

Public Relations Team, Spring 2016

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Abstract

For Spring 2016 semester, the AguaClara Public Relations Team's goals were to increase awareness on campus and to build relationships with alumni. The team planned three types of activities: fundraiser, promotional events, and AguaClara merchandise sales. These projects aimed to make known the mission and accomplishments of AguaClara. Moreover, the team released advertising publications and utilized social media to showcase the talents within AguaClara. In terms of alumni relations, the team formed connections by sending out AguaClara newsletters. The Public Relations Team worked diligently to share the meaningful efforts of AguaClara to provide safe drinking water to communities in need.

Semester Schedule

Team Members: Erika Axe and Rachelle Ng Team Advisor: Lishan Zhu

Task Map

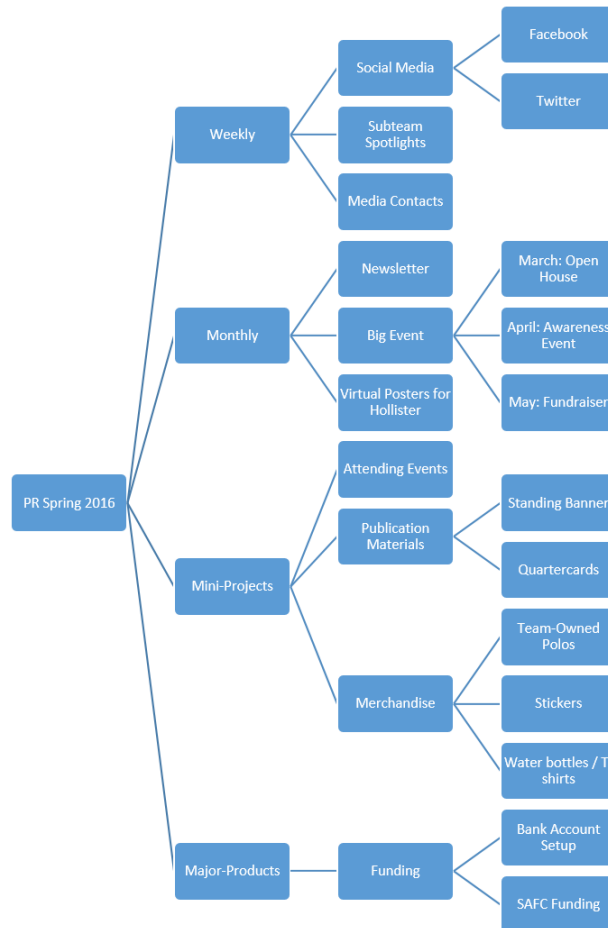


Figure 1: Spring 2016 Public Relations Team Task Map

Task List

The detailed task list was a compilation of the goals and ideas set out for the Public Relations Team for Spring 2016. Each listed task was accompanied by the team member in charge, as represented by a set of brackets, and a date for each task to be accomplished by when applicable.

1. Facebook Updates - [Rachelle] Posting photos and statuses, creating events if necessary, and publishing Subteam Spotlight / Team Member Spotlight every Friday

2. Twitter Updates - [Erika] Sending out tweets and linking to the Facebook page
3. Meetings with Lishan - [Erika and Rachelle] Tuesdays from 3:00-3:30 PM in the B60 Lab
4. Newsletter - [Erika] sending out newsletter once a month to the entire team and the alumni
5. Publication material - [Erika and Rachelle] creating posters and quarter-cards to advertise AguaClara
6. Open House - [Erika and Rachelle] hosting a lab open house on Friday, April 15 to invite students and prospective students to pre-enroll for the class next semester
7. Fundraiser - [Rachelle] organizing a late Spring Semester Fundraiser
8. Apparel and Merchandise - [Erika and Rachelle] ordering team merchandise and professional polos
9. Presentations and Events - [Erika and Rachelle] Giving presentations and representing AguaClara at various events such as the Reverse Career Fair or the Social Impact Conference
10. Media Contacting - [Erika and Rachelle] Reaching out to various media outlets asking to feature AguaClara as a form of advertisement for the team and its mission
11. Public Relations Team Funding - [Erika and Rachelle] Working to establish a functioning bank account and working with the SAFC to budget any needed Public Relations Material

Introduction

AguaClara research teams designed water treatment processes that improved water quality for poor communities. However, the Public Relations Team was responsible to make sure that their accomplishments were appreciated and recognized widely by potential members, clients, or stakeholders both on campus and beyond. In addition, the Public Relations Team worked to invite new students to join the team while fostering teamwork in the lab. The Public Relations Team also worked on posting updates to AguaClara social media accounts, recruiting new team members, creating subteam spotlights, managing merchandise sales, and creating documents for managing money transactions within the Public Relations Team. The impact of AguaClara's research would grow with the increase of public awareness and support for AguaClara both on and off campus.

Literature Review

To preface the discussion about the AguaClara Public Relations Team, the importance of Public Relations must be explained. Relevant literature explored the role of Public Relations of non-profit organizations, comparable to AguaClara.

Organizational brand identity management: a critical asset for sustainable competitive advantage by non-profits

In the 2013 research [Amujo and Laninhun, 2013] in Third Sector Review, organizational brand identity management was emphasized as a key strategic resource. Organizational brand identity management, which could be categorized as one of the main functions of the AguaClara Public Relations Team, had been proven to be crucial in shaping people's view of the non-profit organization. The research stated that the resource of Public Relations had however been underutilized and neglected among non-profits until recent years. The increase in public relations activity traced back to major non-profits such as Greenpeace, the Red Cross Society, and the Ford Foundation, that successfully took advantage of organizational brand identity management. This research stated the importance for non-profits to differentiate themselves through communicating the core values, vision, and culture through organizational brand identity management. Brand management would allow organizations to clearly show their altruistic motives, creating a brand alliance which would separate the non-profits from their competitors. Applying the research to AguaClara, the Public Relations Team recognized the significant role Public Relations played within the project team. More importantly, the Public Relations understood that marketing materials should always accurately reflect the core values of AguaClara. The external alignment would help to build a consistent brand identity for AguaClara. The Public Relations Team tangibly translated understanding into action by soliciting advice from other project team members or advisor about potential publication, like the newsletter, and by emphasizing AguaClara's community-centered mission in all Public Relations material.

Public Relations Strategic Planning Process

The thesis [Roy, 2008], analyzed the potential of using public relations in the reduction of infection rate of HIV/AIDS among Black women. In the paper, the "Public Relations Strategic Planning Process" was explained. The Public Relations Strategic Planning Process involved four steps: defining the problem, planning and programming, taking action and communicating, and evaluating the program. The process could be used in the AguaClara Public Relations planning. Defining the problem aligned with the discussion in the previous subsection which explained the process of Public Relations identifying with the mission of the overall organizations and ensuring that its mission would be accurately conveyed. Planning and programming required the Public Relations Team to determine the goals, the targeted audience, and the desired objectives to be accomplished by each Public Relations project. Taking action and communicating referred to the logistical aspect of Public Relations, detailed plan and execution of project. And finally, evaluating the program pointed to the activity after the execution, assessing the outcomes of the campaigns. The AguaClara team was familiarized with step one and three of the process. AguaClara team successfully communicated AguaClara's mission and took care of logistics of events. However, the team could potentially fulfill step two and four more consistently by implementing new practices. The Public Relations Team brainstormed some possible ideas to consciously select a more targeted audience for events and projects. Lastly, the Public Relations Team should

consider soliciting feedback after events and discuss making changes based on these comments. By focusing on the whole strategy planning process, the Public Relations Team hoped to increase the effectiveness of the publication or events of AguaClara.

