Even in Public Relations, the real world is messy. It is not always black and white. Because you learn by doing, the Public Relations Campaign course aims to provide students with an opportunity to be hands on. The course is designed for Junior or Senior level students because it integrates and puts to use what they have learned throughout their collegiate career. This course requires students to apply their knowledge of business, research, reasoning and psychology. This knowledge enables them to resolve problems and design a PR campaign for community partners.

Meribeth Metzler, Professor of Communications, has been teaching this class for eleven years. When the class began there was a small service-learning aspect to it, but over the years it has evolved to working with 4 community partners per term.

Students participating in this service-learning class must prepare a six month campaign and do the required research for their partner. The students are evenly distributed to each community partner's campaign. The community partners must fit the class criteria and be an organization that has something which needs promoted but for which they do not have the resources to promote. Metzler said, “Finding these partners sometimes is amazingly a challenge.” Once they are selected, students are then able to do meaningful and extensive work for them as they design a full-fledged PR campaign. This work would include creating brochures and utilizing social and other media to meet the goals of promoting the organization.

The current non-profit partners are Our Daily Bread, a soup kitchen; Crayons to Computers, a free store for teachers to obtain school supplies; Venice on Vine, a pizzeria which helps inner city adults hone their job skills; and St. Vincent de Paul Vincentian Volunteers of Cincinnati, where students live in inner-city neighborhoods and volunteer for a year.

Although students in this course have a heavy workload, they find it beneficial to be involved with these organizations. “Students get a real appreciation for the causes of their organization,” Metzler said. Metzler says it’s an obligation for the University to better the community and this is one way to do that. Victoria Scheetz, a UC alum now works for a furniture and design company in northwest Ohio as a social media specialist. She updates social media posts throughout the day, writes blogs on interior design and implements social media campaigns. She said every day she is implementing what she learned from Dr. Metzler’s course.

“I learned everything from dealing with unhappy clients to working with a group. I truly got to understand all about how the public relations world worked. I was able to see my ideas implemented in real life, which was definitely a cool experience,” Scheetz said.

During the course, Scheetz helped prepare a campaign for Buona Terra Gelato and Crepes located in Mt. Lookout Square. While solving the PR problems of a newly established business, she had to meet the needs of the owners as well as prospective customers.

“How many courses can you take in college that allows you to get experience inside and outside the classroom? It was great learning about something then putting your knowledge to the test to get things done and actually see your plans play out in real life,” she said.