



University Council

February 9, 2024

UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE – 2023-2024

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Dear Colleagues:

The attached proposal from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication to create a Graduate Certificate in Crisis, Risk, and Disaster Communication will be an agenda item for the February 16, 2024, Full University Curriculum Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

Susan Sanchez, Chair

cc: Provost S. Jack Hu

Dr. Marisa Pagnattaro

## PROPOSAL FOR A CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

**Date:** December 6, 2023

**School/College/Unit:** Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication

**Department/Division:** Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication

**Certificate Title:** Graduate Certificate in Crisis, Risk, and Disaster Communication

**CIP:** 09.0999

**Effective Term:** Fall 2024

**Which campus(es) will offer this certificate?** Athens

**Level (Undergraduate, Graduate, or Post-Baccalaureate):** Graduate

### **Program Abstract:**

Effective communication and competency in crisis management leadership is pivotal for organizations and stakeholders in times of crisis, risk, and disaster. The Crisis Communication Think Tank (CCTT), a thought leadership entity established in 2018 at the University of Georgia (UGA) and housed in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, has become a globally-recognized best practice model in building academia-industry collaborations among leading crisis scholars and practitioners through dialogue on emerging topics and co-creation of theory-driven, evidence-based advice for crisis research and practice. To educate the next generation of crisis communication leaders, based on the successful CCTT model of bridging academia and industry, this 12-credit graduate certificate program in crisis, risk, and disaster communication will provide advanced learning about crisis, risk, and disaster communication through specialized coursework connecting theory and practice across sectors and industries. Program participants will be recruited primarily from current and future graduate students in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, the Terry College of Business, and the College of Public Health. The proposed certificate is specifically aimed at students interested in obtaining in-depth and integrated education in the interdisciplinary areas of crisis and risk communication, risk management, and disaster management.

The certificate's curriculum is designed to be completed within two years of study. It will utilize currently available UGA graduate courses, instructional personnel, and classroom facilities. Graduate students who successfully complete the certificate will have the advanced communication management knowledge, skills, hands-on experiences, and demonstrated competencies to work with organizational leaders, corporate and/or firm executives, community partners, media professionals, and key stakeholders in and outside organizations to effectively manage crisis, risk, and disaster threats and challenges.

## 1. Purpose and Educational Objectives

*State the purpose and educational objectives of the program. How does this program complement the mission of the institution?*

The purpose of this graduate certificate is to provide students with advanced knowledge, skills, hands-on experiences, and demonstrated competency in applying crisis, risk, and disaster communication theories and principles to manage challenging and complex crisis, risk, and disaster issues. Students who graduate with this certificate will be better able to provide sound guidance on issues that can quickly and profoundly harm organizational reputation, business well-being, and public health and safety. UGA has a commitment to excellence in research, teaching, and learning, with a mission to foster a well-prepared student body. Given the growing need for organizational readiness and the critical role of effective and ethical public communication in society, there is much demand for advancing the training of future leaders and executives in the crisis, risk, and disaster communication domains. In times of crisis, risk, and disaster, leaders in the communication industry, business, and public health agencies must quickly meet the information needs of affected individuals and communities. Students in this program will acquire the knowledge and abilities needed to use communication to effectively respond to information needs, provide clear guidance in situations where uncertainties abound, and foster compliance with recommendations.

This certificate's administration will be housed in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication. In addition to utilizing existing graduate courses and resources, along with the theory and practice foundation provided by the Crisis Communication Think Tank (CCTT), Grady College will collaborate with the Terry College of Business and the College of Public Health in making this a distinct program that advances excellence in crisis, risk, and disaster communication education with three core features:

- *Interdisciplinary*: Mass Communication, Business, Public Health
- *Interconnected*: CCTT as the model for academia-industry collaboration and partnerships
- *International*: CCTT-International network across countries and cultures

Specifically, the following educational objectives will be met by this program:

1. Increased advanced knowledge in the interdisciplinary areas of crisis, risk, and disaster communication for graduate students from mass communication, business, and public health.
2. Increased student communication leadership competency as reflected in greater knowledge and abilities in applying crisis, risk, and disaster communication theories, legal and regulatory considerations, disaster response practices, and research to decision-making, response plans and strategies, and communication activities and messages.
3. Increased student ability to use communication strategies, tactics, theories, and best practices to help organizations, agencies, and others formulate and implement sound, evidence- and theory-based communication activities in a crisis, risk, or disaster management situation.
4. Increased student ability to apply advanced communication management models and frameworks, including from hands-on, project-based, and scholar-practitioner learning experiences.