Previous Work

In this section, the Public Relations Team discussed the team's work in previous semesters. The Public Relations Team mainly coordinated events, maintaining social media, and writing grant applications.

Events

The Public Relations Team represented AguaClara at various events and tabling opportunities. The Public Relations Team attended events in the Fall 2015 semesters such as presentations to Engineering 1050 classes, Reverse Career Fairs, GHSC Club Fair, Homecoming Project Team Showcases, and the Engineering Sesquicentennial Showcases. In reviewing the Public Relations Team's performance in regards of attending these events, the team noted that some of the team materials were outdated and that the team should dedicate time to update these materials in the future semesters.

The Public Relations Team covered another aspect of events by organizing promotional events for AguaClara. In Fall 2015, the Public Relations Team held a major event, the Open House. The purpose of the event was to showcase the newly renovated laboratory in Hollister and to celebrate the tenth year and tenth plant for the AguaClara program. The Public Relations Team decorated the lab, bought snacks, and made fliers and posters which introduced the entire project team. Unfortunately, the attendance for the event was low and there was a higher concentration of team members than outsiders. The Public Relations Team could improve the event by increasing publicity, which would attract more interested students to visit the lab.

Social Media and Newsletter

For the past few semesters, the Public Relations Team had actively monitored social media content for the AguaClara team. The three main social media medium were Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. The Twitter account allowed us to post short updates regarding AguaClara; the Facebook page allowed us to post weekly spotlight and team photos; the LinkedIn account served as a platform for us to connect with alumni. The Public Relations Team planned to further increase engagement with social media by more frequently posting and encouraging more people to follow AguaClara on social media at team events.

In Fall 2015, the Public Relations Team drafted an alumni and team newsletter using MailChimp. The newsletter would help AguaClara reach out to alumni and keep in touch with them. Building long-lasting connections with the team alumni proved to be an important key to success to the AguaClara program.

Grant Applications

In past years, the Public Relations Team applied to various grants and minor competitions on behalf of AguaClara. For example, in Spring 2015, the team undertook the creation of a promotional video for an entry into the National Academy of Engineering Grand Challenges Engineering For You Video Competition. The Public Relations Team edited using iMovie, featuring various pictures and collages. The team uploaded the video to YouTube and submitted it to the competition. In Mid-April, the team was notified that the video was moving onto the next round of judging. The grand prize for the competition was 25,000 USD, and there were also other opportunities to win 5,000 USD for videos in each competition category. Overall, grant applications offered opportunities for the Project Team as a whole to gain funding. Also, they provided a platform for AguaClara to obtain recognition for AguaClara's influential research and design.

Methods

This section discussed the methods used in AguaClara's work for the Spring 2016 semester. After the processes had been explored, the Public Relations Team would analyse the things that went well and went poorly. The four areas of focus for this semester were events, social media, funding opportunities, and merchandise.

Events

The Public Relations Team remained dedicated to event planning the Spring 2015 semester. Besides the regular events such as the Project Team Blitz, the Public Relations Team organized a new event, the fundraiser.

Project Team Blitz

The first event was the Project Team Blitz. On Monday, February 8, members of the Public Relations Team and AguaClara team leads attended the Project Team Blitz in Duffield Hall. The Project Team Blitz, an event hosted by the College of Engineering each semester, resembled a reverse career fair. All Cornell project teams set up a presentation table in the main hall with accompanying representatives for the team. Recruiters from various technical companies had the opportunity to walk around the area and to engage various teams. For the past few years, the Project Team Blitz was traditionally held the night before Engineering Career Fair on campus. The company representatives then had the opportunity to market their companies to desired project teams. They often either directly asked for team resumes or encouraged members of the project team to visit that company's booth the following day during the Technical Career Fair. The event allowed the Public Relations team to have an opportunity to promote the team's research and talents. By giving company recruiters a copy of the AguaClara resume book, the networking capabilities of the team increased and team members had better access to professional opportunities by being a part of the team.

In preparation for the event, the College of Engineering emailed team leads to register AguaClara for the event. Once the date and time was finalized, the Public Relations Team needed to put together a resume book for the event. In the AguaClara announcement emails, members were told that if they were interested in having their resumes given to recruiters, they should email personal resumes to the Public Relations Team. Once all resumes were collected, they were consolidated into a .PDF file that could then be emailed to any recruiters who were interested in receiving the team's resume book. Creating the resume book required more time than expected as many members of the team did not send in the resume until the night before the Engineering Career Fair. The Public Relations Team reflected upon the experience and decided that the resume submission deadline for the team member should be set before the Project Team Blitz. The improved procedure would ensure that the Public Relations Team had more time to prepare the resume book and the resume book could be readily available for recruiters to read through at the Project Team Blitz, instead of after the event.

On the day of the event itself, AguaClara representatives wore team apparel (or business casual attire) and answered any questions regarding both general and technical information of what AguaClara does. At the table itself, AguaClara representatives displayed several materials. The most updated tri-fold poster stood in the back of the table and was accompanied by the small scale model of an AguaClara water treatment plant. In the front, a team member's laptop played a revolving slide-show of team pictures. The team noticed that some photos in the slide-show were outdated and did not provide the most accurate representation of AguaClara's plants in the current condition. Therefore, the slide-show should be updated before its next usage.

Overall, the Project Team Blitz was a helpful experience for AguaClara members to talk with recruiters and to communicate with the leaders within the College of Engineering and members of other engineering project teams. The team realized that the majority of recruiters at the event looked for Computer Science students and did not target recruiting for the AguaClara representatives at the table. The Public Relations Team hoped to encourage and advertise the Project Team Blitz more vigorously in the AguaClara, especially towards team members in other less common majors within the team. The Public Relations Team also thought of another way to increase the benefits of the event by preparing handy statistics to showcase the wide range of talents within AguaClara. If the AguaClara representatives could confidently speak about the diverse talent within the team, along with showing the prepared resume book, AguaClara would make a stronger impression upon the recruiters.

Social Impact Conference

On February 27, the Public Relations Team attended both the Social Impact Conference and the Dia de Ciencias hosted by the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers for K-12 students.

