

Shared notes (9.11.26 Webinar)

Some recruitment ideas from our session:

- Attend staff meetings to recruit university employees for undergrad and grad programs
 - Usually, your institution will have some kind of staff (employees who are not faculty) organization led by a president and officers. Contact the president and find out what kind of opportunities are available. If they have regular meetings, see if you can present at those meetings. Find out if they have advertising opportunities such as a newsletter or at a staff awards ceremony.
 - For staff members, your master's degree is going to be more applicable than the bachelor's degree as most staff jobs require a bachelor's degree (with some exceptions).
 - A few selling points:
 - You need a master's degree to move up in higher ed. You might as well be working on one while you're here
 - If your institution offers discounted tuition, then the value vs the cost of the degree is going to be very high.
 - Tech comm is very versatile and applicable to any job they're looking to do.
 - If your program is online, that seems to be even more attractive to staff members. They don't want to be on campus longer than they have to be :)
 - A 30 credit master's degree with a non thesis option is especially attractive
- Consider starting parent outreach at your school or connecting if there are events like that (See [JMU Admitted Student Open House](#) for reference)
- Consider target-rich departments you might partner with (health programs for medical rhetoric connections, business schools, ROTC programs, etc.)
- Come up with a department tagline: Write to Learn, Write to Earn,; Writing for Change; Where Sciences and Humanities Meet, etc.)
- Seek internal recruitment grads from university, college or graduate school
- Consider partnership with university branding and marketing office
- Think about search terms so that your website and social media will appear on student searches
- Consider creating department t-shirts to increase visibility on campus (could use something like [Cafe Press](#) to keep costs down)
- Consider dovetailing your recruitment work with your scholarship (*Programmatic Perspectives* might be a great publishing venue)
- Consider asking for specific data from your registrar (when do students declare your major? What majors might they be switching from? etc.)
- Postcards
 - Meet with your academic advisors to tell them about your degree program and what kind of career opportunities it offers. Advisors don't just tell students what classes to take. They offer all kinds of advice including what majors might be most applicable to career goals.

- Meet with the admission counselors in your admission office. Admissions is the first point of contact for prospective students. If admissions officers don't know what tech comm is, they won't tell students about it.
- Think of the landing web page for your program primarily as a recruitment page. Give prospective students the information they want on the front page. Make sure to have an obvious form on the page where a prospective student can request more information.
- Remember, once prospective students apply, you are still recruiting them. Maintain contact. Remind them if they are missing application materials. Offer them a personal contact for questions.
- Get involved with local organization activities/meetups. STC may be dead, but there are others, such as Write the Docs, that are still active.
- Consider partnering with local businesses/organizations. Which ones offer education benefits (pay for tuition). Can you advertise to their employees somehow? (I haven't tried this one yet, but I'm looking into this now).

WRITERS WHO WORK
Professional Writing
Master of Science degree

WRITE TO LEARN, WRITE TO EARN.

- Taught by working writers
- An education that can lead to a career

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A novelist who has also published as a ghost writer.
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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- 36-credit hour program
- Rolling application deadline
- Thesis optional
- Classes meet in the evening and online

CHOOSE FROM THESE EDUCATIONAL TRACKS:

- Writing for the Public and Private Sectors
- Teaching Writing
- Journalistic Writing
- Technical Writing and Information Design
- Scientific Writing
- Creative Writing

LEARN MORE AT:
<https://www.towson.edu/cia/departments/english/gradwriting/>
or write to prwr@towson.edu

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National Resources:

CPTSC –

ATTW -

Master's Degree Consortium of Writing Studies Specialists:

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/mdcwss/>

Last version of list:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1sW6jq0Zpll_zqdssTLdzBW0c_D3jNSje/edit?gid=1435298071#gid=1435298071

Local Resources that we use with differing degrees of access/success:

Marketing Communications

<https://www.jmu.edu/marketing-communications/teams/index.shtml>

Social Media Manager for the university

<https://www.jmu.edu/marketing-communications/teams/social-media/index.shtml>

- Teams virtual community of people creating content
- Access to social media tools – our university pays for **BrandWatch** which helps with scheduling and assessing the impact of posted content as well as managing posts that garner unwanted attention.
- We indicated our willingness to play by their rules

Digital and Web Experience:

<https://www.jmu.edu/marketing-communications/teams/digital-web-experience.shtml>

Photography and Video creation:

<https://www.jmu.edu/marketing-communications/teams/photo-video/index.shtml>

Professional photographs – if we know something on our end about where to stage photos, and what types of photos will help with our message

Video – harder, more expensive, more labor intensive for the marketing communication offices. Funding is the issue, and their budget may or may not fit with our needs.