## 2. Need for the Program

*Explain why this program is necessary. In addition, provide the following information:*

- a. *Semester/Year of Program Initiation*: Fall 2024
- b. *Semester/Year of Full Implementation of Program*: Fall 2024
- c. *Semester/Year First Certificates will be awarded*: Spring 2026
- d. *Annual Number of Graduates expected (once the program is established)*: 30
- e. *Projected Future Trends for number of students enrolled in the program*: 30 annually

Industry and societal demand for graduates with an advanced degree with crisis communication management skills and knowledge are not only increasing but becoming critical in the U.S. and globally, as illustrated by business community and industry thought leadership. For example, a 2023 business journal article at the Wharton School is titled “The prepared leader: The five phases of crisis management” (<https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/the-prepared-leader-the-five-phases-of-crisis-management/>); and a 2023 Forbes article discusses “Why cross-cultural communication can be critical in a business crisis” (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/edwardsegal/2023/07/28/why-cross-cultural-communication-can-be-critical-in-a-business-crisis/>). UGA has been positioned to not only address this need but take the lead as a national and international model for training the next generations of crisis communication leaders.

C. Richard Yarbrough, a 1959 UGA graduate, past president of the National Alumni Association, and recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award, has established the C. Richard Yarbrough professorship in Crisis Communications Leadership, the first of its kind in the nation. Named one of The 100 Most Influential Public Relations Practitioners of the 20th Century by *PR Week* and twice identified by Georgia Trend magazine as one of the 100 Most Powerful and Influential People in the State of Georgia, Yarbrough’s vision is to make UGA “the go-to place for the study of crises.” In addition, the UGA Crisis Communication Think Tank (CCTT) is named one of the best practice models by the *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* via connecting “the best of both worlds” (i.e., crisis scholars and practitioners) in the U.S. and globally. The CCTT leadership has established a partnership with risk management and legal studies experts at the Terry College of Business and disaster management experts at the College of Public Health.

In the program feedback session with industry leaders, Greg Trevor, UGA Associate Vice President and University Spokesperson provided the following thoughts: “*As a crisis communications practitioner for more than a quarter-century, I have seen first-hand how current and future generations of crisis communicators would benefit from an even higher level of academic preparation and practical training. I also can state unequivocally that the CCTT’s existing partnership between academics and practitioners has greatly enhanced my own insights into this rapidly changing field. Based on my preliminary conversations with fellow practitioners, I am convinced that this graduate certificate—combining the distinctive strengths of the University of Georgia’s crisis, risk, and disaster communication curricula—will be highly valued not only by current graduate students, but also by professionals looking to expand their knowledge and skills, and by prospective employers in academia, industry, and the non-profit sector.*”

Other leading crisis scholars and practitioners also offered their support and why this program is needed.

*“The Graduate Certificate in Crisis, Risk, and Disaster Communication is the type of interdisciplinary program we have been needing in crisis management for years. The blend of communication, business, and public health makes it something unique and valuable to students. The certificate program is an amazing opportunity for graduate students at the University of Georgia that students at other schools will envy.”* - Timothy Coombs, Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*

*“In today’s world, risks, crises, and disasters are ever present. Tomorrow’s leaders must be equipped to successfully steer their organizations through choppy waters, and effective communication is essential to this success. With this proposal, UGA will cement their international reputation as the center for risk, crisis, and disaster communication education and*

*research. The proposed certificate is novel and necessary. I anticipate wide interest in this certificate.*" - Brooke Liu, Professor of Communication and former Associate Dean for Graduate Studies at the University of Maryland

*"Communications practitioners all too often learn the business side of crisis management while responding to an issue. Bringing together elements from Communications, Legal, Risk Management, and Disaster Management into a single curriculum puts practitioners from each discipline into a better position to work together more efficiently and effectively when situations arise."* - Matt O'Connor, Executive Director, Public Relations, Wellstar Health System

*"For corporations, the ability to work together cross-functionally is critical in successfully anticipating, preparing, and responding to crisis situations. This certificate program helps to address real-world challenges with a grounding in research."* - Karen White, APR, Retired Executive Director, Corporate Affairs, Amgen

*"The Graduate Certificate in Crisis, Risk, and Disaster Communication is an important step in both acknowledging the complexities of modern crises and preparing organizations for dealing with them. Most organizations, especially corporate entities, still have a traditional hierarchical structure and work in silos, with the various functions and operations within that structure fairly isolated from each other. Because of this, they are ill-prepared to work cross-functionally and in a matrix style when a crisis occurs. On top of that, the very nature of modern crises has evolved into a veritable hydra of disaster, with multiple risks and impacts all needing responses simultaneously. Bringing together the critical disciplines taught separately at Grady, Terry, and the College of Public Health is a best-in-class approach for crisis communications. With this innovative graduate certificate program, the UGA Crisis Communication Think Tank is redefining how organizations prepare for and respond to threats and crises."* - Jason Anthoine, Managing Founder, Audacity

The need for such a program is also strongly supported by UGA faculty. For example:

