

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

NO.: BHE 22- 24

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DATE: January 24, 2022

BOARD DATE: February 1, 2022

**APPROVAL OF LETTER OF INTENT OF BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY TO
AWARD THE MASTER OF ARTS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND
AUTHORIZATION FOR FAST TRACK REVIEW**

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the Letter of Intent of Bridgewater State University to award the **Master of Arts in Public Relations** and has determined that the proposal aligns with BHE criteria. Accordingly, the BHE authorizes the Commissioner to review the program and to make a final determination on degree-granting authority pursuant to the Fast Track Review protocol.

VOTED: Motion approved and advanced to the full BHE by the Executive Committee on 1/24/2022; and adopted by the BHE on 2/1/2022.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9(b), AAC 18-40

Contact: Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D., Senior Associate Commissioner for Strategic Planning and Public Program Approval

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
February 1, 2022
Bridgewater State University
Letter of Intent
Master of Arts in Public Relations

DEGREE TITLE ABSTRACT ON INTENT AND MISSION OF PROGRAM

Bridgewater State University (BSU) intends to offer a Master of Arts in Public Relations (MA/PR) as an online degree program that is designed for students in industry settings, including highly skilled positions in integrated communication fields that include, but are not limited to, public relations, marketing, media relations, digital strategy, fundraising and development, public affairs, and social trend research. It is further intended that the program will enable graduate students to develop and extend applied and strategic communication skills and public relations knowledge, by providing the ethical, intellectual, and practical tools that strengthen and expand lifelong social, cultural, and professional opportunities. The proposed MA/PR program is designed as a tool for workforce development, with a direct emphasis on increasing economic opportunities for regional residents. As students conduct scholarship, internships, and project-based-learning in cooperation with community partners, they will utilize and promote BSU's position as a primary economic, cultural, and intellectual engine in southeastern Massachusetts. It is expected that the program will provide a faster route to a master's degree via its Early Admissions Pathway (a four plus one program) and a seven-and-a-half-week quarter system, fulfilling the need for an affordable, Massachusetts-based, public online graduate program.

The proposed Master of Arts in Public Relations was approved by the Bridgewater State University Board of Trustees on June 17, 2021. The LOI was circulated on October 7, 2021. No comments were received.

A. ALIGNMENT WITH MASSACHUSETT'S GOALS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Address Gaps in Opportunity and Achievement in Alignment with Campus-Wide Goals
The Equity Agenda and BSU's Campus Strategic Plan significantly influenced the development of the proposed MA/PR program. It is intentionally tethered to multiple strategic goals, which are explicated below in section B of this motion. In this context BSU holds that traditional media has evolved technologically and splintered into an extensive number of options for the consumer, becoming more difficult for institutions and individuals to manage their public relations, branding, and messaging to key audiences and stakeholders. As the workplace grows progressively virtual, this trend

accelerates. A wider variety of institutions are now thinking strategically about communicating their mission and values within a competitive landscape. Businesses and non-profits that previously neglected or ignored public relations now find themselves having to navigate complex interactions with internal and external audiences; these organizations are responding by hiring in-house or agency public relations practitioners. At the same time, BSU's response to the COVID-19 global pandemic saw many faculty members pivot to online teaching, building familiarity and expertise in this course modality. Large numbers of faculty members completed the BSU summer online offering on teaching and course design, based on Quality Matters rubrics and standards, and supported by the Teaching and Technology Center. BSU plans that as a post-graduate learning opportunity, the proposed online MA/PR will offer graduate educational opportunities for all learners, and specifically intended for students in southeastern Massachusetts. This includes students completing undergraduate programs at BSU.

Program or Department Supports to Ensure Student Retention and Completion

The recently commissioned study from BSU's Office of Institutional Research demonstrated that retention rates for public relations first-year students were seventy-five percent and for transfer students were eighty-two percent. The BSU public relations undergraduate program attracts and supports students as they navigate their studies at BSU. The department was one of the first at the university to offer learners new and innovative degree completion options, both in Cape Cod cohorts and online. The online undergraduate program has been bolstered by the implementation of best learning practices as outlined in the nationally recognized Quality Matters program. This newly proposed graduate program places the department at the forefront of online graduate programming at the university. As well, BSU's College of Graduate Studies offers extensive support to students via the Graduate Writing Fellows Program, a no-cost skills course, "Maximizing the Graduate Student Experience Course," as well as multiple student-centered policies.

