

STRATEGIC PLAN for the  
SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION  
2012-2015

The global information revolution has entailed new responsibilities for institutions of higher education, and this is perhaps especially true for academic units devoted to the practice and study of communication.

In addition to our traditional responsibility of educating ethical communication professionals, supporting the professions and performing scholarly research, we believe that schools of communication have a social responsibility to understand and expand the public service role of communication in the face of great industry change.

With these responsibilities in mind, the School of Communication at Radford University is engaged in a re-envisioning of its future and, with this document, is suggesting paths towards excellence in academics, scholarship and public service.

This strategic plan, then, is based on the premise that universities do not stand alone. They serve, and are related to, the professional and social communities around them. They interrelate their tasks within their colleges and departments for mutual strength and scholarly accomplishment. And they share a common mission towards building a better future, one teaching moment at a time.

**Executive Summary**

1. Seek accreditation from ACEJMC, the national accrediting body for schools of communication and journalism
2. Grow the graduate program to reflect the breadth of the School of Communication
3. Realign the curriculum to better serve students
  - a. Explore interdisciplinary programs
  - b. Make sure students have a minimum of 80 credit hours outside the SCOM and a minimum of 65 semester credit hours in the liberal arts and sciences
4. Grow the commitment to faculty
5. Develop a Center for Research and Partnerships
6. Plan and build a new School of Communication building to house the unit, the Center and necessary support staff.

## **I) Seek accreditation from ACEJMC**

### ***Seeking accreditation supports Goal 2.1 of the RU 7-17 Plan.***

[A consultant's report concerning ACEJMC accreditation shows that additional faculty, a stable governance structure, a diversity plan and effective advertising for faculty, better record keeping and other items would be needed for accreditation.]

ACEJMC accreditation is based on nine requirements, all of which must be met for a unit to become accredited. Within the next three years the SCOM will work to accomplish a minimum of seven of the nine criteria. The criteria are:

1. The policies and practices of the unit ensure that it has an effectively and fairly administered working and learning environment (mission, governance and administration).
2. The unit provides a curriculum and instruction that enable students to learn the knowledge, competencies and values the Council defines for preparing students to work in a diverse global and domestic society (curriculum and instruction).
3. The unit has a diverse and inclusive program that serves and reflects society (diversity and inclusiveness).
4. The unit hires, supports and evaluates a capable faculty with a balance of academic and professional credentials appropriate for the unit's mission (full-time and part-time faculty).
5. With unit support, faculty members contribute to the advancement of scholarly and professional knowledge and engage in scholarship (research, creative and professional activity) that contributes to their development (scholarship: research, creative and professional activity).
6. The unit provides students with the support and services that promote learning and ensure timely completion of their program of study (student services).
7. The unit plans for, seeks and receives adequate resources to fulfill and sustain its mission (resources, facilities and equipment).
8. The unit advances journalism and mass communication professions and fulfills its obligations to its community, alumni and the greater public (professional and public service).
9. The unit regularly assesses student learning and uses results to improve curriculum and instruction (assessment of learning outcomes).

## **II) Grow the graduate program to reflect the breadth of the School of Communication**

### ***Growing our graduate programs supports Goal 2.2 of the RU 7-17 Plan.***

Radford University, the Graduate College, and the School of Communication are dedicated to investing in the growth opportunities for graduate educational excellence. Such areas include increasing the number of graduate students served

by the School, promoting an established and national recognized graduate program, and encouraging faculty development, such as greater technology knowledge, to better serve our graduate population.

1. Explore use of Higher Ed center as well as online and hybrid courses.
  - Encourage and promote more graduate opportunities at satellite campuses, either in person, online/hybrid or via video conferencing.
  - Educate faculty about technology and distance education teaching opportunities
  - Consider potential Certificate Programs that will serve the community and the region
  - Work with the MBA program to allow business students to take our classes and our students to take business classes to broaden the number of electives available to our students and reduce the number of electives it is necessary to teach
  - Work with ESHE on a health promotion graduate program
  
2. Ensure that graduate programs are rigorous and distinctive.
  - Working in conjunction with the graduate college, promote and abide by established academic standards
  - Increase our standards for acceptance of accelerated students into the program
  - Actively recruit top students from the School of Communication and similar programs at Radford University
  - In accordance with the graduate school, host open houses, campus visits, overnight stays, and classroom visits from top students in surrounding colleges and universities.
  - Create and promote study abroad classes and opportunities for SCOM graduate students.
  