*"The proposed Graduate Certificate in Crisis, Risk, and Disaster Communication (CRDC) would meet a growing need for graduate students at the University of Georgia. Winston Churchill once said that 'the difference between mere management and true leadership is communication.' At the University of Georgia, we strive to create leaders in an array of fields. Crises challenge even the best leaders and only with training and preparation can future leaders navigate them. As the co-director of the University's Public Affairs Professional Certificate program that strives to prepare students for leadership roles in public affairs communications, I strongly support the establishment of the CRDC to prepare our leaders to effectively communicate on the crises, risks, and disasters of the future."* - Joe Watson Jr., Carolyn Caudell Tieger Professor of Public Affairs Communications, Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication

*"This proposed certificate is an exemplar of effective collaboration across this great university. Combining the resources and expertise in the Grady College, Terry College, and College of Public Health is exactly what is needed to allow students to understand and explore the inter-connectedness of crisis, risk, and disaster communication. Breaking out of proverbial silos, and taking a comprehensive approach to identifying problems and providing solutions, is essential to succeed in today's world. No matter which college a student is coming from, they will have a learning experience like no other that will provide them tremendous personal growth and allow them to take their knowledge and skills to the next level in their careers."* - Jason Epstein, Lecturer of Legal Studies, Terry College of Business

*“Crisis communication is a burgeoning field in organizational communication driven by a need to communicate instantly when faced with an organizational crisis. In its annual crisis report, the Institute for Crisis Management identified more than 2 million news mentions of crises ranging from consumer activism to cybercrime to executive mismanagement and more. The challenge of crisis communication will be addressed by the proposed Graduate Certificate in Crisis, Risk, and Disaster Communication (CRDC). This certificate will help graduate students and business and nonprofit executives be prepared for the ever-growing challenges of crisis communication management. The CRDC Certificate will be an academic credential in this field that is dominated by superficial training in for-profit workshops and other short-term, case study-focused learning. This certificate will bring the academic rigor of combining research findings of leading crisis communication scholars and literature with the applied practicality that has become a hallmark of the University of Georgia's annual Crisis Communication Think Tank that is administered at Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication. An additional benefit of this certificate is the collaboration it represents between faculty from the Grady College, the Terry College of Business, and the College of Public Health. As C. Richard Yarbrough Professor of Crisis Communication Leadership Emeritus, I believe this is an important next step in furthering the reputation of the University of Georgia as a place to turn for crisis communication expertise. I am very excited by the prospects of this certificate and enthusiastically endorse it without reservation.”* - Bryan Reber, C. Richard Yarbrough Professor of Crisis Communication Leadership Emeritus, University of Georgia

Additionally, graduate students’ demand in advancing knowledge in this area has been increasing. As an example, since 2018, the enrollments of Grady College’s graduate risk communication and undergraduate crisis communication courses have been increasing. As demonstrated in thesis and dissertation titles from Grady College M.A. and Ph.D. graduates since 2017, many are either focused on or related to crisis (e.g., organizational responses to crisis misinformation attacks, corporate change management, public health crisis management, ethical considerations in conflict communication), risk (e.g., misinformation spread on social media, health risk message fatigue), and/or disaster areas (e.g., environmental hazard and climate change related risk communication). [See student demand evidence from students and alumni in “Results of Student Survey” in the next section.]

This program will be initiated and implemented in Fall 2024, with the first certificates being awarded in Spring 2026. Thirty annual graduates are expected, a number which will likely hold steady, if not increase, given the growing market and industry demands. Grady College, together with Terry College of Business and College of Public Health program partners, will track these trends to ensure that adequate faculty and staff resources are in place to support graduate students in the certificate program.

### **3. Student Demand**

- a. Provide documentation of evidence of student demand for this program, including a student survey.*

