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Unit Mission

The mission of the Office of Communications and Marketing is to lead all of the college’s high-impact communications and marketing efforts within the framework of the university brand, college key initiatives, and college strategic goals and to provide quality products and services.

Executive Summary

The Office of Communications and Marketing reflects on another highly productive year supporting the college’s strategic focus areas and missions through its quality products and services. This summary is a brief, highly selective synopsis of the unit’s successes, followed by an in-depth description of the unit’s comprehensive branded communications and marketing initiatives that occurred during the 2008 calendar year (CY2008).

Media Coverage and Impact

The total news release output from the college’s Communications and Marketing unit and university staff on college topics during CY2008 amounted to 79 releases. Through releases, combined with our faculty’s media efforts, the college once again garnered significant media attention at the state and national levels. University Relations has repeatedly cited our team for its targeted strategic media plan and its successful implementation.

Media Types

Major media outlets that referenced the college include the Associated Press, EurekAlert (an online science news site), U.S. News and World Report, USA Today, Fox News, Washington Post, Science Daily, Medical News Today, CNN, MSNBC.com, and other national and state media. State and local media also provided solid coverage of the key initiatives we submitted to them via news releases and direct pitches. Many of the news releases were an integral strategic part of the organization’s public relations projects, which were expertly coordinated by the unit as well.

Our unit also closely collaborates with the University Visual and Broadcast Communications unit on the creation of video and radio news releases. In addition to news media, we receive notification of relevant Web blogs that increasingly reference the college and our faculty.

Marketing and Communications Materials

The group produced a total of 207 branded marketing and communications materials in 2008, which targeted various audiences’. Products range from educational publications to exhibits, newsletters, brochures, and others, and include many products with a strong marketing focus.
The Association for Communication Excellence in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Life and Human Sciences (ACE), the national professional organization for the unit, recognized the unit’s quality and excellent work again this year with the following awards.

- **ACE gold award for Illustrations – Agriculture Across Virginia mural (originally for Sunbelt Expo):**
  - Tim FisherPoff, graphic designer

- **ACE silver award for writing for magazines – “Battle of the Bugs” Virginia Tech Research Magazine:**
  - Michael Sutphin, writer

Additional recognition of excellence for unit staff:

- Lori Greiner – College Employee of the Month of October.

While the product output has been tracked in the categories of marketing and educational/communications materials, this strict division is misleading, as an average of 33 percent of the materials produced last year have a clear marketing purpose. It is important to note, however, that all of our products reach the public and as such reflect on, and thus promote, the organization.

We take pride in the high quality of all products we produce and are fully aware of the marketing potential of all unit efforts – regardless of their delivery medium. Collaborators have consistently commended the group for its outstanding quality and creative work.

One-on-one consultations by the unit staff with college faculty and staff on marketing and communications topics also play a vital role for the organization’s integrated communications and marketing program and are an important factor for the organization’s cohesive branding efforts and brand integrity.

**e-Communications Impacts**

The importance of Web and other electronic communications outlets continues to increase, and the unit has made an effort to utilize Web 2.0 and social networking tools more aggressively. In 2008, we have laid the groundwork for a spotlight on the university home page that features a blog updated by students in the college’s study abroad program in South Africa. We continue to explore Web 2.0 and new media with collaborators in various units, especially for undergraduate and graduate recruiting.

The redesign work of the Virginia Cooperative Extension website in collaboration with AHNR-IT staff is in progress and involved input from an advisory committee, focus groups, and intense benchmarking efforts, as well as many behind-the-scenes efforts. The newly designed site is slated to launch in spring 2009.
Our websites continue to play a crucial part in our communications efforts. The college home page (cals.vt.edu) received more than 891,000 page views during the CY2008. This figure translates into an average of 12,024 page views per day. The Virginia Cooperative Extension website (ext.vt.edu) experienced more than 21 million page views per year. The Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station scored 213,000 page views for the CY2008.

Additionally, the unit utilized prime real estate on the Virginia Tech home page for eight college and/or Extension-related spotlights

**Supporting Change within the Organization**
We worked with VCE leadership to implement streamlined process for so-called VCE publications and other Web-based VCE content. The resulting peer review process and non-peer review option for making Extension content available online streamlines processes within our unit and provides an option to content providers for launching their non-peer-reviewed content in a more timely manner. This latter statement will be especially true once the new VCE website is live, as the new site is anchored in a content management system.

