

IABC Kansas City: Engaging Students & Young Professionals
Work Plan 2021

Context

IABC Kansas City (KC IABC) is in the heart of North America, straddling the Missouri and Kansas state lines. The organization began more than 60 years ago as the Kansas City Industrial Editors and has been named IABC Chapter of the Year seven times.

As a medium-sized chapter, KC IABC has diverse membership. It represents the professions of corporate communications, marketing, public relations, social media, design, videography, and photography. Members work in communications for large and small businesses, agencies, and nonprofits. We also have many self-employed entrepreneurs in our ranks, as well as college students who are looking forward to a career in the field. At the beginning of the 2019-2020 board year, our membership was approximately 120 communicators. We have an active audience of approximately 800 professionals throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area.

Through the decades, KC IABC has become synonymous with outstanding professional development and networking opportunities for business communicators in the greater Kansas City area. The hallmark of KC IABC's professional development is a successful Business Communicators Summit (BCS). This all-day conference, patterned after regional IABC conferences, provides diverse professional development to 100 communication professionals in the KC metro area every year. We draw people from as far as Topeka, Kan. (75 miles from Kansas City), and Bentonville, Ark. (200 miles from Kansas City).

The chapter's ongoing professional development events are also highly successful, with nine events a year. These are attended by both members and non-members, of which the latter are often a substantial proportion. Additionally, our active special interest groups – Masters for seasoned professionals, IndyComm for independent entrepreneurs, provide targeted opportunities for learning and networking for members and guests.

The biggest challenge for the 2019-2020 board year was dealing with the impact of the pandemic and a gradually declining membership. Despite these challenges, we continued to provide strong professional development, while maintaining a highly engaged board and an expanding group of volunteers.

The strategic cornerstone of the board year was to sustain the excellence of our professional development offerings with the intent of engaging our membership and enticing guests. We have focused on rewarding board members by allowing them to attend monthly professional development events at no cost.

Reaching younger professionals and students was a critical component to engage members and entice guests. Focusing on our student relations initiatives and involving young professional members as volunteers were key strategies.

Goals & Objectives

The objectives in the student education and young professionals arena for 2019-2020 included the following:

- Deliver an IABC presence to college campuses and classrooms through panels of speakers called the KC IABC Career Roadshow, in both spring and fall semesters, with a goal to expand the number of events by 10% (+1 event) and increase the number of students reached by 20%.
- Expand the base of volunteers in the membership who participate in our campus outreach KC IABC Career Roadshow by 20%, with at least 20% of volunteers in the young professional's category (within five years of graduation).
- Sustain and add at least two new contacts with educators at area colleges and universities, to build

awareness of IABC and its abilities to create connections for students along with preparation for job search and the world of work in support of IABC's pillars.

- Extend contact with students reached at KC IABC Career Roadshows by inviting and adding at least 25 students to the email database.
- Maintain student attendance at the annual Business Communicators Summit of 15-20 students, through student registration scholarships and promotion for professors and instructors to bring groups.

Budget

The 2019-2020 student relations budget was \$650. This included \$500 for student scholarships to the Business Communicators Summit (February 2020) and \$150 for expenses in other categories, such as printing and mileage. Nine of the 10 \$50 scholarships were awarded, for a total expense of \$450.

Implementation

Engaging Students & Young Professionals Overview

Our chapter has historically maintained consistent outreach to students and young professionals to build a bridge to future membership and participation. We are mindful that many clubs and professional associations have the challenge of declining membership, particularly as younger audiences are not as attuned to the benefits and rewards of a live group and one-to-one interactions versus pursuing content and connections online. This year's board priorities of encouraging attendance, engagement, and participation through excellence in programming and fostering connections guided our objectives and projects to address students and young professionals.

As a strong IABC chapter, a cornerstone of the KC IABC Board is to encourage each board member to embrace IABC's pillars (advancing the profession, creating connection and developing strategic communicators). We are able to focus on all three of these pillars in our student and young professional activities. By engaging these audiences, we are enhancing awareness of IABC, creating multiple opportunities to build connections through networking events, and providing education to further their communications skills.

Engagement & Relationship Building

With the KC IABC Career Roadshows, my students gained a better understanding of the importance of the communications function to a variety of business and industries. And, more importantly, they got a glimpse into the advantages of belonging to a professional association such as IABC after they graduate.

As a college educator who is constantly being asked to do more with less, I am so grateful for KC IABC's support through this programming. I am also grateful that KC IABC recognizes college students and educators as an important audience to build relationships with.

