



Letter of Notification (LON)

Policy A1.0 New Academic Programs: Approval Process

Institution:	University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Proposed Academic Program:	Communication and Information, Bachelor of Science (BSCI)
Proposed Implementation Date:	January 1, 2025
CIP Code and Title:	09.9999
CIP Code Definition:	Communication, Journalism, and Related Programs, Other Any instructional program in communication, journalism, and related fields not listed above.
LON Submission Date:	April 24, 2024
Posted Date on THEC Website:	April 25, 2024
Public Comment Period:	April 25, 2024 – May 10, 2024

Letter of Notification Checklist

THEC Academic Policy 1.0 (Section 1.0.6A) Letter of Notification Requirements:

- ✓ Letter of Support from the President/Chancellor signifying institutional governing board or system office support for development;
- ✓ Program overview;
- ✓ Background information;
- ✓ Feasibility Study;
- ✓ Enrollment and graduation projections;
- ✓ Projected costs to deliver the proposed program;
- ✓ Projected revenues for the proposed program;
- ✓ Letters of support.

Letter of Notification (LON)

Bachelor of Science in Communication and Information



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

Submission to THEC: April 24, 2024

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Section I: Overview

Program Information

Institution:	The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
College:	College of Communication and Information
Department:	College-wide
Title of Degree:	Communication and Information
Degree Designation:	Bachelor of Science in Communication and Information
Formal Degree Abbreviation:	BSCI
CIP Code:	09.9999
CIP Code Title:	Communication, Journalism and Related Programs, Other
Proposed UT BOT Approval:	October 2024
Proposed THEC Approval:	November 2024
Proposed Implementation Date:	Spring 2025
Academic Program Liaisons:	<p>Karen Galicia, Director of Academic Affairs 505 Summer Place / 1268B UT Tower University of Tennessee System, 37902 Phone number: 865-974-2140 Email: galicia@tennessee.edu</p> <p>Joseph Mazer, Dean College of Communication and Information 1345 Circle Park Drive, COMM 202 University of Tennessee Campus, 37996 Phone Number: 865-974-3031 Email: joemazer@utk.edu</p>



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE SYSTEM

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, RESEARCH AND STUDENT SUCCESS

April 22, 2024

Dr. Steven Gentile, Executive Director
Tennessee Higher Education Commission
312 Rosa L. Parks Ave. 9th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Dr. Gentile:

On behalf of UTK Knoxville's College of Communication and Information, please accept the attached Letter of Notification (LON) for a proposed Bachelor of Science (BS) program in Communication and Information (CIP Code 09.9999). The BS program will be offered as an interdisciplinary, asynchronous undergraduate online degree program. The proposed program will offer courses across all four communication disciplines in the College. The program is geared towards Tennesseans who have earned some college credit but have not earned a degree. The asynchronous nature of the degree program offers students more flexibility while pursuing this academic program.

The University is well-positioned to support the program. Additionally, in 2020 the College of Communication and Information successfully launched an asynchronous online master's degree concentration in Strategic and Digital Communication.

We look forward to receiving an evaluation of the LON by THEC staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bernie Savarese'.

Bernie Savarese, Ed.D., MBA
Vice President
Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Success
The University of Tennessee System

cc: Donde Plowman, UTK Chancellor
John Zomchick, UTK Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor
Ozlem Kilic, UTK Interim Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Joseph Mazer, UTK Dean College of Communication and Information
Heather Hartman, UTK Assistant Vice Provost for Accreditation
Karen Galicia, UT System, Director of Academic Affairs
Betty Dandridge Johnson, UT System, Academic Affairs Consultant

Campus Letter of Support



February 19, 2024

President Randy Boyd
505 Summer Place / UT Tower
Knoxville, TN 37902

President Boyd:

Please accept the attached application for a new online program, the Bachelor of Science in Communication and Information with an interdisciplinary Communication and Information major in the College of Communication and Information (CCI) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

The proposed Bachelor of Science in Communication and Information is an online, asynchronous degree that specifically targets Tennessee community college graduates. The major is an interdisciplinary communication and information program that spans CCI's four schools. The College has been offering an online, asynchronous master's degree interdisciplinary concentration for four years. Based on current UTK transfer student surveys, there is strong interest in an asynchronous online interdisciplinary major in communication and information.

The new major directly fits into the University's digital learning initiative and targets Tennessee community college graduates who are seeking online, asynchronous bachelor degree programs. The program would allow students who have completed an Associate of Science, Associate of Arts, Associate of Science in Teaching, or an Associate of Fine Arts from a Tennessee community college to study communication and information online and only require the completion of 60 hours at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The program will increase the number of Tennesseans who complete a bachelor's degree that equips them with excellent communication skills that they can utilize in any workplace setting.

There are no existing online interdisciplinary communication and information focused programs in the state. The College will use reserve funds to hire faculty to teach within the program as it grows and does not anticipate having to hire additional staff to administer the program in the first two years due to a targeted admissions plan.

The curriculum of the new major has been reviewed and unanimously approved by the appropriate school, college, and campus bodies on the Knoxville campus, and has the full support of campus administration. At this time, we request transmission to THEC for approval. Please contact me if you have any questions or need additional documentation.

Sincerely,

John P. Zomchick

CC: Donde Plowman
Bernie Savarese
Karen Galicia
Betty Dandridge Johnson
Joseph Mazer
Heather Hartman

Office of the Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor
527 Andy Holt Tower, Knoxville, TN 37996-0152
865-974-2445 865-974-4811 fax provost.utk.edu

Section II: Background

Background Concerning Academic Program Development

Over 900,000 Tennesseans have earned some college credit but do not have a degree¹. Over 35,000 Tennesseans are currently completing online degree programs at institutions outside of Tennessee. With Media and Communication and Information occupations expected to grow 6% by 2031², the College of Communication and Information (CCI) at The University of Tennessee (UT) proposes an online Bachelor of Science in Communication and Information (BSCI) degree completion program to help Tennessee residents meet this educational need and workforce demand. This degree offering will be unique from other communication programs in the state due to its interdisciplinary curriculum, online asynchronous delivery, and target audience. This degree will also help to further the University's and College's Strategic Plans by providing access to Tennesseans across the state.

