

**Docket Item:**

University Program Approval: Eastern Oregon University, Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)/Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Public Relations.

**Summary:**

Eastern Oregon University proposes a new degree program leading to a B.A./B.S. in Public Relations. The statewide Provosts' Council has unanimously recommended approval. Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) staff completed a review of the proposed program. After analysis, HECC staff recommends approval of the program as proposed.

**Staff Recommendation:**

The HECC recommends the adoption of the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the Higher Education Coordinating Commission approve the following program:

B.A./B.S. in Public Relations at Eastern Oregon University.



EASTERN OREGON  
UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

Date: May 20, 2021  
Subject: Notification of New Program  
To: Statewide Provost Council  
From: Sarah Witte, Provost and Senior Vice President

---

**Institution:** Eastern Oregon University  
**College/School:** Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences  
**Department/Program Name:** Public Relations

**Degree and Program Title:** BA/BS in Public Relations

Will Present to EOU Board of Trustees: Fall 2021

**Description:**

The BA/BS in Public Relations sits in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences to maintain a foundation in human communication, the humanities, digital rhetoric and media, and applied communication while drawing on interdisciplinary knowledge and skills in writing, social sciences, marketing and statistical analysis. The program's interdisciplinary electives will lead students (encouraged by their advisors) to earn a second major or a minor in a variety of disciplines such as Anthropology/Sociology, English/Writing, Art, Communication Studies, Marketing and/or Psychology.

Students will be led through three central components of study that will permeate every level of the curriculum, requiring students to learn, practice and refine skills in: writing and media production, social media development and management, and ethical communication and advocacy. Graduates will be prepared to join a growing sector of industry with skills in social media production and analytics, project management, strategic communication, marketing, and media relations. A required practicum and capstone project (including opportunities to join team-based project management with marketing majors in the College of Business) will enable students to build a portfolio of work prior to graduation.

**Program Location and Modality:** On campus and online

**Anticipated Start Date:** Fall 2022

**Anticipated Enrollment:**

(Headcount)	AY2023	AY2024	AY2025	AY2026	AY2027
Online	8	21	39	50	50
On Campus	10	21	31	42	42



EASTERN OREGON  
UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

Total	18	42	70	92	92
-------	----	----	----	----	----

**Addressing Statewide Rural Needs:**

Mission:

*EOU guides student inquiry through integrated, high-quality liberal arts and professional programs that lead to responsible and reflective action in a diverse and interconnected world. As an educational, cultural and scholarly center, EOU connects the rural regions of Oregon to a wider world. Our beautiful setting and small size enhance the personal attention our students receive, while partnerships with colleges, universities, agencies and communities add to the educational possibilities of our region and state.*

- i. The BA/BS in Public Relations fulfills this institutional mission by standing firmly in both the liberal arts and professional studies. As an applied, career-focused degree with a foundation in human, ethical, and social communication theory and practice, students will carry with them into their career the breadth of liberal arts and the professional skills required for immediate success and life-long flexibility.
- ii. Students in this program will be required to use data, analytical thinking and critical inquiry to identify problems and opportunities. They will integrate creativity, social communication theory, digital media, and writing to produce communication that drives action and change. At the heart of this scaffolded practice will be an emphasis on ethical and culturally-responsive practice.
- iii. EOU serves students in remote communities in the greater region of eastern Oregon, as well as other rural communities across the nation. These students will find practica and capstone projects in the local communities where they live and work, using their skills and expertise to advocate for positive economic, cultural, environmental, and social change and impact.
- iv. EOU classes - both online and on campus - are small, allowing significant and impactful connection and mentorship between faculty and students. The capstone requirement for all majors at EOU leads students and faculty to engage in scholarship, research, community collaborations, and/or personal creative discovery. Many of our students are first-generation college students and come from rural places, often wanting to stay or return to those communities in order to make a positive impact. Various occupational outlook projections (referenced in this proposal) show a significant and growing demand for individuals with public relations skills. This degree program will prepare these individuals to bring creativity and innovation to solve economic, social and cultural challenges in their communities, further enhancing the quality of life for all Oregonians.
- v. As the only fully-delivered online BA/BS in Public Relations in the state, any student who would be unable to complete a residential degree program will have access to this degree and its specialized skill development. This elevates access and opportunity for all Oregon students. Training more highly skilled creative, analytical and empathetic communicators to join our Oregon workforce and communities - whether in the private, government, or non-profit sectors - will only enhance our ability to further bridge the ongoing social, political, cultural, and urban/rural divides in the state.

