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Liberal vs. professional advertising education: A national survey of practitioners.

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ARTICLE INFO	**ABSTRACT**
	The issue of liberal vs. professional education is central to the conversation about advertising education. Practitioners influence the development of advertising curricula, so it is necessary to have data representing their views. A national survey was conducted with 366 practitioners in the United States. Findings show that practitioners believe a four-year college degree is important. They also believe that the best educational format includes a balance of liberal and professional education. Practitioners believe soft skills should be taught, though the most attainable entry-level jobs require digital technology skills. Digital technology also is identified as the most significant challenge for the field.

Advertising is a significant socio-economic force. $550.5 billion (USD) was spent on advertising worldwide in 2016, of which $192 billion — over one-third — was spent in the US (J. W. Plunkett, M. B. Plunkett, Steinberg, Faulk, & Snider, 2016). In 2020, advertising spending in the US is predicted to exceed $234 billion, an increase of approximately 8% over 2016 (Plunkett et al., 2016). The field's robust financial health has given rise to considerable employment opportunities. Along these lines, 225,200 jobs in advertising, promotions, and marketing management existed in 2014, with a projected 8.7% growth to 244,900 positions by 2024 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).

Given the field's growth and development, evident through much of the field's history since the end of WWII, it is understandable that America's youth regard advertising a promising career path. In the past several decades, col-

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lege programs in advertising, public relations, and communication studies, and related subjects, often with professional application components, have evolved briskly. Since 2005, it is estimated that at least 145 institutions — 88% more than in 1964 (Ross, Osborne, & Richards, 2006; Ross & Richards, 2014) — offer advertising and/or public relations programs. Richards has suggested that the number of institutions could be substantially greater and estimated that over 300 institutions may be offering advertising and advertising-related academic programs (personal communication, May 21, 2016). Furthermore, 92,591 communication baccalaureate degrees were granted in 2014, 23% more than in 2004, and 75% more than in 1990 (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Concomitant with the advent of academic programs have been evolving research agenda regarding advertising education (Kim, Hayes, Avant, & Reid, 2014). For example, the question of whether advertising education is best taught within the context of journalism/communication or within business programs has been studied by various scholars (e.g., Applegate, 2012; Jungenheimer, 1978; Ross et al., 2006; Rotzoll & Barban, 1984; Wightman, 1999).

Whether advertising and public relations should be offered as separate areas of study or as integrated programs has been addressed (e.g., Duncan, Caywood, & Newsom, 1993; Griffin & Pasadeos, 1998; Larsen & Len-Rios, 2006; Lee & Ryan, 2005; Moody, 2010; Neill & Schuster, 2015; Nowak & Phelps, 1994; Rose & Miller, 1994; Roznowski, Reece, & Daughtery, 2004). Assessment, accreditation, and ranking of programs have also been extensively investigated (e.g., American Academy of Advertising, n.d.; Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, n.d.; American Advertising Federation, 2013; Blanchard & Christ, 1993; Christ, 2006; Christ & Hynes, 2006; Dickson, 2000; Duncan et al., 1993; Richards, 2010; Richards & Taylor, 1995; Richards & Taylor, 1996; Roodhouse, 2004; Ross et al., 2006).

The concern that practitioners and academics should regularly and effectively communicate with one another about the field of advertising and how this connection potentially affects the quality of advertising education and the field itself has received considerable attention (e.g., Blanchard & Christ, 1993; Dunbaugh, 1957; Duncan et al., 1993; Lancaster, Katz, & Cho, 1990; Morrison et al., 2000; Neill & Schauster, 2015; Nyilasy, Kreshel, & Reid, 2012; Nyilasy & Reid, 2007; Waller & Hingorani, 2009).

An historically central and enduring question in advertising education and the subject of the present investigation is the question of the balance between liberal education and professional training, also described as liberal vs. professional education. The liberal-professional nexus has been at the center of discussion about advertising education for the past several decades, often

with particular consideration given to the question of whether one is more important than the other.