**Training and Outreach**
Other unit impacts involve formal and informal training to ensure consistent message delivery at all levels of the organization; public relations efforts; and special events activities, which promote and represent the college in the most advantageous light and in accordance with its key strategic program areas and the university brand.

Our unit played an important role in successfully marketing the college during the summer/fall AREC tours and the Agribusiness visit/Farm Bureau visits to campus in fall. These events promoted the organization to crucial stakeholders and required multiple sets of materials and coordinative work to ensure their success.
Activities Summary

The following table provides a quantitative overview of the unit’s key CY2008 activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Produced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media releases generated by college staff (and campus communicators)</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications and marketing materials total</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALS</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAES</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCE/ANR</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCE/FCS</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCE/4-H</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCE/CV</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCE/Admin</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public and Media Relations

Media Relations Summary

During the CY2008, a total of 79 college- and/or VCE-based news releases were created by unit staff (as well as some by other university communicators). All releases were sent through the university’s news bureau to targeted media outlets. These media releases are an integral part of our strategic communications efforts and focus on the college’s strategic program areas and the university brand.

Additional media coverage was created by faculty and staff interviews, which contributed to the college’s overall success with the media. Due to the limited data provided by online clipping services, the only source for this data used by the university, we rely heavily on the faculty to feed information on media hits back to us.

The college’s total traceable impact in the media during the CY2008 amounted to 927 hits (CY2007: 708). The figure on p. 6 provides a partial picture of the college’s media success and is based on the data available to the college’s Communications and Marketing Office.
Significant Topics and Public Relations Initiatives

The following chart illustrates media hits by key program areas for the CY2008 and 2007.

**Key:**
- **S/P:** Agricultural Profitability and Environmental Sustainability
- **Biodesign:** Biodesign/Bioprocessing
- **CV:** Community Viability
- **Green:** Green Industry
- **H/O:** Health/Obesity
- **ID:** Infectious Diseases
- **Academics**
- **Alumni:** College alumni in the news (Note: In 2007, alumni stories were included in the category “Other.”)
- **Admin:** College/Extension Administration
- **Other:** Includes awards and event listings
The comparative chart below illustrates the total media hits broken down by quarter.

- **Extension helps strawberry growers fight aggressive plant disease:**
  - Distributed news release and pitched story to agricultural media.
  - Covered by several media outlets in Eastern Virginia, including *Twin County News* and *Vegetable Growers News*.

- **New study explores link between sports success and student applications:**
  - Story was picked up by the AP and was covered nationally by multiple media including *ABC News*, *USA Today*, Fox News, *Boston Globe*, as well as many others.

- **Extension targets vanishing honeybees that continue to trouble Virginia’s bee industry:**
  - AP picked up the story and distributed a companion article that was published by multiple media.

- **USA Today honors Virginia Tech’s Christine George as an All-USA College Academic First Team member:**
  - *USA Today* article mentioned the entomology research on which George works. A university spotlight was also created referencing mosquito research. Released in March, sustained interest throughout year.
• **Hay Relief Program helps ensure the vitality of Southwest Virginia’s livestock industry:**
  o This news release was picked up by several Virginia media.

• **Virginia youth stand up, stand out at 4-H State Congress:**
  o Story was picked up by AP and covered by several media outlets such as the *Daily Press*, WTOP, and WAVY-TV. We also provided agents materials that could be customized for their county.

• **Biofuel processes to be developed by French biotechnology company, Biomethodes:**
  o The news release was picked up by several national and international media outlets.

• **Economist shows how free trade agreement helped U.S. farmers increase exports to neighbors:**
  o A news release was distributed, and the story was pitched to several outlets, including the AP.

• **Researcher converts biodiesel byproduct into omega-3 fatty acids:**
  o News release was distributed through the American Chemical Society and story was covered nationally and internationally.

