



University Council

February 27, 2026

UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE – 2025-2026

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Ex-Officio – Provost Benjamin Ayers

Undergraduate Student Representative – Ella Colker

Graduate Student Representative – Yaw Buabeng

Dear Colleagues:

The attached proposal from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication and the Terry College of Business for an Undergraduate Certificate in Corporate Communications will be an agenda item for the March 6, 2026, Full University Curriculum Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

Susan Sanchez, Chair

cc: Provost Benjamin Ayers

Dr. Marisa Anne Pagnattaro

PROPOSAL FOR A CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Date: October 6, 2025

School/College/Unit: Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication; Terry College of Business

Department/Division: Advertising and Public Relations

Certificate Title: Corporate Communications

CIP: 52050100

Effective Term: Fall 2026

Which campus(es) will offer this certificate: Athens

Level: Undergraduate

Program Abstract:

The Undergraduate Certificate in Corporate Communications is designed to prepare undergraduates to become strategic communication leaders in an era of rapid social, economic, and technological change. This 18-credit hour program combines coursework from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication and the Terry College of Business, offering students a unique integration of communication strategy, business literacy, data analytics, and leadership. Through four required core classes and two tailored electives, students will gain a deep understanding of corporate communications within its business context while engaging directly with senior industry leaders who bring real-world insights into the classroom.

This interdisciplinary certificate responds to a growing workforce demand for professionals who can align communication with organizational strategy and reputation management. Building on sustained student interest and enrollment data, the program provides a structured pathway for career preparation in corporate communications. By bridging academic knowledge and professional practice, the certificate advances UGA's commitment "to teach, to serve, and to inquire into the nature of things," while positioning graduates to thrive as ethical, informed, and innovative communication leaders in a connected society.

1. Purpose and Educational Objectives

The proposed Undergraduate Certificate in Corporate Communications will prepare students to become strategic communication leaders at a time when organizations face unprecedented social, economic, and technological challenges. The field of corporate communications is now recognized by CEOs and boards as a core driver of business strategy and reputation

management, requiring professionals who can combine strong communication skills with strategic thinking, business literacy, data analytics, and leadership.

This certificate program complements the University of Georgia’s mission as a comprehensive land-grant and sea-grant institution. By integrating coursework from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication and the Terry College of Business, it equips students with practical skills to address state and national economic and social needs, while also preparing students to navigate and contribute to an interconnected global society.

The proposed certificate offers interdisciplinary coursework and hands-on learning with senior industry leaders. Through the four required core classes, students will come to understand the field of corporate communications and its business context. Throughout the core classes, current chief communications officers and other senior business leaders will join as guest lecturers, bringing real-world insights and experiences into the classroom. The remaining six hours of electives, consisting of courses from both colleges, will further strengthen the training and allow students to tailor their program according to more specific interests.

By bridging the academy and the practice, this certificate advances UGA’s motto “to teach, to serve, and to inquire into the nature of things.” It enhances intellectual and professional preparation for the students and helps position the University as a leader in shaping the next generation of strategic communication professionals.

2. Need for the Program

The Undergraduate Certificate in Corporate Communications program is necessary because it meets a growing and demonstrated workforce need for college graduates who can pair strong communication skills with business strategy, data literacy, and leadership. Formalizing this certificate will provide recognition and structure for a viable career path that is already attracting student interest and align UGA’s teaching mission with state and the national economic and social needs. The labor-market evidence underscores both strong employment growth and compensation advantages for related roles.

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), employment for Public Relations Specialists is projected to grow about 5% from 2024 to 2034, faster than the average for all occupations.¹ Median annual wages for Public Relations Specialists were approximately \$69,780 in May 2024.
- Beyond broad occupational data, more granular compensation analysis from the PRWeek US Salary Survey demonstrates that corporate communications roles are among the highest-earning segments in the public relations industry.²

- a. Semester/Year of Program Initiation: **Fall 2026**
- b. Semester/Year of Full Implementation: **Fall 2026**
- c. Semester/Year First Certificates Awarded: **Spring 2027**
- d. Annual Number of Graduates expected: **30–50**

¹ <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/public-relations-specialists.htm>

² <https://www.prweek.com/article/1911786/salary-survey-2025-employees-hold-line>

e. Projected Future Trends for number of students enrolled in the program: Initial cohort of 10–20 students, with steady enrollment at 30–50 annually and growth potential as demand for corporate communication professionals expands.