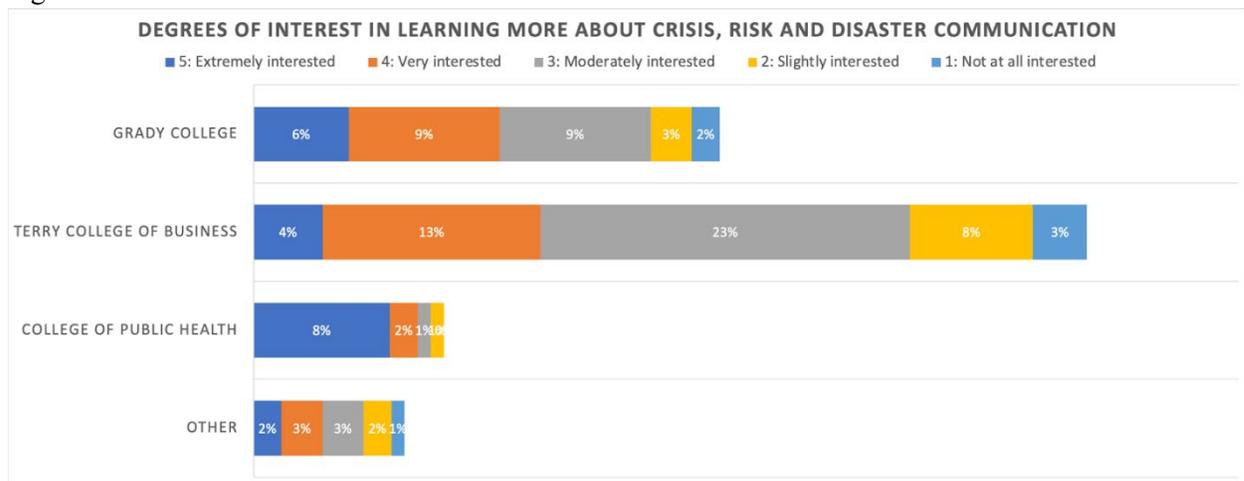
#### **Results of Student Survey**

A survey was launched in October 2023 and completed by 120 UGA students in total (75 undergraduate students and 45 graduate students) who are (1) enrolled in crisis, risk, and/or disaster related courses (e.g., ADPR 5120, Crisis Communication; DMAN 7100, Introduction to Disaster Management; EMBA 7710, Legal and Regulatory Environment of Business; JRMC 8170, Risk Communication; JRMC 9010, Mass Communication Theory; LEGL 4400/6400, Business Law); (2) enrolled in or considering a graduate program, and/or (3) participating in applied communication

focused practice/research student-led, faculty-advised groups at UGA, such as Talking Dog Agency and the Crisis Insights and Analytics Lab at Grady College. About 50.8% of them (n = 61) are from the Terry College of Business, 28.3% (n = 34) are from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, and 11.7% (n = 14) are from the College of Public Health. Eleven students are from other colleges (e.g., College of Education, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, or School of Public and International Affairs).

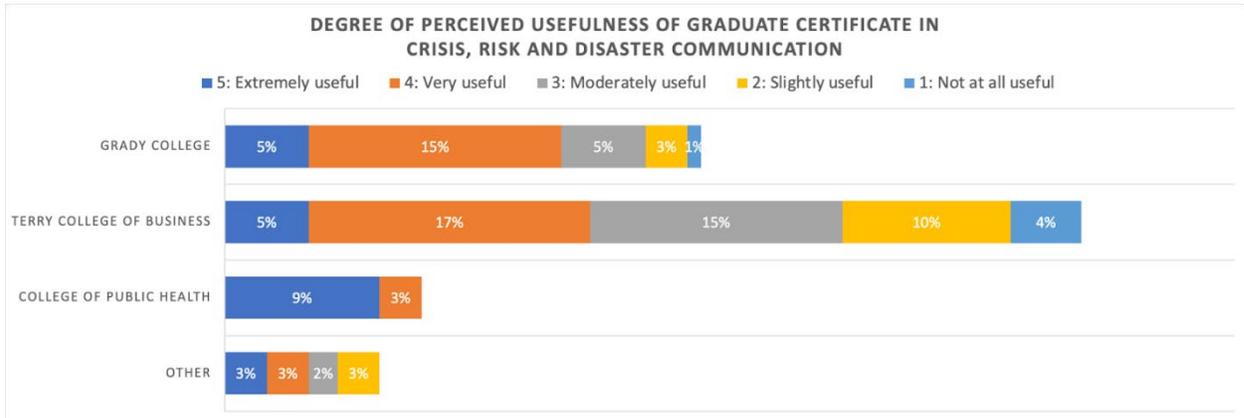
Students were asked to rate how interested they were in learning more about Crisis, Risk, and Disaster Communication. The question was measured with a 5-point scale ranging from *Not at all interested* (1) to *Extremely interested* (5). In their responses, 7 students (5.8%) indicated not at all interested, 15 (12.5%) students indicated slightly interested, 42 (35.0%) were moderately interested, 32 (26.7%) were very interested, and 24 (20.0%) were extremely interested. See Figure 1 for how degrees of interest are distributed across students from multiple colleges. Among the students who completed the survey, all the students from the College of Public Health indicated some degree of interest in learning more about Crisis, Risk, and Disaster Communication, 94.1% of students from Grady College indicated some degree of interest, and 93.4% of students from Terry College indicated some degree of interest.

Figure 1.