Purpose and Nature of Academic Program

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville's (UTK) College of Communication and Information (CCI) has a 53-year history offering both undergraduate and graduate education as a college. CCI offers a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Communication with a major in Communication Studies, a Bachelor of Science (BS) in Communication with majors in Advertising, Journalism and Electronic Media, and Public Relations, a BS in Information Sciences, Master of Science (MS) degrees in Communication and Information and Information Sciences, and a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Communication and Information. This proposed degree would offer courses from all four communication disciplines (advertising and public relations, communication studies, information sciences and journalism and electronic media) to broaden students' skillset and prepare them to enter the workforce or continue in an academic career.

No other Tennessee higher education institutions offer an interdisciplinary, asynchronous undergraduate online degree completion program in Communication and Information. Further, few institutions nationwide offer this unique degree. Community college graduates from across the state need and want alternative pathways to bachelor's degrees. This major would be open to all Tennessee Transfer Pathways (TTPs) that result in an Associate of Art, Associate of Science, Associate of Science in Teaching, and an Associate of Fine Arts. This degree seeks to afford Tennesseans from across the state the opportunity to attend UTK and complete a bachelor's degree while staying in their home county. The asynchronous nature of the degree program offers students more flexibility and allows them to continue their work and home routines while incorporating college courses on their own time. UTK has initiated conversations with local community colleges

¹ <https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/1706GES-02-03-GutterTNReconnect.pdf>

² <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/home.htm>

to gauge interest and will continue to engage with local, regional, and state stakeholders to best meet the needs of residents across the state.

Communication conveys information and can influence attitudes and stimulate thinking; strong communication is at the root of every successful team, business, and organization. The proposed Bachelor of Science in Communication and Information (BSCI) will prepare students for success in the workplace, continuing education, and lifelong learning. The program includes a broad-based curriculum across all four of the College's communication disciplines, grounded in theory and designed for practical application for current and aspiring communication professionals. Students will develop the knowledge and skills needed to research communication strategies, explore trends, and apply knowledge to address complex business challenges.

The professional values and competencies proposed in this program include that students will:

- Interact effectively with others in personal and professional settings
- Practice the principles of relationship building and group interaction
- Think critically about communication strategy, tactics, and audiences to develop and deliver messages with purpose
- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press in a global context
- Respect and appreciate diverse perspectives and how they influence the communication context
- Create and distribute communications that respect, appreciate, and empower audiences of diverse backgrounds, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and ability
- Know, communicate, and apply information ethics, policies, and laws in pursuit of truth, accuracy, and equity
- Understand, apply, and assess digital content from a user experience perspective
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work

Alignment with State Master Plan and Institutional Mission

The proposed Communication and Information degree program aligns with several components of each of the three Tennessee Higher Education Commission State Master plan points³ as follows:

- 1) Student Success – Access and Completion
- 2) Family Prosperity – Affordability and Outreach to Adults
- 3) Future of Work - Increase enrollment in majors leading to high-demand jobs

Access and Completion - Creating an undergraduate online degree completion program will help to reduce the top two barriers to completing a 4-year degree, balancing work and academic demands and tuition. Offering asynchronous courses increases access since students do not need to leave their homes or jobs to complete coursework, and distance education degrees are more affordable than traditional residential programs. Over 900,000 Tennesseans have started but not completed a bachelor's degree. Reducing barriers to degree completion and scaling resources at UT to support distance education students where they are with a new online degree in Communication and Information can help support this state goal.

Affordability and Outreach to Adults – Distance education effectively serves Tennessee's diverse student population. Online education is also more affordable than a residential option since students do not pay fees for campus resources they are not using and are not responsible for room and board in a city with a current affordable housing shortage. Distance Education students are still able to utilize merit-based and need-based scholarships and state and federal financial aid programs and are also eligible for some additional scholarships. If Tennessee achieves its ambitious 55% educational attainment goal by the year 2025⁴, it is imperative that adults engage or reengage in higher education. The communication plan for this new degree offering includes partnerships with TN Reconnect Advisors to identify and educate prospective degree completion students about the employment prospects of earning a Communication and Information degree from the University of Tennessee.

Increased Enrollment in Majors Leading to High-Demand Jobs - In the Winter 2023 Tennessee Business Leaders Survey, 70% of respondents reported an insufficient supply of appropriately trained workers. Sixty-five percent of leaders believe the state should prioritize workforce development to improve business climate.⁵ The New Foundation Skills of the Digital Economy identifies 'Communication' and 'Communicating Data' among the 14 skills already in wide demand by employers, commanding salary premiums, and are crucial for workers who want to keep pace

³ <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/thec/bureau/research/other-research/master-plan/finalmp.pdf>

⁴ <https://driveto55.org/>

⁵ <https://haslam.utk.edu/publication/tennessee-business-leaders-survey-winter-2023/>

with a changing job market.⁶ The newly proposed online Communication and Information degree's interdisciplinary nature will cover these skills and overlap with other skill areas.