**Employment Success Summary:**



EASTERN OREGON  
UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

EOU would offer the only fully online bachelor's degree in public relations in the state of Oregon.

Institutional research shows that occupation projection data far outpaces degree conferral in the field of public relations in the tri-state region EOU serves, the state of Oregon and the entire Oregon-Washington-Idaho tri-state northwest. The long-term above average projected growth and unmet demand in this field suggests sustained opportunity into the future.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (which is mirrored in the Tri-State region of the Northwest), there are several career paths for a graduate with a bachelor's in public relations, and nearly all of these career paths show above average growth projections (6%-18%) for the next decade. These paths include public relations specialists; advertising, promotions, and marketing managers; public relations and fundraising managers; marketing specialists and managers; and communications specialists - in for-profit, government, NGO, and non-profit sectors.

**Collaboration:**

Collaborations with other Oregon institutions is unclear but welcome. At EOU, integration between public relations' and other programs' faculty and students will be exciting, bringing opportunities for student-faculty collaborations in scholarship and media production across the campus and throughout the greater community (e.g., podcasts produced in the campus radio station, public promotion of University events and activities, social media scholarship, community projects (practica and internships) with local organizations and nonprofits, and writing for the EOU student newspaper, among many others).

**Contacts:**

*Nathan Lowe, Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*  
*Xiaowei Chen, Associate Professor in Communication Studies*



## Proposal for a New Academic Program

**Institution: Eastern Oregon University**

**College/School: College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Department/Program Name: Public Relations**

**Degree and Program Title: BA/BS in Public Relations**

### 1. Program Description

a. Proposed Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) number.

09.09 Public Relations, Advertising, and Applied Communication

b. Brief overview (1-2 paragraphs) of the proposed program, including its disciplinary foundations and connections; program objectives; programmatic focus; degree, certificate, minor, and concentrations offered.

The BA/BS in Public Relations sits in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences to maintain a foundation in human communication, the humanities, digital rhetoric and media, and applied communication while drawing on interdisciplinary knowledge and skills in writing, social sciences, marketing and statistical analysis. The program's interdisciplinary electives will lead students (encouraged by their advisors) to earn a second major or a minor in a variety of disciplines such as Anthropology/Sociology, English/Writing, Art, Communication Studies, Marketing and/or Psychology.

Students will be led through three central components of study that will permeate every level of the curriculum, requiring students to learn, practice and refine skills in: writing and media production, social media development and management, and ethical communication and advocacy. Graduates will be prepared to join a growing sector of industry with skills in social media production and analytics, project management, strategic communication, marketing, and media relations. A required practicum and capstone project (including opportunities to join team-based project management with marketing majors in the College of Business) will enable students to build a portfolio of work prior to graduation.

c. Course of study – proposed curriculum, including course numbers, titles, and credit hours.

Program Requirements: Public Relations is a minimum 60 credit hour degree. A grade of "C-" or better is required for each course counting towards the major, but a cumulative grade of C [2.00] is required for completion of the major.

### PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS: 34 credits

Course #	Title	Credits	Prerequisites
PRLS 201	Introduction to Public Relations	3	
PRLS 211	Public Relations Techniques	3	WR 121 or equivalent
PRLS 301	Writing and Production for	4	PRLS 201 and PRLS 211

Public Relations (UWR)

PRLS 311	Public Relations Case & Campaigns	4	PRLS 201 and PRLS 211
BA 312	Principles of Marketing	4	Sophomore standing
COM 325	Intercultural Communication (DPD)	3	Sophomore standing
PRLS 401	Public Relations Campaign on Social Media	4	PRLS 301, Junior standing
PRLS 490	Legal/Ethical Issues in Public Relations (UWR)	4	PRLS 301, Junior standing
PRLS 498	Practicum	2	Junior standing
PRLS 499	Capstone: Portfolio Presentation	3	Senior standing

**ELECTIVES: 26 credits** (at least 15 upper-division credits required)

Course #	Title	Credits	Prerequisites
COM 112	Public Speaking (GTW)	3	
PSY 201	General Psychology (SSC)	4	
PSY 202	General Psychology (SSC)	4	PSY 201
SOC 204	General Sociology (SSC, DPD, UWR)	5	
SOC 205	General Sociology: Problems (SSC)	5	
COM 211	Small Group Communication	3	
COM 215	Conflict Management (AEH, UWR)	3	
WR 222	Introduction to Rhetoric	4	WR 121 (C- or better)
COM 225	Foundations of Digital Media (APC)	4	
STAT 243	Elementary Statistics (SMI)	4	MATH095 or MATH098
COM 260	Foundation of Mass Media	4	
BA 225	Business Communication (UWR)	4	WR 121 or equivalent
SOC 327	Introduction to Social Research (UWR)	5	SOC 204, SOC 205, Jun standing
WR 230	News Writing	4	WR 121 or equivalent
BA 321	Principles of Management	4	Sophomore standing
WR 330	Digital Rhetoric (UWR)	3	Upper division standing
POLS 340	Politics and Media (SSC, UWR)	5	Sophomore standing
COM 345	Advertising Principles and Practice	4	
MKT 346	Digital Marketing and Soc Media Strgs	4	BA 303 and BA 312
WR 351	Professional Editing and Publishing	4	Junior standing
COM 355	Organizational Communication (SSC)	4	
PSY 360	Principles of Social Psychology	5	PSY 201, PSY 202, Soph standing
COM 452	Advanced New Media	4	COM 252 or COM 225
BA 461	Organizational Behavior	4	BA 321, Junior standing
MKT 464	Promotion Strategy	4	BA 312
MKT 465	Consumer Behavior	4	BA 312

d. Manner in which the program will be delivered, including program location (if offered outside of the main campus), course scheduling, and the use of technology (for both on-campus and off-campus delivery).

The full degree program will be offered both online and on campus in La Grande. Courses will be scheduled in both modalities so that students would be able to transfer into the program and graduate in two years or complete the full degree from start to finish in four years.

e. Adequacy and quality of faculty delivering the program.

All electives in the major, and several required courses (more than half of the credits), are already taught by current EOU faculty with appropriate credentials (at least Masters, but the vast majority with PhDs in their academic fields). In addition, EOU will hire a tenure track public relations faculty member prior to program launch.

f. Adequacy of faculty resources – full-time, part-time, adjunct.

A search would be conducted in Fall 2021 to hire a new tenure track faculty member with expertise in public relations (w/ social media production emphasis) to compliment expertise in the college and the program by the time the program launches in Fall 2022. In addition, online adjuncts with academic and/or professional experience in the field will be hired to bring specialized expertise to the curriculum. As enrollments grow, the University is committed to opening a search for a second fully-devoted faculty member in the program by year four, at the latest.

g. Other staff.

N/A

h. Adequacy of facilities, library, and other resources.

EOU has adequate facilities (faculty offices, computer labs, and technology) and library resources to launch this program and support students.

i. Anticipated start date.

Fall term of 2022.

## 2. Relationship to Mission and Goals

a. Manner in which the proposed program supports the institution's mission, signature areas of focus, and strategic priorities.

