

# Quinnipiac

## School of Communications

### Strategic Plan 2020–2025

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## A Communications School of the 21st Century

### Introduction

The media world shaping the Quinnipiac University School of Communications has been changing at a faster rate than ever before. New technologies and delivery methods such as social media, design and podcasting have changed and expanded how everything from advertising to films to news is delivered. Concepts such as “fake news,” as well as the explosion of television and streaming media content, have impacted how and what our students should learn so that they can be successful communicators.

In addition, communication skills have become a vitally important necessity in non-communication jobs, making what the School of Communications teaches even more relevant. Social media site LinkedIn recently released a report showing that the No. 1 soft skills that employers are looking for in potential workers is their ability to communicate effectively and through various formats.

As a result, the School will become more proactive in addressing these needs and evolve and transform itself into the Communications School of the Future. Using a strategy that focuses **on the student experience**, the School will acquire and sustain a more prominent position in relation to both this university and its competitors. Students from the School of Communications will gain more practical and portfolio-building material in their courses than any competitor in the Northeast. The School offers a strategic approach to communications, and students benefit from professional connections and training in a broad range of areas. Recent data shows that millennials are already changing jobs at a faster rate than any other generation before them. The School of Communications will prepare students for their first job as well as provide the skills, including critical thinking, to help them build a longstanding, successful career.

*To accomplish this strategy, the School will become an operation that emphasizes continuous learning for its constituents, even after their graduation. It will also work with companies and professionals within the media world to critically examine how it needs to remain at the forefront of communications education. It will break down previous barriers and emphasize diversity across its curriculum, knowing that its students will need such knowledge to succeed. It will play a bigger role in its communities through collaborations and service. And it will re-engage with its growing alumni base as a key group that needs to have a voice within the School.*

In addition, the School will collaborate more with other academic programs across campus to ensure that its students have the knowledge that they need to go out into the world and make a difference in their careers and their communities. Quinnipiac’s School of Communications, which has already been a leader in student support services, will set the precedent so that students are able to prepare themselves for a changing workforce that depends on versatility and nimbleness to be successful.

# Quinnipiac

## School of Communications



This five-year strategic plan for the School of Communications outlines its plans and sets priorities for how this will be accomplished. It's the result of multiple conversations across the School that began with a retreat, included groups of faculty and staff that met multiple times and looked hard at our past as well as the future of media. We're proud of what the School has accomplished during its first 20 years of operation and look ahead with excitement as to how we can help our students become the Communicators of the Future.





**Goal #1:**  
**Build a mindset that prepares graduates  
for 21st century careers and citizenship.**

**ACTION 1.1:** Ensure that communications jobs of the 21st century are incorporated into the School's curriculum, including at the graduate level. The following areas will receive more attention:

- a. Sports communications in all forms;
- b. Data analytics, including user/audience insights;
- c. Media literacy;
- d. Film, television and streaming media production;
- e. The business side of communications;
- f. New delivery formats such as podcasting;
- g. Visual communications, including design; and
- h. Working in diverse, cross-cultural environments.

**Timeline:** This is a strategy that will be pervasive throughout the next five years. The School will begin by proposing a new master's program in film, television and streaming media production for the 2020-21 academic year to address the growth in such jobs and to address a need from its 3+1 film, television and media undergraduate students.

**Resources Needed:** Many curriculum updates will require funding. The School's administration and the University's development office will seek money for professorships in these positions and look to increased enrollment for funds as well. Faculty positions that open due to retirements in the next five years may have their responsibilities change. In addition, the School will collaborate with other Quinnipiac programs in some of these efforts.

**Responsible Agent:** Undergraduate and graduate curriculum committees, department chairs, associate dean and dean.

**Goal Metrics:** Increase in enrollment. **We expect these changes to be revenue and income positive after three years.** Increased student and faculty submissions/awards/engagement with professional organizations in these areas.



**ACTION 1.2:** Improve School of Communications programs to reflect what it means to be a 21st century citizen to improve the student experience.

- a. Raise percentage of School students who spend a semester abroad, or in the QU in LA and QU in DC programs, by 10 percentage points;
- b. Increase community and global components of curriculum across all departments;
- c. Increase diverse student and faculty populations;
- d. Increase opportunities that combine and/or collaborate with the curriculum of other Quinnipiac schools.