CRM (constituent relation management) Student Success interface.

Colleges have different budgets for using this resource with recruitment.

When the budget is there, this tool can be helpful; for us, it's a way to shape a message over a series of emails. Does it draw students to our degree?

<https://www.jmu.edu/marketing-communications/teams/photo-video/index.shtml>
<https://help.jmu.edu/TDClient/277/Portal/Requests/Service/10663/Student-Success-CRM-Salesforce>

In-field Recruitment and Design Resources we found helpful:

[Marketing tech comm: A content analysis of value propositions on master's degree websites | Proceedings of the 43rd ACM International Conference on Design of Communication](#)

Chong, Felicia. (2016, October 6-8). "Methods We Use to Sell Technical Communication: An Analysis of Recruitment Advertisements in CPTSC Conference Programs." Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication Conference, Statesboro, GA, United States,
<https://cptsc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2016.pdf>

Crow, Angela, and Jen Almjeld. "Story Versus Search: Writing Studies Graduate Recruitment Lessons Learned." *Programmatic Perspectives* 16.1 (2025).

Miller, Jennifer Roth, Dieterle, Brandy, deWinter, Jennifer, & Vie, Stephanie. (2020). Social media in professional, technical, and scientific communication programs: A heuristic to guide future use. *Communication Design Quarterly Review*, 8(1), 19-34.

Roundtree, Aimee Kendall. Program Recruitment. White Paper. April 28, 2016
<https://cptsc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Recruiting-Roundtree-2016.pdf>

Potts, Liz., & Gonzales, Laura. (2020). Teaching content strategy in technical communication. In Tracy Bridgeford (Ed) *Teaching Content Management in Technical and Professional Communication*. (pp 59-71)) New York: Routledge.

Thominet, L., Seal, S., & Acosta, K. (2025). Marketing tech comm: A content analysis of value propositions on master's degree websites. *Proceedings of the 43rd ACM International Conference on Design of Communication, SIGDOC '25*, 66–72.
<https://doi.org/10.1145/3711670.3764621>

Versosa Hurley, Elise, and Amy C. Kimme Hea. "A Rhetorical Approach to Teaching Social Media Tools." In Tracy Bridgeford (Ed) *Teaching Content Management in Technical and Professional Communication*. (pp. 125–137) New York: Routledge.

Watts, Julie. (2017, October 5-7). "Using a social media strategy to recruit master's students in technical and professional communication." Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication Conference, Savannah, GA, United States,
<https://cptsc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2017.pdf>

Higher Ed Recruitment Literature:

Alexander, Jamel-Jared, & Walton, Rebecca. (2022). Relational recruiting: Using black feminist theory to inform graduate recruiting strategies. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 65(1), 164–178. <https://doi.org/10.1109/TPC.2021.3137571>

Amirali, Shabeer, & Bakken, Jeffrey P. (2015). Trends and challenges of recruiting and retaining international graduate students: An internal perspective. *Journal of Education Research*, 9(4).

Chong, F., & Roundtree, A. K. (2021). Student recruitment in technical and professional communication programs. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 30(1), 1-18.

Cingillioglu, Ilker, Uri Gal, and Artem Prokhorov. "Social media marketing for student recruitment: an algorithmically sequenced literature review." *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* 34.2 (2024): 1101-1123.

Dayley, C. (2021). Combatting embedded racism in TPC academic programs: Recruiting for diversity using student-informed practices. *Programmatic Perspectives*, 12(1), 5-38.

Dayley, C. (2022). Ethical deception: Student perceptions of diversity in college recruitment materials. *Communication Design Quarterly Review*, 10(1), 38-50.