3. Student Demand

a. Evidence of student demand (including a student survey).

One core course for the certificate, ADPR 3870, Introduction to Corporate Communications, was initially developed and offered in Spring 2023 as a special topic class (ADPR 5990/7990, Seminar in Advertising and Public Relations). The course has been successfully taught every semester since then and was in its sixth offering in Fall 2025. The academic advisor group worked with program directors to send a survey to collect student feedback through a listserv that included all Grady undergraduate students and master’s students including those in the Double Dawgs program. Student survey results from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 (n=158) have revealed sustained interest from students. Students surveyed include sophomores (34.81%), juniors (33.54%), seniors (24.68%), and others (6.96%) such as graduate students and students in Double Dawgs programs.

- Regarding interest in learning more about corporate communications, 96.2% expressed some interests, with 53.06% being “very” or “extremely” interested. (question asked: “How interested are you in learning more about corporate communications?”)
- Regarding interest in pursuing a career in corporate communications, 43.67% were “very” or “extremely” interested, with an additional 29.75% showing moderate interest. (question asked “How interested are you in pursuing a career in corporate communications?”)
- When it comes to the perception of usefulness of a certificate in corporate communications, 84.17% considered it useful, with 62.02% considering it as either “extremely” or “very” useful. (question asked “How useful do you think a Certificate in Corporate Communications would be, considering your interests and future career goals?”)
- About 60.76% stated that they would pursue a certificate in corporate communications should their schedule allow, with 29.75% being highly likely and 31.01% being likely. (question asked “If your schedule allows, would you elect to pursue a Certificate in Corporate Communications?”)

Additionally, open-ended comments submitted by students further confirmed the demand. Some examples include:

- “This would line up with exactly what I want to do in life! Please let this be a program!”
- “Exciting! Y’all should definitely implement this certificate!”
- “I would be extremely willing to enroll in this certificate!”
- “I am happy to be an advocate for this certificate and someone to reach out to while more planning is in progress!”

b. Evidence of sustained enrollment

The survey results from three semesters indicated sustained interest and demand, and subsequent course enrollment remained steady and strong. Based on program planning and projected enrollment, the initial certificate cohort will consist of 10-15 students, with the projection to grow to 30-50 annually once the program is established. This enrollment level is reasonable and sustainable, given the continued interest, alignment with industry demand, and current data point.

4. Program of Study

a. Specific course prefixes, numbers, and titles

The Undergraduate Certificate in Corporate Communications consists of 6 courses for a total of 18 credit hours: this includes four core courses (two in Grady, two in Terry) and two elective courses (one from Grady, one from Terry).

Part I: Core Courses (12 hours)	
ADPR 3870, Introduction to Corporate Communications (3 hours) - NEW	
ADPR 5870/7870, Advanced Corporate Communications (3 hours) – NEW	
MARK 3000 or MARK 3001, Principles of Marketing (3 hours)	
MGMT 3000 or MGMT 3001, Principles of Management (3 hours)	
Part II: Elective courses (6 hours)	
Select one Grady course from the list.	Select one Terry course from the list.
ADPR 3860, Introduction to Public Affairs Communications (3 hours)	BUSN 4900, Communicating for Business Effectiveness (3 hours)
ADPR 5120, Crisis Communication (3 hours)	FINA 3000 or FINA 3001, Financial Management (3 hours)
ADPR 5130, Sports Communication (3 hours)	ILAD 5980, Personal and Organizational Leadership (3 hours)
ADPR 5880, Business Literacy for Communications (3 hours) –NEW	MBUS 3010, Introduction to Music Business (3 hours)
ADPR 5910, Public Relations Management (3 hours)	MGMT 5440, Business Ethics (3 hours)
ADPR 5930/7930, PR Ethics, Diverse Cultures, and Cross-Cultural Leadership (3 hours)	RMIN 4000, Risk Management and Insurance (3 hours)

b. Identify any new courses created for this program

ADPR 3870, Introduction to Corporate Communications (3 hours)