Additionally, BSU is developing an on-campus agency '**Studio Bridge W**' within the Communications Department. It is planned that the agency will serve as a supervised, experiential learning site for the proposed program. It is expected to be a model for national public relations initiatives, and to be operational when the proposed MA/PR is fully approved and ready to enroll students.

Alliances and Partnerships with PK-12, Other IHE's, Community Employers

This graduate program does not directly link with PK-12. However, it is planned that the proposal will build off an undergraduate program that is connecting, recruiting, and enrolling diverse students from area high schools. In addition, it is planned that the program will engage with regional employers. BSU anticipates that most students will be working in associated fields while using the proposed program as a vehicle for professional advancement. Thus, coursework design is expected to integrate real-time solutions for current employers via project-based learning. Additionally, internships are expected to be a part of the student experience and BSU is preparing to establish an advisory council that includes employers, once the LOI is approved by BHE. The department cites its thriving undergraduate internship program with relationships at organizations such as the Metro South Chamber of Commerce, the American Cancer Society, Shift Communication, and 360 PR. BSU fully anticipates these relationships to serve as a foundational to the proposed MA/PR. It is further expected that the BSU Alumni and Development Office offers resources will be deployed in expanding partnership opportunities.

Relationship to MassHire Regional Blueprints

In a report completed for BSU, Eduventures provided evidence that southeastern Massachusetts needs an increased number of public relations professionals at a faster rate than regional and national markets. The market analyses conducted in December 2019 and January 2021 showed that “... *the public relations market is growing and also getting more competitive...*” The 2021 report indicates that these trends have continued to increase during the last year, despite the ill-effects of the pandemic on the job market. The same report states that “...*nationally, regionally, and within Massachusetts, public relations specialists and public relations fundraising managers are growing significantly faster than the average of all jobs*”¹.

The proposed MA/PR degree is anticipated to directly serve the fastest-growing job growth industries in southeastern Massachusetts. According to the *Southeastern Massachusetts Labor Market Blueprint*, the three priority industries are Healthcare; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; and Finance and Insurance. The proposed MA/PR program curriculum is designed to enhance professional skill development in these three industries. In addition, BSU plans that the proposed program will serve other industries important to southeastern Massachusetts, such as tourism and hospitality, through intersections with a variety of enterprises that are vital to the growth of the region. Research shows that there is considerable need and demand for a public relations graduate degree in and in southeastern Massachusetts as well as all of New

¹ A summary of the Eduventures report was included in the LOI materials circulated on October 7, 2021.

England ². Additionally, the workforce growth rate for public relations specialists exceeds the national average for other occupational categories.³ In addition, a recent BSU survey of senior-undergraduates in Communication Studies, over sixty percent of students stated that they would be interested in pursuing a master's degree in public relations at BSU. Seventy-five percent of current graduate students at BSU indicated in a separate survey—the bi-annual Student Experience Survey of Spring 2021—that they would like to see more online offerings in the College of Graduate Studies.

Duplication

BSU indicated that currently, there are no public relations master's programs available in public higher education in Massachusetts, and that only one public applied-communication master's degree program exists in the Commonwealth. BSU further noted that it is well-positioned to provide the opportunity. This program would be BSU's first fully online graduate program, and also the first to run courses on an accelerated time frame (seven and a half weeks). The accelerated timeframe is designed to provide students with the flexibility to concentrate on fewer courses at a time and to achieve program milestones more quickly. The accelerated model is especially well-suited for graduate students and online learners. Fitchburg State University (FSU) offers an M.S. in Applied Communication, Social Media Concentration. It is an online program featuring seven-week accelerated classes. Sharing some core competencies found in most Communication programs, FSU's program focuses on Digital and Social Media, rather than broader public relations functions. The total cost of this program is approximately \$13,500. Stonehill College offers an M.A. in Integrated Marketing Communications. This program is housed in the Department of Business Administration within the School of Business. While this program shares learning outcomes that are similar to BSU's program, it is geared toward marketing and advertising rather than to the broader skills of a public relations strategist. The Stonehill program is a two-year hybrid program, requiring on-campus attendance. The yearly total cost of the program is approximately \$20,000. Boston University offers an M.S. in Public Relations. It is primarily a full-residency program, with hybrid and online offerings. The estimated yearly cost of this two-year program is \$75,000 with housing/incidentals and \$60,851 for attendance only. Lasell College in Newton, M.A. offers an M.S. in Communication: Public Relations. It is an online program that offers some hybrid classes and a similar course selection to the proposed program. The two-year cost for the program is approximately \$22,000.

