



By Walter Gerald

It's no secret that in today's competitive job market, every bit of experience counts. Gone are the days when a college degree was all one needed to land a job in the communications industry. Things that once made graduates stand out—internships and portfolios—are now taken for granted by employers. It takes preparation and practice to enter today's mass media job market, and thanks to The Carolina Agency, School of Journalism and Mass Communications students are getting just that.

Conceived by assistant professor Dr. Tom Klipstine and instructor Jeffrey Ranta in 2006, The Carolina Agency aims to give students a taste of real-world work with real-world clients, but without some of the stresses of a for-profit agency. TCA is one of only about a dozen full-service, student-run advertising and public relations agencies accredited by the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) in the entire country.

"TCA has been a very successful experiment that has taken on a life of its own. It's fast-paced and challenging — we have fun but we also work hard. Students really enjoy the class," said Ranta.

As part of TCA, students can develop their portfolios and resumes with real work, without the hassle of juggling the responsibilities of a job and an internship. Every day, students get a taste of real agency practices including the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of print and Web design, public relations writing, Web site development, marketing and more.

In its infancy, The Carolina Agency had only a handful of students and even fewer clients. But the agency has grown to employ students from all types of majors and now boasts a history of more than 30 clients, including repeat business with the Ronald McDonald House Charities, Colonial Life Arena and many more. TCA has also earned several awards from PRSA and the International Association of Business Communicators for its advertising and marketing campaigns.

## Real Agency, Real Clients, Real Experience



The agency is an attractive option for local small businesses and non-profits that may not have the budget to employ professional firms. TCA works to deliver professional quality in fulfilling each client's needs, specializing in graphic design, building brand identity, event planning, marketing plan development, media relations and Web site analysis and improvement.

Students are assigned to specific clients within the agency. Each team develops and carries out a communication plan that meets the needs of its assigned client. A team typically includes an account executive, a creative director, media relations specialist, event planners and research assistants.

"The Carolina Agency is able to provide a wide variety of advertising and public relations solutions including, but not limited to, brand development, marketing plans, creative design, and Web design, to clients across the Southeast," said student director Mary Catherine Burton.

In this time of changing media, graduating without some direction is no longer an option. Landing a job without insight into one's industry is almost impossible. And thanks to The Carolina Agency, the J-school's students are more prepared than ever to face these challenges head-on.

THIS WAY TO THE REAL WORLD