

American University's School of Communication Launches SOC3, an On-Campus Integrated Communications Agency

Powered by Gen Z, the SOC Communication Collaborative for Change (SOC3) is a groundbreaking new initiative designed to diversify the communications industry and give AU students true agency experience

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) October 12, 2022 – Today, American University's School of Communication (SOC) launches a unique experiential learning opportunity for its students, SOC Communication Collaborative for Change (SOC3). With the goals of integrating disciplines and diversifying the communications industry, SOC3 will give students the opportunity to work with real clients at an actual agency on environmental, social and governance issues (ESG) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) for organizations and companies interested in having a meaningful impact on society. The program's initial launch is made possible by a \$500,000 Change Can't Wait campaign gift from AU Board of Trustees member and alumnus, Michael Kempner, founder and CEO of the independent public relations agency MikeWorldWide.

SOC3 will train the next generation of changemakers across communication fields by tackling complex problems that organizations face with fresh solutions through storytelling from a Gen Z perspective. The curriculum-based experience will allow AU's young professionals the opportunity to jumpstart their careers by managing real client accounts and give them the experience of running an integrated communications agency. Their inaugural client will be [DC Central Kitchen's Healthy Corners](#) program, which delivers fresh and frozen produce, as well as healthy snacks, to corner stores in D.C.'s low-income communities at wholesale prices. Agency members will create dynamic content including videos, infographics, and social media posts for various storytelling platforms with the aim of increasing awareness about and participation in the program within the targeted communities.

"SOC3 aims to amplify messages that change minds and mindsets using empathy, knowledge, humor and goodwill, as well as different storytelling methods through the lens of Gen Z," said Pallavi Damani Kumar, Hurst Senior Professorial Lecturer and SOC3's faculty advisor. "We strongly believe that Gen Z is well suited to make a difference on the issues that matter most today – from addressing food insecurity to communicating about climate change to providing understanding about the effect of racial inequities."

In addition to the gift from Trustee Michael Kempner (SPA/BS '81), his public relations agency, MikeWorldWide, will provide in-kind support. The agency is providing assistance with creative design, media relations, and overall program guidance.

"American University continues to champion industry-wide diversity and experiential learning with the establishment of SOC3," said Michael Kempner, founder and CEO of MikeWorldWide. "It is my hope that this agency will provide students with real-world professional experiences they would normally only receive in external settings by working side by side with practicing branding and communications professionals at this Gen Z-focused agency."

A recent [analysis](#) by Diversity Action Alliance found that only 21 percent of public relations professionals are racially or ethnically diverse, and by providing a for-credit experiential learning opportunity, SOC3 aims to change that. The fall semester cohort of 18 communication majors participating in SOC3 is 61 percent diverse, a far higher percentage than most professions in the communications industry. Participants will not only receive course credit, but they will also receive a stipend for the semester.

“SOC has long prided itself on having socially engaged students who seek innovative experiential learning programs,” said Sam Fulwood III, dean of the School of Communication. “The SOC3 program will not only give our students hands-on, real-world opportunities working with some of the most well-known nonprofits in the region but it also addresses inequities in the industry by providing a paid, curriculum-based experience.”

As the only school in Washington that brings journalism, film, public relations and communication studies together, SOC is uniquely suited to launch SOC3. SOC’s students and alumni tell stories that influence change, inspire action, and transform communities and the world.

More information about SOC3 can be found on their website: www.soc3change.com.

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About American University

American University leverages the power and purpose of scholarship, learning, and community to impact our changing world. AU’s faculty, students, staff, and alumni are changemakers who shape the future from sustainability to social justice to the sciences. Building on our 129-year history of education and research in the public interest, we say [‘Challenge Accepted’](#) to addressing the world’s pressing issues. Our [Change Can’t Wait](#) comprehensive campaign creates transformative educational opportunities, advances research with impact, and builds stronger communities.

About MikeWorldWide

MikeWorldWide is a leading independent, integrated public relations agency serving global clients across the US & Europe. It employs more than 225 communications experts that live at the intersection of consumer brand marketing, technology and corporate reputation. The award-winning firm applies its expertise and [culture of caring](#) through research, strategy, creativity, empathy, and insight for clients to maximize the potential of every marketing channel. It delivers breakthrough communications for the global enterprises, corporate leaders and innovative brands who are driving the creative economy. Open positions at MWW can be found [here](#). To learn more about MikeWorldWide, visit mww.com.