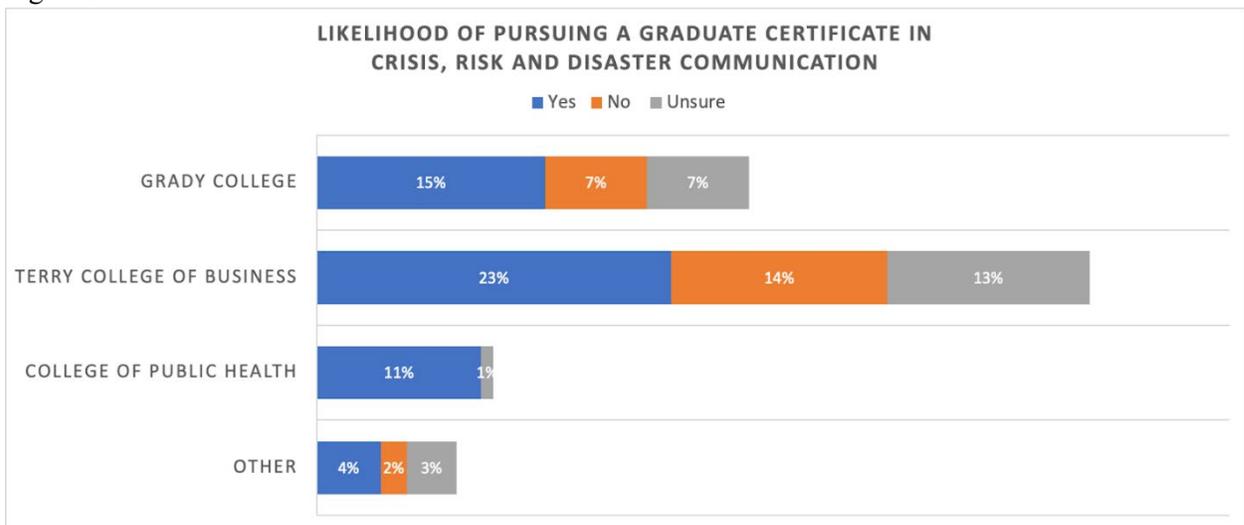
When it comes to the question “How useful do you think a Graduate Certificate in Crisis, Risk, and Disaster Communication would be for you, considering your interests and future career goals?” on a scale of 1 (*Not at all useful*) to 5 (*Extremely useful*), 6 (5.0%) students reported not at all useful, 18 (15.0%) reported slightly useful, 26 (21.7%) reported moderately useful, 44 (36.7%) indicated very useful, and 26 (21.7%) indicated extremely useful. See Figure 2 for how degrees of perceived usefulness of getting a Graduate Certificate in Crisis, Risk, and Disaster Communication are distributed across students from multiple colleges. Among the students who completed the survey, all the students from the College of Public Health indicated some degree of perceived usefulness in the certificate, 97.1% of students from Grady College indicated some degree of perceived usefulness, and 91.8% of students from Terry College indicated some degree of perceived usefulness.

Figure 2.



When asked about their likelihood of pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Crisis, Risk, and Disaster Communication, 64 (53.3%) students selected yes, 27 (22.5%) selected no, and 29 (24.2%) indicated unsure. See Figure 3 for how likelihood is distributed across students from multiple colleges. Among those who are likely pursue the graduate certificate, 43.8% (n = 28) students are from Terry College, followed by 28.1% (n = 18) from Grady College, 20.3% (n = 13) from College of Public Health, and 7.8% (n = 5) from other colleges.

Figure 3.



In the “open comments” section of the survey, multiple respondents indicated their strong interest in the program and/or explained why it would be attractive. Here are a few examples of the quotes:

- *“Crisis Communication is often at the center of Disaster Management and Public Health, so to have the opportunity to learn more about it as a certificate would be amazing. Thank you for creating this!”*

- *“I think it would be a really helpful thing for any job in public health. Currently I am taking a policy analysis elective to gain skills in that area. I think the same would be true for disaster communication because it isn't necessarily my strong suit but it is a vital topic I need to learn about.”*
- *“Being an artist studying Disaster Management, art is one of the few ‘universal languages’ that can be understood by most people. Both risk and communication can be interpreted by art and if one has a solid understanding of the two, it would seem to be very beneficial when broadcasting to a wide audience when handling delicate/hazardous situations.”*
- *“I think this is a great area to look into.”*
- *“Def a good idea to have a certificate related to insurance considering the large role it is continuing to have and develop in the world and economy.”*
- *“It seems like a great opportunity for those who want to work for big organizations/companies, especially those who have an interest in public health! ... it seems amazing.”*
- *“I will not be able to participate in this certificate as I am a second-year graduate student, but if I was here longer, I would definitely pursue it.”*
- *“I think it'd be great if this certificate was open to all colleges, not just Grady, the College of Public Health, & Terry. I graduated from Grady & am now a grad student in SPIA, but I would still love to do this certificate! :)”*

## **Alumni Feedback**

UGA alumni were also asked to provide feedback for this proposed certificate program from the perspective of a former student and rising leaders in industry and/or academia. A few examples:

*“Conducting research in crisis communication was a powerful complement to my degrees. I am so grateful for the opportunity to deepen my understanding of strategic communication and organizational crises, both as a communicator and leader. Especially in modern media environments, swift and tactful navigation of crises is essential to organizational leadership, and I feel well prepared to enter the workforce with a solid foundation in this skillset.” - Elise Karinhak, Schwarzman Scholar 2024 and UGA Foundation Fellow 2023*