Mission:

*EOU guides student inquiry through integrated, high-quality liberal arts and professional programs that lead to responsible and reflective action in a diverse and interconnected world. As an educational, cultural and scholarly center, EOU connects the rural regions of Oregon to a wider world. Our beautiful setting and small size enhance the personal attention our students receive, while partnerships with colleges, universities, agencies and communities add to the educational possibilities of our region and state.*

i. The BA/BS in Public Relations fulfills this institutional mission by standing firmly in both the liberal arts and professional studies. As an applied, career-focused degree with a foundation in human, ethical, and social communication theory and practice, students will carry with them into their career the breadth of liberal arts and the professional skills required for immediate success and life-long flexibility.

ii. Students in this program will be required to use data, analytical thinking and critical inquiry to identify problems and opportunities. They will integrate creativity, social communication theory, digital media, and writing to produce communication that drives action and change. At the heart of this scaffolded practice will be an emphasis on ethical and culturally-responsive practice.

iii. EOU serves students in remote communities in the greater region of eastern Oregon, as well as other rural communities across the nation. These students will find practica and capstone projects in the local communities where they live and work, using their skills and expertise to advocate for positive economic, cultural, environmental, and social change and impact.

b. Manner in which the proposed program contributes to institutional and statewide goals for student access and diversity, quality learning, research, knowledge creation and innovation, and economic and cultural support of Oregon and its communities.

EOU's Ascent 2029 strategic plan has established an institutional commitment to these important community-serving values, which was affirmed when the state officially recognized EOU as Oregon's Rural University.

*Goal 5: Relevance and Interconnection – Serve as the educational, economic, and cultural engine for rural places*

*Objective 1: Educational partnerships are cultivated*

*Objective 2: Be recognized as a leader in promoting rural community prosperity and resilience*

EOU classes - both online and on campus - are small, allowing significant and impactful connection and mentorship between faculty and students. The capstone requirement for all majors at EOU leads students and faculty to engage in scholarship, research, community collaborations, and/or personal creative discovery. Many of our students are first-generation college students and come from rural places, often wanting to stay or return to those communities in order to make a positive impact. Various occupational outlook projections (referenced in this proposal) show a significant and growing demand for individuals with public relations skills. This degree program will prepare these individuals to bring creativity and innovation to solve economic, social and cultural challenges in their communities, further enhancing the quality of life for all Oregonians.

c. Manner in which the program meets regional or statewide needs and enhances the state's capacity to:

- i. improve educational attainment in the region and state;
- ii. respond effectively to social, economic, and environmental challenges and opportunities; and
- iii. address civic and cultural demands of citizenship.

As the only fully-delivered online BA/BS in Public Relations in the state, any student who would be unable to complete a residential degree program will have access to this degree and its specialized skill development. This elevates access and opportunity for all Oregon students. Training more highly skilled creative, analytical and empathetic communicators to join our Oregon workforce and communities - whether in the private, government, or non-profit sectors - will only enhance our ability to further bridge the ongoing social, political, cultural, and urban/rural divides in the state.

### 3. **Accreditation**

a. Accrediting body or professional society that has established standards in the area in which the program lies, if applicable.

N/A

b. Ability of the program to meet professional accreditation standards. If the program does not or cannot meet those standards, the proposal should identify the area(s) in which it is deficient and indicate steps needed to qualify the program for accreditation and date by which it would be expected to be fully accredited.

N/A

c. If the proposed program is a graduate program in which the institution offers an undergraduate program, proposal should identify whether or not the undergraduate program is accredited and, if not, what would be required to qualify it for accreditation.

N/A

d. If accreditation is a goal, the proposal should identify the steps being taken to achieve accreditation. If the program is not seeking accreditation, the proposal should indicate why it is not.

N/A

### 4. **Need**

- a. Anticipated fall term headcount and FTE enrollment over each of the next five years.

(Headcount)	AY2023	AY2024	AY2025	AY2026	AY2027
Online	8	21	39	50	50
On Campus	10	21	31	42	42
Total	18	42	70	92	92

- b. Expected degrees/certificates produced over the next five years.

60

- c. Characteristics of students to be served (resident/nonresident/international; traditional/nontraditional; full-time/part-time, etc.).

In keeping with EOU's long and successful tradition as a rural-serving institution, this program would serve a diversity of students, from online adult learners looking to complete a degree to traditional residential students enjoying a four-year campus experience or two-year transfer pathway. Students would be majority full-time on campus, but a mixture of full-time and part-time online. Approximately 60% of students in the major would be Oregon residents.