**Timeline:** Becomes a major focus in 2022-23. Incremental steps before then.

**Resources Needed:** Time, creativity and an open mind. Recruiting of diverse students through high school program and diversity scholarships are mentioned later in the strategic plan, as are ways to make the School more international.

**Responsible Agent:** Curriculum committee. Specific department chairs will work on interdisciplinary opportunities. Collaborate with the Department of Cultural and Global Engagement on exchange programs in South America, Europe and Africa.

**Goal Metrics:** Enrollment increase, specifically in the programs evaluated and the new majors and minors. **We expect this action to increase revenue produced by the School.**

**ACTION 1.3:** Refine and develop professional partnerships to enhance experiential learning, to improve Hamden-Quinnipiac relations, and to promote interdisciplinary work in the School of Communications. Engaging in such partnerships helps teach our students—both at the undergraduate and graduate level—how to be good community citizens and improves the public’s image of communicators.

- a. Review current professional partnerships—The Agency, voting guide, QNN, HQ Press—for learning effectiveness, financial benefit, maximum publicity and community impact;
- b. Implement internal professional partnerships with organizations such as the Quinnipiac Polling Institute, Albert Schweitzer Institute, QU Library, QU Athletics, and student organizations;
- c. Explore and implement external professional partnerships, and use alumni connections to create and foster these partnerships;
- d. Explore and implement community partnerships such as Hamden Public Schools, Hamden Public Libraries, government offices and area non-profit organizations;



- e. Launch a Community Journalism Fellows Program that could fund students to work on existing and upcoming community-based journalism projects in the Hamden/New Haven area; and
- f. Create a publicity plan to showcase students' work and solicit more professional clients with a focus on monetizing partnerships.
- g. Involve students in these plans in order for them to prepare for work as independent contractors and to promote themselves.
- h. Hire a director of community partnerships to oversee client contracts, manage communication with client, solicit more partnerships. This person would also seek funding for projects.

**Timeline:** Beginning with 2020-21 academic year.

**Resources Needed:** Permanent funding would be required for the director of community partnerships. We expect that funding to be offset partially by the funding the staffer would bring in.

**Responsible Agent:** Associate dean and chairs. Administrative staff.

**Goal Metrics:** Increase experiential education opportunities for students. Increased media mentions of the School of Communications.

**ACTION 1.4:** Assess professional development and research needs and opportunities, with a focus on gaining new information in their fields and insight into emerging technologies, as well as community and sustainability projects. Smarter faculty improves the student experience.

- a. Create and support a professional development program for faculty and staff, such as increase funding for professional development opportunities that result in a positive impact on student experience and learning. Offer time off for faculty to re-engage in industries;
- b. Create and support professional partnerships to connect the School with the modern workplace;
- c. Increase funding for creative/research activities and associated travel; and
- d. Reward student mentorship, faculty-student research collaborations, community-centered projects, and sustainability projects.

**Timeline:** Throughout the five-year plan.

**Resources Needed:** Part of the School's fundraising strategy will focus around professional development.

**Responsible Agent:** Dean, chairs, scholarship and creative works committee.



**Goal Metrics:** Increased quantity of research and creative output by faculty, and increased quality of faculty output, evidenced by placement in higher tier publications, more prominent festivals/shows.





## Goal #2:

### Create an inclusive, excellence-driven community.

**ACTION 2.1:** Start outreach program that targets high school and community college students interested in careers in communications, with a focus on diversity.

- a. Provide sit-in experiences in classes for high school and community college students;
- b. Invite high school and community college teachers to visit Quinnipiac on their career-development days;
- c. Create inducements and incentives such as “Bring a Friend” to open house events;
- d. Provide opportunities for underrepresented high school seniors to take courses for credit;
- e. Visit high schools in the four-state area with media classes to talk to students about careers in communications;
- f. Invite high school students to School of Communications events;
- g. Offer high school summer camps in communications fields; and
- h. Create partnerships with school systems where students can earn credits to a School of Communications degree at Quinnipiac.

**Timeline:** Summer 2020 with the high school sports journalism camp. Others could be offered in later years.

**Resources Needed:** Staff time and faculty support when possible. Promotional materials, including those that attract underrepresented students, communities and cultures. (An increase in marketing funding for the School will be required.) Faculty will need compensation to run high school camps. Facilities and food services will need to cooperate with summer camps.

**Responsible Agent:** Faculty and administrative staff. Some began visiting Connecticut high schools in fall semester 2019.

