

## **Graduate Certificate in Strategic Communication** **September 23, 2019**

### **Introduction and Rationale**

Strategic Communication is a rapidly growing field, with the United States Bureau of Labor and Statistics projecting a growth of 9-10% in the areas of public relations as well as digital and social media through 2026. Individuals working in the field of strategic communication are coming from a wide array of undergraduate backgrounds, from communication to business to English and more. As people start on a strategic communication career path from a variety of different undergraduate backgrounds, and as more individuals already working in this field want to increase their potential career prospects, it is necessary for these individuals to have the opportunities to learn and develop the basic knowledge and skills to help make them effective strategic communication professionals.

The intent and goal of this graduate certificate is to combine three of our currently offered foundational graduate courses and one elective of a student's choosing into a ***Graduate Certificate in Strategic Communication***. The Graduate Certificate in Strategic Communication will provide professional education and training at the graduate level. It will focus on: the basic principles a strategic communication professional faces; the theoretical background necessary to understand how to create effective public relations, social media, and strategic communication campaigns; and the methodological skills required to test and understand the effectiveness of currently implemented campaigns. Graduates of this certificate program will have the knowledge and skill set to effectively pursue their desired career within the fields of Public Relations, Digital Media, Social Media, and other Strategic Communication areas.

### **Primary Target Audience and Estimated Enrollment Potential**

This certificate program is designed for both those individuals looking to start a career and those individuals already working who would like to make themselves more valuable within their current employment situations in the various fields within strategic communication. Individuals from any undergraduate background looking to work, or currently working, in the areas of *public relations, digital media, social media, and other strategic communication-related positions* will find the content pertinent and valuable to their current and future employment goals. The enrollment potential for this program over time is strong. We predict a few individuals will initially enroll in the certificate program and that in a few years we would have 10 to 15 students enrolled.

### **Certificate's Competitive Advantage**

The online nature of this curriculum, with all four courses being offered in online formats only, makes this certificate program very attractive to working professionals as well as recent college graduates. While the University of Delaware is in close proximity to cities where many strategic communication and public relations professionals are employed (Wilmington, Philadelphia, Baltimore) the online delivery of this certificate will make it attractive to individuals from across the United States (and potentially beyond). While some students may seek an advanced degree, others are looking for specific content area to propel them forward in their careers. A certificate offers students a credential that supports their need for advancement without the full commitment of a Master of Arts degree, which takes more time and financial resources. The certificate program may also be the gateway into the MA program in that someone who enrolls in the certificate program might be motivated subsequently to apply for the Masters degree. Individuals who successfully complete the certificate program are excellent candidates for the Masters degree in Strategic Communication and, if interested, will be given full consideration for admission.

### **Program Description**

The Certificate in Strategic Communication requires satisfactory completion of four (4) graduate level courses (12 credits) as detailed below. Students are required to take three core courses (9 credits) and make select a fourth course (3 credits) from a menu of choices.

Each certificate course must be completed with a grade no lower than a B-; the overall GPA of the Certificate in Strategic Communication courses must be no lower than 3.0.

Students are required to take the following three core courses:

- COMM702 Principles of Strategic Communication*
- COMM703 Strategic Communication – Research*
- COMM706 Strategic Communication – Theory*

One additional course must be taken from the list below:

- COMM609 Public Relations Campaign Planning*
- COMM707 Strategic Communication Ethics*
- COMM719 Reputation Management*
- COMM722 Crisis Communication*
- COMM724 Public Relations Writing*
- COMM733 Writing for Digital Media*
- COMM734 Digital Media Content Strategy*
- COMM754 Communication and Leadership*

## **Requirements for Enrollment**

1. Applicants must hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited four-year college or university with a minimum grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 system. Undergraduate transcripts must be provided with the application.
2. Two letters of recommendation indicating the capability, interest, scholastic, and professional potential of the candidate for graduate study.
3. An application essay addressing the reasons behind the applicant's interest in this certificate program.
4. International applicants must demonstrate a satisfactory level of proficiency in the English language if English is not their first language. The University requires an official TOEFL score of at least 550 on paper-based, 213 on computer-based, or 79 on Internet-based tests. TOEFL scores more than two years old cannot be considered official. Alternately, IELTS can be accepted in place of the TOEFL. The minimum IELTS score is 6.5 overall with no individual sub-score below 6.0.