Danielle LaGree, Ph.D.
A.Q. Miller School of Journalism & Mass Communications
Kansas State University

KC IABC Career Roadshow & Outreach

After several years of successful annual Career Day or Career Night events, for which students from multiple colleges traveled to a location arranged by KC IABC, we switched gears five years ago to instead take representatives of the club out to campuses and classrooms. This was a strategic decision so we could reach more students each year and create more potential future connections for students with KC IABC professionals.

Roadshow venues for 2019-2020 included two events on two campuses and three virtual events with three colleges. The typical format includes a speaker panel of three or four member volunteers plus a moderator, which has been the Student Relations Chair. After each panelist gives a brief 2-3 minute overview of their career path, the moderator guides a discussion with pre-drafted questions (**Work Sample #1**), giving the panelists an opportunity to address issues in launching a career, conducting a job search, basic networking, future trends, and the benefits of belonging to a professional association like IABC. Plenty of time is left for student Q&A. During in-person events, many students linger afterward to make personal connections with the IABC speakers. For the upcoming spring semester, plans are underway for an additional three Roadshow events.

The career roadshow was a great opportunity while I was in college. I learned so much from the panel and even made personal connections that helped me prepare for the real world after school!

They offered advice and guidance and even met with me one on one to answer my questions. Overall, the career roadshow gave me peace of mind and confidence that I could make it in a real job. The best part is we keep in touch today!

Emily Thole
University of Central Missouri
Public Relations, May 2019

Measurement and Results

In 2019-2020 we reached approximately 139 student attendees. This number is down significantly due to the pandemic. We have increased our volunteer panel speaker participation with five new member volunteers and two of these representing young professionals. We visited classrooms at Johnson County Community College and the University of Missouri at Kansas City. Virtual events were held with Central Missouri State University, Kansas State University and William Jewell College. Events at Truman State and UMKC were scheduled and then cancelled due to COVID-19. New contacts have been established at three colleges (Kansas State University, Truman State University and William Jewell College) further expanding our contacts from the last club year.

Student Attendance at Business Communicators Summit

For this annual, one-day signature event for KC IABC held in February, we encourage student attendance and participation by offering scholarships (**Work Sample #2**) to fully cover the \$50 student registration fee. The event is a banner opportunity for students to gain a great deal of real-world exposure to both skill-building information and connections with area professionals who may be in the position to help them find employment in the future. An email campaign targeted our professor and instructor contacts at area colleges and universities, providing a “low bar” requirement for students to claim their complimentary registration scholarship (to email an explanation of why they would like to attend BCS). After the awarding of scholarships, board members and member registrants were briefed on student attendance, and they were encouraged to sit with individual students and “host” them for various parts of the day’s programming.

Measurement and Results

We successfully awarded nine of the ten available scholarships (identical to the previous year). In addition, several colleges brought groups of paid student attendees, for a total of 13 student attendees. Seven colleges and universities were represented at the event, including Avila University, Johnson

County Community College, Truman State University, University of Central Missouri, University of Kansas, Kansas State University, and University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Results

Objective	Result
Deliver an IABC presence to college campuses and classrooms through panels of speakers called the KC IABC Career Roadshow, in both fall and spring semesters, with a goal to expand the number of events by 10% (+1 event) and increase the number of students reached by 20% in 2019.	The pandemic impacted our goals and we conducted five Career Roadshows during the 2019-2020 year. Two were on campus visits and three were remote events. This was a decrease from eight events in 2017-2018, a 38% decrease. We reached 139 students in 2019-2020 compared to 210 in 2017-2018, a 34% decrease.
Expand the base of volunteers in the membership who participate in our campus outreach KC IABC Career Roadshow by 20%, with at least 20% of volunteers within five years of graduation.	Exceeded. In 2019-2020, the base of volunteers participating in KC IABC Roadshows expanded from 18 to 23 (growth of 27%). This included five new volunteers and two young professionals (40% growth).
Sustain and add at least two new contacts with educators at area colleges and universities.	Exceeded. Expanded contacts to three new educators at area colleges and universities. All three were extremely happy to bring this opportunity to their students and establish long-term relationships with KC IABC.
Extend contact with students reached at KC IABC Career Roadshows by adding at least 25 students to the KC IABC email database.	Exceeded. Added a total of 42 students to the KC IABC email database.
Maintain student attendance at the annual Business Communicators Summit of 15-20 students.	Although we did not achieve the student numbers, we did set a record for the number of colleges/ universities (seven) represented. In 2018, 18 students attended BCS, and in 2020, 13 students attended, a 27% decrease. Nine students were on scholarship, and four were paid attendees.

Work Samples Attached in Support of Entry:

- Work Sample 1: Career Roadshow Panel Questions
- Work Sample 2: BCS Student Scholarship Application