

Kirk Hallahan

Profile

Kirk Hallahan is a professor in the Department of Journalism and Technical Communication at Colorado State University, Fort Collins. He was employed for 19 years in public relations, public affairs and marketing before embarking on a second career in university teaching and research in 1991.



Professional Career

A 1971 graduate of UCLA, Hallahan completed his master's degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he began his public relations career by promoting attendance at summer school and by coordinating a speaker's bureau for a NASA-sponsored project on satellite meteorology.

In 1973, he joined the Los Angeles office of a major public relations agency, Harshe-Rotman & Druck, Inc., which later merged into Ruder & Finn. While in counseling, he worked in a wide range of consumer and business-to-business programs. Among his clients were the Pasadena Tournament of Roses and Rose Bowl football game. He also oversaw the general photography room at the Academy Awards for six years.

Hallahan entered the financial services industry in 1979, just prior to the deregulation of banking, and participated in the introduction of major new services by California Federal Bank, then the nation's largest fourth largest savings and loan (now merged into Citibank). He was involved in four major mergers and coordinated public relations [with outside counsel] of Cal Fed's initial public stock offering, which raised \$387 million and was then the second largest IPO in U.S. history. He also oversaw a 250,000-circulation quarterly customer magazine and was responsible for the corporate annual report.

From 1984 to 1989, he was in charge of public relations and communications for the California League of Savings Institutions. He served as the trade group's chief marketing and public affairs officer; oversaw a 5,000-circulation monthly publication; developed a new corporate identity system; supported programming and promotion for three major annual conferences; and managed statewide political action programs.

For two years, from 1989 to 1991, he was the chief public affairs officer at Coast Federal Bank, Los Angeles, a \$9 billion institution (now merged into JP Morgan Chase). He was responsible for speech writing and executive projects, employee communications, media relations, government and industry relations, a speaker's bureau, community and urban outreach, and all charitable contributions.

Hallahan is a past president (1978-79) of the Publicity Club of Los Angeles and has been an accredited member of the Public Relations Society of America since 1978. He served as treasurer of the PRSA Los Angeles chapter for seven years, as South Pacific District Chair in 1984 and as Financial Services Section chair in 1986-87. He was chosen PRSA-LA's Professional of the Year in 1988, and captured a coveted PRSA Silver Anvil for a promotional program conducted on behalf of Shindana Toys in 1975.

Academic Career

In 1991, Hallahan returned to the University of Wisconsin-Madison and entered the Ph.D. degree program in mass communications, which he completed in 1995. While pursuing doctoral studies, he taught the intermediate public relations case studies course as well as the large-lecture introductory public relations course at Wisconsin. He also was faculty adviser to the Public Relations Student Society of America (a position he also holds at Colorado State). His Ph.D. minor is in business (marketing).

From 1993 to 1996, he served on the faculty at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks. At UND, he taught several public relations courses, a graduate research seminar, an integrated marketing communications course for non-majors, and a large-lecture introductory mass media course.

Hallahan joined the Colorado State faculty in 1996 and was promoted to associate professor with tenure

in 2000 and full professor in 2007. At Colorado State, he has taught undergraduate courses in public relations and advertising, media and society, business communication, and business/professional and technical communication. He also developed a new undergraduate course in digital promotion management, one of the first of courses to address the use of Internet- and mobile-based media in public relations and advertising. His graduate teaching assignments have included public relations management, managing communications systems, communication theory, and research methods.

For five years, from 1998 to 2005, he was faculty coordinator for Colorado State's professional master's degree program in communications management offered in Denver. The program awarded 128 degrees. On campus he has advised and supervised theses by 15 master's students—including surveys, content analyses and experiments related to communications in the United States, Canada, Japan, Taiwan and Ukraine.

Hallahan's research crosses organizational strategic communications. His dissertation research focused on the role of content class schemas as heuristics in the processing of product information presented as news versus advertising. His strong interest in promotional message strategy continues. In recent years, he has devoted a major portion of his attention to the use of communications technologies in public relations, marketing and organizational communication. In recent years, his graduate seminar in public relations management focused on online public relations, including applications of technology in crisis and issues management and problems of technology management. Separately, he developed and teaches a comprehensive introductory public relations course online.

Hallahan's research has appeared in *Public Relations Review*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Handbook of Public Relations*, *Encyclopedia of Public Relations*, *Public Relations Quarterly*, *Public Relations Tactics* and the *Dartnell Public Relations Handbook*. Other articles have been published in *Communication Yearbook*, *The Internet Encyclopedia*, *Handbook of Technology Management*, *Handbook of Crisis and Risk Communication*, *Asian Journal of Communication*, *Journal of Communication Management* and the *Journal of Promotion Management*. He has presented his work at two dozen scholarly conference sessions, where he captured 10 top-paper honors in refereed competitions.

Honors, Achievements and Involvements

Hallahan is recipient of four major awards for public relations educators: the PRSA Foundation's Jackson, Jackson & Wagner Behavioral Science Prize (2001), the Institute for Public Relations' Pathfinder Award (2007), the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication PR Division's suPRstar award (2009), and the national PRSA Outstanding Educator of the Year Award (2010). In 1995 Hallahan was elected a member of the PRSA College of Fellows. In 2005, he was honored with the Swede Johnson Lifetime Achievement Award presented by PRSA Colorado Professional Chapter.

His academic involvements include the AEJMC PR Division, where he has served as research chair, professional freedom and responsibility chair, and webmaster. He previously was a leader in the PRSA Educators Academy, a member of the International Communication Association and of the Society of Professional Journalists. He also operates PR-education.org, a web portal to public relations education.

He has been active on Colorado State's Faculty Council (vice chair, 2005-2006; parliamentarian, 2006-2007) and was instrumental in completion of the university's strategic plan while on a special assignment as special assistant to the president in 2005-2006. In 2009, he was appointed Colorado State's University Grievance Officer responsible for facilitating the resolution of disputes involving faculty or administrative professionals.

Hallahan was listed in the 58th edition of *Who's Who in America* (2004) and has been listed previously in *Who's Who in the West*. While a practitioner, he was listed in both *Who's Who in Public Relations* (6th edition) and annual editions of *O'Dwyer's Directory of Public Relations Executives*. He serves on the editorial boards of *Public Relations Review*, *Journal of Public Relations Research* and the *International Journal of Strategic Communication*.