

## **RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL MEDIA IN THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND HUMAN SCIENCES**

**WHEREAS**, the domain of communication has grown in terms of specialization, expertise, disciplinary areas, and methodologies; and

**WHEREAS**, a School of Communication and Digital Media will enhance the university's ability to create, convey, and apply knowledge that expands personal growth and understanding of human communication, improves media practice, and broadens media literacy among voters and other media consumers; and

**WHEREAS**, a School of Communication and Digital Media will advance social and community development through ethical news and sports reporting, advertising, corporate communication, and public relations and foster economic competitiveness through industry-related majors in advertising, communication science and social inquiry, digital media production, multimedia journalism, sports media and analytics, professional communication, and public relations; and

**WHEREAS**, a School of Communication and Digital Media will align curriculum resources more efficiently and allow more coordinated and strategic investment of resources within the college and university in communication and digital-media instruction; and

**WHEREAS**, a School of Communication and Digital Media will more closely align the communication programs with national, institutional, and SCHEV peers that have colleges or schools of communication, journalism, or media; and

**WHEREAS**, a School of Communication and Digital Media supports the land-grant mission of Virginia Tech in the discovery and dissemination of knowledge about human and digital communication; and

**WHEREAS**, a School of Communication and Digital Media will enhance the stature of Virginia Tech as an internationally recognized university for teaching, training, and research scholarship in human communication, mass media, and digital production; now,

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the resolution for the establishment of a School of Communication and Digital Media hosted within the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences be approved effective Fall 2020 and the proposal forwarded to the President, Board of Visitors, and State Council of Higher Education for Virginia for approval.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Board of Visitors approve the resolution to establish a School of Communication and Digital Media.

May 6, 2020

## **Proposal for the School of Communication and Digital Media College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences**

### **1. Proposed name: School of Communication and Digital Media**

2. Proposed School will be composed of people and programs from the Department of Communication. The School will replace the Department and be a unit of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. The School plans to cooperate with units in other colleges as it develops future majors.

3. Proposed effective date of the organizational change: July 1, 2020.

### **4. Proposed Mission:**

- **Mission:**

- The School of Communication and Digital Media, consistent with Virginia Tech's land-grant mission, will be a national leader in the discovery and dissemination of knowledge about human communication, mass media, and digital production. The School will (1) enhance the university's ability to create, convey, and apply knowledge that expands personal growth and understanding of human communication and improved media practice and literacy; (2) advance social and community development through ethical news and sports reporting, advertising, corporate communication, and public relations; (3) foster economic competitiveness through industry-related majors in advertising, communication science and social inquiry, digital media production, multimedia journalism, sports media and analytics, professional communication, and public relations; and (4) improve the quality of life for all Virginians by promoting a more informed and engaged electorate through better-educated practitioners in broadcast, print, online, and social mass media.

- **Benefits sought by creating the new organizational structure:**

- Serve the Commonwealth more effectively in educating students in advertising, communication science and social inquiry, digital media, journalism, sports media, professional communication, and public relations.
- Align curriculum resources more efficiently.
- Offer two-to-three additional nationally accredited majors.
- Allow more coordinated and strategic investment of resources within the college and university in communication and digital-media instruction.
- More closely align communication programs with national institutional and SCHEV peers that have colleges or schools of communication. Of Virginia Tech's 25 peer institutions, nine have schools of communication, journalism, or media, and eight have colleges of communication, journalism, or media. Three schools of communication, journalism, or media and one college of communication, journalism, or media are within the ACC. The Commonwealth of Virginia has six schools of communication, journalism, or media (See Table 1).
- Recruit and retain high-caliber faculty members who expect to work in a school or college of communication.

- Recruit the best undergraduate and graduate students who are now applying to Virginia Tech's aspirational peers with colleges or schools of communication.
- Prepare graduates for the most competitive positions in advertising, corporate communication, media production, journalism, sports media, and public relations.
- Interact with industry partners more effectively.
- Achieve greater success in external partnership and development endeavors.