Innovative Approaches to Teaching and Learning

² Mass.gov. *Regional Labor Market Blueprints*. Southeastern Labor Market Blueprint and Southeast 2020 Update. Retrieved at <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/view-your-regions-blueprint>.)

³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections, 2019-2029

All of the faculty members planning to teach in the proposed MA/PR graduate program are well-versed in best practices for online teaching as a result of training and professional development in this area during the pandemic. Course shells and syllabi will be consistently branded and similarly structured for student-centered utility. BSU plans that program faculty will work with an in-house course designer.

The Studio Bridge W Agency and course will mimic the professional workplace, offering students a unique workforce-oriented experience with significant high-impact practice opportunities. Studio Bridge W and related courses were developed from the Department's 2018-19 Provost's Innovation Grant, which was intended to serve undergraduate and graduate students. The latter will be able to participate in the agency online, similar to participating from an off-site location in the workforce, or through on-campus participation. Within the Studio Bridge W course and suite, students will have access to industry-relevant software, including Adobe Creative Cloud, for writing, digital imaging, layout, and web content management. In addition, subscriptions to TrendKite/Cision and Hubspot will be used for digital analytics, message analysis, voice comparison, and social amplification. Professional memberships to the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) will provide access to student career opportunities to broaden professional networks and enhance educational experiences. The College of Graduate Studies will explore funding membership in PRSSA for all graduate students at \$60 per student per year. Bridgewater's Information Technology is working on a range of affordable solutions for software packages. BSU estimates a \$28 student technology fee assessed for five PR courses.

B. ALIGNMENT WITH CAMPUS STRATEGIC PLAN AND MISSION

Priority Rationale and Support of Strategic Plan and Overall Mission of Institution

BSU's institutional strategic goals and mission were applied to the development of the proposed MA/PR. The Academic Affairs division also has strategic goals that are nested within the BSU campus-wide strategic plan. The relevant goals and the particular way the MA/PR program were developed to align with each goal are detailed below, starting with the Campus Strategic Plan goals, and followed by the Academic Affairs goals as follows:

Campus Strategic Plan

GOAL 1: Focus resources and decisions on the overarching priority of student success. The most recent *BSU Factbook* reports that in 2019 there were 547 undergraduate students in Communication Studies. This is an increase of 5.8 percent

from 2015, when there were 517 majors in the department. The undergraduate public relations concentration offers a foundational understanding of the field of public relations. A master's-level degree program will build on this foundation for BSU students and other learners in the region, offering the opportunity to thrive and to lead in this field. A BSU MA/PR degree will offer job seekers an affordable and accessible way to gain a competitive edge and reduce on-the-job training for employers. BSU and other research indicates that public relations skills can be applied to a wide variety of industries, including business, non-profit management, education, STEM, public health, global relations, and emergency management.⁴ Students in undergraduate majors and concentrations within Communication Studies, as well as those BSU undergraduates outside of the major who have taken public speaking, writing, and behavioral/social science coursework (all core requirements), are eligible to apply for the Early Admissions Pathway (4 plus 1) for Public Relations.

GOAL 2: Provide a teaching and learning environment with exceptional educational opportunities for intellectual, creative, and professional growth.

The Department of Communication Studies has been a BSU leader in extending educational opportunities to learners at different stages of their careers. It has led the way in the delivery of online classes, with core public relations faculty trained in the nationally recognized Quality Matters standards certification program. Training in on-line pedagogies led to successful summer online teaching, and subsequently, BSU's higher education online teaching and course design graduate certificate. Many professors have completed this training and more will do so, or otherwise demonstrate proficiency, before they can teach in the proposed program.