The University of Tennessee Institutional Vision

The mission of the University of Tennessee System (UT) is to serve the people of Tennessee “through the discovery, communication, and application of knowledge. UT is committed to providing undergraduate, graduate, and professional education programs in a diverse learning environment that prepares students to be leaders in a global society.”⁷ Creating a bachelor’s degree program in Communication and Information advances this mission by preparing students for various communication careers to meet current and future workforce demands. This new degree offering addresses the first goal of the vision: Cultivating the Volunteer Experience, and seeks to:

- Demonstrate leadership in providing high-quality educational opportunities for people at every stage of life, whenever and wherever they seek to learn
- Provide learners at all levels with opportunities to engage in rich learning and scholarship that is collaborative, inquiry-based, experiential, affordable, and relevant
- Deliver educational opportunities that are responsive to the needs of learners
- Support curricular innovations that align with 21st-century workforce needs and our research strengths and priorities
- Ensure that the programs we offer are accessible to communities across Tennessee and beyond

This new degree offering also aligns with the fifth and final goal of the vision: Embodying the Modern R1, Land Grant University, as an online degree program connects Tennesseans across the state and inspires future Volunteers to join our diverse community as we:

- Deepen and extend the university’s ability to connect with Tennesseans
- Establish, build upon, and streamline processes to identify community needs and activate university resources to meet those needs

Communication and Information academic courses and research, scholarship, creative activities, and engagement accomplishments serve students across the state, not just Communication and Information majors. For example, Communication undergraduate courses created and offered online can also contribute to the knowledge integration in other online academic programs undergraduate degrees at UT Knoxville, such as Business (Haslam College of Business), Education (College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences), Arts and Sciences (College of Arts and Sciences), and Agriculture Leadership, Education, and Communication (College of Agriculture).

⁶ https://www.burning-glass.com/wp-content/uploads/New_Foundational_Skills.pdf

⁷ <https://www.utk.edu/vision>

Institutional Capacity to Deliver the Proposed Program

The proposed academic program should positively impact the University’s Strategic Growth plan by offering an additional online distance education program. The college does not anticipate this program decreasing enrollment from other units across the College or University as we specifically target non-traditional students from across the state of Tennessee who have earned an associate degree from an accredited Tennessee community college and are seeking an online, asynchronous education. Most of the required coursework (48 hours) will be taught by the College of Communication and Information faculty, and 12 hours of coursework may be taken within the College or other units within the University. This approach will help grow the University’s distance education enrollment by allowing students pursuing a two-year degree at another institution to continue their education within the state.

In 2020, the College of Communication and Information launched an asynchronous online master’s degree with a concentration in strategic and digital communication. After three years, the concentration has enrolled over 200 students, and evidence from their personal statements demonstrates that these students could not pursue a residential master’s degree due to work and family obligations or location and transportation challenges. During this time, the residential MS enrollment in CCI has also grown.

Existing Programs Offered at TN Institutions

According to the THEC website, two programs have the 09.9999 CIP code. Austin Peay State University launched a Communication Instruction Graduate Certificate, and Tennessee Tech University offers a Communications Bachelor of Science degree with concentrations in Communication Studies and Journalism out of the College of Interdisciplinary Studies.⁸ While these academic programs have the same CIP code, the degree UTK has proposed is still unique in its interdisciplinary nature and online mode of delivery.

Table 1.
Existing Program Offerings at Tennessee Institutions

Institution Name	Degree Program	Number of graduates in past three years
Austin Peay State University	Communication Instruction Graduate Certificate	Program implemented in June 2023
Tennessee Technological University	Communication Bachelor of Science	2020-21: 29 2021-22: 32 2022-23: 20

⁸ [API Search - Dashboard \(tn.gov\)](#)

Accreditation

The University SACSCOC liaison has been informed of the proposed program and will be responsible for providing the appropriate notification to the institution's accreditor.

The new major will not seek program and/or disciplinary accreditation. The interdisciplinary program spans four schools: Communication Studies, Information Sciences, Journalism and Media, and the Tombras School of Advertising and Public Relations. As such, there is no program or disciplinary accreditation to seek.

Administrative Structure

The program's administrative structure will mirror the College's asynchronous online master's degree concentration in Strategic and Digital Communication. The four schools led by School directors will offer the required courses and the faculty who will teach the courses. The operational aspects of the program, such as admissions, recruitment, course scheduling, and faculty scheduling, will be completed by CCI's Office of Online Programs, which reports to the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs. The Office of Online Programs will work collaboratively with the Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Programs and Advising since this program is an undergraduate program. The academic advising will be conducted virtually by a master advisor in the College's Undergraduate Programs and Advising office. Please see the organizational chart in Appendix C for additional information.

Section III: Feasibility Study

Student Interest

Many students in Tennessee who have completed an associate degree actively seek bachelor's degree options online. After consulting with colleagues from the community colleges in the state, the College is confident that we will reach our enrollment goals. A feasibility study was conducted during Summer 2023. Currently, enrolled transfer students (n = 179) who had matriculated into the College of Communication and Information in our current majors (Advertising, Communication Studies, Information Sciences, Journalism and Electronic Media, and Public Relations) between Fall 2020 and Summer 2023 from a TN community college were sent an email with a survey link and asked to share their thoughts on whether an online, asynchronous degree in Communication and Information would have appealed to them. These students either graduated with an Associate of Art or an Associate of Science degree or completed credits toward an AA or AS degree and transferred to one of the college's five residential majors. The survey was sent via UTK email to the students. Twenty students responded to the survey (11% of the population). When surveyed, 88% of community college transfer students within the college indicated that they would have considered (47% yes, 41% maybe) pursuing an online asynchronous degree. In an open-ended response question, one student shared, "I would be interested because being able to complete my course work on my own time is what I prefer. Throughout my academic career, online learning has overall better suited me than the alternative. The flexibility it offers students is a key interest point for me." This asynchronous online version would afford working, non-traditional, and/or location-bound Tennesseans who earned an associate degree the opportunity to earn a degree from the state's flagship institution without leaving their homes. Their enrollment helps the College and the University fulfill its land grant mission.