Some of the earliest perspectives on advertising education were offered in the post World War II era. Sandage (1955) felt universities were not accountable to the industry and that practitioners should not expect "polished practitioners" (p. 210) ready to enter the profession. In 1955, David Ogilvy proposed the creation of a *National College of Advertising*, with the expressed purpose of training individuals for the field of advertising in lieu of pursuing a traditional baccalaureate degree in advertising, which Ogilvy described as "sadly useless" (as cited in Hileman & Ross, 1969, p. 58). Dunbaugh (1957) and many others in the industry disagreed with Ogilvy and advocated for a university education, supported teaching advertising principles, experience in research, and practical assignments and presentations with real-world clients (Hileman & Ross, 1969, p. 57-60; Chandler & Davis, 2011, p. 79).

In 1959, both Ford and Carnegie foundations criticized advertising education for being housed in business schools, which focused on "how to" professional training, as opposed to liberal arts education. According to Stankey, the two foundations advocated "… increasing academic standards, increasing admission standards, reducing the degree of vocationalism and overspecialization, increasing the component of liberal arts to fifty percent, and improving the quality of business research, among others" (as cited in Rotzoll & Barban,1984, pp. 7-8).

In the 1970s, practitioners remained divided between professional training and liberal education. *Advertising Age* conducted a survey of agency heads and corporate advertising departments and discovered that 56% thought a university degree in advertising was "very helpful" in preparing for the advertising field (Kingman, 1977, p. 59). Some executives felt life experience and character were sufficient qualifications for entry into the field. As Charles D. Peebler noted, "Most important to us is the desire, the dedication, the willingness to roll up your sleeves and go to work" (as cited in Kingman, 1977, p. 62). However, supporters of formal advertising education felt that the best programs utilized liberal arts education to "…stretch minds and build awareness. Most importantly the student should learn how to communicate what he knows and where to go for the knowledge he lacks" (Kingman, 1977, p. 62).

According to a survey of agency and corporate professionals in which practitioners articulated their views about advertising education, many practitioners had not studied advertising in college and simply fell into advertising as a career (Rotzoll & Barban, 1984, p. 8). Many practitioners did not support college-level advertising education, preferring a broad-based liberal

education, and felt it best to learn about advertising on the job. Those who valued advertising education "…seem to be saying send us young men and women who have a *foundation* in advertising, but are broadly educated. We'll provide the specialized training" (Rotzoll & Barban, p. 16).

Planning for Curricular Change in Journalism Education (1987), widely known as the *Oregon Report*, assessed the state of journalism and mass communication education, which shares much, intellectually and professionally, with advertising education. With rapid technological developments, rising student enrollment, and disagreement among professionals as to how higher education programs should be structured, the *Oregon Report* sought to provide a strategic plan to meet the needs of constituents. The report advocated hands-on instruction and a mix of scholars and professionals as teachers, among other ideas. The report quickly caught on as a model for evaluation and vision for journalism, mass communication, and advertising education programs nationally. Aligned with the findings of the *Oregon Report* is the *Report of the Task Force on Integrated Communications* (Duncan et al., 1993). Comprised of 25 faculty and practitioners, this task force recommended:

> . . . 1) a strong emphasis on liberal arts education, 2) training in verbal, written, and visual communications, 3) a solid understanding of business and organizational behavior, 4) an understanding and respect for other communication disciplines and specialties, and 5) mastery of basic research skills. (executive summary, para. 6)

The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Curriculum Task Force echoed a similar sentiment that "The purpose of media education is to produce well-rounded graduates who have critical thinking skills as well as practical skills" (as cited in Christ, 2006, p. 32).

Liberal vs. professional education in the 21ˢᵗ century

Earlier explorations regarding advertising education were marked by debate as to the merits of liberal education relative to professional training. Since the turn of the 21st century, informed opinion, as presented in the literature, follows similar paths of discourse, with some favoring liberal education, some a balance of liberal and professional education, and others a focus on greater professional training as the educational cornerstone for a career in advertising. The following is a selected summary of the views of present-day practitioners and educators.

Practitioners

Some practitioners support liberal education as a proper, though not always sufficient, background for a career in advertising. For example, Miller (2009) asked, "Isn't advertising all about native ability and instinct?" (p. 42), suggesting that an undergraduate student is better off pursuing a liberal education. "There's just too much precious learning to be had in science, history, art, literature, language and math" (p. 42).