#### 5. Proposed Organizational Structure:

- The proposed School will be a unit of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. The School Director will report to the Dean of CLAHS.
- Internal Organization of the School
  - Administrative leadership will be provided by a Director and Assistant Director. The School will have three curricular units: Communication Studies, Journalism and Mass Communication, and Public Relations. Each area will have a Coordinator. As is now the case within the Department of Communication, the School will have a Director of Graduate Studies, Undergraduate Coordinator and Basic Course Director, and Director of Research and Outreach. An Executive Committee—consisting of the Assistant Director, Director of Graduate Studies, Undergraduate Coordinator and Basic Course Director, Director of Research and Outreach, and each curriculum unit Coordinator—will serve as an advisory group to the Director.
  - Each curricular unit will be home to various majors within the School. Journalism and Mass Communication will have curricular responsibilities for the Digital Media Production and Multimedia Journalism majors. Public Relations will have curricular responsibilities for the Advertising and Public Relations majors. Communication Studies will have curricular responsibilities for the Communicating Science and Social Inquiry and Professional Communication majors. Communication Studies will coordinate the School's general education offerings as well.
  - Curricular unit Coordinators will be selected by the School Director upon consultation with faculty members within the units.
  - Unit Coordinators will serve on the Executive Committee, represent the interests of the unit faculty, mentor faculty members, and assist the Director with external stakeholder relations.
- Promotion and Tenure/Annual Evaluation:
  - The promotion and tenure process and annual evaluations will be organized at the School level under the guidance of the School Director. Subcommittees will be established for each curricular unit to ensure that candidates for promotion and tenure are evaluated appropriately in accordance with University policies and procedures by colleagues and administrators.
  - All candidates for promotion and tenure considerations will be reviewed and acted upon at the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. The School will have

- representation at the College level per governance policies and procedures to ensure adequate faculty input in academic, research, and service missions of the College.
- The current Department of Communication processes and procedures provide the general guidelines for the School. Committee memberships will be revised to include appropriate faculty membership from the curricular units.
  - Identify any additional resources needed to create the administrative organization of the proposed school and provide justification for these resources.
    - Will the school require an additional financial/budget officer?
      - No
    - Will the school require a development officer?
      - No. The function will be part of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences development purview.
    - Will the school require an information officer?
      - No. This function will be part of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences marketing and communication purview.
    - Will the school require associate or assistant directors?
      - Yes. The position of School Associate/Assistant Director will require an administrative stipend. The Undergraduate Coordinator and Basic Course Director (one position) will require an additional administrative stipend. As noted above, the School would have a Director of Graduate Studies and Director of Research and Outreach as well. These positions are now part of the Department of Communication structure and do not require stipends.
    - What additional staff resources and operating budgets would be required to support any new positions?
      - Current Department of Communication staff resources will be adequate for the School's administrative needs. Two recent 1,500-hour position hires will handle any expanded requirements.
      - The current operating budget, including summer- and winter-session instruction, provides adequate funding for the proposed School. New majors under consideration will use mostly existing courses within the department and collaborations with other units. The PIBB model will generate necessary revenue for the few courses needed to complete the majors from within the School and seats in existing courses in partnering units. Faculty members from other units participating in the new majors will have affiliated faculty status within the School.
      - The allocation of new resources within the current budget include two administrative stipends.
      - One-time transitional costs will be needed for signage, stationary, business cards, branding, and marketing of the School.
      - A request for two new faculty positions (one instructor and one tenure-track position) will help address increased instructional requirements associated with the new Digital Media Production and Professional Communication majors. These positions were part of the departmental 2019-2020 hiring request.

- Develop a proposed operating budget that reflects both current operations and any new financial resources required to create the school.

- See Table 2.

6. Describe the academic programs (including instruction, research, and outreach) that would be offered or conducted by the proposed school. If recent academic program review documents are available, they may be submitted to respond to the relevant questions below.