3. Encourage more visibility at regional, national and international conferences by our graduate students and a broader group of our faculty than now attend.
  - Encourage graduate students to submit papers
  - Encourage faculty member to submit papers
  - Promote scholarly endeavors between faculty and graduate students
  - Take advantage of Graduate School offers of financial assistance and incentives for graduate students to attend conferences
  - Encourage scholarly collaboration between graduate students from other RU colleges and other universities, both nationally and internationally
  
4. Development of New and Existing Graduate Programs.
  - Increase the number of faculty teaching in the graduate program
  - Expand the Graduate Program to include additional offerings. For example, a Master's of Mass Communication with varied concentrations such as advertising, journalism, environmental and health communication,

integrated marketing communication, interactive communication/ media/technologies and other possible specializations could be considered.

### **III) Re-align the curriculum and seek resources to better serve students**

***This area supports Goal 1.1 (7-17) of providing high quality academic programs that attract, retain, and graduate outstanding students; Goal 2.1 of ensuring that academic programs are rigorous and distinctive (by achieving ACEJMC Accreditation); Goal 3.2 of developing a strong relationship between RU, the surrounding region, and the nation that fosters academic opportunities, good citizenship, ethical behavior, and civic engagement; Goal 4.3 of ensuring that all programs have adequate facilities.***

1. Seek degree Status where appropriate for existing concentrations
2. Ensure all SCOM students take 80 hours of non-SCOM coursework
3. Explore the Senior Semester Concept to provide an intensive capstone experience for undergraduates
4. Encourage SCOM students to take semester abroad programs as well as summer programs abroad
5. Continue our support for General Education requirements
  - Provide a Core A Coordinator for the oral portion of the Core A requirements
  - Continue to teach COMS 114 for students transferring into the University as well as for our own students
  - Provide GTFs to teach CORE 201 and 202 classes
6. Frequently upgrade computer labs, production studios, and software to adhere to industry standards in order to provide students and faculty with a competitive edge.
7. Investigate the possibility of increasing our acceptance standards and implementing an admissions requirement, such as a writing and grammar test, for students who wish to major within the School.
8. Seek approval for a new building to support SCOM programs

### **IV) Grow the commitment to faculty**

***Growing the commitment to faculty supports RU 7-17 by investing in people and investing in the future (Strategic Directives 1 and 4).***

1. Increase ability for current faculty to have flexibility for research, professional development, and teaching elective courses.
2. Add to the SCOM technical staffing to manage the large amount of technology resources housed in the School. To serve our students with excellence, a broadcast engineer and additional lab/studio coordinators will be needed.
3. Increase our efforts to recruit internationally experienced and ethnically diverse faculty members.
4. Recruit, develop, and retain energetic, committed, and well-trained faculty
5. Increase travel funding for national and international conferences for faculty with papers accepted in these higher profile venues using School resources.
6. Coordinate with the University's Information Technology Office to discuss the possibility of sharing resources to make more space available for our students.

#### **V. Develop Research and Partnerships**

***Developing research and partnerships supports RU 7-17 Goal 1.2, and Strategic Directives 3 and 4.***

1. Expand our reach in the community through grant funding the eventual takeover of the New River Voice, and increasing the number of our students covering community and regional issues and stories.
2. Work to establish the analytical and technical infrastructure for a Behavioral Lab for web applications, advertising and possibly ITEC; for an Interactive Lab for experiments; and for a focus group room. The labs would support the research of other departments, as well as potentially for industry partners.
3. Seek external funding (research grants and contracts) to enhance financial resources, academic quality and program reputation, support faculty research and contribute to the region and Commonwealth.
4. Expand student and faculty opportunities for collaborative networking with professionals.

#### **VI. Plan and build a new School of Communication building**

***A School of Communication building would not only Invest in the Future under the University's 7-17 Strategic Plan but would also serve to Invest in People and in Programs.***

1. Obtain planning money for a School of Communication building [succeeded].
2. Work toward solving short-term facility and space needs for the School of Communication. These have been identified in various requests and proposals to the Dean and Provost over the last several years.
3. Work toward planning a new building to house the School of Communication.