





POWER UP YOUR CAREER WITH THE APR

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**LAEL WAGENECK, APR**

Received APR in 2018

Universal Accreditation Board Member

Public Information Officer with Santa
Barbara County Public Works
Department

CAPIO Past President

lwageneck@countyofsb.org

**JULIA McHUGH, APR**

Received APR in 2008

PRSA Gold Coast Accreditation Chair

Taught PR at Santa Barbara City
College from 2008 to 2026

PR Director of SB Zoo for 17 years

Recent Clients: Elings Park, SB
Historical Museum, SB Botanic Garden

Julia@JuliaPR.com

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TODAY

Goal: provide an overview of the APR process for CAPIO and PRSA members.

- Set expectations for pursuing the APR
- Review the APR process: panel presentation, computer-based exam, and renewal
- Share study tools, mentoring, and strategies to ensure success

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WHAT IS AN APR?

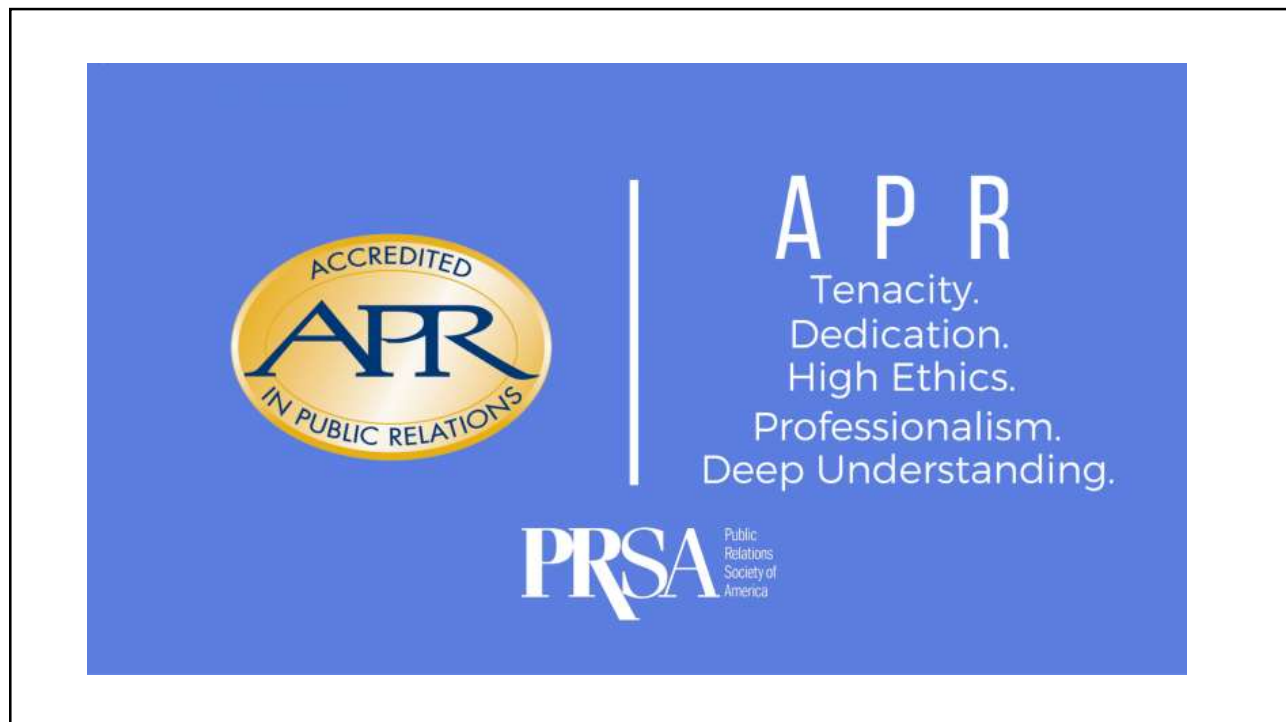
A professional credential, earned through a rigorous process, which demonstrates:

- Commitment to professional advancement
- Broad and strategic public relations knowledge, skills, and abilities
- High level of professional experience and competence