- Describe the program priorities for the school in terms of instruction, research, and outreach missions.
  - The School will allow more comprehensive instruction and greater career opportunities for graduates in human communication and mass and digital media across platforms, industries, and professional organizations. The School will be able to (1) revamp and expand undergraduate curricula; (2) add additional majors that integrate and leverage faculty expertise from the Department of English, Pamplin College of Business, and the School of Visual Arts; and (3) create more opportunities for coordinating transdisciplinary interactions across teaching and research. The School will enhance research productivity by recruiting and retaining high-caliber faculty members as well as outstanding graduate and undergraduate students. The breadth of programs and specialties within the School will enhance the connections with industry partners and opportunities for external and development endeavors.
- Using historical enrollment data and enrollment projections, describe the past and projected enrollments in the units that will be part of the proposed school. Relate these data to overall University trends.
  - In 2014 the Department of Communication moved from one degree with three options (Communication Studies, Multimedia Journalism and Public Relations) to one degree with three separate majors. From 2014 to 2017, each major experienced increased enrollment. The overall increase was 14 percent. In spring 2019, the department surpassed 800 total students in three majors. A concentration in Sports Media and Analytics was added within the Multimedia Journalism major in 2016 and now has 74 students. That concentration becomes a major in fall 2019. The first Sports Media and Analytics majors are to graduate in 2021. The university increased overall undergraduate enrollment by approximately 11 percent from 2014 to 2017.

| <b>Enrollment by Major in the Department of Communication 2014—2017</b> |                  |                  |                  |                  |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|   | <b>Fall 2014</b> | <b>Fall 2015</b> | <b>Fall 2016</b> | <b>Fall 2017</b> |
| <b>Communication Studies</b>  | 52               | 123              | 120              | 165              |
| <b>Communication*</b>   | 147              | 1                | 3                | 2                |
| <b>Multimedia Journalism</b>  | 173              | 242              | 277              | 287              |
| <b>Public Relations</b>   | 277              | 343              | 314              | 303              |
| <b>Department Total:</b>  | 649              | 709              | 714              | 757              |

\*General Communication major with options ended in Spring 2014.

- Freshmen applications for Multimedia Journalism and Communication Studies majors have increased each year from 2015 to 2018. Multimedia Journalism experienced a 28-percent increase in applications. Communication Studies saw a 25-percent increase. Since 2016, the Public Relations major has witnessed a 25-percent increase as well. Total applications for fall 2019 increased by 11 percent.

| <b>Applications to Majors in Department of Communication 2015—2018</b> |             |             |             |             |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|  | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b> | <b>2017</b> | <b>2018</b> |
| <b>Communication Studies</b>   | 154         | 158         | 177         | 206         |
| <b>Multimedia Journalism</b>   | 116         | 135         | 157         | 161         |
| <b>Public Relations</b>  | 63          | 44          | 48          | 59          |

- The department, in collaboration with other units as described above, is developing three new majors to address current student and market demands: Advertising, Digital Media Production, and Professional Communication. Some students in Marketing from the Pamplin School of Business and some in public relations wish to focus on advertising. Likewise, some students in Multimedia Journalism want to work in digital media production without a news focus. Finally, some in public relations prefer to focus more on communication within corporate management. Within three-to-five years of establishing the three new majors, we expect 150 students or more in each.
- Eventually, the proposed School will house seven majors: Advertising, Communication Science and Social Inquiry (the new name for Communication Studies starting in fall 2019), Digital Media Production, Multimedia Journalism, Professional Communication, Public Relations, and Sports Media and Analytics. Enrollment in the Communication Studies, Multimedia Journalism, and Public Relations surpassed 800 in spring 2019. In light of the students now enrolled in the Sports Media and Analytics concentration, we expect 100 majors in that area by 2021. As noted above, we expect some redistribution among current majors to the new ones. By 2023—with the three new majors and current four—we project 1,200-to-1,500 total majors in the School.
- The Department of Communication has a Master of Arts in Communication degree program with 14 GTA positions and total enrollment (2018-2019) of 19 students. Since 2015, enrollment has been averaged nearly 20. We do not expect short-term changes in graduate offerings.

| <b>Enrollment in Master's Degree Department of Communication 2014–2017</b> |             |             |             |             |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|  | <b>2014</b> | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b> | <b>2017</b> |
| <b>Communication</b>   | 17          | 20          | 19          | 19          |

- Describe how the creation of the school will affect faculty workload and productivity in the component units.
  - The instructional workload of the faculty will remain the same.
  - The School does not require additional leadership roles beyond those identified in the Department of Communication.