- d. Evidence of market demand.

EOU would offer the only fully online bachelor's degree in public relations in the state of Oregon.

Institutional research shows that occupation projection data far outpaces degree conferral in the field of public relations in the tri-state region EOU serves, the state of Oregon and the entire Oregon-Washington-Idaho tri-state northwest. The long-term above average projected growth and unmet demand in this field suggests sustained opportunity into the future.

- e. If the program's location is shared with another similar Oregon public university program, the proposal should provide externally validated evidence of need (e.g., surveys, focus groups, documented requests, occupational/employment statistics and forecasts).

N/A

- f. Estimate the prospects for success of program graduates (employment or graduate school) and consideration of licensure, if appropriate. What are the expected career paths for students in this program?

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (which is mirrored in the Tri-State region of the Northwest), there are several career paths for a graduate with a bachelor's in public relations, and nearly all of these career paths show above average growth projections (6%-18%) for the next decade. These paths include public relations specialists; advertising, promotions, and marketing managers; public relations and fundraising managers; marketing specialists and managers; and communications specialists - in for-profit, government, NGO, and non-profit sectors.

## 5. Outcomes and Quality Assessment

- a. Expected learning outcomes of the program:

Communication [C]:

- 1) Effectively comprehend both incoming and outgoing information in public relations communication.
- 2) Articulate message strategy to workgroup, media personnels, and client/employers in both oral and written form.
- 3) Creatively produce campaign literature and graphics to deliver on the campaign goals.

**Inquiry [I]:**

- 1) Efficiently gather, store, and retrieve relevant first hand or second hand information for research purposes in public relations campaigns.
- 2) Promptly discern the key issue and the main aspect of an issue in a problematic situation by following the scientific analytical procedure.
- 3) Synthesize in-depth information from relevant sources under the guidance of appropriate theoretical frameworks.

**Critical Thinking [CT]:**

- 1) Be vigilant to one's own assumptions and societal prejudice underpinning any statement of knowledge.
- 2) Challenge and repair any statement of reality by following rigorous procedure in critical thinking - Description, Analysis, Interpretation, Evaluation, and Engagement.
- 3) Commitment to the professional goal of public relations communication: being a cultural diplomat to helping different sections of the society to negotiate meaning, recalibrate narrative, and rebalance power relationships.

**Problem Solving [PS]:**

- 1) Form a habit of applying public relations as a four-step problem solving routine for organizational effectiveness.
- 2) Use SWOT analysis and scientific research methods to describe the problem accurately and propose hypotheses and solutions with a deep understanding of the problematic situation.
- 3) Design appropriate methods to assess the solution.

**Ethical Fitness [EF]:**

- 1) Recognition of ethical reasoning and social responsibility as the cornerstone for all public relations communication.
- 2) Apply the principles in ethical reasoning (deontological v. teleological) to make a morally defensible tradeoff and achieve a certain degree of moral certainty in dilemma situation.

b. Methods by which the learning outcomes will be assessed and used to improve curriculum and instruction.

Throughout the program of study, students are required to complete multiple assignments to achieve evident results for those learning outcomes. Course learning outcomes (and their linked assessments) are mapped to program learning outcomes, and data from those assessments is used to measure student success and apply modifications to instruction and/or curriculum as necessary. To be specific:

**C 1:** Weekly quiz; in-class citation; individual or group presentation on concepts/theories in public relations.

**C 2:** Individual or group project on campaign prospectus; demo presentation of campaign proposal; internal memo on campaign strategy; capstone project and portfolio presentation.

**C 3:** Brochure for local organization, annual report for nonprofit organization, media advisory, backgrounders, subject matter expert, interview training, public speech drafting, social media content authoring, meme making, slogan development, press release, feature story, podcasting, blogs, internal newsletter.

**I 1:** Research diary, literature review for case study, library search, lexis-nexis database search, case brief, case summary, team project with minutes keeping.

