the major problems at your school? How have you tried to alleviate them in the past?
- 3) What events and resources does your school make available to the community?
- 4) What PR strategies would you use to solve the following problems:
 - Parking/Traffic Congestion
 - Parties/Noise
 - Housing Issues
 - Objection to School's Tax Exempt Status
 - Alcohol Problems
- 5) What are some mistakes that have been made at your school in the past related to relations with the community?
- 6) How so you become aware of problems that the community has with the university?

- 7) What mediums does your university use to communicate with the surrounding community?
- 8) If you could change one thing in university relations, what would it be?
- 9) What have you learned in dealing with the community year after year?
- 10) Do you keep a list of key communicators/opinion leaders that you use in dealing with the community? If yes, how does it help? If no, why not?
- 11) What advice would you give to other university/college relations professionals that struggle with community relations problems?

Town-Gown Relations Intercept Study

This researcher traveled to the communities of the three selected universities in the Delaware Valley Region: Rowan University (New Jersey), University of Delaware (Delaware), and St. Joseph's University (Pennsylvania) and conducted 20 intercept studies with community members within each school's surrounding community.

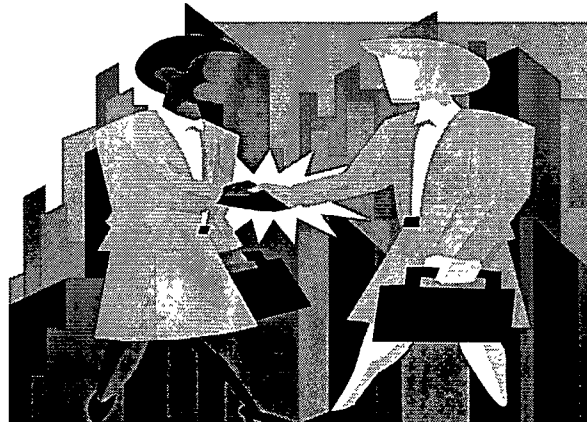
The following questions were asked:

- 1) Do you believe that the community and university have a strained relationship?
- 2) Do you feel that the university puts forth a strong effort when it comes to solving problems that exist between them and the community?
- 3) Do you take advantage of services and events offered by the university?
- 4) What do you believe is the number one problem that exists between your town and the university?
PROMPTS:
 - Parking/Traffic?
 - Parties/Noise?
 - Alcohol?
 - Housing/Studentification?
 - School's Tax Exempt Status?

APPENDIX B

Communities & Colleges: Utilizing Public Relations Techniques and Strategies To Solve Chronic Town-Gown Problems

By: Kristin Leavey



Statement of the Problem

- mutual disdain, hostility, suspicion, segregation, isolation, conflict and tension
- significant lack of mutual understanding between town and gown
- negative media attention and unfavorable publicity for a school's image
- can cause many problems for the success of the school and its financial standing





Research Question



“Using public relations techniques and strategies, how can colleges and communities alleviate the top five problems that are encountered year after year?”

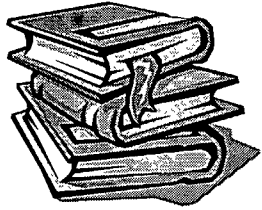


Delimitations

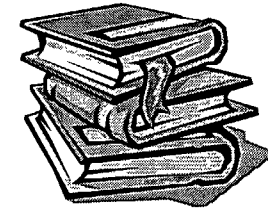
This study will not include:

- single-sex universities
- 2-year colleges
- vocational or technical schools
- colleges outside the United States
- does not compare public colleges vs. private colleges





Purpose 1



To either prove or disprove the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis I:

It is expected that most colleges and universities still find the following five areas most problematic: parking, housing, parties, alcohol, and objection to a school's tax-exempt status.



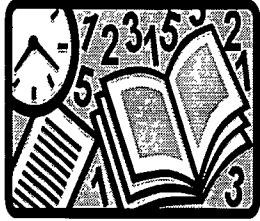
Purpose 2



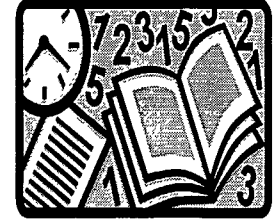
To either prove or disprove the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis II:

It is expected that urban locations will be more accepting of colleges and universities existing in the area than rural locations.



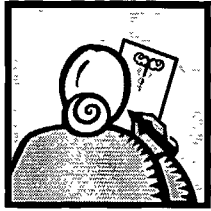
Purpose 3



To either prove or disprove the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis III:

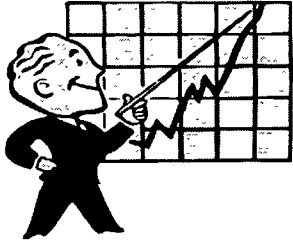
It is expected that the following public relations techniques will aid in alleviating the top five problems of town-gown relations: School & Community Planning/Policy Meetings, Newsletters, Economic Impact Studies, and Special Events.



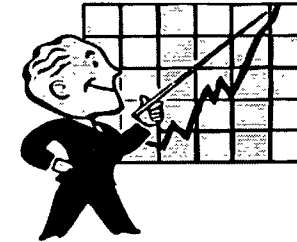
Methodologies



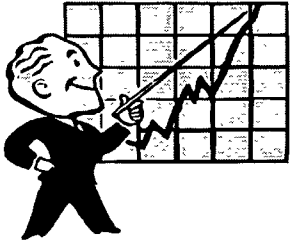
- Personal Interviews with three college/university relations directors
 - conducted at Rowan University, University of Delaware, St. Joseph's University
- Surveys
 - sent to over 1,000 college/university relations personnel in the United States via e-mail
- Intercept Studies
 - conducted in the communities of Glassboro, NJ, Newark, DE, and Philadelphia, PA.



Findings



- Only 28.6% of all college relations personnel believe that they have a strained relationship with community; while 86% of community members believe the relationship is strained
- Parking still reigns as the #1 problem followed by a close second, Parties/Noise
- The media is the #1 way schools communicate and receive information about problems



Findings (cont'd)



- **59.7% of all college relations personnel believe the community is very involved when it comes to resolving town-gown problems**
- **Only 22.1% of all community members believe that the college/university is very involved in solving the problems**
- **52.5% of all schools surveyed have conducted economic impact studies**



Summary, Interpretation, & Conclusions



- Difference in opinion as to:
 - whether there is a strained relationship
 - how willing to help resolve problems
 - what was the community/college's top problem
- Urban areas were found to be more accepting of schools existing in the area



Summary, Interpretation, & Conclusions (cont'd)



- The top five problems as determined by Nicole Spagnolia's 1998 study still reign
- The majority of schools felt that economic impact studies were effective tools in showing that the university was not a "free rider"
- School/Community Meetings, Economic Impact Studies, Newsletters, & Special Events all proved to be top ways colleges can alleviate problems along with several new ideas

Thank you for you time
and attention!!