**Goal Metrics:** Increased minority enrollment in the School of Communications.



**ACTION 2.2:** Expand professional academic advising services within the School of Communications that will improve the student experience.

**Timeline:** 2021-22 academic year.

**Resources Needed:** Funding for at least one additional full-time academic advising staff position. **We expect the funding needed for this position to be generated partly by the high school sports journalism camp.**

**Responsible Agent:** Assistant dean of student services.

**Goal Metrics:** Higher satisfaction scores of School's advising system.

**ACTION 2.3:** Expand summer curriculum for Quinnipiac students via QU Transition and others that will improve the student experience.

**Timeline:** The School would like to offer COM 101 "Communications First-Year Seminar," COM 120 "Media Industries and Trends," COM 130 "Visual Design" and COM 150 "Public Speaking: Principles and Practice" and other classes in the summer to entering students to assist in their transition. We're shooting for Summer 2022 to begin.

**Resources Needed:** Social media promotion to create an Instagram campaign, potentially as a student assignment. We need help from admissions in identifying entering students who would benefit from communications courses during the summer.

**Responsible Agent:** Associate dean

**Goal Metrics:** Lower dropout/transfer rate of School of Communications students.

**ACTION 2.4:** Find more financial resources to attract a diverse group of students, building upon the success of the Hearst Scholarships. Develop opportunities for scholarships, fellowships, and assistantships for underrepresented graduate students.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Resources Needed:** Money that is earmarked for diversity efforts. One potential area is a scholarship for diverse students to fund their semester in QU in LA. We also need to do a better job of marketing and promoting the Hearst Scholarships.



**Responsible Agent:** Dean, Office of Development and Alumni Affairs.

**Goal Metrics:** Increased number of scholarships given to diverse students.

**ACTION 2.5:** Expand diversity of faculty and staff to better reflect the student body that they serve.

**Timeline:** 2020-21 academic year and throughout five-year plan.

**Resources Needed:** Create a dean's taskforce to solicit grants for endowed chairs focused on media and underrepresented communities. The dean will actively encourage chairs to create candidate pools more likely to yield candidates from underrepresented groups and to advertise in publications and websites that would add to the diversity of the pool.

**Responsible Agent:** Dean's office.

**Goal Metrics:** Higher percentage of diverse faculty and staff by 2025.

**ACTION 2.6:** Develop more ethnic and global studies courses and expand existing courses such as COM 340 "Exploring Communications Abroad," MSS 311 "Diversity and the Media" and MSS 346 "Global Communication." Provide opportunities for students to explore communication theory and practice as it relates to minorities and gender issues, which will improve the student experience.

- a. Revise current cultural and global requirements for School of Communications students;
- b. Actively encourage students to participate in noncredit travel experiences;
- c. Actively encourage student engagement in University-wide diversity and global programs;
- d. Facilitate exchange programs with international institutions; and
- e. Find financial support for students through scholarships, parents' fund and other areas to experience global opportunities.

**Timeline:** Throughout the five-year plan.

**Resources Needed:** Time to assess current course offerings in diverse issues and add new courses, if needed.

**Responsible Agent:** Curriculum committee and chairs. Dean will address exchange programs.



**Goal Metrics:** Increased percentage of School of Communications students enrolled in COM 340, MSS 311 and MSS 346. New course offerings that attract more students to such courses.

**ACTION 2.7:** Enhance and expand the social, cultural and educational footprint of the School of Communications to the world on a sustained basis.

- a. Promote study abroad experiences and international field trips. Each department within the School should offer at least one of these every two years, if not more;
- b. Invite international community groups in the region to campus for discussions;
- c. Recruit students from outside the U.S., particularly for the graduate programs;
- d. Forge relationships with international universities, such as providing faculty with guest teaching and exchange opportunities, as well as student exchanges; and
- e. Create a relationship with the Fulbright organization to attract graduate students from outside the U.S.

**Timeline:** Beginning with the 2022-23 academic year.

**Resources Needed:** Financial support will be needed to recruit international students. We will work with admissions to devise a plan. We believe we can target Asia, Central America, the Caribbean islands and South America successfully.

**Responsible Agent:** The School needs to create an international committee to focus on these efforts. Dean will address international university exchange initiative.

**Goal Metrics:** Increased international students enrolled in the School. Increase in exchange students taking classes in the School.





