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## **Universal Accreditation Board Announces**

### **Year-One Examination Statistics**

**NEW YORK, NY (August 4, 2004)** – Having achieved one year of program experience, the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB) is announcing results for the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations.

Since July 1, 2003, when the re-engineered Examination was launched, through June 2004, 360 candidates have applied to sit for the Examination, 171 candidates have participated in a Readiness Review, 148 have advanced from Readiness Review, and 68 have taken the computer-based Examination. Of those 68 who have taken the computer-based Examination, 49 have passed it and earned Accreditation – a 72% pass rate.

“That’s an average of one application per day, and one new APR per week,” said Carol A. Scott, APR, chair of the Universal Accreditation Board.

Under the protocol of the re-engineered Examination, candidates cannot sit for the computer-based Examination until they advance from Readiness Review, which assesses

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a candidate's professional experience, includes a body of work review and an extended discussion between Accredited public relations practitioners and the candidate.

Information gained from the Readiness Review helps the panelists assess the candidate's readiness to take the Examination and help him or her identify specific areas of the body of knowledge in which they should focus further study.

“We’re gaining momentum for the re-engineered Examination and so far have received great enthusiasm from the candidates who have taken it,” said Scott. “We’re also finding that our pass rate is better than it was before we changed the Examination because candidates first have to go through Readiness Review. They aren’t being advanced until the Readiness Review panel feels they are ready to sit for, and capable of passing, the computer-based Examination. We also have available to them the Accreditation in Public Relations Online Study Course, which thoroughly prepares candidates.

“Even though a higher percentage of candidates are passing the Examination, we are finding that we still have potential candidates who are unsure about the process and therefore hesitant to initiate their application,” added Scott. “While we’re disappointed that our numbers aren’t higher, we also recognize that it takes time for such a significant

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change to be adopted. We're confident that as more candidates go through the Accreditation process and experience the ease of the computer-based Examination, our numbers will increase."

The slowed rate of adoption of the new process is to be expected, according to University of New Mexico communication professor Dr. Ev Rogers, one of the country's leading experts on the diffusion of innovations theory. Diffusion of innovations is one of the theories that is included in the new APR computer-based Examination.

"The individuals in a social system do not all adopt an innovation at the same time," Dr. Rogers said. "Rather, they adopt in an over-time sequence." The current group of APR candidates are considered early adopters of the new process and serve a vital role in diffusion of the new APR process, according to Rogers, author of "Diffusion of Innovations," now in its fifth edition.

One official with Thomson Prometric concurred with Dr. Rogers about the time element. "Acceptance and widespread adoption of any change to an existing accreditation program requires some investment in time and effort on the part of the test sponsor," said David A. Meissner, Thomson Prometric executive director of

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Testing System Strategy. "I am confident that through their candidate outreach and education efforts the Universal Accreditation Board will begin experiencing increased testing volume. Computer-based testing provides an unprecedented degree of scheduling flexibility and delivery convenience, and these benefits will soon become common knowledge among APR candidates." Thomson Prometric has served as technical consultant to the UAB in re-engineering, and provides the facilities for candidates to sit for the computer-based Examination.

The Universal Accreditation Board, which was created in 1998, is a consortium of ten professional communications organizations including the Agricultural Relations Council, Florida Public Relations Association, Maine Public Relations Council, National School Public Relations Association, Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), Religion Communicators Council, Society for Healthcare Strategy and Market Development, Southern Public Relations Federation, Texas Public Relations Association and now the Asociación de Relacionistas Profesionales de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico Public Relations Association). Each organization contributes resources and senior-level volunteer members who represent all segments of the public relations profession. The UAB oversees the public relations profession's professional certification program. A revised Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations was launched in July 2003.

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