Dayley, Chris, & Rebecca Walton (2018). "Informing Efforts to Increase Diversity: Academic Programs and Student Motivation in Technical and Professional Communication. *Programmatic Perspectives*, 10(2), Fall 2018: pp. 5–46.

Friess, E. (2026). "Boring people doing boring jobs": High school educators' conceptions of technical writing and technical communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 35(4), 485-496, DOI: 10.1080/10572252.2025.2571212

Greer, Tomika, Johnson, Olivia, & Delk, Desmond. (2021). Graduate enhancement for minority Studies (GEMS): Case study of a graduate student recruitment program. *College Student Journal*, 55(4), 371-386.

Griffin, Kimberly A., & Muñiz, Marcela. M. (2011). The strategies and struggles of graduate diversity officers in the recruitment of doctoral students of color. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 44(1), 57-76.

Lim, Weng Marc, Teck Weng Jee, and Ernest Cyril De Run. "Strategic brand management for higher education institutions with graduate degree programs: empirical insights from the higher education marketing mix." *Journal of Strategic Marketing* 28.3 (2020): 225-245.

Palav, Mahesh R. "Strategic marketing in education: Leveraging branding and communication for institutional success." *Multidisciplinary Aspects of Education*. <https://books.google.es/books> (2024).

Palmer, Laura. A. (2012, October). Understanding social media advertising in higher ed: A case study from a small graduate program. In *Proceedings of the 30th ACM International Conference on Design of Communication*, 115-120.

Poock, Michael C. (2007). A shifting paradigm in the recruitment and retention of underrepresented graduate students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 9(2), 169-181.

Russell, J. A. (2020). Enhancing graduate student research, recruitment, and retention via a summer research experience. *Kinesiology Review*, 9(4), 343-348.

Shadding, C. R., Whittington, D., Wallace, L. E., Wandu, W. S., & Wilson, R. K. (2016). Cost-effective recruitment strategies that attract underrepresented minority undergraduates who persist to STEM doctorates. *SAGE open*, 6(3), 2158244016657143.

Wall Bortz, W. E., Knight, D. B., Lyles, C. H., Kinoshita, T., Choe, N. H., Denton, M., & Borrego, M. (2020). A competitive system: Graduate student recruitment in STEM and why money may not be the answer. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 91(6), 927-952.

Almjeld and Crow Survey Text

Graduate Recruitment Study

You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Jen Almjeld and Dr. Angela Crow in the School of Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication at James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to examine digital communications with prospective students for recruitment purposes. We are exploring textual and visual strategies intended to accurately and responsibly attract and educate prospective Writing Studies graduate students.

This study will contribute to our graduate program's success and may also benefit other Writing Studies graduate and undergraduate programs at other universities.

This study has been approved by the IRB, protocol #24-4284.

The short survey should require no more than 20 minutes of your time.

By clicking the arrow below and completing the survey, you are giving your consent to participate.

If you have any questions about the study, please reach out to Dr. Almjeld at almjeljm@jmu.edu or Dr. Crow at crowad@jmu.edu.

To consent to participate in this study and to continue the survey, please click the arrow below.

1. How did you begin your search for a master's program? If you can't remember, how might you expect to search for a graduate program?

2. Check the criteria that were most relevant to you when beginning your search for a graduate program:

1. Location: I wanted to stay in this region of Virginia.
2. Location: I wanted to stay within a five-hour driving trip from my family home.
3. Location: I wanted to move to this region of the country because I hoped to find employment within one or two hours of JMU.
4. Program: I wanted to find a program that was focused on technical communication because I want to be a writer for specific industries: health, government, science, technology, etc.
5. Program: I wanted to find a program that was focused on Writing Studies because I hope to teach in either public schools or at a university.
6. Program: I wanted to find a master's program that would be my first graduate experience with a smaller number of students before pursuing a PhD in rhetoric and composition, technical communication or a similar field.
7. Size: I wanted to gain a master's degree at an institution that didn't offer an in-field PhD because I might receive more individual attention than at a larger PhD-granting university.
8. Other criteria. Please explain.