It is anticipated the MA/PR master's students conducting their scholarship, internships, and project learning, will both utilize and promote BSU's position as a primary economic, cultural, and intellectual engine in southeastern Massachusetts. Many of the assignments in the courses will involve taking on needed projects for regional partners. This experiential learning is expected to build students' confidence and contribute to professional portfolios to be shared with prospective employers. Students may elect to work virtually or in-person with the Studio Bridge W agency. The department's public relations agency course replicates the professional workplace on campus through its media lab and Studio Bridge W. This student-run, public relations agency and media production/editing suite is an example of a unique and exceptional high-impact practice (HIPS), which leads to deeper, more workforce-oriented learning. While HIPS are not normally or explicitly employed within graduate education, hands-on experiences offer rich learning opportunities at any level.

⁴ Hand, Lindsey. (2015). "The Interdisciplinary Nature of Communication Studies." American Public University.

GOAL 3: Provide opportunities for personal and professional growth for faculty, librarians, and staff in support of organizational progress. One of the faculty challenges of teaching in an undergraduate-only program is a lack of opportunities to engage with high-level, discipline-specific ideas consistently, beyond periodic conference participation. BSU sees that a master's degree program, especially one that works with learners and part-time faculty currently employed in related workplaces, continually rejuvenates a department's faculty, staff, and associated librarians. Teaching in a master's degree program pushes and reinvigorates professors, strengthening the faculty's scholarly engagement and approach to undergraduate education.

GOAL 4: Serve as a regional catalyst for economic, cultural, and intellectual engagement. BSU's Eduventures reports from 2019 and 2021 are based on data collected about the occupations coded as Public Relations Specialists, Editors, Advertising and Promotions Managers, and Public Relations and Fundraising Managers. Entry-level job titles include Public Relations Specialist, Publicist, Event Coordinator, PR and Community Relations Specialist, Marketing Communications Assistant, Government Relations and Policy Specialist, Media Relations Associate, Development Communications Associate, Social Media Communications Specialist, Investor Relations Associate, and Science Communication Coordinator. Nationally, all but one these areas have seen growth (Editor category). BSU primarily examined SOC codes for Public Relations Specialists and Public Relations and Fundraising Managers. Public relations specialists were found to be a segment of the workforce that is growing faster than the national average when compared to other occupational categories.⁵ While the average national workforce is experiencing a 3.7 percent growth rate, that figure is 7.2 percent for public relations and 9.2 percent for public relations and fundraising positions respectively. In May 2020, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics listed Massachusetts as having one of the highest employment levels in Public Relations and Fundraising Managers in the nation and showed that the metropolitan regions of Boston-Nashua and Providence-Warwick offered some of the highest employment levels and national pay in each category. The recently updated Labor Market Information website for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts noted an annual increase of 4.4 percent in Public Relations Specialists positions.

GOAL 5: Advance diversity and social justice with impact in the region and beyond. According to [DATA USA](#)⁶, the most common race/ethnicity for public relations specialists in the United States is white (non-Hispanic), representing 76.4 percent of all practitioners. The second most common race or ethnicity is Black (Non-Hispanic), representing only 7.95 percent of the total. BSU anticipates that the affordable and more

⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections, 2019-2029

⁶ <https://datausa.io/profile/soc/public-relations-specialist#demographics> retrieved 12/13/21

easily accessed online nature of this program will allow for wider participation across socio-economic levels and a more diverse student body. Planned enrollment approaches to address the lack of diversity will encourage/mentor minority BSU undergraduate students to enroll in the master's program via the Early Admissions Pathway (four plus one) option, support involvement in leadership roles with student organizations such as the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), invite guest speaker professionals from minority communities, and actively market the program to diverse students via our presence at graduate program fairs, geofencing digital advertisements, info sessions, and direct mail campaigns. Regarding gender, 64.4 percent of public relations specialists are female. This degree will provide students with more affordable and flexible opportunities for career and economic advancement. This flexibility will be especially helpful for those with young families, full-time employment, and considerable extended-family responsibilities.

Academic Affairs' Strategies

1. Providing dynamic learning environments focused on our students' futures. The master's degree program in public relations will be a one hundred percent online program. While face-to-face contact is important in public relations, future employment in the global field will increasingly rely on social and digital media communication. The COVID-19 pandemic also highlighted how technological advancements have enabled innovative digital services and tools to replace traditional public relations tactics and functions. The 2021 Eduventures report finds that in New England, public relations master's degrees grew at a rate of eleven percent from 2014 to 2019; the report urges BSU to stand out as it enters this market. The report explains that *"...in order to be competitive in this market, Bridgewater would want to make sure to stand-out and be clear in value proposition and differentiators."* BSU expects to fulfill this by offering a one hundred percent online degree and a seven-and-a-half week "quarter" system (vs. a traditional fifteen-week semester). The program is expected to focus on strategic planning, critical thinking, and project-based curriculum, which is further expected to benefit current undergraduate students, potential students, the department, the university, and the community at large.