Windels, Mallia, and Broyles (2013) pointed out that, due to the complex and ambiguous nature of the advertising industry, coupled with the strong client service needs of the field, soft skills that transfer across the job spectrum are important for success. Windels et al. define soft skills as "general skills that can transfer across the job spectrum — whether you're in engineering, politics or advertising — including problem solving and interpersonal communication" (p. 17). Their study of 85 advertising agency professionals revealed that top skills included critical thinking, interpersonal communication skills, presentation skills, persuasion, problem-solving, writing, organizational skills, a good work ethic, and professionalism; these attributes are often associated with liberal education.

Other practitioners seem to favor professional training in preparation for an advertising career. Herrera (2014) said advertising students are falling behind in prepping for the real world and need more computer science and graphic design coursework. Though he conceded that theory is important, he maintained it is nevertheless ". . . a difficult asset to show off when graduating" (p. 10) and recommended expanding core college requirements into areas of greater skill and technological sophistication.

However, many practitioners voiced the need for a blend of liberal and

professional education. For instance, in interviewing Effie award-winning creative directors about university advertising programs versus portfolio schools, Blakeman and Haley (2005) found that "well-rounded is better" (p. 9), citing ". . . the need for young creatives to have a broad knowledge base beyond advertising" (p. 9), which is best provided by a liberal education. A survey of small IMC agencies (Beachboard & Weidman, 2013) revealed that 76% of respondents said college is important and 88% preferred a baccalaureate degree with a focus on broad education, teamwork, written and oral communication, strategic thinking, and creative thinking, in addition to a host of technical skills, such as proficiency in mobile advertising, analytics, and computer skills.

Similarly, a review of employer-preferred skills for entry level advertising and marketing employees affirmed that a blend of soft skills, such as sophistication in writing, speaking, and organizational skills, as well as technical know-how, are in demand. In addition, interpersonal and collaborative skills, as well as computer skills — skills best explored and learned at university — were identified as top requirements (Lowry & Xie, 2008).

With technological advances overwhelming the advertising field, some scholars have investigated what this may portend for advertising education. Robbs's (2010) interviews with 13 senior creative executives regarding digital advertising appears to concur with the call for a blend of professional and liberal education. As one creative director remarked, "It's all about the idea" (p. 9), and what is largely needed is effective storytelling and presentation skills to help explain and justify the idea, no matter the platform.

Along these lines, Neill and Schauster (2015) advocated a balance of theory and practice for core skills and competencies needed to succeed in the "new media landscape" (p. 5), with emerging roles emanating from technological developments. Their interviews with 29 advertising and public relations executives in the US suggest that practitioners stress the need for good interpersonal skills, teamwork, critical thinking, problem-solving, writing, and presentation skills, combined with more business literacy, math, and data analytics. "This reality suggests support for teaching both theory and practical skills using a variety of learning methods" (p. 15).

Nyilasy et al. (2012) explored what they referred to as the academician-practitioner gap and discussed ". . . practitioners' conscious rejection of the traditional knowledge base in academia . . . " (p. 147), revealing tension between academic and professional approaches. That is, practitioners tend to use what they know will work based on experience, in contrast to a theoretical approach.

Educators

Educators have demonstrated a range of concerns regarding liberal and professional education, though it appears from the ensuing discussion that they are largely interested in balancing liberal and professional education, rather than favoring one over the other. Kim (2012) found that advertising/public relations programs are more balanced in their approach than are those in journalism, broadcasting, and business. Kim asserted, " . . . that the curriculum of higher education should be informed but not dictated by industry changes" and urges ". . . accurate assessment of the depth of digital skills and knowledge expected of advertising graduates" (p. 35).

Some educators discussed the difficulty of keeping up with the industry, due in large part to swift technological changes. They urged that curriculum adjustments are needed (Scovotti & Jones, 2011; Wetsch, 2012). Chennameni, Lala, Srivastava, and Chakraborthy (2011) acknowledged that creative problem solving, writing, and presentation skills are crucial. They also state that professionals expect advertising education to train students in consumer analytics for insight and effectiveness, as well as being proficient in digital metric skills. Chennameni et al. conclude by suggesting ways to update curricula in accord with emerging demands of the field.

