

Virginia Tech Graduate School communications department

2015-16 Annual Report

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In 2015-16, Graduate School communications continued its focus on improving and increasing reach and engagement with multiple audiences, using social media platforms, University news, press releases and key publications. We also continued a redesign of the Graduate School website, moving it to the university's new Content Management System (CMS). Summaries of key efforts and accomplishments are listed below.

Communications/information products

With Dannette Beane, converted the Graduate School's recruitment brochure to a 12-page, 8-inch square glossy publication, with a pdf counterpart online. We updated the photos to include a diverse array of graduate students and included information on several Transformative Graduate Education (TGE) initiatives. The brochure has been used by both Graduate School recruitment staff and recruiters from colleges and programs across the university.

With Monika Gibson and Lauren Surface, designed and published a full-color map/brochure of the Graduate Life Center, featuring photos of graduate students throughout. The brochure led to new posters for the GLC and Graduate School lobbies, and new signage for the meeting rooms.

Website

- Coordinated the website redesign, working with a team of graduate school directors and with New City designers
- Reviewed new copy for new website and edited copy on the existing website
- Helped design and build sections and pages for the new website and developed a library of more than 200 photos for use on the site
- Worked with Associate Dean Amy Pruden to revamp the Interdisciplinary Graduate Education webpages, consolidating content, raising visibility of the IGEP blog, and adding an Individualized Ph.D. (IPhD) program page and a page with links to other interdisciplinary graduate education efforts across the university.
- Compiled an inventory of the new website pages, including their locations and the URLs of old pages from which they were built, if applicable, so University Relations webmaster and his team can redirect users to the new pages.

Social media

- Created and launched an Instagram Graduate School account.
- Continued to grow Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn followers and presence.

Facebook:

Increased number of followers/likes from 3,779 in July 2015 to 4,591 in August 2016.

Increased average weekly reach to about 4,200 followers, prior to Facebook recalibrating its algorithms in its effort to push nonprofit/business accounts to pay to boost posts. Our organic reach dropped to about 2,100 followers per week, but organic shares and activity have begun to amplify our reach.

LinkedIn:

After establishing a LinkedIn university page in September 2014, we now have more than 653 followers. We also have seen an increase in the number of organic shares of posts made by the Graduate School.

Twitter:

We have increased twitter followers from 1,339 in 2015 to 1,968 in July 2016, and have more than 3,800 posts. Our 2016-17 communication plan includes increasing the number of posts and boosting the number of accounts the Graduate School follows, which will increase our reach.

We have built Twitter exchanges/relationships with departments, IGEPS, colleges, organizations across campus and increased awareness of the Graduate School's feed.

Storify:

The Graduate School has used this social media post aggregation platform to build several narratives, including the 2016 Global Perspectives Program Twitter/Instagram/Facebook posts, 2016 Spring commencement, and Dean DePauw's 31 tips for thriving in Graduate School on Twitter. The stories received more than 450 organic (no promotion) views over the course of the year.

Campaigns:

We developed a social media campaign on Facebook and Twitter highlighting student responses to prompts about Inclusion and Diversity shared with students on the Graduate Center Walls. Photos and posts ran on both social media platforms, and on Instagram.

University Relations

Graduate education-focused stories for the University Relations News pages and the university's website home page included:

- Graduate student awarded Virginia Center for Health Innovation fellowship
- Graduate Student Assembly elects new slate of officers for 2016-17
- Graduate School honors 23 students as Citizen Scholars
- Laura DeNardis to receive 2016 Graduate School Alumni Achievement Award
- Graduate School hosts training institute for Ecuador university faculty
- Doctoral student shares cancer research with high school students
- Virginia Tech graduate student in Chesapeake wins national Milken Educator award
- Graduate School Dean Karen P. DePauw wins outstanding contributions award
- Monique McKay named Graduate School ombudsperson

- Graduate Life Center celebrates its 10th anniversary
- 'Bring Your Children to School Day' aims to highlight need for more child care at Virginia Tech campuses
- Graduate School welcomes new and returning students with week of events
- Virginia Tech Graduate School honors top scholars of the 2015-16 academic year
- Kacy Lawrence joins Graduate School as data reporting and assessment administrator
- Virginia Tech graduate programs among the best in the nation according to latest survey
- Global Perspectives Program scholars cap study abroad with presentations at Swiss Embassy
- Doctoral student Anne Hilborn shares Serengeti field work and photos on Twitter
- 4 graduate students chosen as 2016 Bouchet Honor Society scholars
- Mary Tackett and Richard Rodrigues named Virginia Tech graduate students of the year
- Demand is rising for Virginia Tech's Communicating Science course
- Academy for Graduate Teaching Assistant Excellence (Spotlight)
- Najla Mouchrek pursues Virginia Tech's first individualized Ph.D.
- Graduate School Diversity Scholars to share projects on May 5

Additional projects

I worked with Student Services to update the scripts for the Graduate Awards dinner in March and the Graduate Commencement Ceremony in May, and worked with University Relations to provide coverage and support for both the Graduate School and University commencements in May, and the Graduate School commencement in December 2015.

Working with the Ombudsperson, I began the process of updating the Expectations for Graduate Education, and aligned the condensed version to the larger document/website.

From October 2015 through June 2016, at the request of Dean DePauw, I provided communications support to the Office of Inclusion and Diversity. Work included boosting social media activity, writing several stories for university news, and assisting the Dean with the InclusiveVT annual report.

Key goals for 2016-17

- Launch the redesigned Graduate School website on the university's CMS, and continue refining and improving the site.
- Work with University Relations on rebranding efforts, making sure the graduate school is part of the conversation.
- Continue work in the Expectations for Graduate Education.
- Report and write stories focused on graduate education programs/initiatives and graduate students for University News and the Graduate School website, and help share them with audiences and track reach and engagement.
- Increase our presence and visibility on LinkedIn, using metrics to assist the process.
- Increase our activity on Instagram.
- Continue to build our reach, audience, and engagement on Twitter and LinkedIn.

- Work with Dean DePauw to develop a webpage featuring key presentations.
- Work with Dannette Beane to build a library of short videos of students talking about their graduate school experience.
- Work with Kacy Lawrence to develop more graphics highlighting our facts and figures, and sharing survey results and other data.
- Work with Associate Dean Amy Pruden to design and produce a 12-16 page brochure on the interdisciplinary graduate education programs and IPhD.
- Working with University Relations on social media best practices and incorporating them into the Graduate School's social media accounts.