

Virginia Tech Graduate School communications department

2014-15 report

The Communications Manager began the 2014-15 academic year with several key goals:

1. Evaluate how the Graduate School reached key audiences with an eye toward improving and increasing reach and engagement, especially on social media platforms.
2. Increase the number of stories published by University News and outside media outlets that focus on the Graduate School and graduate students.
3. Educate communications managers across the university about the Graduate School and its initiatives and students.
4. Learn the Graduate School and Graduate Life Center calendars and events to ensure advance notice and highlight students' achievement in university news, on blogs and on social media platforms
5. Evaluate the website to determine how content can be better packaged and more easily found and used, with the aim of updating and redesigning the website to improve usability and bring greater focus to the Transformative Graduate Education components and accomplishments.
6. Evaluate what peer institution's graduate schools' websites and analyze what they are doing to reach audiences, and analyze their use of social media.
7. Evaluate the graduate school's print materials and begin creating, designing and building products to fill gaps.
8. Explore ways to increase visibility of the Expectations for Graduate Education.

Between August 2014 and July 2015, we made progress in each area.

1. Improving and increasing reach and engagement, especially on social media platforms.

LinkedIn: Established a university LinkedIn page for the graduate school in September 2014. The Graduate School aims to post at least weekly on the site, and now has more than 300 active followers. Several posts have been liked and shared.

Twitter: Increased twitter followers to a daily average of 1,339 as of July 2015. We have built Twitter exchanges/relationships with departments, IGEPs, colleges, organizations across campus and increased awareness of the Graduate School's feed, and those of the Director of Recruitment and Diversity and Dean Karen DePauw. We outpace many of our peer graduate schools in terms of activity and reach. Active aggregation and reposts helped expand the reach of Global Perspectives Program Twitter posts on Twitter. We also have helped to amplify the NCR Twitter feed.

I regularly live tweet events at the Graduate School and across the university, especially if Dean DePauw is a participant, and post on Twitter across multiple accounts. Also post on Facebook.

Facebook: This has been our most active social media account. We have increased our average weekly reach on Facebook from 90-100 to an average of more than 3,800 per week,

with multiple spikes over the year (greatest reach was 40,000 people for a President Sands post on May 15, 2015). We have increased number of likes (followers) from 3,108 in August 2014 to 3779 in July 2015 (at 3853 at the end of August). We average an increase of more than 50 followers each week.

We have developed reciprocal relationships with other university department and unit Facebook pages, which has boosted the Graduate School's visibility and demonstrated our connections across campus.

Flickr: Created a social media account focused on photo galleries that can be used across other social media platforms.

Blogs: Post news on social media accounts of new posts on Dean DePauw's blogs, sending readers to the Word Press blog site. Created a Graduate School news blog site, augmenting other news platforms and linking to galleries. The blog was active during the Fall semester and returned to activity in Summer 2015. Also worked with Associate Dean Amy Pruden and others on ways to boost visibility of Graduate School blogs, particularly those of the IGEPs.

Media campaigns: Developed InclusiveVT social media campaign highlighting student responses to prompts on the GLC hall walls about inclusivity and diversity. Photos and posts ran on Twitter and Facebook.

Logo: Worked with university design and editing team to create a social media logo for the Graduate School, using the approved Graduate School logo. We use that logo on all Graduate School social media accounts.

Social media guide: Began assembling a social media guide for Graduate School staff and student government officers.

2. Increase the number of stories published by University News and outside media outlets that focus on the Graduate School and graduate students.