2. Empowering faculty and librarians to excel within their disciplines. Faculty and librarians are often not able to engage the full breadth of their disciplinary knowledge, interest, and curiosity in their work with undergraduate students. This new program affords this opportunity as graduate student research and project-based learning will serve as a catalyst for additional research and creative activity by faculty. Research also indicates that project-based learning using a portfolio-approach results in more reflective learning and authentic student engagement, an outcome that is ideally suited

to a professionally oriented graduate program.⁷ In addition, graduate students serving as research assistants support faculty to pursue scholarship and external funding for travel and resource/equipment purchases.

3. Investing in high-impact practices and the people advancing them. The proposed graduate degree in PR is geared toward experiential learning. It is heavy on research, promotes workforce-specific and project-based learning, and encourages internships, applied learning, and global experiences through hands-on, in-class assignments.

4. Encouraging our people to develop their lives and careers. If there is one overarching goal of the degree, it is to give learners the tools to acquire additional knowledge about themselves and advance their career opportunities.

5. Making a positive impact on Massachusetts and beyond. Graduate education via the master's degree program will impact the broader university community by engaging in research and service in the public interest to the region, the state, and the nation. BSU plans that when graduate students work with faculty and librarians, scholarship and creative work result in economic, cultural, and societal developments that serve BSU's mission of responsible citizenship and stewardship. This program's commitment to project-based learning facilitates the relationship between BSU and its communities.

6. Serving as a beacon for diversity and social justice. BSU holds that a better-informed citizenry understands the pressing need to lessen social and economic inequality in pursuit of a just world. And that as such, classrooms can and should be viewed as sites of social transformation. The faculty members within the proposed MA/PR are committed to teaching, curriculum design, and development practices that mitigate unintentional harm to underrepresented communities and racial/ethnic groups. BSU admissions and recruitment practices are routinely updated and reevaluated to recruit a diverse group of incoming students. BSU's reasonable price-point and the College of Graduate Studies' support systems, including the Graduate Writing Fellows Program and a no-cost, graduate skills course, "Maximizing the Graduate Student Experience," are designed to allay fears about graduate school within a student body largely comprised of students who are the first in their families to attend a graduate program.

⁷ Sanchez, Andrea Ximena Castano, Angel Pio Gonzalez Soto, and Jose Miguel Jimenez Gonzalez. (2015). "Factors influencing e-portfolio use and students' approaches to learning in higher education." *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education*. Vol. 11, Issue 3

Program Goals and Learning Objectives (Form B)

The goals of the proposed MA/PR program are to provide students with a liberal arts education that emphasizes advanced knowledge of public relations theory and professional strategic communication skills; develop intellectually open and aware lifelong communicators who actively engage with their local, regional, and global communities; prepare students for the digital work environment; and create ethically grounded public relations leaders.

The learning objectives planned to be met upon completion of the MA/PR program, graduates will be able to demonstrate advanced understanding of the strategic and critical thinking skills central to the public relations profession; develop strategic public relations research, planning, and communication programs; demonstrate concise, strategic, and objective-oriented communication skills using mass media, digital, and social media modalities; design systematic and theoretically-informed strategic public relations campaigns and content; practice relevant codes of professional ethics and standards for strategic communication.

It is planned that these goals and objectives will be evaluated through coursework direct assessment (exams, project-based learning assignments, public information campaigns/projects), student engagement with high-impact practices (capstone applied work, internships, community engagement), indirect assessment (student feedback via surveys at the program and college levels), and alumni career monitoring (LinkedIn and regular surveys).

ALIGNMENT WITH OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL OBJECTIVES OF INSTITUTION

Enrollment Projections (Form C, Appendices)

In the first five years, it is expected that the proposed MA/PR will serve at least 44 students in total, based on the conservative anticipated yearly enrollment goals below. BSU's Early Admission Pathway (4 plus 1) program will encourage current undergraduate students to enroll in the program.