Local and Regional Need/Demand

In the Summer 2022 Tennessee Business Leaders Survey, 7 out of 10 respondents reported an insufficient supply of appropriately trained workers. Fifty-seven percent of respondents believe that improving training and education is the path to expanding the supply of qualified workers.⁵ In the Master Plan for Tennessee Postsecondary Education, adult learners are a focus population. The Drive to 55 is not achievable by just focusing on college enrollment among recent high school graduates. Nine hundred thousand adult Tennesseans with some college but no degree represent the "sleeping giant" that must be an active part of the Drive to 55.⁹

⁵ <https://haslam.utk.edu/publication/tennessee-business-leaders-survey-winter-2023/>

⁹ <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/thec/bureau/research/other-research/master-plan/MasterPlanSummary.pdf>

Based on a recent Lightcast report (Appendix D) on trends and needs in the communication sector, the following top skills are being sought by employers: journalism, marketing, social media strategy and content creation, copywriting, and proofreading.¹⁰ This new major will supply graduates who are competent in these areas. The Lightcast report stated that the above skills have increased in job posting frequency within recent months (Q4 2023 dataset). Both communication and writing skills show growth in skills that employers are seeking. There is an 8.4% increase in target communication and information occupations regionally, while the national average is 5.8%.

Employer Demand

According to the U.S. Bureau for Labor Statistics, media and communication positions are expected to grow by 4% through 2032. The Occupational Outlook Handbook from the U.S. Bureau for Labor Statistics projects that media and communication careers will grow on pace with other industries and 114,300 each year due to employment growth and the need to replace workers who leave the profession.²

The New Foundation Skills of the Digital Economy identifies ‘Communication’ and ‘Communicating Data’ among the 14 skills already in wide demand by employers, commanding salary premiums, and are crucial for workers who want to keep pace with a changing job market.⁶ Job seekers with these skills have the potential to thrive in a digital economy – becoming more adaptable to future disruption, increasing their earning power, and improving their long-term career prospects. Since the 2020 pandemic, there has been a shift to remote work and an increasingly distributed workforce. This shift comes with challenges, especially for digital immigrants who grew up without technology. Skills like communication, reasoning, ethical decision-making, and teamwork are critical to remote team success. The interdisciplinary nature of the new proposed online Communication and Information courses will teach these skills as well as intersect and overlap with other skill areas like Critical Thinking, which is sought in 11% of Marketing and Public Relations jobs, 6% of Design Media and Writing, and 21% in other job sectors.

Community and Industry Partnerships

The College of Communication and Information has the support of the Board of Visitors, a group of successful communication alumni professionals, for this new academic program. CCI has an endowed partnership with the Tombras Group, a top 25 independent agency nationwide, and has

¹⁰ Lightcast report – Q4 2023 Dataset – Communication, Journalism, and Related Programs, Other (09.9999)

² <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/home.htm>

⁶ https://www.burning-glass.com/wp-content/uploads/New_Foundational_Skills.pdf

strong internship and career pathways with state and national employers such as Discovery Communications, the Oak Ridge National Lab, and TV and media outlets.

As students progress through the major, they will be exposed to career development programming within the College of Communication and Information. As part of the career development program, existing and new community and industry partners will interact with students of the new interdisciplinary major. Current industry partners include Axle Logistics, WBIR, the Tombras Group, and Insight Global, to name a few. Partnership activities include industry coaching, networking opportunities, internships, industry panels, mentor programs, and workshops. These industry partners frequently meet with the College's Director of Career Development to provide industry-relevant insight and ways for the College to continue to address the area's workforce development needs. Our college's board of visitors will provide feedback about the major and our graduates as we continuously seek to improve the program.

Letters of support from employers, TN Achieves, and a community college partner are provided in Appendix A.

- Angela Hughes, Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs, University Parallel, Pellissippi State Community College
- Cecelia Prewett, Managing Partner and President of DC Public Relations, SKDK
Graham Thomas, Chief Community and Government Relations Officer, TNAchieves
- John T. Williams, CCI Board of Visitors and Retired Chief Executive Officer, The Eye Center

Section IV: Enrollment and Graduation Projections

In the first year that the BS in Communication and Information is offered, we plan to cap enrollment at 25 students, allowing us to monitor the delivery closely and identify areas for improvement. In the following years, we will increase marketing efforts and expand class sizes as we add dedicated faculty and staff to scale the program.

The attrition rate was set at 20%. This rate was based on the average 2-year attrition rate of 40% and averaged with the attrition in the online master's in strategic and digital communication concentration in CCI. The attrition rate in the Strategic and Digital concentration is less than 10%, but the course plan in the undergraduate program will require more hours and, therefore, may lead to higher attrition.

Table 2.

Projected Enrollment, Attrition, and Graduates in the BS Communication and Information Program During the First Five Years of The Program.

Projected Enrollments and Graduates				
Year	Total Annual Enrollment	Projected New Enrollment	Projected Attrition	Projected Graduates
1	25	25	5	0
2	58	30	11	20
3	86	37	17	41
4	104	45	20	66
5	127	55	25	79

Section V: Projected Costs to Deliver the Proposed Program

Faculty and Instructional Staff

One-time Start-up Costs

In the program's initial design, the College will budget money toward developing asynchronous online courses (4 full development and six partial development). The college will utilize UT's Digital Learning services to support instructional design. Faculty that have not taught online courses previously will be able to enroll in the Jumpstart Online Course Development Program, which provides research-based course design and multimedia support. This instructional design support does not currently incur additional costs to the College, but we will compensate faculty \$1,000 for their time in the program. We anticipate up to five faculty members will participate in the Jumpstart program. The College will offer faculty content creation stipends of \$2,500 - 5,000 per course.