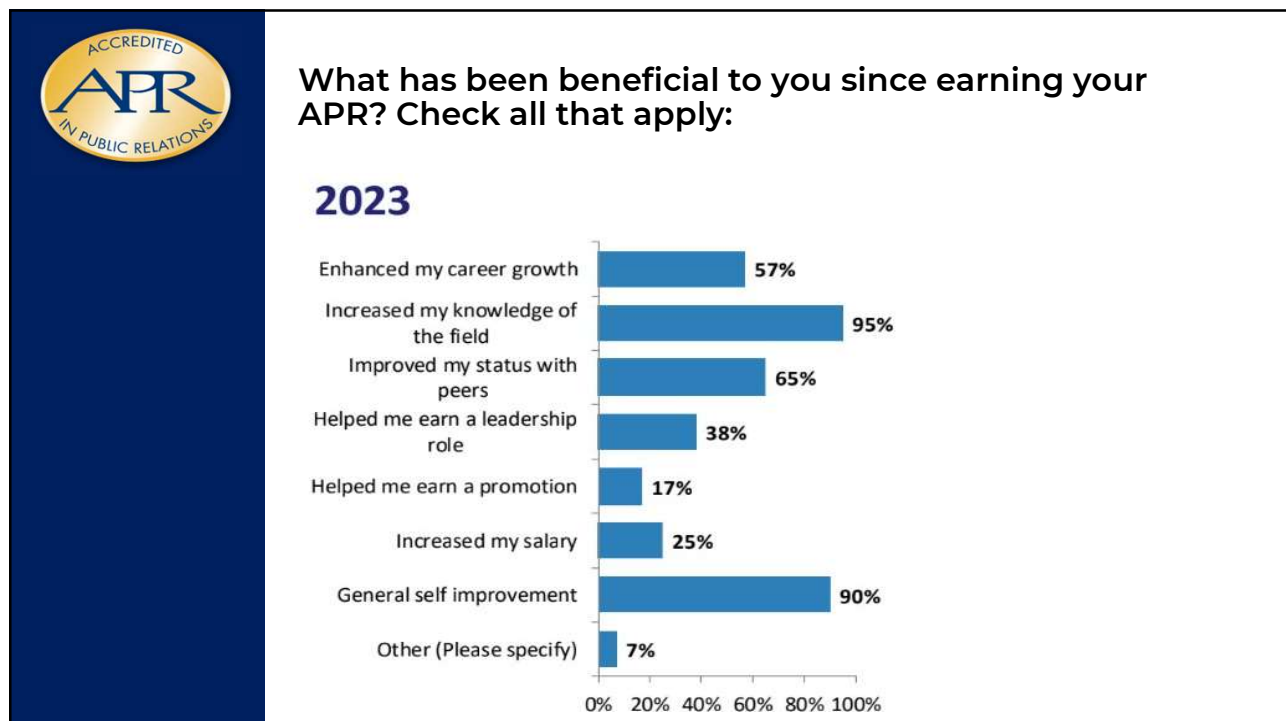
APR is administered by the Universal Accreditation Board

PRSA is one of several public relations organizations that participate in the UAB consortium

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Why APR?



"I pursued accreditation for two reasons; I'm a strong believer in life-long learning, and I wanted to demonstrate my knowledge and commitment as an ethical public relations professional. Earning my APR has validated my skills and abilities as a communicator and helped secure my place at the table with senior leadership."

Pat Holloway
Director of Communications, Dalton Public Schools



“My APR gives me the confidence to help me work from a strategic point of view. It reminds me only to make the best ethical choices for my company and its audiences. Because of my APR, I am equipped to practice communications in any industry.”



Ivy Johnson, APR
Senior Account Executive
MP&F Strategic Communications
Nashville, Tennessee

"Earning my APR was a boost to both my confidence and professional growth. It gave me the knowledge, skills, and strategic perspective that accelerated my career. Gaining a deeper understanding of the communications planning process—based in research, planning, implementation, and evaluation (RPIE)—provided a framework for success in public sector communications."

Christine Brainderd, MPA, APR
Communications Manager
City of Folsom



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Interaction: Snapshot of You & APR

Pick a partner, someone you don't know well.

- Where are you in your APR process? Decided? Questioning?
- How would it benefit you, specifically?
- What do you hope to achieve?

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Steps to a Lifelong APR

1. Apply
2. Initial Prep and Study, Complete Questionnaire
3. Panel Presentation
4. More Study
5. Computer Exam
6. Renewal

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Apply

Who is eligible?