The Social Impact Conference, hosted at Cornell University, gathered various on-campus social groups to share about their missions and work. The Public Relations Team had the opportunity to promote AguaClara and reached out to other groups, such as Take Back the Tap. The event hosted over 80 people and was featured in the Cornell Daily Sun. At the event, the Public Relations Team

Representative sat on two separate panels (the undergraduate panel and the panel on sustainable technology and design). During the conference itself, the PR representative for AguaClara was expected to share personal opinions on various social and technological issues pertaining to climate change as a member of AguaClara. The event centered heavily on the personal experiences of each panelist. However, the panelist for AguaClara needed to explain to the attendees of the conference what AguaClara does as a group and what kind of presence they have on the campus and global community in addition to how they operate compared to other student groups at Cornell University. The representative did not need to do any set up or table any materials about the team and spoke about the different ways in which AguaClara contributed to the Cornell community and on an international scale.

The Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers Dia de Ciencias

The other event, Dia de Ciencias, was hosted in Ithaca High School. To prepare for this event, a few AguaClara members met beforehand to create the scientific demos for elementary children, which aimed to encourage children to explore Science, Technology, Engineering and Math fields. The team created two illustrations, one with water siphon and one with large water bottles which created mini water "tornadoes." The AguaClara team enjoyed interacting with the children at the fair and educated them about the fascinating aspects of water. As an added bonus, the AguaClara team spoke with prospective university students and shared with them AguaClara's work. This event gave an opportunity for AguaClara to give back to the local community and to participate in such a meaningful Cornell effort of promoting Science, Technology, Engineering and Math education.



Figure 2: AguaClara at Dia de Ciencias

The team appreciated the opportunity to reach out to the community. Everyone enjoyed the time spent at the fair. However, the preparation process could be improved. The team started preparing the material only a few days

prior to the event. More importantly, the pickup and departure were not communicated efficiently to the attending members. The public relations team should have taken more initiative in coordinating logistics for a clear preparation session, meet up time, and travel arrangements.

BEE 1200 Presentation

On April 6, the Public Relations Team visited the classroom of BEE1200, the Biological Engineering freshman seminar. In the classroom, there were multiple project teams, including iGEM, Mars Rover, etc.

The team prepared for the presentation by revising one of the old presentations. The PowerPoint was condensed; the Public Relations Team removed slides that included information which could be confusing for a five minute presentation. In the actual presentation, the team talked about the motivation behind AguaClara, going over some statistics about the clean water situation in the world. Then, the team walked through the AguaClara technology, explaining the various processes happening inside the plant. The slides were also updated to include a roadmap of the typical Biological Engineering track and how AguaClara fits into this schedule. The team shared briefly about the upcoming Open Lab event to invite interested students to join.

Overall, the presentation was a success. Freshmen who were about to enter into pre-enrollment had the opportunity to learn about AguaClara. However, the slides lacked information about the subteams and the demographic of the project team. The Public Relations Team observed the features in other project teams' presentations. Subteam and member information could help students envision how they could fit into AguaClara and encourage them to pre-enroll.

AguaClara Open Lab Event

The Public Relations Team worked with the Red Carpet Society in order to show future freshman engineers the AguaClara lab space and to inform them about the different project teams on campus. The event was combined with the semester open house for current students in order to maximize the time which lab members needed to sacrifice for this event. The event was held on Friday, April 15 from 3:45 to 4:45 PM.

To prepare for the event, the Public Relations Team created a Facebook event to invite people on campus to come. The team posted this event and advertised in various Facebook groups on campus, such as the Class of 2019 wall and the College of Engineering wall. The team also made a flyer about the event that was circulated in various listservs. Another component to prepare for the event was searching for volunteers to be at the Open House. The team started a Google spreadsheet and emailed this spreadsheet to invite all freshmen on the team.

On the actual day of the event, the interested students met in the lobby of Hollister Hall and the Public Relations Team gave a short 15-minutes presentation about AguaClara's mission, plants, and members. After the presentation, visiting students had the opportunity to voice questions and ask for clarification. The second portion of the schedule was a lab tour. Two of the team leads conducted a tour for the prospective group of students and the current students. At various stations, team members shared about their lab work and research.

The tour helped students to gain a deeper and more hands-on comprehension of the AguaClara's experience. To conclude the event, the tour guides found a location to gather and took overall questions. Their contact information was also recorded for future purposes.

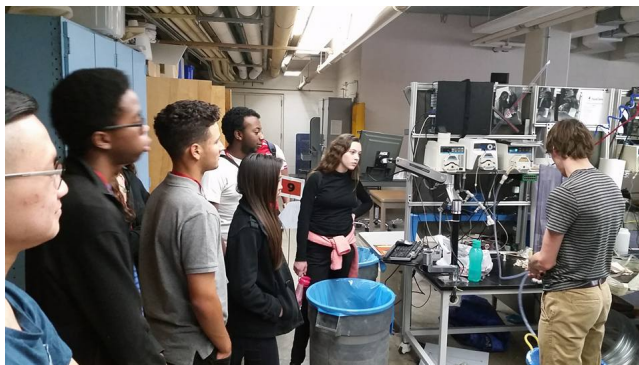


Figure 3: AguaClara Open House

Overall, the event was successful. The students who visited the lab commented that the tour helped them understand AguaClara a lot more than reading information about the project team. The attendance was around 16, including the prospective students. It was a wise choice to combine the prospective students lab tour with the Open House. Combining the events reduced the risk and chances of recruiting more volunteers than visitors. Therefore, moving forward, the Public Relation Team should continue to plan for a combined Open House and Prospective Students lab tour.

AguaClara Fundraiser

At the start of the semester, the AguaClara Public Relations team brainstormed a new AguaClara event, an AguaClara fundraiser to increase awareness and spending budget for the Public Relations team. After many turns and changes, the AguaClara fundraiser was held in Cafe Pacific on May 14, 2016.

Initially, due to various promotions, the Public Relations Team was introduced to GroupRaise, a platform to organize fundraisers with local restaurants. The Public Relations Team researched this website and found it to be a useful tool to plan the fundraiser. The Public Relations Team chose the restaurant to be Colleetown Pizza and set a tentative towards the end of the semester. But the team could not secure the date because the bank account was not set up. So the team was unsure about how the money would be stored after the event.

As May approached, the team realized the planning for fundraiser needed to start. On April 14, the team submitted a request to GroupRaise for holding a fundraiser at CollegeTown Pizza. However, the restaurant did not give a reply and the request expired. Afterwards, the team called the owner of CollegeTown Pizza to inquire about the situation. The owner then explained that he would not like to host a fundraiser for the remainder of the school year because he had already agreed to too many this past few months. In light of this situation, the Public Relations team adopted the GroupRaise model, of splitting sale

revenues with the restaurant, and drafted a proposal to present to other Collegetown restaurants. Finally, the team negotiated with Cafe Pacific to co-host a fundraiser on May 14, 2016. Customers who came from 4:00 PM to 9:00PM on that day and who paid by cash could drop their receipts in a bucket and donate 10 percent of their meal sales to AguaClara. Both representatives from AguaClara and Cafe Pacific signed a contract that detailed these agreements.

To prepare for the event, the Public Relations Team created a Facebook event and distributed quarter cards around campus. The design of quarter cards focused on bright colors and appealing graphics to attract attention. The quarter cards, shown in Figure 4, were spread in Duffield Hall and Statler Hall. Also, in the team emails, the fundraiser was advertised to encourage team members to visit Cafe Pacific.