*“The Graduate Certificate in Crisis, Risk and Disaster Communication would be an invaluable addition to UGA's roster of certificate programs. During my time at UGA, I was a CCTT intern, took Dr. Jin's crisis course, and took a Disaster Management class with Cham Dallas. These crisis-specific experiences prepared me to have a keener eye in spotting potential crises within a business, understand how to manage difficult conversations with stakeholders, and be in the habit of staying up to date on the current socio-political climate. In my career at a scaling, direct-to-consumer ecommerce start-up, I understand that businesses can be held under a microscope, with the cruciality of social media, focus on climate change/sustainability, and trends that people gravitate towards brands/businesses that reflect their personal values. Offering this certificate would bring a new wave of professionals that are passionate about & equipped with crisis communication skills as the need for it rises.” – Sarah McRae, Brand Manager at Kitty and Vibe*

*“I do feel that as a PR professional this certificate and its associated courses would be beneficial for anyone to have as they pursue a career in communications. It's not the mastery—that comes with years of practice and doing—but the exposure to best practices, standards and strategic plan building around times of crisis and/or disaster in the classroom that will set students with this certificate apart as they will be more prepared to understand and react to these types of*

*situations when the time comes in their careers.” - Laura Burr, Assistant Account Executive, Arketi Group*

*“As a former Ph.D. student who was deeply interested in the interdisciplinary research between health and risk communication through the lens of public relations, CCTT served as the perfect arena to learn from the experts from all of these disciplines, get to share my research ideas and receive feedback from these experts. It was very helpful for me to prepare myself for the job market by sharing my research ideas in front of these experts. I fully support and am so excited for this graduate certificate program.” - Hyoyeun Jun, Ph.D., Assistant Professor/Mass Communication and Public Relations, Department of English, Communications and Media Salve Regina University*

*“As a former student, I believe that my experience in the field of public relations has been built upon foundational skills gained from the University of Georgia. I would have been thrilled to earn a graduate certificate in crisis, risk, and disaster communication and know that it will help students acquire a competitive edge that can be used in the workplace.” - Jacob Smith, Junior Associate - Weber Shandwick*

*“As a recent graduate of Grady, having attended and experienced The Crisis Communications Think Tank, I have leaned on this crisis and risk curriculum in my new career. Having the skills to handle a crisis is so important to master whether or not you are in a crisis management field. In my position, with a focus on travel and tourism, I must track crises that are happening daily because this can affect client communications, pitching, and even business success. The Graduate Certificate in Crisis Risk and Disaster Communications will be essential to graduate students when they enter the public relations job market. Dr. Jin sets the bar high to ensure students are prepared to handle any crisis and I would gladly sign up for this course as it would be very beneficial to me in my career today.” - Jordan McManus, Account Coordinator at Lou Hammond Group*

*“Grady College is where I had the best years in my life. During my Ph.D. studies, Grady College provided me the opportunity to fulfill my career aspirations and helped me to grow academically and professionally. I feel certain that Grady College offered me with the ideal mix of academic rigor, resources, and mentors expert in crisis, risk, and disaster communication of my interests. The Graduate Certificate in Crisis, Risk and Disaster Communication would give more students valuable opportunities to engage with Grady College's outstanding academic program and to pursue their interests under the guidance and tutelage of supportive faculty members. I would highly recommend this certificate program to anyone interested in pursuing a career in crisis, risk, and disaster communication.” - Sungsu Kim, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Advertising & Public Relations School of Communication, Kookmin University, Seoul, South Korea*

*“As seen through world events over the past few years, issues and crises can happen at any moment and—in both my background as a research and work as a practitioner—a high level of interdisciplinary work is needed to develop efficient, effective, and ethical communication. The cross-industry knowledge the proposed graduate certificate would provide interested students—the chance to see issues and crises from variant perspectives—is a boon that would greatly benefit University of Georgia graduates and the university at large. Additionally, the integration of the academic/practitioner Crisis Communication Think Tank expertise further establishes the University of Georgia’s Grady College as a leader in the communication field. Under Dr. Yan*

*Jin's leadership, I have no doubt that this uniquely developed certificate will greatly benefit many parties for years to come.*" - Taylor Voges, Ph.D., Research Consultant, Ketchum

*b. Provide evidence that demand will be sufficient to sustain reasonable enrollment.*

Within Grady College, there is a strong demand among graduate students in advancing knowledge in crisis, risk, and disaster communication, as evidenced in (1) the increasing enrollment of Grady College's graduate risk communication and undergraduate crisis communication courses, and (2) the crisis, risk, and/or disaster focused theses and dissertations among M.A. and Ph.D. graduates since 2017-2018. In terms of annual enrollments among courses proposed to be included in this certificate (see "Program of Study" for details), the estimated enrollment numbers are robust, providing a comprehensive indication of strong pools of students who study in these core courses and are likely to consider the certificate program (e.g., DMAN 7100, Introduction to Disaster Management - 15-20; JRMC 8170, Risk Communication - 15-20; MGMT 7011, Leasing Evolving Organizations - around 50; RMIN 7100, Fundamentals of Risk Management - 15-30). Additionally, there are 15-30 students in the Grady-Public Health joint undergraduate certificate program (many taking crisis communication classes) in Strategic Health and Risk Communication, as well as over undergraduate and graduate students (from Grady College, Terry College and other units) actively participating in the CCTT-affiliated Crisis Insights and Analytics Lab. Together, there is a strong pool in terms of student demand and for sufficiently recruiting interested students to participate in the graduate certificate in crisis, risk, and disaster communication.