This is an introductory, “gateway” course to the Undergraduate Certificate in Corporate Communications. The course will demonstrate the critical role strategic communications plays in supporting a company’s business strategy. Students will learn how to develop integrated communications plans involving all aspects of communications: media relations, brand PR, internal communications, crisis communications, social and digital communications, government relations, investor relations, executive communications, public affairs, and corporate social responsibility/ESG. Students interact with current Chief Communications Officers and other communications professionals.

ADPR 5870/7870, Advanced Corporate Communications (3 hours)

Prerequisite: ADPR 3870, Introduction to Corporate Communications

Explore corporate communications from a leadership perspective. Through real-world cases and industry experts, students will learn how organizations navigate complex, multi-stakeholder environments. Topics include senior communicators and the C-suite, ESG in polarized contexts, crisis and risk management, change communication, business acumen, and the evolving media and AI landscape.

ADPR 5880, Business Literacy for Communications (3 hours)

Prerequisite: ADPR 3870, Introduction to Corporate Communications

This course offers students a practical introduction to business literacy from a communication perspective. Students will learn the fundamentals of how organizations operate and make decisions. Students will also learn how communications professionals collaborate with key functions such as legal, finance, marketing and human resources to deliver communication strategies.

5. Model Program and Accreditation

a. Model programs, disciplinary standards, and accepted curricular practices

As a credential, this certificate provides students with formal recognition of specialized skills highly valued by employers, making them more competitive for public relations roles in corporate settings or serving corporate clients. It also offers a strong academic foundation for students who wish to pursue advanced study in communication management, public relations, or business.

In the United States, it is less common for corporate communications to be offered as a program at the undergraduate level than the graduate level, but the information from existing programs at other institutions provide some reference points. For instance, [New York University offers an M.S. in Public Relations and Corporate Communication](#), with its core curriculum emphasizing writing, ethics, social media and research. [Georgetown University’s Master’s in Public Relations and Corporate Communications](#) include core courses in PR ethics, writing, and strategic planning. [Purdue University’s B.A. in Corporate Communication](#) focuses on theories and principles, organizational communication, and interpersonal communication.

Internationally, leading institutions in Europe and Asia have established corporate communication as an established academic discipline with a strong strategic focus. For instance, [Erasmus University Rotterdam’s MsC in Corporate Communication](#) includes leadership, reputation management, employee communication, etc., in addition to its foundation course in corporate communication. [The Chinese University of Hong Kong offers an M.S.Sc. in Corporate Communication](#) that also includes the CSRCom and Sustainability Hub.

The proposed certificate matches prevailing practices and model programs by emphasizing strategy and management integration, applied planning and writing, with the flexibility of more specialized areas through the combination of core and elective courses within both the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication and the Terry College of Business. The proposed undergraduate certificate has lighter course load by design to fit into undergraduate program pathways while sustaining the program’s rigor. This program design is also modeled based on exemplar certificate programs at the university such as the Undergraduate Certificate in Public Affairs and the Undergraduate Certificate in Sports Media.

This certificate is titled Corporate Communications to align with industry terminology, while the curriculum itself emphasizes the strategic foundations of corporate communication as an academic discipline.

b. Specialized accreditation analysis

N/A

6. Student Learning Outcomes

By completion of the program, students will be able to:

- LO1. Demonstrate understanding of corporate communications’ critical roles in advancing business objectives and organizational reputation.
- LO2. Apply business acumen, research and analytics to plan and assess strategic communication using clear key performance indicators (KPIs).
- LO3. Develop critical thinking of corporate communications practices that take into consideration the external and internal factors, channel mix, and issue considerations.
- LO4. Demonstrate understanding of ethical and legal frameworks relevant to corporate communications.