**I 2:** Campaign prospectus, case brief.

**I 3:** Case study, capstone thesis.

**CT 1:** Weekly discussion, midterm paper, film review essay, self-reflective essay, in-class citation and discussion.

**CT 2:** Prospectus for campaign for social change, weekly discussion.

**CT 3:** Campaign prospectus, practicum project, portfolio presentation.

**PS 1:** Internship and practicum project.

**PS 2:** Case study paper and presentation, campaign prospectus, case brief, survey questionnaire testing, probability sampling, focus group discussion, in-depth interview.

**PS 3:** Campaign prospectus, opinion survey.

**EF 1:** Book report, case brief, midterm paper.

**EF 2:** Weekly discussion, case study, case brief, film review essay.

a. Nature and level of research and/or scholarly work expected of program faculty; indicators of success in those areas.

Tenure track faculty at EOU are expected to maintain a regular “commitment to subject discipline,” and the indicators of this success are defined by each discipline. For public relations faculty, this is evidenced through regular conference attendance and presentations, writing for peer-reviewed academic publication, student-faculty research project collaboration, and/or professional partnerships and initiatives that engage the greater community.

## 6. **Program Integration and Collaboration**

a. Closely related programs in this or other Oregon colleges and universities.

EOU: BA/BS in English/Writing, BA/BS in Communication Studies, BA/BS in Marketing (all of them online and on campus)

PSU: Strategic Communications and Public Relations Certificate (online)

U. of Oregon: Bachelor's in Public Relations (on campus)

George Fox University: Bachelor's in Communication with a Public Relations Concentration in Communication (on campus)

Southern Oregon University: Bachelor's in Communication with a Social Media and Public Engagement Concentration (on campus)

b. Ways in which the program complements other similar programs in other Oregon institutions and other related programs at this institution. Proposal should identify the potential for collaboration.

Collaborations with other Oregon institutions is unclear but welcome. At EOU, integration between public relations' and other programs' faculty and students will be exciting, bringing opportunities for student-faculty collaborations in scholarship and media production across the campus and throughout the greater community (e.g., podcasts produced in the campus radio station, public promotion of University events and activities, social media scholarship, community projects (practica and internships) with local organizations and nonprofits, and writing for the EOU student newspaper, among many others).

c. If applicable, proposal should state why this program may not be collaborating with existing similar programs.

N/A

d. Potential impacts on other programs.

We predict that this major will add recruitment opportunities for the College by attracting students who may be looking for a more specialized degree in applied and career-focused communications, which will compliment our current programs. Public relations students will be required to seek electives in many different disciplines in the College (and other Colleges), further populating and benefiting those courses, minors, and majors.

## 7. External Review

If the proposed program is a graduate level program, follow the guidelines provided in *External Review of New Graduate Level Academic Programs* in addition to completing all of the above information.

N/A

*Nathan Lowe, Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*  
*Xiaowei Chen, Associate Professor in Communication Studies*

*May 1, 2021*

**Institution: Eastern Oregon University**  
**Program: BA/BS in Public Relations**

**Action:** At the **December 1, 2021**, meeting, the Statewide Provosts Council approved a new program for **Eastern Oregon University, BA/BS in Public Relations** to move forward to the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission for its review and approval. The **Eastern Oregon University** Board of Trustees approved the **BA/BS in Public Relations** program at its **November 10, 2021**, meeting.

---

**Eastern Oregon University**

Sarah Witte, provost

Approved  
 Opposed  
 Abstained



**Oregon Health & Science University**

David Robinson, interim provost

Approved  
 Opposed  
 Abstained



**Oregon State University**

Ed Feser, provost

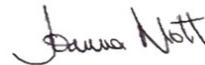
Approved  
 Opposed  
 Abstained



**Oregon Tech**

Joanna Mott, provost

Approved  
 Opposed  
 Abstained



**Portland State University**

Susan Jeffords, provost

Approved  
 Opposed  
 Abstained



**Southern Oregon University**

Susan Walsh, provost

Approved  
 Opposed  
 Abstained



Patrick Phillips, provost

Approved  
 Opposed  
 Abstained



**Western Oregon University**

Rob Winningham, provost

Approved  
 Opposed  
 Abstained

