

July 7, 2021

Dear Linda,

Thank you for taking the time to review and share your thoughts with Del Galloway about our concerns surrounding the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the UAB. I am glad to hear that you are open to meeting with us during our annual conference in August to discuss our concerns in person.

As stated in our formal letter sent to key PRSA leaders on February 18, 2020, in response to the proposed MOU, the issue of UAB governance remains our utmost concern. The proposed MOU does not honor the original agreement of the UAB and relegates the group to an "advisory committee" within PRSA. I've reattached this letter which outlines our research on this matter and our continued stance.

We did have two other concerns that we raised that I know you spent some time discussing with Del. I want to thank you for addressing these. We understand that legally the UAB cannot prevent a non-member of PRSA or a Participating Organization (PO) from taking the exam and cannot require membership to maintain the credential once received. We just have a few remaining questions on this topic.

- It appears the PRSA website still notes that membership is required to maintain the credential. When will that be changing? This requirement change will likely negatively impact the Pos and remedies such as rebates* will be needed.
- How will non-members be charged (increased price, etc.) to make membership a logical option that can save the individual money while encouraging membership in the organization of their choice?
- Also, as POs continue to be a valuable source for candidates into the Accreditation pipeline, and with these funds going into PRSA's bottom line, we would like to understand how a rebate structure can be put into place to make this an equitable process for all involved.*
- And finally, we would like to understand how it is legally written/outlined that PRSA can revoke anyone's APR credential?

Del also explained that our third point (expecting the Accreditation credential name (APR) to not be changed) is no longer being discussed by PRSA and that you agree it is best to continue building the brand that has already been established. He also shared that you cannot guarantee this won't be brought up for discussion years from now, which we understand as well. We are just relieved to know this conversation is no longer happening at this time.

So, with this in mind, and in addition to the UAB governance issue raised above, there are some notable UAB changes and interactions that have occurred since FPRA submitted our formal response to the MOU that frankly have caused us to pause and question this partnership and our role as a PO with the UAB. While these elements individually may seem minor, when looked at collectively and with the knowledge that these changes or interactions have happened since FPRA sent our response to the MOU without ever hearing back from PRSA after numerous attempts, I think this may help you understand why this continues to erode our trust and mutual understanding between our organizations. These are all things we are very much interested in discussing during your visit to our annual conference in August as we truly do want to work toward alignment that works for everyone involved.

I. Annual Meeting Schedule Change:

In early 2020, PRSA requested the UAB change from 5 annual meetings (3 in-person at PRSA headquarters in NYC and 2 virtual) to 4 annual meetings (2 in-person and 2 virtual)

II. It Takes a PRo Investment:

In February 2020 we were introduced to Maureen Walsh, PRSA's new Chief Marketing and Sales Officer. At that time, we were told they were going to focus on refreshing the **It Takes a PRo** campaign which has been around for several years and which we helped to financially support design costs. At any rate, yes, it was more than time to change it up. We were also promised a whole new toolkit to promote APR, too. At the time, Maureen said she was new and begged our indulgence while she got her bearings. Fair enough. That was the same thing we were told at the subsequent full UAB in July and by then, of course, we were deep in the throes of COVID-19, but even though we asked at the two subsequent UAB meetings, nothing has moved forward – so here we are 16 months later, and we've gone through two APRils without anything new.

In the meantime, however, in addition to the attempted takeover of all UAB social, the Communications Workgroup has been stripped of marketing responsibilities, which bounced to PRSA/Maureen and which has now fallen back to the POs.

III. New PRSA APR Newsletter

New APR newsletter created for PRSA APRs was introduced in April 2021. It was distributed to PRSA APRs only, but the UAB Chair passed it along to the other POs for their use. Issue here is the branding of PRSA on this newsletter, not UAB.

IV. Website Address Name Changed to Add "PRSA"

In April 2021, we learned that PRSA moved all UAB Accreditation information from praccreditation.org to accreditation.prsa.org. Again, another stripping away of the UAB brand in exchange for PRSA.

V. Request for Social Media Ownership

PRSA asked for control of the Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts for marketing purposes. The Communications Work Group requested a plan for those channels prior to turning them over. PRSA declined, so the APR social media accounts are staying with UAB.

VI. Exam & Prep Workgroup:

Practice Test Delay – When our UAB Rep first met with the Exam & Prep work group in September 2019, she was told the test was ready to roll out and the plan was a soft launch in early 2020 with heavy push/promotion in time for April (PR month). At each subsequent UAB, as well as each monthly work group, we asked for the status and/or requested that the work group chair ask for the status (when we were not receiving an update). Initially, we were told it was in Prometric's court and that was what accounted for the delay. At the April work group – when we learned after-the-fact about the website domain change to add "PRSA" – we were told the real story is that PRSA was figuring out how to monetize the practice test; we always knew there would be a fee attached to it, so this seems a bit odd. But we are approaching the two-year anniversary of completion ...

VII. Marketing Clarification in the Policy & Procedures Workgroup

In February – May 2021, the Eligibility/Appeals/P&P Workgroup made updates to the UAB Policy & Procedures document. One of those changes was to clarify the APR marketing responsibilities. The content was revised to:

- The UAB will recognize that the principal responsibility for marketing the APR, APR+M and Certificate in Principles of Public Relations programs rests with each of UAB's participating organizations.

Finally, I did want to include the timeline of our attempted communication with PRSA regarding our response to the MOU. While we are absolutely understanding that our worlds were turned upside down due to the pandemic, the lack of response has been disappointing. Again, I thank you for the focus you are now bringing to our concerns.

Communication Timeline Regarding MOU

- **September 22, 2019** – FPRA President, Alyson Gernert joins FPRA UAB Reps, Lanette Hart and Laura Byrnes, in NYC during the regularly scheduled UAB meeting to discuss FPRA's concerns surrounding the proposed MOU.
- **February 18, 2020** – Formal Response letter was mailed to Ann Knabe, Jason Barnhart, and Kathy Mulvihill.
- **February 25, 2020** – Follow-up email was sent by Alyson Lundell to Jason Barnhart, Philip Bonaventura and Scott Trotter, confirming mailed letter and attaching a digital copy to the email.
- **February 26, 2020** – Jason Barnhart acknowledges receipt of letter and says they will be back in touch shortly.
- **March 2020** – Pandemic Shutdown.
- **February 11, 2021** – Alyson Lundell sends email to Jason Barnhart to restart dialogue around our legal response to the MOU.
- **March 5, 2021** – Jason Barnhart acknowledges email and says they will be back in contact shortly.
- **June 21, 2021** – Del Galloway reaches out to share an update (official call took place Friday, June 25) – We are so grateful for Del in this process as he was one of the key catalysts that brought the concept of Universal Accreditation to fruition. Not a simple feat as much was given up by the POs such as FPRA to support the effort. All was done under the agreement that such an accreditation process would be governed by a Universal Accreditation Board which was comprised of all the Participating Organizations.

Thank you for your time,

Alyson Gernert, APR, CPRC
FPRA President