The student survey indicated that 43.8% respondents from Terry College, 28.1% from Grady College, 20.3% from the College of Public Health, and another 7.8% from other colleges are interested in pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Crisis, Risk, and Disaster communication. This suggests many current and future graduate students would pursue this certificate. With an initial target enrollment of 30 graduate students per year, demand for the certificate is expected to be sufficient to sustain, and potentially increase, this projected enrollment in the program.

*c. To what extent will minority student enrollments be greater than, less than, or equivalent to the proportion of minority students in the total student body?*

Currently, the graduate students in the Grady College's graduate program are: White (57%), Black/African American (14%), Hispanic/Latino (6%), Asian (1.8%), and 3.2% identifying as Multi-ethnic. Most graduate students in the Grady College graduate program identify as female (74%).

For the primary program partners: Terry College's graduate program in Risk Management and Insurance (RMI) has approximately 25% minority students, and international students make up 50% of the enrollment. About half of the graduate students in the RMI graduate program identify as female (50%). The College of Public Health is the second most diverse college at UGA, with 34% minority students, with international students making up 5% of the enrollment.

Given the composition of the three colleges collaborating on this Grady College-led graduate certificate, it is expected that minority student enrollments would be greater than or equivalent to the proportion of minority students in the total student body at UGA.

#### **4. Program of Study**

*Provide a detailed program of study for the certificate program, including:*

*a. Specific course prefixes, numbers, and titles*

*b. Identify any new courses created for this program*

Given the purpose of this graduate certificate to provide students with advanced knowledge, skills, and experience across the fields of crisis, risk, and disaster communication management research and practice, and its interdisciplinary nature of content and industry trends, this 12-credit graduate certificate will have its program of study constructed with two core Grady College courses (6 credits). Depending on a student's study of focus and/or career orientation (Business Track or Public Health Track), they will choose two other courses (6 credits) offered by the Terry College of Business or the College of Public Health.

**Certificate Course Requirements (12 Credits/4 Courses)**

**Required Courses (6 hours)**

- JRMC 8170, Risk Communication
- JRMC 8XXX, Crisis Communication and Strategic Conflict Management\*

**Choose one of the following tracks (6 hours)**

- *Business Track:*
  - MGMT 7011, Leading Evolving Organizations
  - RMIN 7010, Fundamentals of Risk Management  
or RMIN 7100, Fundamentals of Risk Management  
or LEGL 7XXX, Legal Risk: Management, Strategy, and Communication\*\*
- *Public Health Track:*
  - DMAN 7100, Introduction to Disaster Management
  - DMAN 7400, Public Health Crises and Disaster Management  
or DMAN 7450, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Disasters  
or DMAN 7650, Disaster Mental Health Overview

NOTES:

- (1) All the above are 3-credit graduate courses.
- (2) \*New Course to be proposed; will be taught under JRMC 8160, Special Topics, until approved.
- (3) \*\*New Course to be proposed; will be taught under LEGL 7500, Special Topics, until approved.
- (4) In all required courses, academia-industry interconnected learning-by-doing experiences (e.g., CCTT member lectures) and interdisciplinary collaborations (e.g., students from Grady College, Terry College, and College of Public Health collaborate on projects) will be incorporated.

**5. Model Program and Accreditation**

*a. Identify any model programs, accepted disciplinary standards, and accepted curricular practices against which the proposed program could be judged. Evaluate the extent to which the proposed curriculum is consistent with these external points of reference and provide a rationale for significant inconsistencies and differences that may exist.*

No peer or aspirational universities are currently operating any similar programs, although most institutions offer at least one crisis, risk, and/or disaster communication focused course. Based on program scanning in the U.S., the only graduate certificate program offered in a similar content area is at Wayne State University. However, the entire coursework of the 12-credit, online graduate certificate in "Risk and Crisis Communication" (<https://comm.wayne.edu/grad-certificates/riskcrisiscomm.php>) is

solely offered by one unit (i.e., the Department of Communication) and is primarily related to public health emergencies, lacking the business and risk management angle.

Besides adding “disaster” and “risk management and legal studies” to the important training and practice domains, what makes UGA’s proposed graduate certificate program distinct from Wayne State University’s program (and future programs other universities might develop) is the unique value grounded in UGA’s excellences in the following: (1) *Interdisciplinary*: Mass Communication, Business, Public Health; (2) *Interconnected*: CCTT as the model for academia-industry collaboration and partnerships; and (3) *International*: CCTT-International network across sectors and areas.