3. When starting your search, do you remember the strategies you used? (Check all that apply)

1. Looked for guides (Peterson's Guide or US News and World Report)
2. Signed up with online platforms that help prospective students find information
3. Developed a list of specific universities and explored their programs
4. Asked friends for their graduate program recommendations
5. Asked mentors for their graduate program recommendations
6. Sought graduate programs at JMU because I want to stay at the same school as my BA
7. Other. Please explain:

4. What keywords did or would you expect to use when seeking information about graduate education in Writing Studies? (Check all that apply)

1. State or region
2. Graduate program
3. Technical communication
4. Professional writing
5. Science writing
6. Teaching writing
7. Writing studies
8. Rhetoric and composition
9. Business writing
10. Other. Please explain:

5. When you applied for programs, did you request information about a program?

1. Yes
2. No

6. If yes, what kind of information did you receive from the program?

1. A series of direct emails
2. One email from X person, offering to meet with me
3. Information about informational meeting
4. Received no information from the program
5. Other. Please explain:

7. When you went to the web page to look at information about the specific courses in the program, what were you searching for? (Check all that apply)

1. Requirements for degree completion
2. Explanation of the sequence of courses and the curriculum

3. A sense of whether I was prepared to do well in the curriculum
4. A sense of how much of a background I would need in the discipline to enter and succeed
5. Other. Please explain:

8. When visiting web pages for potential graduate programs, what design features are most important to you?

Please rank the top 3 from the list below by moving your top three answers to the top of the list.

1. Ease of navigation
2. Alignment with key words from my search
3. Visual attractiveness of the space (more white space, less clutter, fewer colors, limited typefaces)
4. Layout that facilitated ease to find searched for content
5. Availability of accessible content (closed caption videos, ability to change font size, etc.)
6. Appropriate amount of information
7. Direct address to me as a user/consumer
8. Other. Please explain:

9. What sorts of artifacts / texts were useful to you or would you expect to be useful for prospective graduate students? (Check all that apply)

1. Program website
2. Direct email
3. Social media posts
4. Print brochures
5. Print direct correspondence
6. Other. Please explain:

10. How likely were you to link to social media accounts from a program's website or to search out that program's social media accounts? (rank from 0 or "Not at all likely" to 10 or "Extremely likely")

11. If you did link to a program's social media accounts, which platforms did you look at?

1. Facebook
2. Instagram
3. TikTok
4. LinkedIn
5. Other. Please explain:

12. If you did browse social media accounts, what were you looking to see?

13. Please rank the importance of information below for those considering graduate school.

Rank up to 5 types of information in order by moving your top answers to the top of the list.

1. Cost / financial aid
2. Health and wellness resources
3. Mentoring support
4. Student groups
5. Opportunity for scholarships / assistantships
6. Employment rates of graduates
7. Length of program
8. Housing availability
9. Cost of living in the community
10. Information on surrounding community
11. Information on faculty (faculty research interest, access to faculty, etc.)
12. General information about students

13. Internship opportunities
14. Quality of research facilities
15. Career paths of program graduates
16. Other. Please explain:

14. Please rank how important (on a scale of 0-5) it was to you that a graduate program demonstrated the following aspects:

1. Rigor
2. Caring
3. Cost effectiveness
4. Diverse student population
5. Diverse faculty population
6. Diverse surrounding community
7. Job preparation
8. Information on alumni and their career paths
9. Other. Please explain:

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey. Your response has been recorded.

Questions we are still grappling with:

-Is it a good idea to form alliances with other similar/small-ish departments on your campus?

-How might we work together as a field to brand and market Writing Studies to increase student and parent awareness?

- Maybe we could create a web site, or a section of the CPTSC web site, dedicated to student recruitment. I'm thinking it would have 2 parts. One for faculty and one for students.

-The faculty page could be resources such as the ones found in this document. It could provide templates, documents, and advice. It could also provide a list of programs willing to advertise for other programs. For example, I'd love to

advertise for PhD programs or even other master's degree programs by putting up flyers or pointing students to program web sites (Chris Dayley)

- The student facing page could give info about "Why tech comm" or "why writing studies?" and provide a program directory. Instead of having one person try and keep up with the current directory, it would be the responsibility of individual programs. You could send out a reminder every year to update your program info. Also, keeping your program info in the directory could be tied to having a current CPTSC membership.