Figure 4: AguaClara Open House

On the actual day, the Public Relations Team went to Cafe Pacific to set up the bucket. At the end of the day, 9:00PM, one member returned to the restaurant to collect the bucket with the receipts. The receipts were counted and AguaClara received 20 dollars from Cafe Pacific. The total sales totaled 197.16 dollars, from 28 customers.

The money raised from this fundraiser were lower than the team's expectation. While disappointed, the team saw this as a great first time learning experience. There were several improvements and ideas for changes noted. First, the planning process for fundraiser should have been done earlier. The team would recommend for future teams to attempt using GroupRaise again but start earlier. GroupRaise's collaboration would allow for a higher revenue-sharing model. Secondly, if the team decided not to go with GroupRaise, the team should consider including more restaurants in the event, which would help to increase the probability of people visiting one of the participating restaurants. Lastly, the final consideration would be to find a restaurant with a higher average check. Although Cafe Pacific cooperated well and was a great partner to work with, many customers only had desserts, drinks, or snack items. The average check was 7.04 dollars. The AguaClara Public Relations can choose a restaurant that focused on main entree items, increasing the revenue from each customer to around 10 dollars.

Observing this year's fundraisers, the Public Relations Team increased in confidence that the next fundraiser would be more successful if the team would implement the suggestions above.

At all of these events, the Public Relations Team publicized the work of AguaClara and raised awareness for the need to provide sustainable water treatment for communities in places like Honduras.

Social Media and Newsletter

AguaClara Public Relations Team actively communicated latest updates about the team in the newsletter and through social media channels.

Newsletter

The Public Relations Team sent out its first monthly newsletter during the last week of February. The goal of the newsletter was to provide an opportunity for consistent communication with AguaClara alumni. By creating a newsletter, the Public Relations Team hoped to build a long-lasting connection between the current members and the former members. The newsletter served as an additional means of keeping alumni up-to-date on the work being done both in the field and in the lab. The newsletter for February 2016 included a brief update on our water plants in Honduras, a thank you note for the renovated lab down in Hollister Hall, a message about the winter trip to Honduras, advertisement opportunities to join the AguaClara mentorship program, and invitation to apply to become an AguaClara Engineer in Honduras. The newsletter was first drafted by a member of the Public Relations Team. It was then sent out to be edited and reviewed by the rest of the Public Relations Team and the Public Relations Team adviser. Once edits were made according to the feedback, a new draft of the newsletter was sent out to all AguaClara team leads and Professor Monroe for final edits and review. After the final copy of the newsletter was created, it was sent out to all of the team leads, advisers, and Public Relations Team for a unanimous approval before being formally sent out to the entire AguaClara listserv.

The newsletter was written on a system called Mailchimp. There were a number of advantages and disadvantages with this particular system. Because Mailchimp was already used by AguaClara in the past, it already stored nearly 500 previous and current members of the team loaded onto its listserv. Transferring a mass of contact information that large would require significant effort. Additionally, many notable mass-emailing systems charged fees for using their platforms. With the AguaClara's existing Mailchimp account, the Public Relations Team had free access. Despite the advantages of Mailchimp, the disadvantages of the system outweighed the benefits. After creating multiple drafts of the newsletter and making consistent edits to the work, the Public Relations Team realized that the system was very temperamental and hard to properly format. Because the system would not allow certain types of consistency in the email (for example, the system did not allow the same left or center justification for all of the newsletter's content), the newsletter gave off an unprofessional feel. There were also issues with Mailchimp where text coloring, spacing, font, and sizes were incredibly difficult to change in order to keep the newsletter consistent. Additionally, there were limited options for the formatting of content within the newsletter that preventing the Public Relations Team from making significant improvements to the look and feel of the newsletter.

Due to the difficulties faced by using the Mailchimp system, the Public Relations team decided to find a suitable replacement system that would allow access to the same number of AguaClara alumni and current members and would be free of charge. This system change would significantly increase the ease of sending out newsletters every month after finalizing the initial template. This would expedite the process of publishing the newsletter and conserve valuable time for the entire team. Besides the formatting, the Public Relations Team understood the team's shortcoming in proofreading for content accuracy and grammar. The team had dedicated itself to pay more specific attention to details before sending out the alumni newsletter.

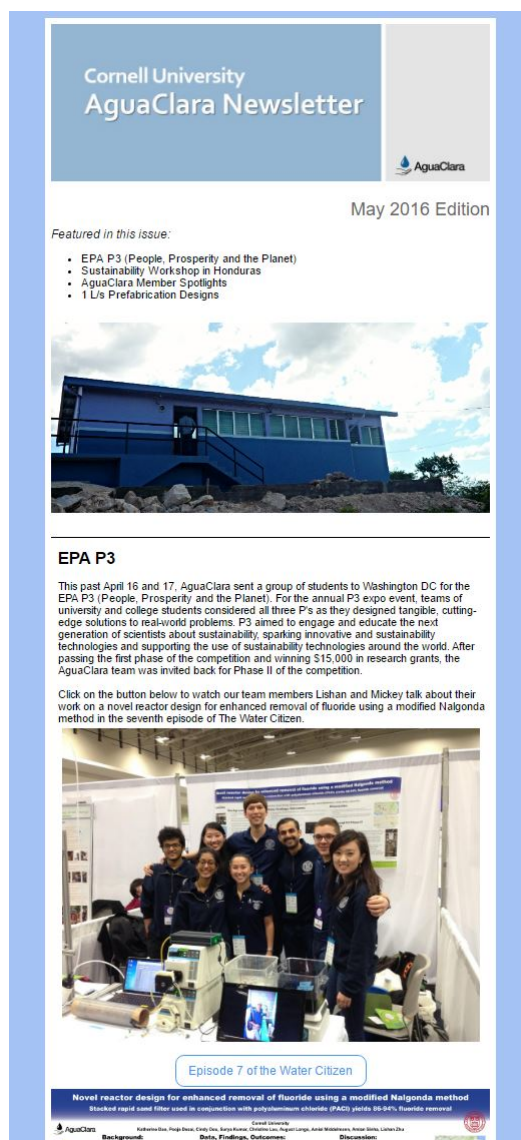


Figure 5: Preview of the May 2016 Newsletter

The team decided to make the switch to the Vertical Response system. Vertical Response was chosen due to its top ranking of free, online mailing systems. This system displayed an improvement in easier usage and formatting. Additionally, the system allowed an easy transition of the existing listserv from the Mailchimp system. The Public Relations Team used Vertical Response to write the end of the year, May 2016 newsletter (as previewed in the figure above). This newsletter included information about sending AguaClara members to the EPA P3 (People, Prosperity and the Planet) in Washington DC, updates on the Sustainability Workshop in Honduras (as well as links to the AguaClara blog), links to the AguaClara Member Spotlights, and links for donating to the 1 L/s Prefabrication Design Team. Unless an increase in the number of people on the Public Relations Team in the future, it would be the easiest to have two newsletters written: one for the start of the semester and one for the end of the semester. Because the newsletters required a long process of approvals and edits before publication, having more than two newsletters would take away the necessary time to complete all the other projects for the Public Relations team over the course of the semester.