See curriculum map below

	LO1	LO2	LO3	LO4
ADPR 3870, Introduction to Corporate Communications (core)	X	X	X	X
ADPR 5870, Case Studies in Corporate Communication (core)	X	X	X	X
MARK 3000 or MARK 3001, Principles of Marketing (core)		X		

MGMT 3000 or MGMT 3001, Principles of Management (core)		X		
ADPR 3860, Introduction to Public Affairs Communications (Grady elective)			X	
ADPR 5120, Crisis Communication (3 hours) (elective)	X			
ADPR 5880, Business Acumen and Financial Literacy (elective)		X		
ADPR 5910, Public Relations Management (elective)		X		
ADPR 5930/7930, PR Ethics, Diverse Cultures, and Cross-Cultural Leadership (elective)				X
BUSN 4900, Communicating for Business Effectiveness (elective)			X	
FINA 3000 or FINA 3001, Financial Management (elective)		X		
ILAD 5980, Personal and Organizational Leadership (elective)			X	
MBUS 3010, Introduction to Music Business (elective)			X	
MGMT 5440, Business Ethics (elective)				X
RMIN 4000, Risk Management and Insurance (elective)				X

7. Assessment and Admissions

a. Describe how the learning outcomes for the program will be assessed

Outcome	Direct Measure	Indirect Measure
Demonstrate understanding of corporate communications' critical roles in advancing business objectives and organizational reputation	Pre- and post-Likert scale measures after ADPR 3870 and ADPR 5870 on students' perceived understanding in aligning corporate communications practices and business objectives	Appraisal of ADPR 3870's Fortune 500 Company Communications Analysis assignment regarding the alignment between communications activities and business objectives and corporate reputation; Informal short poll from invited industry guest speakers regarding their assessment of students' understanding of corporate communications
Apply business acumen, research and analytics to plan and assess strategic communication using clear	Assessment of ADPR 5870's case study assignment on students' identification of KPIs, financial/operational indicators, and application of	Exit survey item on students' confidence in applying business acumen and using analytics to inform decisions.

key performance indicators (KPIs)	CommsTech in corporate communications practices	
Develop critical thinking of corporate communications practices that take into consideration the external and internal factors, channel mix, and issue considerations	Appraisal of ADPR 3870's Fortune 500 Company Communications Analysis assignment regarding the organization's communications strategies and tactics, SWOT analysis, and recommendations	A 5-item Likert checklist completed by each student for their own plan and one peer's plan. Scores are aggregated for program assessment (not graded).
Demonstrate understanding of ethical and legal frameworks relevant to corporate communications	Assessment of ADPR 5870's memo assignment regarding the ethical issue and core legal considerations in corporate communications practices	Exit survey item on students' comfort in applying ethical and legal frameworks to corporate communications practices.

Note:

- 20-35% of students' work samples will be sampled from two of the core courses—ADPR 3870 and ADPR 5870.
- Rubrics will be created for direct measures. Survey/checklist items will be developed for the indirect measures.

b. Describe the process and criteria for how students will be admitted to and retained in the program

Admissions Process and Criteria

Eligibility

- The program will be open to undergraduate students in the Grady College and the Terry College
- At least 30 credit hours completed or in progress
- Minimum overall GPA: 3.0
- Admissions are open each Spring and Fall
- Students who are not selected may re-apply in subsequent semesters

Application materials

- Submit a short essay (250-300 words) on the student's preparedness, reason to apply, and career goals.
- One-page resume

Admissions Timeline

- Spring cycle: Applications open in late January and are due last business day of February; decisions released by March 31.
- Fall cycle: Applications open in late August and are due last business day of September; decisions released by October 31.
- Given the limited capacity, decisions can be accepted/waitlisted/deferred to next cycle/rejected

