Overview and Background

The language of the First Amendment leaves no doubt about the importance the Founding Fathers placed on free and open discourse. As the press is the only non-governmental institution specifically mentioned in the Constitution, the Founders surely realized the importance of its role in democracy. The interconnectedness of today’s world makes free and open exchange of information crucial. Journalism was never more important to democracy and to a free society than now.

"Undergirding all its functions is the most foundational purpose of a free press, which is to hold us all accountable," said Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. “In the media, the daily discussion of the nation’s business and the world’s—which with the advent of the Internet, cable television, and other means of instant access to the news is now on a 24/7 cycle—is the way we take the temperature of our lives, our culture, our society and even our civilization; it is the way we assess our direction and debate where we are going, or should be going, in the future."

It is imperative for this world-class research institution, and for the Philip Merrill College of Journalism, to help lead the way.
The Rise of the College

From the outset, what is now the Philip Merrill College of Journalism has aspired to be among the world’s premier journalism programs. Many factors—including proximity to the nation’s capital, a distinguished faculty, and a strong public affairs reporting focus—have made that goal attainable. Our curriculum focusing solely on journalism at both the undergraduate and graduate levels is almost singular among the nation’s top programs. It is a curriculum grounded in the bedrock of reporting, writing, editing, and ethical studies—but placing high priority also on the technological changes that have come with the digital age.

Journalism schools are not ranked by U.S. News & World Report as are many other academic programs. However, Merrill College is widely regarded among the nation’s best as evidenced by the fact that we are one of only 12 schools that comprise the membership of the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education. Further evidence of the stature of Merrill can be found in the high regard for the school among many of the nation’s top journalists, along with the repeatedly strong showing of our students in national competitions, outstanding job placement of our graduates, the leadership roles assumed by our faculty in professional development activities, and the fact that Merrill College outstrips every other College on campus in terms of out-of-state students (60 percent for August 2015 entry). Leveraging our location in proximity to both the nation’s capital as well as the state capital, Merrill is well positioned to continue its rise to excellence.

Capital News Service

Merrill operates four news bureaus, reporting from the Ronald Reagan Building in downtown Washington, D.C.; from Annapolis with the state legislature, courts, and executive branch as a focus; and from the College Park campus, where a multimedia news bureau is based at John S. and James L. Knight Hall and Capital News Service-TV operates from the Richard Eaton Broadcast Center at UMTV. The four bureaus create the College’s Capital News Service (CNS) – one of the longest-running “teaching hospital” models for journalism education in the country now in its 25th year. Under close supervision of faculty editors, undergraduate and master’s students supply stories via a wire service and website (www.cnsmaryland.org) to paying clients throughout Maryland and beyond. They air “Maryland Newsline,” a live nightly newscast to approximately 500,000 homes in Prince George’s and Montgomery counties via Comcast and Verizon. The Capital News Service is thus both a source of information and a vehicle enabling Merrill’s students to build a strong body of work with which the majority have launched careers. Merrill’s news bureaus are often imitated by other universities that have adapted the idea as a professional-level capstone experience.
Other Student Reporting Initiatives

Recent January-term students have reported from Latvia, Hungary, and Slovakia. Merrill offers concentrations in sports and investigative reporting, as well as capstone classes in urban affairs reporting in Baltimore and national security. In all, Merrill offers students not only a rigorous course of study but practical experience in reporting that is the equal of top journalism programs.

The Strategic Plan: Scope and Structure

A 10-year strategic plan for the Philip Merrill College of Journalism was developed over the course of an academic year in 2007-2008, with input from Merrill’s faculty, students, and staff. The plan was ambitious and required significant capital investment and reallocation of existing resources. It envisioned a total 10-year expenditure of $30 million over the College’s base budget. This plan revisits and updates the 2009 plan. Although the goals and mission of the 2009 plan remain largely intact, journalism is a fast-moving profession. The 2015 update revises for the next five years some goals and plans, particularly in the area of curriculum offerings and faculty expertise needed in the future.

Implementation of the 2009 plan has been guided the University’s concurrent plan. Throughout Merrill’s implementation we have also endeavored to:

• Build an inclusive community
• Embrace the power of technology
• Act with entrepreneurial spirit
• Partner with others, locally and globally
• Take responsibility for the future

The plan going forward is governed by three strategic initiative themes:
“Launching the Next Era of News”
“A National Force, Globally Involved”
“Spreading the Tools of a Free Society”

Like the University’s plan, this document has four core priorities: undergraduate education; graduate education; research and scholarship; and partnerships and professional outreach.

Also addressed are our critical enablers: faculty and staff, infrastructure and academic support, and external affairs/communications.
The Vision

The Philip Merrill College of Journalism is shaping the future of news and media. As the top journalism school in the Washington, D.C. region and a global leader in journalism education, the College is committed to promoting a strong and independent free press.

Through its faculty and curriculum, the Merrill College champions the fundamental journalistic values of accuracy, accountability, and fairness, and is a trailblazer in using digital and multimedia technologies in dynamic storytelling. It prepares its undergraduate students for success in today's exciting and innovative journalism landscape and gives its graduate students the skills and confidence to rise to the top of today's demanding news and media-dependent professions.