Social Media

Social media, as mentioned in the previous works section, played an important role in promoting AguaClara in past years. The Public Relations Team continued to actively utilize these channels to reach audiences and market AguaClara. The target audience for the AguaClara social media content was the greater community outside of the project team members, including but not limited to alumni and other Cornell students. Two major focuses of Social Media included the Twitter feed and the Facebook page.

Twitter was build for short and instant action, automatically limiting tweets to 140 characters. Therefore, the AugaClara Public Relations Team mainly used Twitter for quick updates on the team's latest news. Often time, posts provided snapshot of the progress in Honduras, events AguaClara team members attended, or life in the lab. For example, the top tweet, showcased in the figure below highlighted the first lab time of the new semester. For AugaClara, Twitter tweets were geared towards alumni or older people because the Public Relations Team analyzed that most of the followers fit into this demographic group and Twitter had become more obsolete among Cornell student population.

Top Tweet earned 124 impressions

Our team members are already getting right to work on the 1st Tues lab time. We're excited for a great new semester!
pic.twitter.com/1aVvexB8cU



Figure 6: Top Tweet in February 2016

Facebook, on the other hand, allowed the Public Relations Team to create longer posts and was directed towards both the alumni and student populations. Therefore, besides the usual updates, the Public Relations Team aimed to provide longer content that would draw people to become interested in AguaClara.

The prime example was the weekly member spotlight. Previously, the Public Relations Team had featured subteams on the spotlight to introduce the many subteams within the project team. These posts described and explained the job functions of various subteams, giving a richer context to the daily laboratory life of AguaClara team members. However, this semester, the Public Relations Team decided to switch focus and to feature individuals on the team instead of an entire subteam. The motivation behind the switch was to form more personal connection with the audience. As explained in the literary review section, relationship building was one key function of Public Relations. By featuring individual team members, the friends of that particular member would feel more connected to the mission of AguaClara, hearing about their friend's experience with the team and how AguaClara had positively impacted their lives. The connection would be deeper than the connection formed with subteam spotlight because the subteam spotlight devoted more energy to explain job functions while the individual spotlight was dedicated to tell personal stories.

There were three main steps to the process of creating the member spotlight. First, the Public Relations Team emailed the team members chosen to be featured. The Public Relations Team hoped to feature a range of talents within the team, purposefully selecting members with different backgrounds, teams, and lengths of working in AguaClara. In the email, the Public Relations Team briefly introduced the member spotlight and asked if the member would be willing to be featured. Then, the Public Relations Team arranged a photoshoot session with each individual. Due to lack of accessibility to camera equipment,

a camera from Mann library and all the photoshoots were conducted on the same day. Lastly, a follow up email was sent to the members with a link to a Google doc where the members would answer to interview questions.

The Public Relations Team experimented with another method to encourage more members to participate in the member spotlight. All AguaClara members received the link of a Google form that invited members to fill out if they would like be featured. The form only received two responses. The Public Relations Team attributed this lack of response to the shyness for team members to volunteer in being publicized. Alternatively, lack of response could be merely a result of the lack of time or effort for members to fill out the form. Either way, the attempt to decrease exclusivity and increase transparency was noble but not as effective as initially anticipated. Personal invitations proved to be more effective in finding members to spotlight.

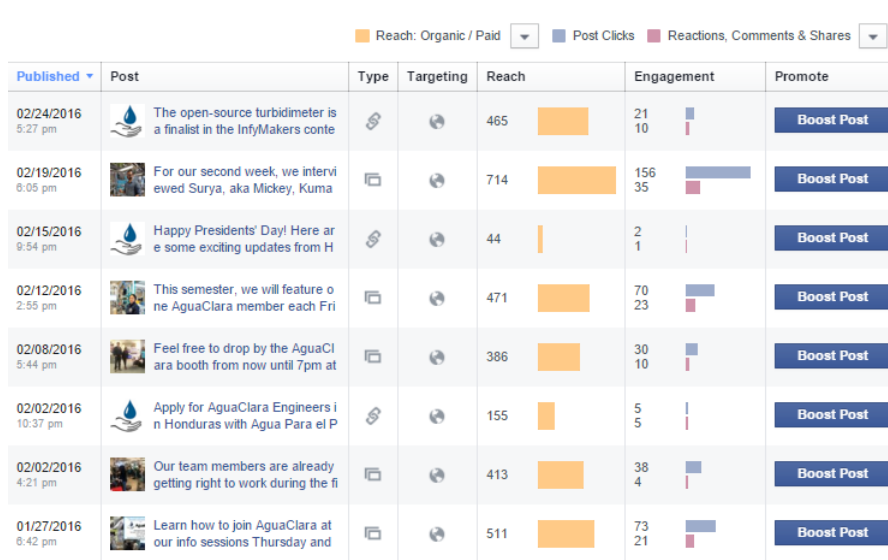


Figure 7: Facebook Statistics in January and February 2016

Overall, the response of the Facebook posts was positive. The Public Relations Team monitored the performance of these posts and verified that the members spotlight was effective in attracting people to the page. Most interesting, observing the figure above, the Public Relations Team noticed the difference in engagement with these member spotlights. Member spotlights encouraged people to engage with the post, responding to the material through liking the posts or commenting on them. The activity of user engagement was not commonly observed in other posts because individuals felt more compelled to comment when they knew the person featured on the post or wanted to show support and affirmation for the featured member. From the statistics below, the Public Relations Team learned that the frequent twitter updates and the member spotlight had produced desirable results and would continue the efforts to maintain high activity AguaClara's social media.



Figure 8: Stats about AguaClara facebook followers

Funding Opportunities

SAFC Budget

The Student Activities Funding Commission (SAFC) was an organization responsible for allocating funding to over 500 registered undergraduate student organizations on the Cornell campus. At the start of Spring 2016, organizations were given the opportunity to apply for funding through creating a budget and filling out an application. The AguaClara Public Relations Team decided to apply for SAFC funding. Traditionally, the Public Relations Team had been self-funded, without receiving funds which were available to other research functions within AguaClara. The team saw the potential benefits for having a budget, allowing more resources to be obtained. As a first time applicant, AguaClara belonged to the “New Group Tier,” eligible for up to 500 USD of funding from SAFC. To manage the 500 USD budget, the Public Relations Team determined more prioritized items to be purchased for AguaClara based on most past spending records and experiences. The team brainstormed for items which had always been on the wish list of items but never purchased due to budget limitation, such as new team polos and a banner. Then, the team examined items purchased from previous semesters and decided which one would be eligible for funding. For example, while food costs were high at past events, SAFC stated that they would not be reimbursed under their regulations. After the team compiled a list of items, the team conducted research to create a budget based on real life cost estimations. It was essential to take screenshot of this research to explain how the team determined the budget and specific numbers. Lastly, the team filled out the budget form on orgsync, which required categorizing the requested items, attaching supporting documents, and writing a description for the purpose of the each item.