- We expect creation of the School will enable faculty members to increase collaborative and transdisciplinary research with faculty colleagues from participating units within the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences as well as other colleges.
- Describe the programs offered and trends in degrees awarded for these programs.
  - See above for a description of current and proposed undergraduate majors.
  - From 2013 to 2017, the Department of Communication has graduated about 200 students a year across three majors. We project an additional 200 degrees per year within three years.

| <b>Undergraduate Degrees Awarded 2015 – 2018</b> |             |             |             |             |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Department of Communication</b>               |             |             |             |             |
|  | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b> | <b>2017</b> | <b>2018</b> |
| <b>Communication Studies</b>                     | 16          | 26          | 24          | 25          |
| <b>Multimedia Journalism</b>                     | 44          | 50          | 56          | 61          |
| <b>Public Relations</b>                          | 89          | 148         | 104         | 116         |
| <b>Total:</b>                                    | 197         | 224         | 184         | 202         |

- Graduate degrees awarded during the past four years:

| <b>Graduate Degrees Awarded 2015 - 2018</b> |             |             |             |             |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Department of Communication</b>          |             |             |             |             |
|   | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b> | <b>2017</b> | <b>2018</b> |
| <b>Communication</b>                        | 6           | 7           | 12          | 8           |

- List and describe any anticipated major changes to the academic programs, such as new degree programs, options or concentrations to be proposed; merger of programs/degrees; or discontinuance of degrees/programs. (Proposed changes to academic programs would need to be reviewed separately through usual governance procedures.) Estimate the effects on enrollment and resources if such changes were implemented.
  - All the current and new majors have or will have a common core of courses that lead to a B.A. in Communication with a major designation. Future plans could include consideration of moving majors to separate degree status.
  - No new degree programs, merger of programs/degrees, or discontinuance of degrees/programs are planned in relation to establishing the School.
  - Anticipated enrollments and resources are addressed above.
- Describe changes in the nature, quantity, or interdisciplinarity of the research, scholarship, creative expression or artistic performances of faculty in the component departments/programs that might be anticipated by establishment of the school.
  - Within the last two decades, the communication domain has grown in terms of specialization, expertise, disciplinary breath and methodologies. The scope of knowledge and expertise expands well beyond the traditional scope of a single department.
  - Over the last decade, as the Department of Communication moved from options to majors and introduced new majors, faculty hiring became more diverse in

terms of disciplines, research methodologies, and research interests. Research productivity increased. Likewise, research collaborations within the department increased. The introduction of new majors and collaborations with units in other colleges should further enhance the quantity and breath of research within the School. We would expect to see expanded research into advertising, general business communication, and digital media technologies as a result of new majors related to these areas.

- Collaborations and partnerships identified throughout this document will promote increased transdisciplinary research, increase the already considerable collaborations, and expand opportunities for funded research, especially in advertising and digital media technologies.
- The appointed Director of Research and Outreach will chair a corresponding committee with members from all School units. The Director and committee will be responsible for promoting the School's research missions. Those include fostering a climate of research productivity by facilitating and publicizing faculty research, identifying faculty needs for research support, and assisting with faculty pursuit of internal and external research sponsorship.
- Describe changes in the nature, quantity, or interdisciplinarity of the outreach and continuing education of faculty in the component departments/programs that might be anticipated by establishment of the school.
  - The Director of Research and Outreach and the Research and Outreach Committee will organize the Annual Distinguished Lecture Series, seminars and guest lectures/public presentations.
  - Outreach and university service account for 20 percent of annual evaluations for tenured and tenure-track faculty members. Thus, the School will have clear expectations for outreach activities appropriate to the university's land-grant mission.
  - The quantity, breath and diversity of outreach activities should increase in the School environment.