Recurring Costs

The college plans to hire two new faculty members in the program's first year within two of the four schools to develop and teach the online, asynchronous courses. The anticipated budget for starting salary plus benefits would be \$75,000 per faculty member. In the projected growth and enrollment plan, we will have the capacity to meet the demand with the two new hires. As the program grows, there are plans to add two additional faculty in the other two schools by year three. In addition to full-time faculty, we may need to utilize non-tenure track faculty and lecturers to deliver the curriculum.

Non-Instructional Staff

In the projected growth and enrollment plan, we have current capacity with non-instructional staff to meet the demand for the first year. We would need to hire an additional dedicated academic advisor in the second year. The current salary for an Academic Advisor I is \$46,000. If enrollment grows more quickly than anticipated, then we would need to hire additional staff strategically to meet student needs.

Graduate Assistants

At this time, no graduate assistants will facilitate the program. In the future, using graduate assistants who are interested in online teaching may entice more senior faculty members to teach in the program.

Utilizing graduate teaching assistants would also provide CCI's graduate students with a unique skill set that many other PhD programs do not. Thus, it would give doctoral graduates a competitive edge when entering the academic job market. The College's PhD program is interdisciplinary, which would help us build the interdisciplinary nature of our undergraduate program.

Accreditation

The undergraduate majors within the Tombras School of Advertising and Public Relations and the School of Journalism and Media are accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). The other undergraduate majors, Communication Studies and Information Sciences, do not have programmatic accreditation. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this program, we will not seek programmatic accreditation. Currently, there are no discipline-specific accrediting bodies that would be appropriate.

Consultants

A program consultant will be sought to provide the external review required by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's new program process. The cost of the external reviewer varies between \$1,500 and \$3,000. The College has budgeted \$3,000 for the external reviewer as a one-time expenditure.

Equipment

New faculty will need to be fully equipped with computers and other technology to teach online, asynchronous courses. Equipment needs include laptops and computer setups (including monitors and other technology-related equipment like webcams) for new faculty hires, which is approximately \$5,250 per faculty member. The college anticipates hiring two new faculty members to support this program in the first year, resulting in \$10,500 in equipment purchases as one-time costs. New faculty hires by year three would also require new laptop computers budgeted at \$ 5,250 per faculty member. After new computer purchases, the centrally funded university Computer Upgrade program would provide technology upgrades once every four years.

Information Technology

We plan to utilize the University's Information Technology resources, including the Office of Information Technology technical support and Digital Learning at UT instructional design support. This support is already provided at the school level, and additional programs will not incur additional costs.

Library Resources

Currently, \$5 of every distance education student's credit hour is attributed to library resources for students. There will be no additional costs for library resources. The College does not anticipate any new library acquisitions as a result of this program. Since it is interdisciplinary across our existing four schools, all necessary library holdings are already in place.

Marketing

One-time Start-up Costs

To recruit students for this new degree, we plan to visit community college partners across the state to market our program and talk with their students who may be interested at career and continuing education fairs. We will create promotional and informational materials to distribute at TN community colleges, regional workforce development, and chamber of commerce events. In the first year, this will cost \$5,000. This degree targets students with a Tennessee two-year degree, so the marketing and outreach will be highly intentional. We plan to utilize existing university resources, such as the College of Communication and Information and Vols Online websites, to share program requirements, information, and benefits.

Recurring Costs

After the program launch, digital marketing and public relations campaigns will be utilized to highlight the new program in year two and beyond since online promotion is more cost-effective and will increase our reach. The anticipated cost of the digital marketing campaign in year two and beyond is \$1,000 monthly, for a recurring cost of \$12,000 per year.

Facilities

This program is delivered online, asynchronously, using existing staff and faculty resources, so we do not anticipate additional facilities expenses.

Travel

Travel resources will include visits to Tennessee Community Colleges. The travel budget will be \$7,500 for the first three years. After the first three years, the travel budget will likely decrease as we offer more virtual interest sessions. Travel costs will include car mileage to and from the community colleges in the state, hotel rooms for overnight visits as warranted, and per diem for the staff or faculty who are traveling. The College anticipates traveling to selected community colleges across the state to build partnerships with faculty and staff while recruiting students.

Other Resources

None are anticipated at this time.

Section VI: Projected Revenues for the Proposed Program

Tuition

Changes in funding models due to declining state and federal support and an increasing reliance on tuition revenue have pressured institutional leaders to prioritize sustainable funding strategies.¹¹ Tuition revenue was calculated based on the Enrollment and Graduation projections in section IV. The first class will have 25 enrolled students, taking 12 credit hours in the fall and spring terms and 6 hours in the summer semesters. The total cost per credit hour from the [University of Tennessee Schedule of Tuition, Maintenance, and Fees](#) is \$439, including online support and library fees.

Grants

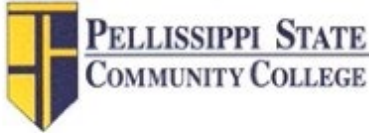
None are anticipated at this time.

Other

None.

¹¹ <https://tennessee.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/UTenn-System-Online-Market-Assessment-Posted-Huron-Report-Jan-4-2022.pdf>

Appendix A: Letters of Support



To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of the University of Tennessee's College of Communication and Information's proposed new online degree in Communication and Information. I serve as the Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs, University Parallel, at Pellissippi State Community College. After talking with industry leaders in the state of Tennessee, it is evident that college graduates who possess excellent communication skills are essential to the workforce.