Item to Purchase	\$\$ To Request
Stickers	\$37
Apparel (Polos)	\$229
Marketing Materials [Quartercards & Posters]	\$10
Banner	\$75
Tablecloth	\$13
Decorations	\$8
	\$372

Figure 9: SAFC Budget Detailing

Figure 9 illustrated the final budget for AguaClara in the Spring 2016 semester. The highest monetary request was for the apparel. The next step involved getting AguaClara’s adviser and various past E-board members to comment and to approve the budget on orgsync.

The effort proved to be worthwhile when the budget decision was announced. AguaClara received funding for all items except for the banner. The funding allowed the Public Relations Team to have 297 USD to spend. After discussion about the outcome and process, the Public Relations Team noted several observations for future application to SAFC. The banner was denied due to incorrect categorization; it was considered to be a “durable good” instead of an “administrative fee.” Understanding this helped the team to be more aware of the careful classification of budget items in the future. Also, the process of SAFC application started the same week as the deadline for applying. The team learned that it should allocate more time to brainstorming and as a result the team should be able to fully utilize the budget. At the same time, the Public Relations Team realized that the SAFC budget could open many doors for more freedom in spending and the team should continue this endeavor of applying for funding in future semesters.

Student Group Leadership Award Application

The Public Relations Team also attempted to attain another source of potential funding, the Student Group Leadership Award. The Student Group Leadership Award, sponsored by the Cornell Engineering Alumni Association and the College of Engineering, was created to recognize student organizations that dedicated themselves to work diligently and creatively to improve their activities, membership involvement, and alumni connection. The Team Leads and the Public Relations Team believed that this award would be a great fit for AguaClara; AguaClara constantly worked hard to improve students’ quality of education by offering a place for students to apply classroom knowledge in real life situations and make an actual difference in communities.

The application entailed the following three parts: a written response to the application with discussion questions, a proposed calendar, and an adviser statement. The written response was the most time consuming, soliciting information about the goals, the membership involvement, and the description of new events for AguaClara. In the goals section, the Public Relations Team highlighted the importance of engaging research and learning in the program. In the membership involvement, the team stressed the increasing numbers in mem-

bership and the long-lasting alumni relationships with alumni. Lastly, in the new events section, the team talked about the new subteams and the National Sustainable Design Expo.

Evaluating the application writing process, the Public Relations Team concluded that more time could be dedicated to preparation. Although an initial email was sent out to the team leads to find a time to meet, busy schedules made it difficult to schedule a time to meet. The Public Relations Team recommended that for future application, a date should be set immediately after the release of the application to discuss general ideas and align expectations for application. Then, the team could use the additional time to polish the application.

Bank Account

In order to maintain any additional funding for the Public Relations Team, the team decided that a bank account should be established in order to safely keep money from one semester to another. Up until now, Public Relations made sure that all expenses and gains would break even. Additionally, money was kept in the lab with different merchandise. Because of the lack of records about the money was collected, money was frequently misplaced and lost, leaving the Public Relations Team with no money for future. To solve the problem, this semester the team looked into opening an account with CFCU Community Credit Union. CFCU was one of the two banks that had representatives present at the Cornell Store. The bank had two options available for bank accounts. The first option was to set up a bank account under the name of a particular person. While the option was the easiest to establish, it would not be easy to transition the account from one account holder to another. In order to transition money from one person to another, the account would need to be completely shut down and a new account would need to be made by another person. The other option was to make an account as an organization alone that would be able to transition easily from one person's use to another. Unfortunately, AguaClara needed to have a tax identification number in order to establish the bank account with CFCU. In order to generate a tax identification number with the IRS, there needed to be a person who was listed as the "Responsible Party" a person who had a level of control over or entitlement to the funds or assets in the entity that, as a practical matter, enabled the individual directly or indirectly to control, manage, or direct the entity and the disposition of its funds and assets. The ability to fund the entity or the entitlement to the property of the entity alone, however, without any corresponding authority to control, manage or direct the entity (such as in the case of a minor child beneficiary), would not cause the individual to be a responsible party. The account would take five USD to establish and the AguaClara research advisor would be the Responsible Party. The Public Relations team ultimately chose to create a bank account as an organization. Once an online form for the EID was filled out with Monroe as the responsible party, an account was set up with CFCU. A savings and checking account were established for easy use of a Venmo account. The 124 USD that the Public Relations team had been holding were deposited into the account. A debit card could not be given to the team until someone was signed with the account and can guarantee access to the card and the team for two years minimum. The bank account was then altered so that Fall 2016 Public Relations Team members and Team Leads could have access to the account. All

information regarding the bank account and Venmo account for the team was saved onto the team drive, along with any receipts of money being deposited or withdrawn from the account. This information was made available on the drive but was privatized and limited to be viewed by the Team Leads and the Public Relations Team.

Merchandise

The Public Relations Team was responsible for organizing the sales and production of AguaClara merchandise, which showcased the AguaClara logo and increases public recognition of AguaClara. In Fall 2015, the team ordered a new design of quarter-zips through the 4imprint Company. The quarter-zips received a popular and positive reception from the team. The Public Relations Team also explored the options of ordering stickers and team polos last semester. The team ultimately decided to delay ordering these items in order to prioritize the quarter-zips.

The main motivation for AguaClara Merchandise Sales was to increase team spirit and to advertise AguaClara by increasing other students' familiarity with the team name. The Public Relations Team wanted to encourage the entire team's participation and to ensure the team would benefit from the sales.

Survey

Therefore, the first step taken by the Public Relations Team was to survey the preference of the AguaClara team members. The Public Relations Team made a Google form that listed several initial merchandise ideas. On the form, the Public Relations Team included the projected price, rough draft photos, and a suggestion box. Then, the form was sent and distributed to AguaClara team members.

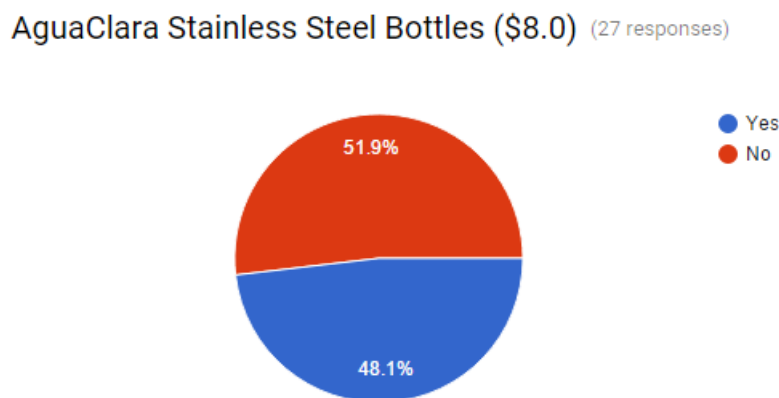


Figure 10: Stainless Steel Water Bottles

AguaClara Water Bottles (\$10.0) (27 responses)