• **Virginia Tech ranked among top universities in agricultural and natural resource research:**
  o A news release was picked up by AP resulting in multiple media hits, including NBC-12, NBC-29, WAVY-10, WRIC-8, Daily Press, Americanfarm.com, and WDBJ-7.

• **Extension encourages firewise landscaping practices to prevent home and property fires:**
  o A news release resulted in a story in the *Roanoke Times* and WVTF public radio.

• **Extension encourages parents to take a stand against bullying:**
  o News release was picked up by the *Roanoke Times, Virginian-Pilot*, and WVTF public radio.

• **University researchers discover how mosquitoes avoid succumbing to viruses they transmit:**
  o A news release was distributed through the Office of Research. Multiple scientific media including Science Daily and *Scientific American* picked it up.
• **Research consortium to sequence turkey genome:**
  - A release was distributed in collaboration with VBI. The story was covered by numerous national and international science media including MSNBC.com, *US News and World Report*, Livescience.com

• **Multiple award recognition releases about faculty members were distributed.**

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**Faculty in Major Media – Highlights**

• **Jaren Pope**, agricultural and applied economics, was featured in an Associated Press article that was carried by *USA Today, Washington Post, New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Houston Chronicle*, and numerous other sources for his research on how March Madness and other sporting events affect college admissions.

• **Dini Miller**, urban pest management specialist, was quoted in an article about bed bugs in the *Washington Post*.

• **Paul Estabrooks**, human nutrition, foods and exercise, was featured in a front-page feature story in the *Roanoke Times* about his obesity research. Also interviewed by *CBS radio news*.

• **Mark McCann**, director of Virginia Cooperative Extension, was quoted in an article about the new Farm Bill in the *Washington Post*.

• **Jerzy Nowak**, former head of the Department of Horticulture, was featured in several articles nationally, including stories by the *AP* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, about his new appointment as the Director for the Center of Peace Studies and Violence Prevention.

• **Percival Zhang**, biological systems engineering, was featured in several articles nationally and internationally, including the *Economic Times, Biomass Magazine*, and *California Science and Technology News*, about his research on converting plant sugars into hydrogen. Also featured in several articles nationally and internationally about Biomethodes plan to develop his hydrogen fuel process.

• **Allen Straw**, horticulture, was quoted in a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* article about local food trends.

• **Robert Williams** and **George Flick**, both food science and technology, were cited in an *AP* article about food safety. The article mentioned Virginia Tech’s high-pressure processing research.
• **Joe Guthrie**, agricultural technology, was cited in an AP article ([Forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com) as well as other publications) about farming succession.

• **Zhiyou Wen**, biological system engineering, was featured in many articles, including *Science Daily*, *Medical News Today*, *Feedstuffs*, *Alternative Fuels*, and *Biodiesel* magazine about his biodiesel/omega-3 research.

• **Dennis Dean**, biochemistry, was featured in a front page Sunday article about the Carilion-Virginia Tech research partnership in the *Roanoke Times*.

• **Eric Day**, entomology, and **Adria Bordas**, Fairfax Extension, were interviewed on NBC-4 (Washington, D.C.) about the emerald ash borer discovery.

• **Matt Benson**, community viability specialist, was cited in several media hits about Farm Bureau’s “Safe Our Food” campaign. The story was picked up by multiple media, including WAVY-10, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, *Daily Press*, and several others.

• **Sharron Quisenberry**, dean, was cited in coverage of research rankings, including NBC-12, NBC-29, WAVY-10, WRIC-8, *Daily Press*, Americanfarm.com, and WDBJ-7.

• **Jennifer Abel**, Arlington County Extension, was quoted in an article in the *Washington Post* about financial education program for teenagers.

• **Rami Dalloul**, animal and poultry sciences, was quoted in an article on MSNBC.com about the turkey genome project. The story was covered by numerous media outlets including *US News and World Report*.

• **Susan Day**, horticulture, was quoted in Science Daily about Virginia Tech’s research on tree filtration.

• **Adam Downing**, Madison County Extension, was quoted in a *Washington Post* article about acorn shortages along the East Coast. CNN wrote a similar story, which was picked up by *Lawn and Landscape* magazine.

• **Kevin Myles and Zach Adelman**, both entomology, research about how mosquitoes avoid succumbing to viruses they transmit was picked up by multiple media including Science Daily and *Scientific American*.