## 7. Proposed Evaluation Criteria

- Using the general guidelines provided in the policy document, state the evaluation criteria that will be used to assess the effectiveness of the new school in achieving the benefits that are sought by its creation.
  - Policy 6150 states: "Reviews will be guided by the school's objectives and implementation plan, as well as by the relationship of the school's goals to the University Plan. Demonstrable evidence of accomplishments must be included in both the internal and external reviews. The evaluation will emphasize the degree to which the school has met the criteria and benefited the institution, with evidence such as active involvement of a critical mass of interdisciplinary faculty and students; contributions to enriching the education of students; effective interdepartmental collaboration with respect to teaching, research, and public service activities; and increased access to external resources. In addition, the review will address issues of administrative effectiveness and efficiency and fiscal management."



- The Public Relations curriculum is certified by the Educational Affairs Committee of the Public Relations Society of America. The Multimedia Journalism and Public Relations curricula have undergone preliminary review for accreditation by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Those programs are working toward full accreditation by 2022. The new Sports Media and Analytics major and the proposed Advertising and Digital Media Production majors could qualify for ACEJMC accreditation in the future.
- Accreditation procedures require annual feedback from practitioners in each discipline on the quality of student learning. Practitioners join faculty members in assessing whether assignments completed by graduating seniors meet minimum competencies in 12 learning outcomes set by ACEJMC. Faculty members must show how they use practitioner feedback to improve instruction.
- Standards for maintaining certification and accreditation require on-campus reviews by outside evaluators every six years. Evaluation teams from ACEJMC and PRSA include educators in each discipline under review and practitioners (news executives, public relations practitioners, advertising agency representatives, etc.). ACEJMC judges all major programs on nine standards. PRSA uses eight. Besides considering how well graduates meet professional standards, evaluators judge faculty qualifications, curriculum design, and assessment methods in light of current industry trend, student diversity, faculty contributions to each discipline through scholarship and service, and employer perceptions of Virginia Tech graduates.
- The School will participate in the University's Academic Program Review at least every five years to provide a systemic review for fostering continuous improvements. The review will be a comprehensive evaluation of activities and include a self-study report that is evaluated by a team of peer reviewers.
- The School will be subject to an annual report to the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. That report includes a summary of faculty performance evaluations, pre-tenure reviews, unit achievements, and summary of school highlights.

**Table 1.**  
**Peer Institutions with Schools, Colleges, or Named Schools of**  
**Communication/Journalism/Media**

| <b>Peer Institutions with Schools, Colleges, or<br/>Named Schools of Communication</b> |                                |                                 |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|  | <b>Number with<br/>Schools</b> | <b>Number with<br/>Colleges</b> | <b>Number with<br/>Named Schools</b> |
| <b>ACC peers (15 total)</b>  | 3                              | 1                               | 1                                    |
| <b>SCHEV peers (25 total)</b>  | 9                              | 8                               | 6                                    |
| <b>Commonwealth of<br/>Virginia peers (6 total)</b>                                    | 6                              | 0                               | 1                                    |

**Table 2. Virginia Tech – College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences  
School of Communication and Digital Media  
Anticipated E&G Resources**