The following stories were featured on the University news site and the University's home page during 2014-15:

- New hire/appointment, Amy Pruden, Marin Riegger
- Karen Stradt, chocolate research, October (included in university's year in review publication)
- Announcement in November of Little Hokie Hangout (brief) November
- Dean's travels to Qatar, November
- Announcement of the child care initiatives, November
- Alex Noble, engineering master's student studying motorcycle safety, November
- Presidential management fellows, December
- Doctoral student earned best paper award at international conference, December
- SPIA/VTIPG student developed RE: Reflections and Explorations blog, January
- Spring and Summer 2015 stories and accomplishments
- Bouchet Society scholars

- Diversity Scholars
- Citizen Scholars
- Jacob Groh, leadership award
- Conference of Southern Graduate Schools thesis award winner (march)
- Graduate Education Week preview
- Graduate School awards
- Student of the Year, Sheldon Masters
- Graduate School alumni award
- Graduate School commencement speaker
- Global Perspectives Program (for August C of E annual report)
- Communicating Science, became a university spotlight story and an article in SPHERES

Increased the number of Graduate School notices and calendar listings on Virginia Tech News site, and boosted the number of links associated with the Graduate School on the weekly student edition of University News email, which reaches all students on all campuses.

Also worked with other communicators to feature graduate students in their stories, which resulted in an increased focus on those students' contributions and their visibility in stories. Several colleges and departments highlighted graduate students on their webpages and in print and social media publications after the awards and scholars stories were published.

Outside media:

- Story in the Roanoke Times about the child care initiative, which ran front of the New River Valley section
- Story on WVTF on the Ethics requirements
- Story on WSLs on the Little Hokie Hangout and child care initiatives

Print materials

- Developed 4-page Graduate School information brochure, using the 2014 templates.
- Developed a 4-page diversity/inclusion brochure with Dannette Beane.
- Worked with Dannette Beane on an Inclusion/Diversity poster and other materials.
- Worked with University Relations design team to develop new Graduate School Powerpoint, Flier, Brochure templates, and a social media logo.

3. Educate communications managers across the university about the Graduate School and its initiatives and students.

The Graduate School hosted two university relations communicators meetings over the year. Dean DePauw spoke at one and Dannette Beane was the featured speaker at the other.

4. I worked with Monika Gibson, Lauren Surface, Dannette Beane, Marin Riegger and the GSA to post more events and activities on the university calendar and write notices to focus on

projects, awards nominations and other deadline-based activities on the university calendar and in university news.

5. Evaluate the website to determine how content can be better packaged and to highlight key initiatives, such as the child care programs and InclusiveVT.

- Developed strategy for short-term webpage update, initiated in November; Jeremy and Ziggy working on it in December
- Updated several pages and fixed broken links. Worked with Marija on new look for awards page and links to galleries.
- Working as liaison/coordinator for the web redesign project with New City (ongoing)

6. Evaluate peer institutions' webpages to determine what they do well and what we need to do to improve.

Reviewed all SCHEV peer graduate school websites, from home pages to back pages. Have shared that information with the New City developers. They have since analyzed graduate school and university websites as well as part of the redesign process.

Also began the process of building an Instagram account for the Graduate School.

7. Evaluate the graduate school's print materials and begin creating, designing and building products to fill gaps.

- Developed 4-page Graduate School information brochure, using the 2014 templates.
- Developed a 4-page diversity/inclusion brochure with Dannette Beane.
- Worked with Dannette Beane on an Inclusion/Diversity poster and other materials.
- Worked with University Relations design team to develop new Graduate School Powerpoint, Flier, Brochure templates, and a social media logo.

8. Explore ways to increase visibility of Expectations for Graduate Education.

Worked with then Ombudsperson Ennis McCrery on potential print products highlighting the expectations, using the "Expectations at a Glance" as the launching point. Now working with University Relations design and editing team on a product for students, faculty, departments and the graduate school.

Additional activities:

Worked with University Relations video department on a short video showcasing the Graduate Life Center. Video has been shot. Narration and editing scheduled for Fall 2015.

Named to Northern Virginia Strategic Communications Committee

Worked with Child Care Coordinator and with the IGEP Associate Dean to ensure all materials associated with those programs aligned with university branding guidelines, and helped with the agreement to use "Hokie," a term licensed by the athletics department, in Little Hokie Hangout. Also worked with university design and editing team on new templates.