### Media Visits/Public Relations Initiatives

• Continued visits and quarterly conference calls with the communications group at the Virginia Farm Bureau and expanded them to include Jeff Ishee of “On the Farm Radio” and “Virginia Farming” to pitch stories and coordinate efforts. The University
Relations Visual and Broadcast Communications Dept. is also represented during these meetings.

- Continued quarterly College Editorial Board meetings with representation from all units across the organization to ensure wide feedback to our communications and marketing efforts as well as consistent messaging at all levels.

**Articles**

- “Save the Bay, Save Agriculture” – *Virginia Tech Research* magazine (Summer 2008) [Michael Sutphin]
- “Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences Celebrates 100 Years of Progress” – *Virginia Tech Magazine* (Spring 2008) [Lori Greiner]
- “Biofuels: The search for innovative solutions to the energy crisis” – *Virginia Tech Magazine* (Fall 2008) [Michael Sutphin]
- “From West to East: The Yangtze River” – *Virginia Tech Research* magazine (Winter 2009) [Michael Sutphin]
- “A Healthy Virginia, A Healthy World” – *Virginia Business* insert (Fall 2008) [Michael Sutphin]

**Broadcast Media**

**Radio:**

*SoundLine* consists of "sound bites" for radio stations to use in creating their own segments. These feature Virginia Tech professors, researchers, and experts commenting on their research projects and academic endeavors. *SoundLine* is timely and produced to highlight newsworthy projects, usually on a weekly basis. Notification goes out to 30 stations across the state via e-mail, and the stations can download the "sound-bites" from the university website.

**News Features** are one-minute pieces. Virginia Tech Radio produced 86 features over the course of the year and distributed them on CD to 22 stations across the state. **News Features** focus on the work of Virginia Tech professors, researchers, and experts.

Both *SoundLine* and **News Features** are free services to which Virginia radio stations can subscribe by contacting us. These stations range from big to small, urban to rural, and far Southwest to Tidewater. In collaboration with Visual and Broadcast Communications, our unit produced 9 *SoundLine* and 28 **News Features** with topics related to work in our college. **Note:** News Features are undergoing a redesign/repurposing move to a new distribution system replacing CDs with Web-based postings that will make them easier to find and download, and reduce repeats. The new system should debut in early 2009.

**RadiolQ spots** – Radio IQ is a public radio service of Virginia Tech and Ferrum College offering BBC news and NPR talk programs to listeners in the New River Valley. A total
of 8 spots were produced in 2008.

**Podcasts** – Podcasts are special audio interviews on specific topics. They are available for listening via the Internet or downloading to an MP3 device, and they are located on the University Relations Podcast page at www.podcasts.vt.edu. A total of 9 podcasts were produced in 2008.

**Video:**
Visual and Broadcast Communications produced five items of video footage on college topics that were distributed to the Virginia Farm Bureau and *Down Home Virginia* television programs and also found usage at university-level and other outlets.
Communications and Marketing Projects

Publications/Products

The unit produced a total of 207 products during CY2008. (For a complete product listing, please see the appendix.) Products included 145 educational materials for Virginia Cooperative Extension: Agriculture and Natural Resources (58), Family and Consumer Sciences (61), Community Viability (2), and 4-H (24). The remaining 62 products were marketing projects for the College and VCE.
Of the 207 total products, 69 percent were VCE educational materials, 21 percent were marketing products for the college, and 10 percent were marketing materials for Extension.

Types of Publications Projects 2008

The unit produces many different types of materials, which are selectively highlighted in the following.

**Exhibits**
Exhibits are produced for use in public settings where a quick visual impact is desired. The exhibit shown is a biological systems engineering project detailing ways to reduce pollution and protect the local water supply.
Production and field guides
Up-to-date production guidelines and their timely distribution are critical to Extension’s mission in agriculture and natural resources and to Virginia agribusinesses. These materials are updated and produced in the last quarter of each year to be ready for winter grower meetings and spring planting.

Illustrations
Original illustrations are one of the products we provided that cannot be obtained from any other unit. Our artists draw technical illustrations of specific items, such as insects, agricultural systems, and animals. The example shown is a logo designed for the Land Care Stewards program.