- Members of 8 participating organizations: PRSA, CAPIO, NSPR, etc.
- Recommend 5+ years in PR of full-time professional experience, or teaching of PR courses at the college level

Fee = \$385 (check for rebates from your chapter)

Renew every three years: Must fulfill of Renewal Accreditation requirements and have continued membership in the participating organization

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Initial Prep

- **Receive** notification of eligibility – clock starts ticking for *one year to complete the process*
- **Complete** the Panel Presentation Questionnaire
- **Read** the APR study guide
- **Identify** additional texts to fill in gaps (recommendations are online)
- **Study** on your own or in a cohort, formal study group, online seminar, flash cards, etc.
- **Use** resources from www.PRaccreditation.org and www.capio.org/apr

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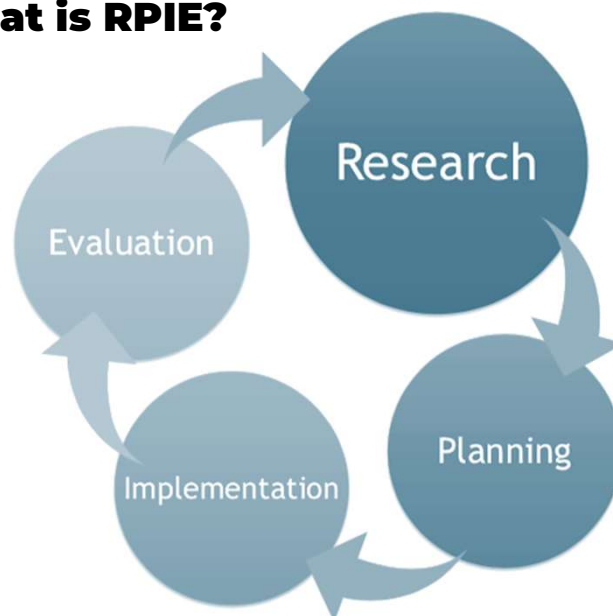
Panel Presentation

- Review **questionnaire** and present **slide deck**
- **Case Study of project/campaign framed in RPIE**
 - *Focuses on your organization and your role*
 - *Showcases your experience*
 - *RPIE = Research, Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation*
 - *Include supporting materials*
- **Presented virtually**, with a panel of 3 APRs, who recommend **“advance” or “not advance”**
- Scored in **12 KSAs**

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What is RPIE?



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Panelist Form – 12 KSAs

Skill	Demonstrated in	Score (0-3)
1. Creative conceptualization/creativity	Questionnaire (all sections); Panel Presentation	
2. Initiative	Questionnaire (section 2); Panel Presentation	
3. Interpersonal skills	Panel Presentation	
4. Management skills	Questionnaire (section 1)	
5. Multi-tasking	Questionnaire (section 2); Panel Presentation	
6. Flexibility	Questionnaire (all sections); Panel Presentation	
7. Time management	Questionnaire (section 1)	
8. Uses multiple delivery mechanisms	Panel Presentation	
9. Communication skills/Speaking	Panel Presentation	
10. Communication skills/Writing and Editing	Questionnaire (all sections); Panel Presentation	
11. Communication skills/Listening	Panel Presentation	
12. Presentation skills	Panel Presentation	
TOTAL SCORE		

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Interaction: The Project

Pick a different partner, someone you don't know well.

- If you had to select a project right now, what would it be?
- Do you need help identifying one? Assist each other.
- There are no perfect projects; an element may be missing. What element(s) of RPIE might you need to create now?

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Exam

- **Computer-delivered** and **scored, taken remotely**
- **100% multiple choice** (terms, situations, analysis, etc.)
- Can take **2 to 3.5 hours**; most people take just over 2 hours, but you are allowed 3.5 hours)
- **Immediate** preliminary results; official results via mail
- **Retake if necessary**; receive coaching and support
- **Exam** administered online by **Examity via Certification Management Services**

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KSAs Assessed

The APR exam tests these **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs)**:

- Research, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation – 30%
- Leading the PR Function – 20%
- Managing Relationships – 15%
- Applying Ethics / Law – 15%
- Managing Issues & Crisis Comm – 15%
- Understanding Communication Models, Theories, and History– 5%

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Gerald sensed that more than just his reputation was riding on the success of the presentation.