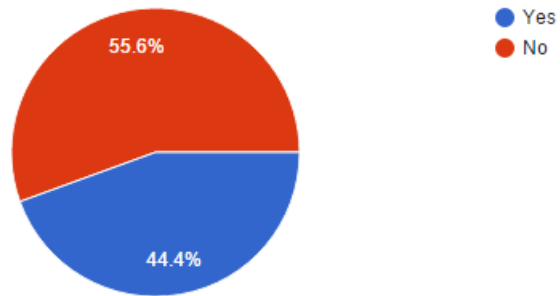


Figure 11: Plastic Water Bottles

AguaClara T-shirts (\$13.0) (27 responses)

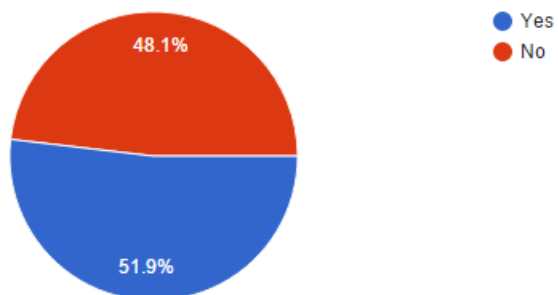


Figure 12: 13 USD T-shirts

AguaClara Hoodies (\$19.00) (27 responses)

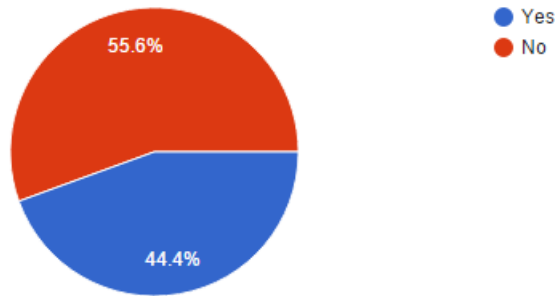


Figure 13: 19 USD Hoodies

Based on the survey results shown in the figures above, the Public Relations Team chose which good to order and sell. The final goods to order were determined to be the water bottles and the AguaClara T-shirt. Between T-shirts and hoodies, the Public Relations Team picked the T-shirts because it had a greater percentage of people who indicated yes to buying, 51.9 percent compared to 44.4 percent. The survey provided additional information for the Public Relations Team to make decisions; however, the results could have been potentially biased. The sample size was 27 out of the total 66 members in AguaClara. The responses therefore only reflected the opinions of a selective portion of the entire organization. Moreover, the prices on the survey could skew the results. Stainless steel water bottles was a more popular response than the plastic water bottles yet the results were inconclusive to the actual preference because the stainless steel option was two dollars cheaper than the other. It would be more accurate to give a range of price for each type of merchandise, instead of specific products.

After determining the objects to be ordered, the Public Relations Team continued the process by brainstorming specific design ideas. The Public Relations Team recognized its weakness in design acumen. Desiring the creative AguaClara T-shirt designs, the Public Relations Team wanted to take advantage of the talents present in the AguaClara team. Hence, the Public Relations Team created a T-shirt design competition for the overall team. The Public Relations Team welcomed all members to submit their designs and ideas. From the seas of submission, the Public Relations Team would be able to choose the best design and create a T-shirt beloved by the entire team. Competition promoted team engagement as well, demonstrating the exciting opportunities and invitations for AguaClara team members to get involved in Public Relations activities. The Public Relations Team only received two submissions as seen below.



Figure 14: Submitted shirt design 1



Figure 15: Submitted shirt design 2

Ultimately, the team leads requested that a more formal shirt design be used in order to attract a larger number of potential buyers amongst the team. The final design, shown below, was to create a charcoal gray, short sleeve t-shirt and a navy, long-sleeve shirt that simply had the AguaClara logo written across the front of the chest. The designs were created using CustomInk so that the same design could be ordered with a group pricing for both of the different merchandise options. By placing a group order with CustomInk, the Public Relations Team was able to have team members place their shirt orders online to alleviate the stress of having to individually mark down the names, sizes, and payments of each person. Giving the team roughly a week to submit orders for shirts, the designs were then submitted for free shipping within two weeks so that they would arrive before final presentations for AguaClara on May 20, 2016. The shirts were distributed on the day of the final presentations using a spreadsheet listing all of those who ordered and what size they ordered.



Figure 16: Final short sleeve t-shirt design



Figure 17: Final long sleeve shirt design

Polos and durable goods

On the other hand, the Public Relations Team concurrently worked on certain objects which SAFC had granted the budget for. These items included the polos and durable good.

In terms of the team polos design, the Public Relations Team decided to keep a simple design, a plain background with the AguaClara and Cornell University logos. The logos would allow the team to represent the two groups at different events. Since the T-shirt would print the Cornell logo, the Public Relations Team sought approval from the school to use the logo. First, the team submitted a "Use of Cornell Names, Logos, and Artwork on Manufactured Items" form, along with a design, to the Student Activities Office, 521 Willard Straight Hall. The Public Relations was faced with a challenge when the office disapproved

the design twice, both due to the illegibility of the words in the logo's writing space. Another person arose when the staff of the office was unresponsive to the emails. Finally, the team realized that the staff was on vacation and found another staff member after visiting the Student Activities Office for a second time. The final logo had the writing "Cornell University" to avoid any difficulty in reading the university's name.

After obtaining the design, the team purchased the shirt on 4imprints, a Cornell approved vendor. The shirts turned out to be more expensive than expected due to the addition of a logo on the sleeve that said AguaClara. The Public Relations Team fortunately was able to locate a coupon online to reduce the price. The T-shirts also required two revision with 4imprints due to distortion in original image. On April 7, more than 2 weeks from the placement date of March 21, the T-shirts were delivered.

Learning from this experience, the Public Relations Team realized that the Cornell logo should include the Cornell University text to avoid multiple submissions and rejections from the university. Moreover, in the budget estimation, it would be wise to overestimate the costs instead of stating the cheapest price to avoid unforeseen expenses above the budget. Lastly, the team should continue to order around 3 weeks ahead of time due to complications in the ordering process.

The SAFC also funded the production of AguaClara stickers. Four sticker designs were created by the Public Relations Team in various colors. The designs were then presented to the entire AguaClara class during the Monday night meeting time to be voted on. Once a design was selected, the Public Relations Team ordered 90 stickers from StickerYou.com for 39.80 USD. The stickers would be distributed at the next Monday night team meeting to ensure at everyone can take at least one. Until distribution, the stickers were being stored in the merchandise container in the Hollister Lab Space.



Figure 18: Final Sticker Design

Order History

Order Details

Order Number:	98963854
Order Placed:	Mar 24, 2016
Order Status:	Shipped
Shipping Method:	Standard
Estimated Delivery Date:	Apr 11, 2016
Ship Date:	Mar 31, 2016
Tracking Number:	9205590162729100142724

Pricing

Total Products:	1
Total Cost:	\$36.45
Shipping & Handling:	\$6.99
Promotional Discount:	\$3.64
Tax:	\$0.00
Total (USD)	\$39.80

Figure 19: Sticker Order Receipt

Another approved item was multiple durable goods for the Open Lab event. These items were tablecloth, balloons, and streamers. The Public Relations Team ordered the items through Amazon. The team faced a similar problem when the prices of the object exceeded the original budget. As a result, it was necessary to pick new objects with lower prices. A recommendation for the future would be to allow extra margin of error in estimating costs.