VCE educational publications
As noted in the beginning of this section, 69 percent of the unit’s products in 2008 were comprised of educational materials for Extension. These materials represent VCE to the public and are used extensively in hands-on programs for audiences of all age groups. They range from single-sheet forms and outlines to complete handbooks that range from 50 to 200+ pages.
Communications and Marketing Projects

Brochures
A number of brochures were produced for various uses, including programs and special events. The example shown is an FCS promotional brochure targeted at school administrators.

Newsletters
Newsletters are produced as part of educational programs, as in the case of the *Smart Choices for Young Families* series, or as communications pieces for the organization, such as *Connections*, the college’s alumni newsletter. Our unit also offers editing and design support for our academic departments’ newsletters, as illustrated by the Plant Pathology and Weed Science newsletter shown.

College promotional materials
Our unit creates materials to promote programs, special college events and activities. This year, the undergraduate recruitment brochure was redesigned.
Communications and Marketing Projects

Magazines/annual reports
The college’s impacts-based publication *Innovations* was produced in January 2008. Our unit provided all aspects for development of this piece: concept, story development and writing, photography, design, layout, and production. We also create the Extension magazine *Solutions*.

Website design
Our unit provides website design services and then works closely with AHNRI-IT staff to bring those designs into production as websites. In 2008, we developed the design for the *Living Well* website, a companion to the FCS newsletter of the same title.
Major Project Highlights

College

• Revised and redesigned undergraduate recruitment brochure, *Discover Your Own Path*.

• Department Newsletters and PR materials
  The Communications and Marketing staff continues to support departments and ARECs with the design and production of their newsletters and major PR materials. This is a win-win situation for all parties involved. The units receive editing and design assistance, and the college benefits from more branded materials at all levels. Examples include:
    1. Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences newsletter
    2. Plant Pathology, Physiology, and Weed Science newsletter

• *Connections*, the college newsletter for alumni and friends, was produced and distributed once in 2008. Its total targeted readership is 17,000. (The second version of *Connections* was finalized in 2008 but not distributed until early 2009.)

• *Innovations*, the college’s annual impacts publication, was produced and distributed in print to major college stakeholders and influencers (legislator, producer groups, donors of the college, alumni, Virginia agriculture teachers, faculty and staff) in January 2009. The majority of recipients receive this publication electronically.

• Produced brochure for Online Master of Agricultural and Life Sciences program with IDDL.

• Produced handouts for legislative lobbying and facilitated sending of message from dean on budget situation to alumni, state ELC, and College Leadership Council.

• Created and maintained website for internal budget communications topics – messages from college and university leadership as well as from the governor, questions and answers, budget reduction strategies from faculty and staff.

Cooperative Extension

• Edited, designed, and produced 145 subject-matter publications for use by VCE field personnel in delivering programs.

• Launched new content review process for VCE. Wrote guidelines and developed intranet website. Worked with administration to address issues and revise process as needed.

• Launched public calendar program for VCE in July.
• Determined marketing and communications priorities for VCE program areas for the year via meetings with leadership and developed matrix to help prioritize our marketing efforts.

• Assisted with coordination of six Adobe Connect sessions in lieu of face-to-face VCE fall district meetings. Collected frequently asked questions and compiled questions and answers for administrative use.

• Solutions, the annual Extension magazine, was produced in May and distributed to all VCE faculty and staff as well as our Extension peers in each state.

• Living Well newsletter was produced twice in 2008; creation of the website counterpart.

• Continued to send bi-weekly e-mail messages from VCE Director to help improve internal communications. Conducted survey of audience to assess effectiveness. More than 300 responses were received. Minor changes were made to web presence as a result of the survey and some content changes were implemented.

• Three-day photo trip around Virginia with a university photographer to take photos of VCE programming for web sites and other marketing efforts.

• FCS and Family Nutrition Program (FNP) EFNEP/SCNEP marketing work - identified key audiences, drafted marketing/communications plan, completed two general marketing pieces for FCS - one targeted at school personnel and one targeted at non-Extension faculty.