Broyles and Slater (2014) confirmed the need for big data analytics, target audience relationship management, and engaging messages that are simple and shareable. They advocated partnering with other programs across campus, such as computer science, anthropology, psychology, sociology, and so forth. Liberal arts education is particularly valuable for advertising students because the industry ". . . is, by nature, interdisciplinary" (p. 47).

Concerning pedagogy, educators have advocated for the incorporation of real-world clients in classroom projects, giving students a keener sense of professional practice and employer-client expectations. This can lead to internships, portfolio samples, and greater self-confidence and maturity. Assignments promote the application of concepts and theory, exercise critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and may result in networking opportunities (West & Simmons, 2011; Spiller, Marold, Markovitz, & Sandler, 2011). To this end, Windels et al. (2013) have called for ". . . mandating course work in persuasion, negotiation, and public speaking. . ." (p. 25) while requiring more pitching, presenting, in-class debates, and group projects to develop skills required by the profession.

However, Stuhlfaut and Davis (2010) stated there is a need to teach more about advertising management (i.e., strategizing, coordinating, and assessing marketing communications) with ". . . theoretical foundation and practical applications . . ." (p. 278). They posed the following question, which directly bears upon the mission of teaching advertising: "Are we teaching skills-oriented pedagogy to produce carpenters or a strategic-oriented pedagogy to produce architects?" (p. 278).

Dickson's (2000) extensive historical treatment of media education, which includes advertising education, also attends to the liberal vs. professional debate. He noted that this debate has come to be identified as the "unending dialogue of the deaf" (p. 98), suggesting decades-long discussion without much resolution or progress. Among the contributing factors to the lack of progress in this area is that the perspectives of practitioners and, to a lesser degree, educators are not sufficiently researched. One is tempted to conclude that the conversation between educators and practitioners has been based more on what each group's position is believed to be, and less on their respective functional reality.

Need for research

The above literature review suggests that the issue of *liberal vs. professional* persists regarding the topics researched and discussed relative to advertising education. Insofar as educators look to practitioners for direction and inspiration in the development of curricula, what is needed is ongoing, systematic data that are representitive of the national community of practitioners regarding advertising education and the liberal-professional nexus. Continuing research can help to facilitate the conversation among practitioners and educators (Beachboard & Weidman, 2013; Blakeman & Haley, 2005; Blanchard & Christ, 1993; Dickson, 2000; Dunbaugh, 1957; Duncan et al., 1993; Lancaster et al., 1990; Lowry & Xie, 2008; Morrison et al., 2000; Nyilasy et al., 2012; Nyilasy & Reid, 2007; Sasser & Koslow, 2008; Waller & Hingorani, 2009).

The following research questions are central to this national survey of practitioners:

RQ1: What is the relative importance of a four-year college education?

RQ2: What is the best educational format? Liberal education, professional training, or a blend of the two?

RQ3: What knowledge/skills are needed to be successful in the profession, and what are the most attainable entry-level jobs?

RQ4: What are the most pressing future challenges for the profession?

Method

Three sources provided guidance for the creation of the survey instrument: *What Advertising Students Should Know: A Statement of Principles — Report of the National Education Executive Committee* (American Advertising Federation, 2013); *Advertising Education in the Years to Come* (Richards, 2006); *Advertising Educational Foundation Career Guide* (Advertising Educational Foundation, n.d.). Together, these offered a foundation for developing questions representing the range of issues and concerns regarding liberal/professional and advertising education. A practical aim for the survey was to keep the questionnaire manageably brief to encourage questionnaire completion. Data gathering concluded in February, 2016.

The initial questionnaire was pretested with practitioners for their comments as to appropriateness and readability of questions, comprehensiveness of issues, and so forth, resulting in a 25-item final questionnaire. For our effort to survey a wide spectrum of practitioners throughout the US, Redbooks advertising database provided the sampling frame for a self-administered survey. In addition to members of the field of advertising this survey includes individuals who identify themselves as being in communications, marketing, marketing communications, integrated marketing communications, and public relations; the vast majority incorporate advertising in their professional work. Because advertising and public relations are dynamically connected, professionally and academically, survey questions were written to treat the two fields as integrated. Respondents were given the following instruction:

> Throughout the survey, the acronym A/PR is used which refers to "advertising and public relations." Colleges and universities often link the two areas in one undergraduate program. In the opinion of the researchers of this survey, professionals with backgrounds in advertising, public relations, marketing, communications, marketing communications, integrated marketing communications, etc., all have something valuable to contribute toward the discussion of education in A/PR.