Ensuring that the state's workforce can communicate effectively and efficiently is helpful to workforce development needs of the state and will ultimately benefit the state's economic growth. UTK's new program will be the only communication and information interdisciplinary program in the state offered asynchronously online, and it specifically targets Tennessee Community College graduates. Students attending community college often need more flexibility in modality choosing academic programs than four-year college and university students. By offering this program online in an asynchronous format, community college graduates across the state can study in this field with an option that fits into their specific needs. UTK's College of Communication would be meeting students where they are across the state.

According to a report issued in July 2022 by the Tennessee Board of Regents on Reimagining the Community College experience, "Community college graduates from AA and AS transfer programs who do not attain a bachelor's degree are less likely to be employed in Tennessee and earn lower wages than graduates of other programs" (TBR, 2022). Programs like the bachelor's degree in Communication and Information from the University of Tennessee's College of Communication and Information can hopefully serve as an opportunity for the state's community college graduates to continue their studies and earn a bachelor's degree. This will, in turn, make them more employable and more likely to earn higher wages than they would have with an associate's degree. The online, asynchronous format increases the accessibility of our degrees by removing some of the barriers for community college graduates who have earned an AA, AS, AST or AFA.

Please consider approving this new academic program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Hughes".

Angela Hughes, Ed.D.
Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs, University Parallel



November 3, 2023

Dear Tennessee Higher Education Commission review team,

I am writing this letter to share my support of the Communication and Information online degree completion program being proposed by the University of Tennessee, should it be approved by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. As an alumnus and UTK College of Communication and Information Board of Visitors member, I am excited about the College's desire to expand their program and reach in the online education sector.

I am the Managing Director and President of DC Public Affairs and in our industry, we are witnessing the rapid transformation of our work with the rise of new communication technologies, causing us to re-think the skills, experience, competencies, and the talents that will be required for successful communication professionals. We are always looking for individuals that understand communication theory fundamentals and are educated with the most current knowledge of trends in the field. I see the proposed creation of the new undergraduate degree in Communication and Information as great response to market demand, as the need for these skills will continue to expand for years to come.

Over the past few years, the College of Communication and Information has been successful in delivering synchronous and asynchronous online programs that meet the needs of students and generating well-qualified, workforce ready graduates. The University of Tennessee has been scaling resources to grow online programming in support of their land-grant mission and are prepared to deliver a high-quality online Communication and Information degree.

In summary, I am very excited to hear of the proposed online degree completion program in Communication and Information at the University of Tennessee. Graduates with this unique set of interdisciplinary communication skills are in short supply so I am pleased to endorse this program enthusiastically.

Sincerely,

Cecelia Prewett
Managing Director and President of DC Public Affairs, SKDK

For contact: cprewett@skdknick.com; 703-587-7311

1150 18th Street NW, #800
Washington DC 20036
202.464.6900

One World Trade Center
285 Fulton St. 63rd Floor
New York, NY 10007
212.561.8730

925 N La Brea Ave, 4th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90038
310.801.0448

119 Washington Ave., 2nd Floor
Albany, NY 12210
518.380.5400

VISIT: SKDKNICK.COM • FOLLOW: [@SKDKNICK](https://twitter.com/SKDKNICK)



November 20, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of the College of Communication and Information (CCI) at the University of Tennessee’s proposed bachelor’s degree in Communication and Information. As an alumnus of the College of Communication and Information and member of the Board of Visitors, I know that students graduating from this new program will possess the skills we need to make an immediate impact in today’s workforce. Working in higher education and partnering with Tennessee government, I know this program will help Tennessee reach it’s attainment, workforce and Drive to 55 goals.


CCI’s program is the first of its kind within the state and will help stimulate the labor market with workers who understand and value the importance of creating impactful and accessible communication. Businesses, non-profits and industry across the state need citizens who can create cutting edge communication plans, social media marketing campaigns and information accessible websites. This program seeks to create leaders in these in-demand job fields.


This program allows students who have completed the associate of arts, associate of science, associate of science in teaching and associate of fine arts from across the state to have an online option to complete a bachelor’s degree. In my work at tnAchieves, we know that about 85% of TN Promise students plan to transfer to a four-year university, but that less than half successfully do so. This program will streamline that process for students, making it easier to achieve their ultimate goal of earning a bachelor’s degree. The community college graduate who lives, works and raises a family in West Tennessee would now have access and opportunity to complete a bachelor’s degree from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville that might have been unobtainable had they had to relocate their family, find new employment and uproot their daily lives. That is a new opportunity and that is powerful. Please approve this bachelor’s degree program so that we can continue to provide more opportunities for Tennesseans.


Sincerely,

Graham Thomas

Graham Thomas
Chief Community and Government Relations Officer

 121 E. Jackson Ave.
Knoxville, TN 37915

 graham@tnAchieves.org

 (615) 604-1306

October 20, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

I recently learned that the University of Tennessee is in the process of proposing a new undergraduate degree program in Communication and Information that targets TN community college students who are looking for an online learning experience. I wanted to take a moment as a College of Communication and Information Board of Visitor member, CCI alumnus, and retired Chief Executive Officer of The Regional Eye Center to express my interest and support of this initiative.

The communication and information industry, like many others, is experiencing rapid transformation of our work from the rise of new technologies and ways of working. Each transformation forces us to re-think how we do work for our clients, staff our team, and plan and invest for the future. Our industry sector is demanding well rounded communication skillset including working on cross-functional teams, incorporating social media, strategy, and communication leadership, and requires a different type of preparation. With courses from all four schools in the College of Communication and Information, this program will offer an incredible opportunity for students to enter the job field with skills that will be applicable today and long into the future.

An interdisciplinary Communication and Information degree will allow graduates to be employed in a number of different positions across any industry from agencies, news and media, to healthcare and education. Since today's market allows knowledge workers to work from anywhere, an online program like the Communication and Information degree completion will allow students to learn from anywhere across the state to prepare for these types of positions.

