

Photos: PRSSA hosts networking event allowing students to bolster their professional skills



Known as Comm Connections in prior years, “Elevations: Raising the Bar for PR” is the networking event’s new name. Pictured are President Katie Pesek and Vice President Casey Parrett.

By Neeka Eghbali | neeka7@vt.edu | 703-309-5380

BLACKSBURG, VA, Nov. 4, 2016 – After months of planning the event of the year, Virginia Tech’s chapter of [Public Relations Student Society of America \(PRSSA\)](#) hosted Elevations: Raising the Bar for PR to give students an opportunity to network with industry professionals and fellow peers on Nov. 4.

Held in Squires Commonwealth Ballroom from 3-5 p.m., students from all academic majors were encouraged to attend. 40 students were in attendance, including members of the PRSSA executive board from Radford University. Admission was \$10 plus a suggested donation of a canned food to benefit the [Women’s Resource Center](#) in Radford. A total of 30 cans were donated.

PRSSA Events Chair Jordan Hogge organized the event with help from a team of 30 students since August. Her efforts landed a keynote speaker and five panelists.



Students, faculty and speakers in attendance are directed to a table in the back of the Squires Commonwealth Ballroom. The networking event doubles as a luncheon, offering an assortment of sandwiches and sides catered from Sub Station II in Blacksburg.



With their plates filled, attendees sit down at large, circular tables that serve to encourage communication between students. Pictured above are juniors Ronald Maniece and Megan Finkbeiner discussing their prior experiences in the public relations field and expressing their excitement to hear from communications professionals.



Jordan Hogge, events chair, explains protocol of the event to the PRSSA executive committee. Elevations is the first event Hogge is responsible for planning since being elected in to her position in April 2016. Hogge corresponded with former Events Chair MacKenzie Wine to ensure the successful execution of the event.



Keynote speaker [Professor James Williams](#) from The University of Tennessee's College of Education, Health and Human Sciences. Hogge met Williams when he was invited to speak in one of her classes.

Williams employed a mixture of seriousness and humor to discuss his early life struggles. He emphasized the importance of obtaining a college degree, remaining the only one in his family to do so.



After Professor Williams' speech, the five panelists invited to speak have the chance to answer a pool of questions compiled by Hogge.

Panelists include:

- Partner at The Prime Factory Justin Ashwell
- PR Specialist at Uncork-It Kristen Morrell
- Director of Global Marketing and Brands for Mar-Bal Ron Poff
- Director of Communications for Administrative Services at Virginia Tech Laura Neff-Henderson
- Marketing Manager at Virginia Tech Career and Professional Development Kelly Shannon.



Students in the audience have the opportunity to mingle with the speakers after their speeches. PR Specialist at Uncork-It, Kristen Morrell (left), addresses a group of students interested in the inner workings of her career. She was the former deputy press secretary for Senator Marco Rubio.

Pictured are juniors Mycah Ausberry and Marissa Handerhan (to Morell's left) and sophomore Shelby Mras (to Morell's right) listening intently to Morell's experiences. All three students express a willingness to continue broadening their networks. For them, Elevations is the first step to elevating themselves for similar future opportunities.