## **Goal #3: Nurture and positively impact internal, local and global communities.**

A change in the physical space of the School of Communications is paramount and key to its future success in all areas. New physical space will have far-reaching residual effects and positively impact and nurture internal, local and global communities. Adding space enables flexibility in programming, diverse classroom set-ups and the ability for students, faculty and staff to gather socially. This will enable organic interdisciplinary knowledge sharing, positively impact mental and physical health, and build a foundation for students to engage in their own community and become inquisitive about communities beyond the university. It will also help in recruiting prospective students and retaining existing students.

**ACTION 3.1:** Move all School of Communications offices and functional areas into the same building, which will dramatically improve the student experience, with a focus on the following features:

- a. Ample and versatile spaces for gatherings and events that promote community (internal and external), sharing of ideas, and showcasing of work;
- b. Private, dedicated offices and spaces for faculty and staff to conduct individual meetings and interviews in compliance with FERPA and ADA regulations;
- c. Space for on-campus experiential learning through professional partnerships, such as The Agency;
- d. Spaces for students to work on senior capstone classes/projects;
- e. Space for student meetings, interdisciplinary collaborations, and summer workshops;
- f. Photography space to reflect the increasing importance of visual communications in our disciplines; and
- g. A 21st century instruction facility in film, television and media arts including a 150-seat screening room, a large sound stage, audio and video editing suites and a large three-wall green screen room.
- h. A dedicated space for graduate students and graduate student events.



**The School strongly believes that synergies and efficiencies can be created if it is located in the same building as similar Quinnipiac communications operations, such as Integrated Marketing Communications, student media, public affairs, and sports information. Such a combination would benefit these operations as well.**

**Timeline:** Contingent on the University's master facilities plan. Space for The Agency and the Quinnipiac Podcast Studio are already in the works, but the School is currently limited space wise. We expect to have new space by the end of the five-year plan.

**Resources Needed:** Updated technology is a constant for communications programs. To continue to be competitive in this field, we must focus on technology needs more than we have in the past. In addition, space needs to reflect our standing as a leading communications program and match the performance of our students (i.e., Q30 was named a finalist for best college TV station in 2019 despite limited space and technology resources.)

**Responsible Agent:** Dean, Director of Ed McMahon Center, Chairs, Facilities Department.

**Goal Metrics:** Positive impact on enrollment, increase in number and variety of offered events, increased student engagement in events, and increased and more meaningful interaction between students, faculty, and staff.

**ACTION 3.2:** Support student, faculty and staff mental and physical health.

- a. Train faculty and staff to better recognize and support students with mental health challenges.
- b. School of Communications faculty and staff will become better integrated into Health and Wellness Center resources. Health communications is a growing field, and the School can be a strong partner in this effort.

**Timeline:** Annual and ongoing

**Resources Needed:** Training in handling mental and physical health situations that our students face. Attending mental health workshops and seminars on campus.

**Responsible Agent:** Policy committee.

**Goal Metrics:** Positive impact on student engagement, satisfaction and retention, positive impact on student achievement, as measured through learning goals and objectives, positive impact on faculty and staff engagement, satisfaction, and retention, and increase in scholarship quality and reach.



**ACTION 3.3:** Build and nurture a sense of community and identity within the School of Communications.

- a. Build community across disciplines to allow for creative collaboration;
- b. Alleviate the constraints of the current inflexible grid (for example: integration of a “common hour” into the schedule) in order to facilitate opportunities for meeting, sharing knowledge and building community;
- c. Involve students more intentionally in shared community goals, such as soliciting student feedback on their experiences, continuing to involve students in initiatives such as the Dean’s Student Advisory Board, and welcoming student media organizations at admissions events.; and
- d. Increase social events and structured events to promote a sense of community (ex. Dogs with the dean, faculty vs. student Jeopardy, family-based events).
- e. develop opportunities for graduate students to develop a community, such as short-term travel courses, summer programs, and international collaborations with foreign universities.

**Timeline:** Immediate

**Resources Needed:** Dean’s office will fund social events. Curriculum committee will examine ways for departments to conduct collaborative efforts.

**Responsible Agent:** Dean’s office and curriculum committee.

**Goal Metrics:** Improved student enrollment, positive impact on student engagement, satisfaction and retention, positive impact on student achievement, as measured through learning goals and objectives, higher faculty and staff engagement, satisfaction and retention, higher faculty and staff productivity, and increased interdisciplinary collaboration

**ACTION 3.4:** Engage students in communities outside the Quinnipiac campus on a regional and global scale.

- a. Evaluate our current course offerings such as COM 340 “Exploring Communications Abroad” and COM 350 “Media Culture and Arts of Los Angeles” and review possibilities for I-courses and undergraduate curriculum courses;
- b. Consider the intent of the global issues & cultures requirement and update the list of applicable courses;
- c. Find funding of global travel initiatives;



- d. Create certificate or minor in global media; and
- e. Build more international awareness of our programs.