**Annual Operations**

|  | <u>Amount</u>  | <u>Fringe</u>        | <u>Total</u>            |
|--|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| <b><u>Human Resources</u></b>                                  |                |                      |                         |
| <b><i>Faculty Resources:</i></b>                               |                |                      |                         |
| Consolidated Tenure Track Faculty                              | \$1,570,317.00 | 557,458.00           | 1,887,775.00            |
| Professors of Practice   | \$251,730.00   | 89,364.15            | 341,094.15              |
| 2 New Tenure Track Faculty                                     | \$128,000.00   | 45,400.00            | 173,440.00              |
| Stipends   | \$12,000.00    | 4,260.00             | 16,260.00               |
| <b><i>Staff and Non-Tenure Faculty:</i></b>                    |                |                      |                         |
| Instructors (non-restricted and restricted)                    | \$582,510.00   | \$206,461.05         | \$788,971.05            |
| Staff  | \$236,954.00   | \$129,139.94         | \$366,093.94            |
| Wage – 1,500-hour part-time                                    | \$26.00        | \$1.95               | \$41,925 <sup>(1)</sup> |
| Wage – Student   | \$22.00        | \$1.65               | \$12,000 <sup>(2)</sup> |
| <b><u>Operational Resources</u></b>                            |                | <b><u>Actual</u></b> | <b><u>Estimate</u></b>  |
| <b><i>Studio:</i></b>  |                |                      |                         |
| Operational  |                | \$47,677.16          | \$50,000.00             |
| Upgrades / Replacements <sup>(3)</sup>                         |                |                      |                         |
| Maintenance Fund   |                | \$26,000.00          | \$30,000.00             |
| <b><i>Department Operational:</i></b>                          |                |                      |                         |
| Equipment  |                | \$118,272.23         | \$120,000.00            |
| Supplies   |                | \$73,955.53          | \$75,000.00             |
| Travel   |                | \$58,326.23          | \$60,000.00             |
| Misc. Contractual Services<br>(includes Pcard, software, etc.) |                | \$96,324.24          | \$97,000.00             |
| ETF  |                | <u>\$36,055.50</u>   | <u>\$36,000.00</u>      |

**Anticipated Annual Operations** \$4,335,560.69

**One-Time Investments<sup>(4)</sup>**

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| New Faculty Startup Requests             | \$30,000.00 |
| Branding and Marketing Initiative        | \$20,000.00 |
| Signage, business cards, envelopes, etc. | \$20,000.00 |

**Anticipated one-time investments** \$70,000.00

**GRAND TOTAL:** \$4,475,560.69

**Notes:**

(1) Estimate: \$27.95/hour

(2) Estimate: \$23.65/hour

(3) The Upgrades/Replacement and Studio/Lab equipment comes from course fees.

(4) One-time investments managed over the first three years of the school as required by implementation.

**Office of the Dean**

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June 13, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

Within the last two decades, the general area of communication has grown in terms of disciplinary specializations and scholarly methodologies. The breadth and depth of knowledge and range of expertise has expanded well beyond the traditional scope of a single department with few areas of study. Over the last decade, as the Department of Communication moved from options to majors and introduced new majors, faculty hiring became more diverse in terms of instructional foci and research interests and methods. The demand for additional specializations continues to grow as new media and technologies emerge. A School of Communication and Digital Media within the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences will increase program visibility and opportunities to create, convey, and apply knowledge that enhances personal growth, expands understanding of human communication, and improves media literacy and practice. It will also foster economic competitiveness through industry-related majors in journalism, digital media production, advertising, public relations, and professional communication.

It is also important to note that a School of Communication and Digital Media will more closely align Virginia Tech's communication programs to both national and SCHEV peer institutions with colleges or schools of communication, journalism, or media.

The School will allow the continued recruitment and retention of high-caliber faculty as well as the best undergraduate and graduate students across the Commonwealth and nation.

Through collaborations with units within the college and across the university, the School will not only create new curricula, but also enhance multi-disciplinary scholarship.

Finally, a School of Communication and Digital Media will support the land-grant missions of discovery and dissemination of knowledge about the impact of and best practices in journalism, digital media production, advertising, public relations, and professional communication strategies. It will enhance the stature of Virginia Tech as an internationally recognized university for education and scholarship in these crucial domains of human experience.

The College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences strongly supports the creation of the School of Communication and Digital Media.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rosemary Blieszner".

Rosemary Blieszner, PhD  
Dean and Alumni Distinguished Professor