I personally see this new undergraduate degree in Communication and Information at The University of Tennessee as a demonstration of forward thinking and will be a tremendous way to meet the educational needs of Tennesseans.

Sincerely,



John T. Williams
CCI Board of Visitors member
Chief Executive Office, Retired
The Regional Eye Center
Contact Information: 423-341-6009

Appendix B: THEC Financial Projection Form



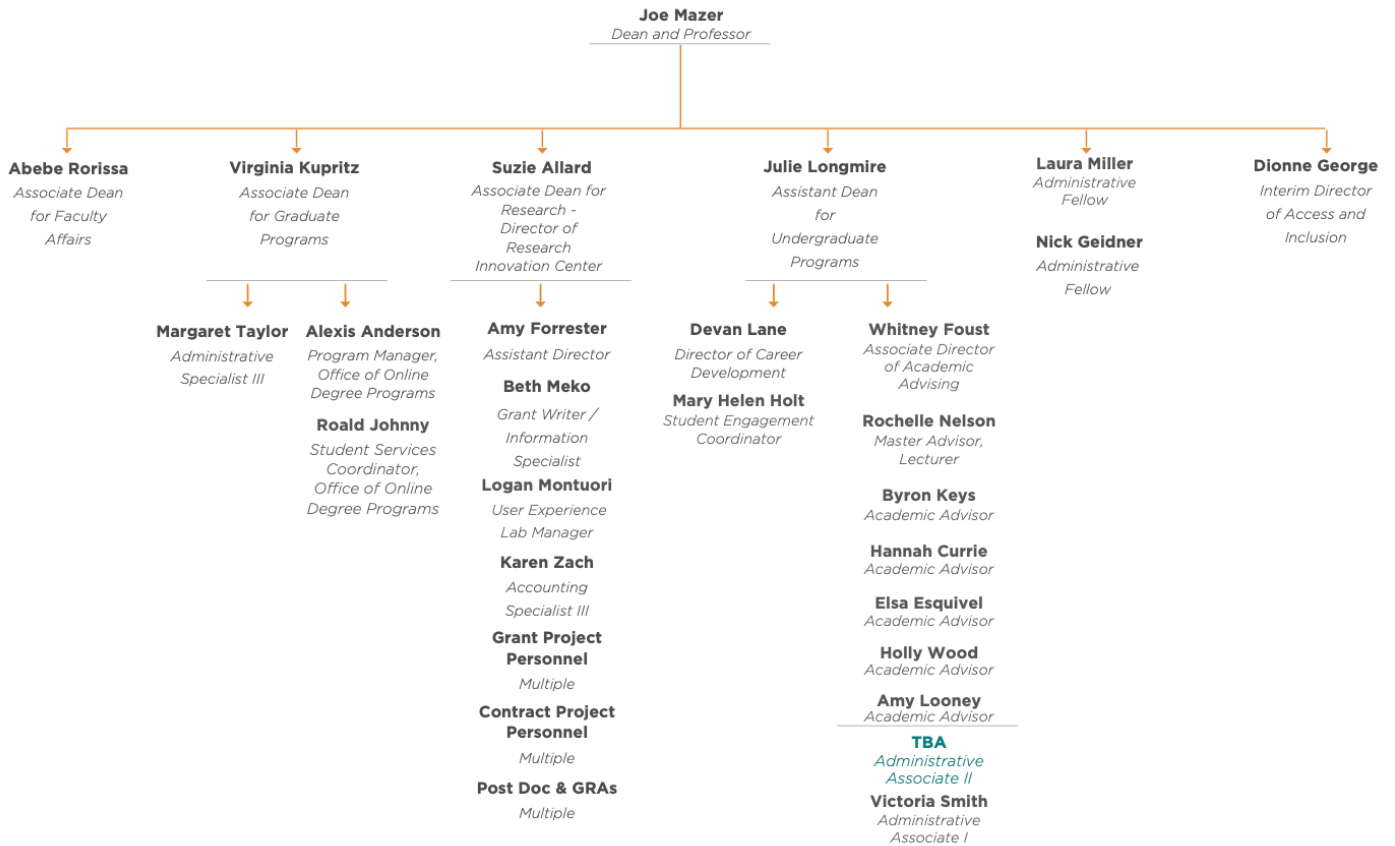
Financial Projections Form

Institution	The University of Tennessee					
Program Name	Bachelor of Science in Communication and Information					
Projected One-Time Expenditures						
Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Faculty & Instructional Staff	\$1,000	\$12,000	\$17,000	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Non-Instructional Staff						
Graduate Assistants						
Accreditation						
Consultants	\$3,000					
Equipment		\$10,500		\$10,500		
Information Technology						
Library resources						
Marketing		\$5,000				
Facilities						
Travel						
Other						
<i>Total One-Time Expenditures</i>	<i>\$4,000</i>	<i>\$27,500</i>	<i>\$17,000</i>	<i>\$20,500</i>	<i>\$5,000</i>	<i>\$5,000</i>
Projected Recurring Expenditures						
Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Faculty & Instructional Staff		\$150,000	\$150,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Non-Instructional Staff			\$46,000	\$47,000	\$48,000	\$49,000
Graduate Assistants						
Accreditation						
Consultants						
Equipment						
Information Technology						
Library						
Marketing			\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000
Facilities						
Travel		\$7,500	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$5,000	\$2,500
Other						
<i>Total Recurring Expenditures</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$157,500</i>	<i>\$215,500</i>	<i>\$366,500</i>	<i>\$365,000</i>	<i>\$363,500</i>
Grand Total (One-Time and Recurring)	\$4,000	\$342,500	\$448,000	\$753,500	\$735,000	\$732,000
Projected Revenue						
Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Tuition		\$329,250	\$763,860	\$1,132,620	\$1,369,680	\$1,672,590
Grants		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other						
Total Revenues	\$0	\$329,250	\$763,860	\$1,132,620	\$1,369,680	\$1,672,590