**Timeline:** The first and third items will be addressed for the 2020-21 academic year. The second and fourth items will be addressed for the 2021-22 academic year.

**Resources Needed:** Financial support for global travel initiatives. The dean will seek donors willing to fund such efforts.

**Responsible Agent:** The curriculum committee. It will begin by developing a global media certificate proposal for the full faculty to consider.

**Goal Metrics:** Increase in student enrollment in global media courses. Positive impact on the School's brand awareness.

**ACTION 3.5:** Recognize need for faculty and staff holistic support to sustain student success.

- a. Provide opportunities for faculty and staff to obtain mental health training to support self-care and student needs;
- b. Attract and retain a diverse faculty and staff to create an inclusive environment;
- c. Encourage innovative ways of connecting with students, such as virtual office hours, to allow schedule flexibility and to meet students at times that fit their lives; and
- d. Demonstrate commitment to faculty wellness and community building by hosting family-oriented events.

**Timeline:** The first item will be yearly. The last three items will be ongoing throughout the five-year plan.

**Resources Needed:** Time and effort.

**Responsible Agent:** Dean's office and chairs.

**Goal Metrics:** Improved faculty and staff retention and higher job satisfaction. Increased productivity and willingness to take on tasks that benefit the entire School.



## **Goal #4:** **Foster lifelong connections and success.**

**ACTION 4.1:** Develop online certificate programs that would be attractive for alumni enrollment. Some areas that will be explored are global media, financial communications and media analytics.

**Timeline:** Beginning with 2022-23 academic year.

**Resources Needed:** Funding will be needed initially. **After the first year, we expect these certificate programs to be self-sustaining and to increase revenue at the School.**

**Responsible Agent:** Curriculum committee and chairs.

**Goal Metrics:** Enrollment in certificate programs, and students who shift from certificate programs into School's master's programs.

**ACTION 4.2:** Funded alumni engagement to forge deeper ties and create a persistent educational exchange and culture. This includes items that generate revenue to offset the costs of delivering the services.

- a. Create content for a School of Communications alumni day during Alumni Weekend;
- b. Assign alumni for mentoring current students;
- c. Host regular alumni events in Boston and New York, and a QU in LA alumni program;
- d. Work with student media to develop their alumni bases for money-producing events;
- e. Develop and create content for alumni LinkedIn group and other social media;
- f. Further develop alumni board, with donation required to serve;
- g. Master classes for alumni led by alumni across the curriculum;
- h. Develop regular email newsletters sent to alumni—both undergraduate and graduate—about School events and happenings; and
- i. Create YouTube show that focuses on faculty, staff, students and alumni, which will be distributed to alumni, keeping them connected to the School. Extend to Instagram.



**Timeline:** Beginning with 2020-21 academic year. YouTube show is expected to be launched in November 2019. Alumni board was relaunched by new dean in September 2019 but needs further expansion. Other items will occur later in five-year plan.

**Resources Needed:** Funding.

**Responsible Agent:** Dean, director of career development, career development specialist, director of Ed McMahon Center.

**Goal Metrics:** Increased giving to School by alumni. Revenue and net income generated from alumni-targeted events. **We expect these events to break even after the third year.**

**ACTION 4.3:** Funded 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of School of Communications celebration. This is a singular major event that must be measured for outcomes. It will require precise planning and funding. The strategic plan strongly urges immediate planning for this event.

**Timeline:** Planning will begin on this event immediately. A Fall 2020 event may include the first honorees of a new School of Communications Hall of Fame—including one from the graduate program—and other awards that will attract attendees.

**Resources Needed:** Funding, potentially from a donor.

**Responsible Agent:** A faculty and staff person from within the School to co-chair the event and spearhead its planning.

**Goal Metrics:** Increased alumni involvement. Positive support and brand recognition for the School.

## CONCLUSION

This is an ambitious and aggressive five-year plan. However, the School of Communications feels that by focusing on the student experience, it can set a precedent in preparing students to be versatile and nimble in a changing workplace.