• Collaborated with Development and VCE staff on three areas: 4-H, FCS, and Master Gardener endowment.
Web Communications and Marketing

Web Communications and Impacts

**College website**

- [www.cals.vt.edu](http://www.cals.vt.edu) – The college home page received 4.4 million hits and more than 891,000 page views during the CY2008. This figure translates into an average of 12,024 requests per day.

- The college communications manager remains the key person responsible for the coordination and development of content to which many units contribute.

**Internal communications:**

- *Insights*, the college’s internal monthly e-newsletter ([www.cals.vt.edu/news/pubs/insights](http://www.cals.vt.edu/news/pubs/insights)), was regularly distributed in 2008. It includes content from the dean and college leadership; faculty and staff successes, awards, and achievements; information about new faculty and staff; and updates on the work that goes on in the college and Extension.

**Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station:**

- The Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station site, [www.vaes.vt.edu](http://www.vaes.vt.edu) – Received 213,000 page views for the CY2008.
Connections:
- Connections – the college’s alumni and friends newsletter was produced in summer 2008. (The second version of Connections was finalized in 2008 but not distributed until early 2009.) The college communications manager writes and edits submitted articles. Communications and Marketing staff edits, designs, and produces the six-page newsletter. Each issue is mailed to a total of 27,000 alumni, with more than 15,000 alumni and friends on the hard copy and more than 12,000 readers on the e-mail distribution list. (Currently, a number of readers receive both versions of the newsletter.) The electronic version is available online to a broad audience (URL: http://www.cals.vt.edu/news/pubs/connections/index.html).

Virginia Cooperative Extension

- Virginia Cooperative Extension Public Site, www.ext.vt.edu, is maintained by the Extension Communications Manager, with technical support provided by AHNR-IT. The site received 21 million page views per year.

- www.ext.vt.edu/vce – Virginia Cooperative Extension Intranet Site. The Extension Communications Manager maintains this site, with technical support provided by AHNR-IT. The site received more than 1 million page requests.

University Spotlights on the Virginia Tech home page

The following college- and or VCE-related topics were featured as spotlights on the Virginia Tech home page.

- Environmentally conscious solutions to eroding streams
- Undergraduate work in Mali to save lives
- Researchers probe mystery of mosquito immunity
- Beautiful gardens help grow Virginia’s green industry
- High-risk plant pathogens have a new foe
- Entrepreneurs and leaders help Virginia communities prosper
- Restoring the nation’s largest estuary
- Agricultural byproducts harvested to cultivate a greener commonwealth
Special Events and Other Marketing-related Activities

- Faculty and Staff Appreciation Luncheon (June 17) – Coordinated information for, writing of, and design of program and award check for luncheon. Approximately 300 faculty and staff were in attendance.

- Society of Environmental Journalists conference (October):
  - Assisted in identifying tour stops.
  - Assisted in lining up speakers for conference
  - Coordinated on-campus tours.

- VA Agribusiness Council Board Visit (October) – Efforts included tour coordination with faculty and the two other colleges; design and production of materials for participants; and tour facilitation.

- AREC Tours (Fall 2008):
  - Updated maps of all ARECs
  - Produced agendas for each tour
  - Created fact sheets on all 13 ARECs, also posted to Web.

- Dean’s Open Forums on Budget Issues (December) – Assisted in coordinating forums and facilitating Adobe Connect access for remote participants

- Virginia State Fair:
  - Coordinated and set up VCE/Virginia Agriculture display.
  - Developed a marketing and public relations effort to promote the Virginia Farmer of the Year award for the first time this year. Recipient was recognized at the state fair, a plaque and goodie basket was given, and a press release was distributed.
Service and Engagement Activities

Training and Presentations

Unit members provided formal and informal training and presentations on the following topics to various audiences:

- “Column Writing 101” workshop at VCE Professional Development Conference [L. Greiner]
- "Writing Successful Impact Statements" for specialists at VCE In-Service [K. Roan]
- “Marketing VCE Programs” at Extension Programming Institute [L. Burcham]
- “VCE Content Review Process” at specialists roundtable at VCE In-Service [L. Burcham]
- “Communications and Marketing in VCE” at New Faculty Orientation [L. Burcham]
- Marketing overview to new VCE employees [K. Roan]
- “Communications and Marketing” for retired faculty breakfast [L. Burcham]
- “Pixel Perfect” workshop for 4-H Congress members [L. Burcham]
- “What you need to know to make a good 4-H club website” workshop for 4-H Congress [L. Greiner and B. Carroll]
- “Writing News Releases” guest lecture for Dr. McGilliard's senior seminar class [L. Greiner]
- Guest lecture on "Public relations and the Importance of Creating a Positive Customer Service Experience" for Dr. McGilliard's class [K. Roan]
- VCE Specialist Update [L. Burcham]
- CY2009 planning meetings with college department heads [K. Roan]

Committee Work

Unit members represent the college/unit on and/or provide leadership for the following committees and groups:

- eXtension iTeam [K. Roan, L. Burcham; chair]
- eXtension Communications and Marketing team [K. Roan]
- ACE Media Relations Workshop committee [L. Greiner]
- ACE Media Relations SIG [L. Greiner]
- ACE Marketing SIG [L. Burcham]
- ACE Leadership and Management SIG [K. Roan]
- Quarterly phone calls with Farm Bureau Communications Office staff and Jeff Ishee, Virginia Farming, as well as university Visual and Broadcast Communications staff
- Agribusiness Visit (Oct. 3) planning meetings [K. Roan]
- PRSA professional advisor for Virginia Tech PRSA student chapter [L. Burcham]
- Virginia Tech Staff Senate [L. Greiner]
- College Alumni Organization [K. Roan/L. Greiner during Roan's FMLA]
- CALSSA [L. Greiner]
• College Editorial Board – [K. Roan, chair; L. Burcham, L. Greiner, M. Sutphin]
• Coordinating Counselors meetings [L. Greiner]
• College Relations Committee [L. Greiner, chair; K. Roan]
• College Diversity Council – [K. Roan]
• Monthly Development/Alumni meetings
• VCE State Extension Leadership Council [L. Burcham for K. Roan]
  o VCE ELC Marketing Subcommittee [L. Burcham]
  o VCE ELC Advocacy Subcommittee [L. Roan]
• ANR Project Leaders [L. Burcham, K. Roan]
• 4-H Leadership Council [L. Burcham]
• FCS Marketing Committee [L. Burcham]
• FCS Publications Committee [L. Burcham]
• Living Well newsletter committee [L. Burcham]

Other Engagement

• Virginia Agribusiness Council Banquet [L. Greiner]
• Northeast District Ag Tour funded by SARE grant [M. Sutphin]
• Deans’ Forum on Infectious Diseases [M. Sutphin, L. Greiner, K. Roan]
• State Fair of Virginia [L. Greiner]
• Society of Environmental Journalists conference [M. Sutphin, L. Greiner, K. Roan]
Professional Development

Unit members took advantage of a number of professional development opportunities off- and on-campus to ensure the highest level of professionalism of their work and connectivity with vital organizations, such as the Association for Communication Excellence in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Life and Human Sciences (ACE).

Staff members are committed to maintaining a high level of involvement in professional organizations and continuing to remain up-to-date on and cognizant of the latest design, communications, PR, and media relations trends. This commitment, combined with its strong support from the organization, is the foundation of high-quality communications and marketing output.

- ACE national conference [L. Burcham, T. FisherPoff, M. Sutphin, L. Greiner]
  - Presentation at conference: Virginia’s Participation in the Sunbelt Agricultural Expo [L. Burcham, T. FisherPoff]
- Media Relations Made Easy, Atlanta, Ga., April 13-15 [L. Greiner]
- ACE Leadership and Management prof. development sessions [K. Roan]
- DigiTool digital archive training, State Library of Virginia [L. Burcham]
- “Using Blogs to Communicate” FDI Training [L. Burcham]
- "Advance VT's Advancing Diversity" workshop [K. Roan]
- University’s Multicultural Luncheon [M. Sutphin, L. Greiner]
- Performance Evaluation training [K. Roan, L. Burcham, L. Greiner]
- University Development Annual Retreat [K. Roan and L. Greiner]
- University Relations summer retreat [M. Sutphin, L. Greiner, K. Roan, N. Templeman, L. Guinn, C. Cox, T. FisherPoff, M. Chorba]
- PRSA Blue Ridge Chapter professional development workshop on Web 2.0 [M. Sutphin, L. Greiner]
- University Relations Brown Bag Luncheons – Topics: Strategic Communication and RSS Feed [both L. Greiner]
- eXtension prof. development sessions on Google spreadsheet forms and on search engine optimization [both K. Roan]
- Adobe Connect [L. Burcham, L. Greiner, K. Roan]
- Scholar I and II [K. Roan]
- Web Content Workshop [L. Greiner]
- Roanoke Regional Writers Conference [M. Sutphin]
- Ensemble CMS Training [M. Sutphin, L. Greiner]
Unit Goals 2009