Resources and Financial Statement of Estimated Net Impact on Institution (Form D)

BSU reports that the Department of Communication Studies has thirteen full-time, tenured/tenure-track faculty members. Of these, four work primarily in the Public Relations concentration and will be able to maintain class offerings for the

undergraduate program. Also, BSU plans to hire adjunct professors with current, hands-on experience in public relations.

Cost and revenue estimates are indicated in form D, based on the projected number of students in form C. These estimates assume a 2 percent tuition and fee increase in years two through five. The chart in form D also assumes four off-load instructors a year at an estimated \$5,000 a course. This is a rough estimate as the majority of instructors cost less than \$5,000 per course. We raise the cost of program instructors in year four and five to account for the fact that higher enrollment may lead us to offer a greater number of courses and the cost per instructor will rise over time. The chart assumes two courses per year cross-listed with 400 level undergraduate sections. It also assumes increased compensation for the DGCE graduate chair.

It is expected that because the proposed program requires little in terms of funding, the enrollment increase will generate more than sufficient revenue to maintain the program. Even with very conservative enrollment figures, BSU anticipates that the program will sustain itself and generate revenue for the university.

The Studio Bridge W is planned to be part of the capstone experience for a newly restructured undergraduate public relations program. The Public Relations Agency graduate class is a project-based class/high impact practice that mirrors the experience of working in a professional public relations agency. This class will be taught entirely online, and students will complete group work using BSU virtual platforms. When Studio Bridge W is up and running, it will be accessed virtually within the graduate program capstone. Graduate students may partner with and/or lead teams of undergraduates working virtually and in-person in the studio. If it is not up and running, the graduate capstone agency option will run as a virtual agency working with a real client or clients for the semester only.

When the Studio Bridge W is fully operational, graduate students can utilize some of the latest software via virtual means. If desired, graduate students will be welcome to make in-person use of the studio. In the interim, students can utilize free software or purchase low-cost access to software via affordable student packages like the ones used by graduate students in cybersecurity. Working with BSU's Internet Technology unit, it has been determined that a package of \$140 per student per year will meet programmatic needs. This package will be funded through a \$28 course fee applied to certain courses; BSU will bring the fee to campus governance after the proposed program is approved.

In terms of infrastructure, Studio Bridge W will need access to industry-relevant software (including Adobe Creative Cloud) for writing, digital imaging, layout, and web content

management. In addition, subscriptions to TrendKite/Cision and Hubspot (provides digital analytics, message analysis, voice comparison, and social amplification), and professional memberships for students/faculty will be required. The College of Graduate Studies will consider supporting membership in the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) for graduate students.

STAFF REVIEW AND VALIDATION

Staff thoroughly reviewed the **LOI** proposing full degree granting authority for the **Master of Arts in Public Relations** submitted by **Bridgewater State University**. Staff validate that the **LOI** includes all data required by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. Staff recommendation is for BHE authorization for the Commissioner to review the program pursuant to the Fast Track review protocol.

Form A2: LOI Graduate Program Curriculum Outline

Major Required (Core) Courses (Total # of courses required = 5)		
<i>Course Number</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>
COMM 501	Theories of Communication	3
COMM 517	Strategic Public Relations	3
COMM 518	Strategic Writing and Media Relations	3
COMM 519	Strategic Public Relations Research	3
	Sub Total # Core Credits Required	12
	Capstone Requirement – Choose one of two (Total # of courses required = 1)	
COMM 590	Capstone I: Public Relations Agency	3
COMM 598	Capstone II: Advanced Internship in Public Relations	3
	<i>Note: If students opt to take both capstones, one can be employed as an elective.</i>	
Elective Courses (total # of courses required = 5)		
COMM 521	Social Media Communication	3
COMM 523	Advanced Crisis Communication	3
COMM 528	Grant Writing	3
COMM 531	Advanced Health Communication	3
COMM 532	Leadership and Communication	3
COMM 533	Strategic Fundraising	3
COMM 537	Public Information Campaigns	3
COMM 538	Cases in Strategic Public Relations	3
COMM 539	Public Relations Special Topics	3
COMM 560	Advanced Organizational Communication	3
COMM 561	Advanced Social Media Communication	3

COMM 598	Advanced Directed Study in Public Relations	3
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<i>Curriculum Summary</i>	
Total number of courses required for the degree	10
Total credit hours required for degree	30