*b. If program accreditation is available, provide an analysis of the ability of the program to satisfy the curricular standards of such specialized accreditation.*

Program accreditation is not available for graduate crisis, risk, and/or disaster communication academic programs at this time.

## **6. Student Learning Outcomes**

*Describe the proposed learning outcomes for the certificate program.*

Upon completion of the graduate certificate, students will:

1. Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of crisis, risk, and disaster in a competitive and complex media and information environment.
2. Demonstrate a strong command of major theories in crisis, risk, and disaster communication and management theories and how to apply them to describe, explain, and predict organizational and individual decision making and responses in times of crisis, risk, and disaster.
3. Understand the process of strategic conflict management in risk assessment and making strategic decisions in crisis and disaster responses, and how to inform internal and external stakeholders on complex and challenging issues.
4. Understand the role of advocacy, the ethical and legal guidelines, and the relationship management with media professionals and digital technology platforms.
5. Demonstrate effective and ethical crisis, risk, and disaster communication leadership and the capability to collaborate with organizations, communities, and stakeholders in different sectors, cultures and markets.

## **7. Assessment and Admissions**

*Describe how the learning outcomes for the program will be assessed. Describe the process and criteria for how students will be admitted to and retained in the program.*

Successful completion of the proposed certificate is dependent on satisfactory completion of the required coursework as laid out in the 12-credit course map. Grades are assigned in each of the courses. A list of specific student learning outcomes will guide program administration in granting certificate status. All learning outcomes will be addressed in the core courses required for the graduate certificate. Performance in these courses will be used to assess attainment of these learning objectives. Additionally, students will be asked to complete a post-certificate assessment of the program through an anonymous online survey, gauging their subjective ratings of their knowledge gained in all learning objectives listed above.

This graduate certificate program will be administered by C. Richard Yarbrough in Crisis Communication Leadership and Director of the Crisis Communication Think Tank (CCTT) at Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, in collaboration with Head of the RMI program at Terry College and IDM director at College of Public Health. The Yarbrough Professor and CCTT Director will oversee the program administration, including (1) distributing the call for applications to graduate students in the three colleges and other units as fit, (2) working with Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies and Grady College's Graduate Studies Program to administer the application and program completion processes, and (2) collaborating program heads in Terry College (RMI) and College of Public Health (IDM) in reviewing applications to discuss program admissions.

All potential participants in the graduate certificate program must be graduate students currently enrolled at UGA or be able to show documentation of their acceptance for coursework at UGA. The admission process requires an application packet containing (1) a resume including applicant's previous experience and learning in areas related to crisis, risk and/or disaster, (2) a written statement of goals and purposes, (3) writing example(s), and (4) list of three academic/industry references. In cases where there are more applicants than available positions, the graduate certificate administrators at Grady College and partners at Terry College and College of Public Health will jointly make decisions regarding the most acceptable applicants based on materials in the application packet. To select candidates from a competitive, qualified application pool, the following criteria will be used: (1) Demonstrated strong competencies in written communication in crisis, risk, and, or disaster related areas; (2) Evidence of strong interest in advancing knowledge and career in crisis, risk, and disaster communication research and/or practice; and (3) Professional experience or evidence of preparedness as demonstrated by internship experience and/or hands-on project success in crisis, risk, and/or disaster related areas. Applications will be taken throughout the academic year and students will be admitted throughout the academic year accordingly. Once applications have been received by the Grady College, all partnering program leaders and faculty representatives will meet to discuss application packets and admission decisions. Students will be notified of their acceptance status through email and provided with instructions for registering for classes.

Retention in the program will be encouraged by requiring graduate students to meet individually with the program director each fall semester to discuss their schedule for the upcoming year to make sure they are on-track to meet certificate requirements. The program director will meet with graduate advisors in all three colleges to ensure mutual understanding of certificate requirements. The graduate certificate program will host guest lectures and invited talks each semester, bringing thought leaders in the CCTT and affiliated network to provide certificate students opportunities for advanced crisis, risk, and disaster communication learning and ample networking opportunities with industry leaders and top scholars in the U.S. and globally.

## Documentation of Approval and Notification

**Proposal:** Graduate Certificate in Crisis, Risk, and Disaster Communication

**College:** Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication

**Department:** Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication

**Proposed Effective Term:** Fall 2024

### School/College:

- Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication Dean, Dr. Charles Davis, 12/6/2023
- Graduate School Associate Dean, Dr. Anne Shaffer, 2/7/24

### Use of Course Approvals:

- Terry College of Business Associate Dean for Research and Executive Programs, Dr. Michael Pfarrer, 10/27/2023
- Terry College of Business Risk Management and Insurance Department Head, Dr. James Carson, 10/27/2023
- College of Public Health Institute for Disaster Management Director, Dr. Curt Harris, 10/31/2023