- Increase the awareness of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Virginia Cooperative Extension's key initiatives and programs through integrated marketing and communications products and activities targeted toward organization's diverse audiences.
- Increase the awareness of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Virginia Cooperative Extension’s key initiatives and programs through targeted local, state, and national media relations efforts.
- Manage the timely and branded publication of peer- and non-peer-reviewed VCE educational publications.
- Improve the effectiveness of our faculty and staff’s media relations, communications, and marketing activities through training.
- Promote diversity in all communications and marketing efforts.
- Actively serve the organization through various college, university, and national committees and participate in professional development opportunities.
Challenges

The national and state budget shortfalls have impacted our unit as well. In October 2008, when the editor on our team took her leave towards retirement (effective January 1, 2009), we re-prioritized our operating funds to help sustain this role on a part-time wage basis until the end of 2008. Any communications unit would be remiss without the vital role of an editor who ensures not only quality of all publicized materials but also serves as a final gauge for accuracy and consistency. We had planned to fill the position come January, but the college-wide hiring freeze has had an adverse effect on this position as well. It is our hope to be able to fill the vacancy at the full-time level during this calendar year, as this position is the sole editing resource for our unit. Sustaining the editorial function is an absolutely indispensable component of any communications operation and safeguards quality of all products. Additionally, our limited operating funds cannot sustain a wage position for any extended period of time.

The unit is optimistic that the college will continue its funding support for the unit’s communications assistant position, currently funded as a restricted position until the end of June 2009 and crucial to sustaining the unit’s core operations. In addition to providing administrative support, the communications assistant produces the college’s monthly newsletter *Insights* and has taken on the lead for the unit-internal VCE publications process. (The publications process encompassed 145 publications during CY2008 and would also cover college marketing pieces.)

The elimination of either of these positions severely would jeopardize the unit’s operation and would prevent us from providing the quality and quantity of services it currently does. It would no doubt bring our operations to a standstill on some fronts.

We also note that we were the lowest-staffed group among similar units at peer institutions in a nation-wide comparison in 2007, a time when all positions on the team were filled at the full-time level. An ACE benchmark effort conducted of 15 peer institutions that year lists our unit at the bottom of the rankings, with the highest ratio of communications staff to Extension/college faculty/staff at 1:150.

Academic units have shared with us that Web-based communications continue to pose a challenge for individual departments. Department leaders unanimously recognize the need for a quality, up-to-date Web presence and have voiced interest in the university’s content management system and standardized design templates. However, they are concerned about the resources to make such transition happen. Departmental websites are the lead content request on the college’s website and play a central role for student and faculty/staff recruiting as well as public relations. We continue to do our share, along with the college’s IT staff, to provide training and advice to our units. Staying up-to-date on this vital communications platform is important. However, the implementation support of a CMS, new design, and in many cases updating content, for the departments does currently not exist.
Academic units have also shared with us that the budget cuts make it difficult for them to continue the production of much-needed newsletters to alumni. Readership evaluation has repeatedly shown that particularly older alumni prefer receiving communications in hard copy, as they are not online and tuned into e-mail. The omission of this important communication level could also impact the college’s fund-raising efforts with this cohort of supporters. We also recognize that challenges with the frequently out-of-date e-mails alumni keep with the university’s Alumni Association make the electronic distribution of department and college newsletters challenging.
Appendix: Educational and Marketing Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pub/Job No.</th>
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# Appendix: Educational and Marketing Materials

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## Appendix: Educational and Marketing Materials

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