Form B: LOI Goals and Objectives

Goal	Measurable Objective	Strategy for Achievement	Timetable
<p>PROGRAM GOALS</p> <p>Provide students with a liberal arts education that emphasizes advanced knowledge.</p>	<p>Course exams.</p>	<p>The four required courses, COMM 501, 517, 518 and 519 focus on achieving this goal. This will be measured by assessing samples from key course exams.</p>	<p>Measured yearly and included in yearly program assessment reports due June 1st.</p>
<p>Develop intellectually open and aware lifelong communicators who actively engage with their local, regional, and global communities.</p>	<p>Job placement rates in PR or related fields, and local, regional, national, and global connections. We will look for leadership roles in community groups or consulting for such groups.</p>	<p>The whole curriculum contributes to meeting this goal. We will measure via connections on LinkedIn and Alumni surveys</p>	<p>Alumni surveys every three years following first graduate of the program. Included in every third annual assessment report, due June 1st of the relevant years.</p>
<p>Prepare students for the digital work environment.</p>	<p>Students will be exposed to multiple platforms and digital tools through their online courses. Success will be measured by student facility with these tools.</p>	<p>Online platforms will be introduced and supports provided as new tools are used for the first time. The Graduate Assessment committee will measure by assessing samples from key course assignments utilizing these digital tools.</p>	<p>Assessment will occur by-yearly to start and move to yearly assessment in year five. Outcomes included in every third annual assessment report, due</p>

			June 1 st of the relevant years.
Create ethically grounded public relations leaders.	Course readings and discussions focused on ethical concerns in public relations.	The four required courses, COMM 501, 517, 518 and 519 focus on achieving this goal. This will be measured by assessing samples from key course exams.	Measured yearly and included in yearly program assessment reports due June 1 st .
<p>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</p> <p>Demonstrate advanced understanding of the strategic and critical thinking skills central to the public relations profession</p>	The four required courses, COMM 501, 517, 518 and 519 focus on achieving this goal. This will be measured by assessing samples from key course exams.	Course readings and discussions focused on ethical concerns in public relations.	Measured yearly and included in yearly program assessment reports due June 1 st .
Develop strategic public relations research, planning, & communication programs.	The products/deliverables of Capstone I and Capstone II.	This will be achieved by project-based learning assignments, public information campaigns/projects, capstone applied work, internship, and community engagement. The Graduate Assessment committee will measure by assessing samples from the capstone courses.	Measured yearly and included in yearly program assessment reports due June 1 st .

<p>Demonstrate concise, strategic, and objective-oriented communication skills using mass media, digital, and social media modalities.</p>	<p>The products of required courses COMM 518 and COMM 519.</p>	<p>This will be achieved through two required courses, COMM 518 and 519. The Graduate Assessment committee will measure by assessing samples from the capstone courses.</p>	<p>Measured yearly and included in yearly program assessment reports due June 1st.</p>
<p>Design systematic and theoretically informed strategic public relations campaigns and content.</p>	<p>The products of Capstone I and Capstone II.</p>	<p>This will be achieved by project-based learning assessments, public information campaigns/projects, capstone applied work, internship, and community engagement. The Graduate Assessment committee.</p>	<p>Measured yearly and included in yearly program assessment reports due June 1st.</p>

Form C: LOI Program Enrollment

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
New Full-Time	12	8	8	8	8
Continuing Full-Time	0	12	26	26	26
New Part-Time	0	0	0	0	0
Continuing Part-Time	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	12	20	34	34	34

Form D: LOI Program Budget

Annual Expenses					
Cost Categories	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Part Time/Adjunct Faculty (Salary & Fringe)	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$24,000	\$28,000
Staff	\$4,000	\$5,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000
Marketing	Included in existing BSU budgets.	Included in existing BSU budgets.	Included in existing BSU budgets.	Included in existing BSU budgets.	Included in existing BSU budgets.
Total Expenses	\$24,000	\$25,000	\$26,000	\$30,000	\$34,000
Annual Income					
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Tuition and Fees	\$102,654	\$174,511	\$302,940	\$309,060	\$315,180
Total Gross Revenue	\$102,654	\$174,511	\$302,940	\$309,060	\$315,180
Total Net Revenue	\$78,654	\$149,511	\$276,940	\$279,060	\$281,180