***A Brief Case Study: How Two Associations Engaged with CTE Career Academies***

**Context**

While working with Scholastic Inc., Rick Delano became one of the early board members of the National Career Academy Coalition. This provided Rick the opportunity to meet and work with the president of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and the director of education at the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC). Rick suggested to them that each of their associations would benefit from understanding how to use career tech and career academies to improve workforce development and education engagement.

**Associated General Contractors of America**

AGC’s head of education and training was looking for strategies to improve relationships with school districts. AGC wanted to advocate for more construction programs, provide advice for improving the quality of those programs, and assist in supporting the CTE instructors with site visits. The AGC executive asked one of its board members (the president of a construction company that was a member of the Chattanooga, TN chapter) to seek out a relationship with a high school in the local school district. The goal was to establish and learn from that relationship and share the details with AGC members at a future national meeting.

The AGC chapter chose Eastridge High School which is located in a low-income section of the community. Leaders of the AGC chapter met with the local chamber of commerce to inform them of their activities and also with the Eastridge principal and the district CTE director. They spent time touring the Eastridge High School facilities and getting acquainted with the staff. Over the course of the next 9 months, AGC was able to advise the district on the programs offered, support work-based learning, and assist the CTE instructors with needed equipment.

At the next annual conference, these AGC chapter leaders were featured speakers. They shared their experiences and insights gained from working with Eastridge High. To reach out to other members, their story was featured in the association’s magazine. Their example and enthusiasm boosted interest among other AGC chapters. These chapter leaders stepped up and took positive action. The story of their success is now a roadmap to guide them and others as they engage education and improve workforce development in their communities.

**Public Relations Society of America**

Rick had actually known the president of PRSA from earlier in his career. Rich invited the PRSA president to travel with him to Philadelphia to visit a communication academy. The two also met with Philadelphia Academies Inc. — the organization that the business community funded to support all the academies in that city. The PRSA president was moved by what he saw. Young students, mostly of color, were benefiting from learning their academics through the lens of the communications field. He also got to meet public relations practitioners who were supporting the academy and realized that these professionals were motivated by their experiences in supporting these students.

When the PRSA president returned to New York, he set in motion the process of selecting a PRSA chapter that would volunteer to engage with a communications academy. The Tampa chapter, with a membership that includes over 200 professionals, stepped up to the challenge. These members serve not only in public relations firms but also as communications staff at a variety of businesses and government agencies.

After thoughtful consideration, the Tampa chapter selected a journalism magnet academy in the district’s newest high school. The academy serves a largely African American population and draws students from across the district. The PRSA chapter was able to mobilize its membership to support the academy teachers and their students with real world communication problems, job shadowing, and other communications related experiences. The Tampa PRSA chapter was asked to document their initiative and describe their members’ experiences. Their inspirational story was reported in the society’s publications. As with AGC, the efforts and feedback of the Tampa PRSA chapter provide a framework to refine and expand future outreach and guide PRSA chapters as they take steps to make a difference in their communities.