Self-administered, electronic survey format was selected for its efficiency as well as ease of contact and data-gathering (Lietz, 2010). Practitioners in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico were emailed invitations to participate in the online survey using GOLD SurveyMonkey as the data-gathering venue. Subsequent email reminders were sent to encourage participation. Incentive prizes, through a random drawing, were offered to participants on a volunteer basis, which were managed by the university's statistical consulting center. A total of 366 completed surveys comprise the final sample.

Results

The ensuing discussion is organized according to the following sections: *Demographics*; *College education, Liberal vs. professional*; *Knowledge, skills, and jobs*; and *Future professional challenges*. Throughout the following discussion, "A/PR" is used as an acronym for "advertising and public relations."

Demographics

Education

Respondents are well educated, with 54.8% having earned a baccalaureate degree and 39.8% either having completed some graduate coursework or having earned a graduate degree. When asked to identify their undergraduate college major, 67% responded as follows: communication studies (18.5%), advertising/public relations (18%), business (15.5%), and art/design (15%). The results are more pronounced concerning the particular graduate program respondents attended. The top three graduate programs are business (42.9%), advertising/public relations (11.8%), and communication studies (10.9%).

Occupation

Respondents are professionally experienced: 68.6% indicated they have had more than 20 years experience in A/PR or related fields, and 19% have worked 11-20 years in the profession. When asked what term best describes their work, the most frequent response was integrated marketing communications (42.1%), followed by advertising (23.6%), public relations (14%), marketing (10.7%), marketing communications (6.3%), and communications (3.3%).

Of those who responded to an open-ended request for job title, the most frequent response was owner/principal/partner/co-founder/president/CEO/COO (61.9%), followed by VP/EVP/SVP/GM/managing director (13.7%), and creative director/art director/ senior graphic designer (4.8%), which comprised the top three responses.

Gender and ethnicity

The majority (58.8%) indicate they are male, and 41.2% identify as female. This is a homogenous group; 94.4% describe themselves as White/Caucasian/non-Hispanic, with the remainder identifying as Black/African (1.8%), Hispanic/Latino (1.8%), Asian/Asian-descent (1.4%), and other (0.7%).

College education, Liberal vs. professional

Four-year college experience

Respondents were asked if a four-year college degree provides appropriate educational background for a career in A/PR. As such, 90.2% indicated that a four-year degree is either essential (53.6%) or desirable (36.6%), though few said no (7.7%), and fewer still were unsure (2.2%). Furthermore, 86.3% maintained that general education coursework is either important or very important for A/PR students to take in preparation for a career in A/PR.

When asked if a four-year college degree should emphasize professional training, liberal arts, or something in between as educational background for a career in A/PR, 66.7% maintained that a balance of professional training and liberal education is preferable, though, 21.4% — about one in five — indicated that the emphasis should be skewed toward professional training.

Respondents were conflicted as to whether or not it is useful for A/PR college students to complete a minor or a second major in another field: 36.3% indicated yes, 38.9% said no, and 24.8% were unsure. However, among those who thought that a second major or minor was advisable, there was little ambiguity; business (52.8%) was the resounding first choice, with journalism/broadcasting (8.5%) and psychology (8.5%) distant second choices.

Experiential learning

Respondents were nearly unanimous in their belief that students should have opportunities to work with real-world clients while enrolled in college. 93% thought it is either important or very important, of which 74% thought it was very important. Similarly, 93% maintained that it is important or very important for students to have an internship experience before graduating and seeking employment. With more tempered enthusiasm, respondents concurred (72.7%) that it is important or very important for students to be involved with industry-related activities, such as being active with the local advertising club.