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ACE THE COMPUTER-BASED EXAM

- **APR Study Guide:** Free at www.praccreditation.org to master KSAs
- **Textbooks:** Study Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations and others
- **Study Options:** Work solo or with a cohort
- **CAPIO Resources:** Study sessions, webinars, and more
- **PRSA Resources:** APR Online Study Course, and more
- **Mentoring:** Free via CAPIO or UAB's Mentor Match

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Sample Question #1

What are two major reasons why organizations retain outside public relations counsel? (Choose two.)

- A. They offer flexibility of talents and skills.
- B. They bring greater credibility to the work.
- C. They will provide sound ROI on the project or program.
- D. They provide objectivity and a disinterested perspective.
- E. They can provide more attention and detail to a project than in-house staff.

Answers are A and D.

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Sample Question #2

Which statement is true about an open systems model of public relations in an organization?

- A. It adapts to changing organizational environments.
- B. It adopts the policy of transparency to build public trust.
- C. It focuses on removing communication barriers between its business divisions.
- D. It communicates with its publics frequently to effect change outside the organization.

Answer is A.

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Sample APR Timelines

Customary (12- month plan)	
Plan and Apply	March 2026
Study and Prepare (mentor, partner)	March-June 2026
Panel Presentation	June-July 2026
APR Exam	August 2026 or later
Completion Target	February 2027

Accelerated (6-month plan)	
Plan and Apply	March 2026
Study and Prepare (mentor, partner)	March-April 2026
Panel Presentation	May-June 2026
APR Exam	June-August 2026
Completion Target	September 2026

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Renewal

- Submit \$75 every three years
- Remain current and involved in the profession
- Continued professional growth
- A minimum of 15 Continuing Education Units
 - 7 CEUs from professional development
 - 1 CEU ethics
 - Other CEUs include teaching, public service, speeches, awards, volunteer PR, leadership in CAPIO, PRSA, or CalSPRA, etc.

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Interaction: You & APR Recheck

Pick a new partner.

- What do you think would be the most difficult part of the APR process for you?
- How might it affect you personally, in terms of family and work balance?
- What are your thoughts about pursuing an APR? Have they changed since we started?
- Are you excited? Nervous?

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CAPIO HELP FOR APR CANDIDATES



- Mentors:** Free mentoring through CAPIO's public sector experts or UAB's Mentor Match program.
- Study Sessions:** Expert-led or peer-led virtual/in-person sessions for exam and panel prep, including the annual OC PRSA virtual course.
- Webinars:** Free CAPIO APR webinars in our Resource Library.
- APR Online Study Course:** Structured prep for \$195 (1-year subscription).
- Cohort Study:** Work solo or with a CAPIO study group for peer support.
- Contact:** Julie Prayter, APR - apr@capio.org - (530) 924-5444
- Website:** www.capio.org/apr

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PRSA HELP FOR APR CANDIDATES

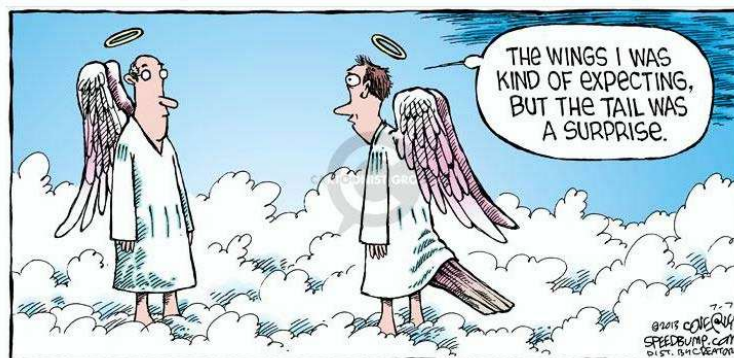


- **APR Virtual Boot Camp:** 3-day intensive course to help prepare for the panel presentation (\$100) or exam (\$400), or both (\$500)
- **PRSA National Capital Chapter Jump Start:** Online series explains APR process, RPIE, theories, ethics, and panel presentation prep (\$90 nonmember, \$75 PRSA member)
- **On-Demand Resources:** PRSA provides on-demand webinars, such as "APR Panel Presentation: Secrets to Success," practice exams, panel presentation guides, recommended texts, and more. Some have fees.
- **Local PRSA Chapter:** Mentoring/coaching available from Julia

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QUESTIONS?



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