Selection process

- The program co-directors will manage the application process. Co-directors will independently evaluate each applicant based on a shared rubric (100 pts):
 - Academic readiness (40 pts): this part concerns students' previous coursework and experiences concerning public relations, communications, and business literacy
 - 35-40: strong foundation with several relevant courses or applied skills
 - 30-34: some relevant preparations and basic skills present
 - <30: limited but some exposure to related areas
 - Essay quality/fit (40 pts):
 - Content and credibility (15 pts): clear, credible interest in corporate communications; experiences are detailed and meaningful
 - Program alignment & goals (15 pts): demonstrates alignment of the certificate and how it supports the students' career and academic goals
 - Style & execution (10 pts): organized, professional writing with clear argument and minimal errors
 - Evidence of engagement (20 pts):
 - Leadership & participation (10 pts): involvement clubs, internship, or volunteer activities showing initiative or leadership
 - Professional development & networking (10 pts): efforts to build professional skills through conferences, training, and professional development

Administration

Dr. Zifei (Fay) Chen and Ben Deutsch will co-direct the certificate program at Grady College. Students in Grady College will work with both directors and an assigned advisor to get advice on required courses and electives that align with the student's interest. Students in Terry College will contact terrybba@uga.edu, which corresponds to Terry College's Undergraduate Program Office. Students will apply for acceptance into the certificate.



Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication
Office of the Dean

February 17, 2026

Provost Benjamin C. Ayers
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
203 Administration Building
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia 30602

Dear Provost Ayers:

I have reviewed and enthusiastically support the proposed **Undergraduate Certificate Program in Corporate Communications** to be led by the Grady College's in partnership with Terry College. The proposed program has been presented to and received unanimous support from the faculty of the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the Fall 2025 Grady College Faculty Meeting.

This interdisciplinary certificate responds to growing workforce demand for professionals who can align communication with organizational strategy and reputation management. This 18-credit hour program combines coursework from the Grady College and Terry College, offering students a unique integration of communication strategy, business literacy, data analytics and leadership.

I believe this undergraduate certificate program will advance excellence in teaching and training the next generation of leaders in corporate communication. Grady College enthusiastically supports it.

Sincerely,

Charles N. Davis
Dean, Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

Terry College of Business
Office of the Dean
417 Correll Hall
Athens, Georgia 30602

Santanu Chatterjee, Interim Dean
Dr. Harold A. Black Distinguished Professor

TEL 706-542-8100
busdean@uga.edu
terry.uga.edu

February 20, 2026

Dr. Benjamin C. Ayers
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Administration Building 203
CAMPUS

Dear Ben,

On behalf of the Terry College of Business, I am sharing my strong endorsement of the proposal from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication for an Undergraduate Certificate in Corporate Communications. The certificate includes several business courses, both as core classes and as major electives. This certificate offers students a unique integration of communication strategy, business literacy, data analytics, and leadership. We are happy to collaborate with the Grady College on this promising program.

I hope the University approves this certificate program, and I am looking forward to its start on campus.

Sincerely,

Santanu Chatterjee

/ag

Enclosure

Documentation of Approval and Notification

Proposal: Undergraduate Certificate in Corporate Communications

College: Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication; Terry College of Business

Department: Advertising and Public Relations

Proposed Effective Term: Fall 2026

School/College:

- Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication Dean, Dr. Charles Davis, 2/17/2026
- Terry College of Business Interim Dean, Dr. Santanu Chatterjee, 2/20/2026

Use of Course Notifications:

- Director of the Music Business Program, Professor David Barbe, 2/27/2026
- Head of the Department of Finance, Dr. John Campbell, 2/27/2026
- Director of the Institute for Leadership Advancement, Dr. Stacy Campbell, 2/27/2026
- Head of the Department of Insurance, Legal Studies, and Real Estate, Dr. James Carson, 2/27/2026
- Head of the Department of Management, Dr. Scott Graffin, 2/27/2026