Knowledge, skills and jobs

Respondents were asked in an open-ended question to identify the three most important knowledge/skill areas that college graduates must have in order to compete for entry level jobs in A/PR over the next 5 years. For those who responded, the following constitute the top three: communication skills (24.4%), problem solving/strategic planning (14.1%), and self-directed learning (12.8%).

Respondents were also given a list of 23 knowledge/skill areas that students might need in preparation for a career in A/PR, as shown in Table 1. Individuals were asked to evaluate each category on a five-point scale, from very unimportant to very important. All 23 categories are thought to have significance in terms of preparation for an A/PR career, with 50.9%-98.6% rating these important or very important. However, categories that received a response greater than 50% for very important, are as follows: problem solving/strategic thinking (82.7%), writing (73.2%), speaking/listening (71.9%), presentation skills (58.5%), digital/web/social/mobile (56.8%), and collaboration/teamwork (52.6%).

Participants were given a list of 10 job titles and asked to identify the three most attainable entry-level jobs in A/PR over the next 5 years, as shown in Table 2. The clear first choice is digital/web/social/mobile (81.3%), followed by account services (63.3%), with graphic design (28.4%) and copywriting (27%) roughly tied for third place.

Future professional challenges

Those who responded to open-ended questions concerning the single greatest challenge for A/PR over the next 5 years provided the following top responses: technology/digital technology (26.3%), critical thinking/design thinking (6.1%), being profitable (5.2%), and training/preparing new work force (4.7%). :

Discussion

RQ1: What is the relative importance of a four-year college education?

A total of 90.2% of respondents maintained that a four-year college degree is either essential (53.6%) or desirable (36.6%) as preparation for a career in A/PR. In other words, though practitioners valued and even expected various technical skills (Table 1), they fundamentally preferred liberally-educated graduates with communication skills, problem solving/strategic planning skills, and the ability for self-directed learning.

This finding serves as an admonishment to those considering a career in advertising to seek a four-year college degree with an emphasis on liberal education. It speaks to concerns about rising college costs and funding (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2015), student debt (Krantrowitz, 2016; Lee, 2013; Weisbaum, 2014), a competitive job market (Douglas-Gabriel, 2016), and the national conversation regarding the role of higher education (Lederman, 2014; Hefling, 2015). Regardless, if one asks, "Is a four-year degree needed to gain employment to the A/PR profession?," the answer, in short, is yes.

RQ2: What is the best educational format? Liberal education, professional training, or a blend of the two?

About two-thirds (66.7%) of respondents indicated they prefer a balance of liberal and professional education. However, a substantial 24% favored professional training. This suggests that the majority of practitioners believe a balanced model provides the best educational format as preparation for a career in A/PR. This supports the central finding for RQ1; not only is a four-year college degree appropriate, but it ought to be a balance of liberal and professional education. The im-

plication of this for the prospective college student is that they should choose their university and A/PR program prudently.

The findings also suggest that one-in-four practitioners (24%) nationwide prefers professional training to either liberal education or a balance of liberal and professional. Though the lesser of the two positions, it underscores the continuing bifurcation among practitioners regarding their views on education.

RQ3: What knowledge/skills are needed to be successful in the profession, and what are the most attainable entry-level jobs?

The top three knowledge/skills areas, as discussed in open-ended questioning, are qualitative: communication skills, problem solving/strategic thinking, and self-directed learning. Even when provided with an extensive list of knowledge/skills areas, the top six responses (above 50% responding very important) are mostly qualitative: problem solving/strategic thinking, writing, speaking/listening, presentation skills, collaboration/teamwork, and digital/web/social/mobile.

Although technical skills are clearly present in the top selections and throughout (Table 1), it appears that qualitative skills occupy an even greater position of importance. This further supports the findings connected with RQ1 and RQ2, the implications of which suggest that A/PR education should be weighted toward soft skills, a topic of national urgency recently underscored in the Wall Street Journal (Davidson, 2016).

It is notable, however, that when asked to comment on the most attainable entry-level jobs over the next 5 years, the most common response is digital/web/social/mobile (81.3%). One is inclined to interpret this as the industry requiring liberally-educated professionals with expertise in digital technology.

RQ4: What are the most pressing future challenges for the profession?