Headshots

This semester, the Public Relations Team took on a new task to offer headshots sessions for the AguaClara team. The motivation for this headshot session was to add personal photos to the individual wiki pages in order to increase personalization. These headshots allowed members' personal uses as well, such as LinkedIn photo.

First, the Public Relations Team set a date to conduct the photo-taking sessions. The team chose two dates and created a spreadsheet with all the available timeslots. The sign-up sheet was sent in the announcement emails. Then, at the Monday night lecture, the team leaders encouraged students to sign up by pulling up the sheet on the computer. The action drastically increased the number of sign-ups. Prior to the day, the Public Relations Team lent a camera from a team member's friend for the photoshoot to ensure high quality photos.

On the day, the members were instructed to meet at the Hollister lobby five minutes before the photoshoot time. Then, a member of the Public Relations Team led them to the law school for the photo-taking. The team decided to use the law school as the backdrop because it offered scenic background. The process went smoothly after the first few people because the photographer had figured which locations work best for lighting and effect. In total, 22 team members participated in the headshot sessions. Afterwards, the Public Relations Team uploaded the photo into a Google folder. Each person had an individually labeled folder within the folder that had all their photos. The Public Relations Team then sent out an email with this information to the team members who participated. The feedback of the photos was generally positive. Some results can be found in the photo below.

Being the first effort at organizing the headshot session, the Public Relations Teams was satisfied with the outcome. The results of the photos were great. Headshot session could become a regular annual or semester effort to provide our team members with a resource to increase professionalism. Moving forward, the Public Relations Team believed that this opportunity can be better taken advantage of if the purpose of the headshot session was more clearly communicated. Many team members felt confused about why they needed to take a headshot. Clarity could be achieved by clearer instructions giving at the Monday lecture. Moreover, time of the photoshoot could be reduced if the participants were told to meet at the law school directly. After the team had realized that the law scene provided great backdrop for headshot, the email could directly specify that members should meet at the law school.

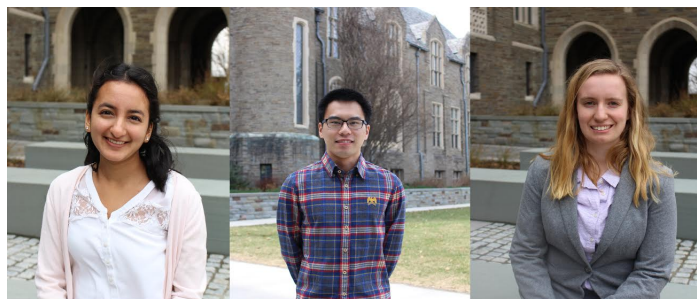


Figure 20: Sample headshots

Conclusion

After a semester of events and planning done by the Public Relations Team, there were a number of things that were discovered to have gone well and a number of things that did not turn out to be so productive. The bank account that was created was a major development for this semester and would greatly change how Public Relations Team funding would be handled in the future. With the bank account, the team could afford to make small payments for miscellaneous items that would need to be purchased. Additionally, the bank account allowed the team to safely account for the team's money. Another positive development for the semester was the use of SAFC funding. Now that the team had actively utilized this resource, purchases like a team table, polos,

and table cloths could be made without the need for extra fund-raising. Being able to make these purchases gave the Public Relations Team an opportunity to provide team with collectively owned items and have the materials needed to publicly, and internally, present the project team in a professional light. The change to making the newsletters published using VerticalResponse was also a major change that made creating newsletters a much easier process due to its much more user-friendly nature compared with MailChimp.

There were a few problems that the Public Relations Team faced this semester that could be either eliminated or changed for the future. Over the course of the semester, the Public Relations Team was presented with many different project ideas and events to attend. Unfortunately, with only two team members and a few already busy Team Leads, many of these ideas and events had to be cut down because of insufficient Public Relations Team members in order to accomplish all of these goals. Additionally, there was much to be learned from the fund-raiser. For a first attempt, the team ultimately did well but learned that there was much to improve for publicizing the event and understanding how much money would relatively come in for a given number of participants at a place like Café Pacific.

The most general conclusion for the Public Relations Team this semester was the need for a complete restructuring of the team operates itself. The Team Leads and Public Relations Team members had decided change a few key elements of the team. The Public Relations Team as a whole had developed to do work beyond actual Public Relations. Modeling after other Cornell Project Teams, for instance—CU Air, with a business team that encompassed Public Relations as well as other responsibilities. There was also discussion of creating roles within the new team (i.e.: Business Team Coordinator, Public Relations Head, Graphic and Merchandise Designer, etc) to create a better system to assigning tasks. This would also help to create roles for each team member, playing on their strengths and helping prospective members for the team to understand their responsibilities. The Public Relations team could also benefit from changing the subteam advisor to one of the general team leads. Since much of the projects needed approval through a chain of command (all team members, then subteam leader, then AguaClara Team Leads), it often ended up taking a much longer time to complete tasks which decreased overall Public Relations Team efficiency. Recruitment for the Public Relations Team had also been determined as something that needed special attention since many potential team members were not within the usual pool of Engineering students who AguaClara typically advertised to. In preparation, Fall 2016 Team Leads had encouraged prospective Public Relations Team members to look into joining the project team much earlier than the typical recruitment period at the very beginning of each semester.

Future Work

In the coming semesters, the Public Relations Team planned to continue improving current efforts and to create new promotional opportunities. First, the team hoped to refine the budgeting process after it applied for funding through SAFC this year. The insights and errors made in this year's budget request will serve as guidelines on how to best manage and request a budget. More-

over, the Public Relations Team will keep on producing regular Public Relations publications, such as the newsletter and the social media updates, with higher efficiency and impact after learning about the most effective editing procedures. The special events hosted by AguaClara this semester, like the Open House and Fundraiser, allowed AguaClara to increase presence on campus and should be hosted again next year. Yet, the Public Relations team will work on amending the structure and advertising process to make each event more impactful.

On the other hand, various creative ideas were not executed this semester due to the limited amount of human resource and money in the Public Relations Team. There were two main ideas that had enormous potential and the team should consider for next semester. The first idea was an awareness event with another on-campus organizations, focusing on environment or social change. The Public Relations Team reached out to Take Back the Tap during this semester but due to the amount of tasks, the team never had the opportunity to collaborate with the organization. Partnering with another group could extend AguaClara's reach on campus and promote the great cause of AguaClara to a larger audience. The second idea would be to reach out to media contact. Reaching out to media contact was not prioritized this semester; the Public Relations Team already stored a database of contacts and would like to take advantage of this document to connect with local media and invite them to share about AguaClara's work. The AguaClara Public Relations teams have laid foundation for both these actions. In the future, these new projects can be easily started, potentially helping AguaClara grow in exciting ways.

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