Appendix C: CCI Organizational Chart

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS, STUDENT SUCCESS, AND RESEARCH

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION



Office of Online Degree Programs

Alexis Anderson
Program Manager
Roald Johnny
Student Services Coordinator

Joe Mazer

Dean & Professor

CCI SCHOOLS



Beth Avery Foster
Director & Professor, Tombras
School of Advertising and Public
Relations

Professors
Eric Haley
Marilea Hoy
Courtney Childers

Associate Professors
Moonhee Cho
Michael Palenchar
Maria De Moya

Assistant Professors
Minjie Li
Christina Jimenez Najera
Matthew Pittman
Joe Stabb (Practice)
Sifan Xu
Oluseyi Adegbola
Jeannette Iannacone
Colin Piacentine (Practice)
Jamie Ward (Practice)

Staff
Dionne George,
Program Manager
Samantha White,
Administrative Specialist

GTAs/GAs & Part-Time Faculty -
Multiple

Jon Hess
Director & Professor, School of
Communication Studies

Professors
Virginia Kupritz
Joan Rentsch

Associate Professors
John Haas
Mike Kotowski
Laura Miller
Emily Paskewitz
Michelle Violanti
Courtney Wright
Jenny Crowley

Assistant Professors
Quinten Bernhold
Jessica Frampton
William Roth Smith
Joe Lybarger (Practice)
Abbey Barnes (Practice)

Distinguished Lecturers
Megan Fields
Sarah Lamb

Senior Lecturers
Cathy Cuevas
Kristin Haun

Lecturers
Kathy Braun
Bradford Case
Leslie Deatrick
Marieke Keller
Chioma Marbrey
Calyn Meade
Nicholas Meade
Macy Pearson
Kelly Phillips
Jason Weaver
Tayler Wahl
Melissa Weaver
Lindsay Harrison

Staff
Sarah Schmid,
Administrative Specialist
Diana Logan
Administrative Assistant

GTAs/GAs & Part-Time Faculty -
Multiple

Abebe Rorissa
Director & Professor, School of
Information Sciences

Professors
Suzie Allard
Dania Bilal
Diane Kelly
Vandana Singh
Peiling Wang
Wade Bishop
Devendra Potnis

Associate Professors
Rachel Fleming-May
Xiaohua "Awa" Zhu

Assistant Professors
Joy Doan (Practice)
Brian Dobreski
Rebecca Frank
Jiangen He
Ben Horne
Kai Li
Hope Chidziwisano
Scot Smith (Practice)

Staff
Amanda Yother,
Assistant Director of Academic
Programs

Lauren Boozer,
Administrative Specialist
Kristen Gallant,
Communications Specialist
Mariah Cozart,
Student Services Specialist

GTAs/GAs & Part-Time Faculty -
Multiple

Courtney Childers
Interim Director, School of
Journalism and Electronic Media

Professors
Julie Andsager
Stuart Brotman
Mark Harmon
Rob Heller
Barb Kaye
Catherine Luther
Amber Roessner
Nick Geidner
Erin Whiteside
Melanie Faizer (Practice)

Assistant Professors Guy
Harrison
Joy Jenkins
Tatia Jordan (Practice)
Mike Martinez (Practice)
Mustafa Oz
Brittany Tarwater (Practice)

Lecturer
Maria Fontenot

Staff
Benny Smith,
General Manager, WUTK-FM
Clint Elmore,
Video Specialist
Yana Truman,
Administrative Specialist

Ernest Rollins,
Communications Specialist
Matt Keaton,
Underwriting and Marketing Manager,
WUTK-FM
TBA,
Director, Daily Beacon

Austin Orr,
Technology Coordinator, Daily Beacon
Joe Robertson,
Administrative Associate

GTAs/GAs & Part-Time Faculty -
Multiple

Appendix D: Lightcast Summary



About Lightcast

Lightcast is a labor market analytics firm that is passionate about providing meaningful data for colleges and their students.

Our data is trusted by a breadth of users including researchers at colleges and universities, economic development organizations, and Fortune 500 companies.

Lightcast data offers a three-pronged approach to labor market information:

1. Our traditional LMI combines dozens of government sources from agencies like the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Census Bureau, and Bureau of Labor Statistics into one dataset that details industries, occupations, demographics, academic programs, and more.
2. Lightcast’s job posting analytics give a real-time look into the needs of employers in today’s labor market. Each month, millions of postings are scraped from employer sites and job boards, de-duplicated, and compiled into an actionable dataset.
3. Lightcast also leverages workforce profiles—an innovative database of more than 100 million resumés and professional profiles that are aggregated from the open web. These profiles unify information for workers— such as education, employment history, skills, and more—to reveal robust detail on what is happening in today’s workforce.

Together, these data related to labor market demand, relevant skills, and the competitive landscape help colleges and universities make informed decisions about their program offerings.

Communication, Journalism, and Related Programs, Other (09.9999)

Target Occupations

*Filtered by the proportion of the national workforce in these occupations with a Bachelor's degree

18,754	+8.4%	\$26.64/hr \$55.4K/yr	2,318
Jobs (2022)*	% Change (2022-2027)*	Median Earnings	Annual Openings*
21% below National average*	Nation: +5.8%*	Nation: \$30.47/hr \$63.4K/yr	

Occupation	2022 Jobs*	Annual Openings*	Median Earnings	Growth (2022 - 2027)*
Writers and Authors	9,509	1,167	\$25.79/hr	+10.11%
Editors	9,246	1,151	\$27.44/hr	+6.55%