The greatest future challenge for A/PR largely concerns technology/ digital technology. Although technological innovations provide exciting new opportunities for the field of advertising, practitioners lament the challenge of keeping up with swift and often unwieldy changes. Keeping abreast of the newest platforms and understanding how to leverage new communication tools effectively and efficiently is daunting for professionals and educators alike. It is perhaps no surprise that technology is the top concern.

Limitations and recommendations

First, 94.4% of respondents identify as White/Causcasion/non-Hispanic. Given the lack of diversity among respondents, further research is recommended to survey more ethnically and racially diverse practitioners in the profession on the topic of the liberal-professional nexus and other issues related to advertising education.

Second, the survey does not clearly link job titles with specific knowledge/skill areas thought to be important for new graduates to have mastered. Further research is recommended to identify skills as they relate to specific professional positions, such as copywriting, research/account planning, account management, creative services, media services, production services, digital/web/social/mobile, and data analytics, and so forth.

Third, the survey does not disentangle digital/web/social/mobile, but rather, treats these as a single area of knowledge/skill. Further research is recommended to discern specific knowledge/skills needed for each of these and associated areas.

Final remarks

The findings speak to one of Richard's (2006) predictions for advertising education in 2016: "Some programs will not adapt, and some will abandon their core. Both eventually will wither and die" (p. 140). In other words, the best programs will not abandon their core of teaching fundamental principles of advertising, which include liberal education and learning soft skills, and will also integrate the technological tools needed to succeed in the emerging media environment.

There is continuing need for systematic national data representing practitioners' views on the evolving concerns regarding advertising education. Effective communication between educators and practitioners regarding curricula and the tools of the industry may be more important than ever.

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Appendix

Table 1: Knowledge/skill areas as preparation for a career in A/PR
VU=very unimportant, UI=unimportant, IM=important, VI=very important, Uns=unsure

Knowledge/Skill	VU %	UI %	IM%	VI%	Uns %
Ad copywriting	00.0	07.1	61.7	19.3	11.9
Account management	00.3	04.8	57.8	28.6	08.5
Big data/data analytics	01.0	08.6	55.5	18.5	16.4
Branding	00.7	03.8	53.5	32.8	09.3
Collaboration/teamwork	00.7	02.1	41.0	52.6	03.8
Communication theory	01.0	12.2	51.4	20.1	15.3
Computer software	00.7	08.9	49.8	19.8	20.8
Creativity	00.3	01.7	48.5	46.4	03.1
Digital/web/social mobile	00.7	00.3	41.2	56.8	01.0
Ethics	00.7	03.7	36.4	47.6	11.6
Guerilla sales	01.0	15.5	43.8	07.2	32.4
Graphic design	01.0	12.0	47.4	11.3	28.2
Impact on culture	04.4	17.0	41.4	09.5	27.8
International/global	04.1	20.5	35.5	04.8	35.2
Media planning/buying	02.1	18.9	46.1	07.9	25.1
Media production	01.4	14.4	50.7`	04.1	29.5
Multi-cultural	01.4	11.0	47.4	10.3	29.9
Presentation skills	00.7	01.0	37.3	58.6	02.4
Problem solving/strategic	00.7	00.3	15.6	82.7	00.7
PR writing	01.0	08.5	50.2	26.4	13.9
Research/account planning	01.4	04.1	61.1	24.9	08.5
Speaking/listening	00.7	00.7	24.8	71.9	02.0
Writing	00.7	00.0	25.4	73.2	00.7

Table 2: Most attainable entry-level jobs; 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choices

Job	1st choice %	2nd choice %	3rd choice %	Total %
Account services	26.8	21.1	15.4	63.3
Copywriting	04.8	11.7	10.5	27.0
Digital/web/social mobile	44.5	23.7	13.1	81.3
Graphic design	03.2	10.1	15.1	28.4
Media planning/buying	02.9	04.6	06.9	14.4
Media production	00.0	02.0	03.6	05.6
New business/sales	04.8	08.4	10.2	23.4
Research	06.1	07.8	09.2	23.1
Strategic planning	02.9	05.8	05.9	14.6
Traffic	03.9	04.9	10.2	19.0