Mission

The College educates students at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels within a liberal arts context, preparing them for careers in journalism and related fields, as well as careers in academic research and teaching. The College works to elevate professional and ethical standards of practice, as well as advocates for increased public knowledge and involvement in democratic processes through dissemination of news. The mission of the College is to improve the production, delivery, and access to news, as well as to enhance the understanding of journalism’s political, cultural, and social roles in the United States and around the globe.

Our undergraduate mission is an uncompromising dedication to the principles of the journalism profession, with training in evolving types of news gathering and delivery.

Our professional master's program provides a post-graduate education to those with a host of undergraduate degrees seeking to enter the field and intensive specialized training for mid-career journalists with a particular focus on investigative, sports, security, and computational journalism.

Values

A set of values, with excellence at the core, shall be reflected in all Merrill College activities.

Ethics – The College is dedicated to these ethical hallmarks of journalism: accuracy in all we report; providing attribution and being open about sourcing except in rare and necessary circumstances; avoiding sensationalism; remaining independent of special interests; maintaining fairness in our reporting; and taking responsibility for our mistakes.
Critical Thinking and Analysis – The College is dedicated to the idea that it is important to examine our own thinking and that of newsmakers and news sources as we weigh facts in the search for a sometimes elusive truth. We are committed to the idea that often there are many sides to a story and that fair reporting always seeks, though it sometimes may fail to find, a balance.

Diversity and Inclusiveness – The College is dedicated to the idea that diversity and inclusiveness are vital to the vision and mission of the Merrill College, to news organizations, and to all of journalism.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship – The Merrill College will encourage students and faculty to look at traditional methods of doing journalism in new ways and challenge both students and faculty to engage in the kind of creative activity that may benefit and strengthen the College in carrying out its mission.

Collaboration Within the College, Across the Campus, and Beyond - The College recognizes that technological change has brought an end to the traditional “silos” of journalism—the practice of specializing strictly in any one form of delivery. Therefore, we are committed to raising the level of collaboration within the Merrill College, with the intention of preparing students to deliver news and information using current and emerging delivery modes used in the profession. We will also seek new and mutually beneficial partnerships with departments and colleges at the University. Those efforts will also extend outward to other academic institutions and organizations here and abroad.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths:

Location – The Merrill College is uniquely advantaged by its proximity to state and federal policy makers, global think tanks, federal agencies, and world leaders. This translates to a rich and diverse environment for learning, for internship and job opportunities, and for research.

Faculty – Faculty and adjunct faculty at the Merrill College are leaders in journalism as well as in higher education. They include media scholars, Pulitzer Prize recipients (currently five, and nine in our history), and George Foster Peabody broadcasting medalists, which comprise more winners of journalism’s highest professional accolades than any school in the nation.

Academic Programs – Merrill’s academic programs are strong. Undergraduate programs are heavily based in the liberal arts and provide a solid foundation in the principles and ethical and legal considerations of the practice of journalism. The success of our programs in this area can be partially measured by our high level of placements. The master’s program is primarily a professional degree, preparing students as reporters of public policy, and offering specializations in sports and investigative reporting. Graduate specializations in computational
and global security are under discussion. The doctoral program has an enviable track record of training journalism scholars and placing them at institutions of higher learning.

**External Reputation** – The College has a strong reputation for preparing thoughtful, well-trained young journalists. Recruiters from leading news organizations visit each year to attract students for internships and jobs. Reflecting its prominence, Merrill was invited first into the Carnegie Initiative, then into its News21, a cutting-edge program in reporting and news delivery for the 21st Century funded by the Carnegie Foundation.

**Momentum** – The College received a vote of confidence by the state and outside funders to build Knight Hall. The new facility, occupied during the academic year 2009-10, has enabled an integrated approach to Merrill’s programs and an ease of collaboration among faculty as well as between the College and its affiliated centers.

**Students** – Merrill attracts high-achieving undergraduates. The College has among the highest graduation rates on the campus (now and in the past). Over the past decade our students have won a large number of awards in regional and national journalism competitions, including SPJ’s Mark of Excellence awards, the Hearst Awards, the Broadcast Educators Awards, the International Communicator (ICA) awards, the Telly Awards, the National Academy of Arts and Sciences (Emmy) Awards, and a Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award, among many others.

**Internships** – All Merrill undergraduate and master’s students have internships – often multiple internships – before graduation. This is enabled by our proximity to the news capital of the nation and by our wide network of contacts. Placements include: The Washington Post; The Baltimore Sun; the Washington bureaus of many of the nation’s top daily newspapers; all local television stations; the Washington and New York bureaus of the broadcast news networks, including ABC, CBS and NBC; myriad magazines; online news outlets; and the cable news networks.

**Centers and Affiliations** – Merrill College was one of the first journalism schools in the country to offer specialized courses in sports journalism. Through the generosity of the family of the late Washington Post sportswriter Shirley Povich, Merrill has expanded its sports curriculum and started the very successful Shirley Povich Center for Sports Journalism. The Center’s annual Povich Symposium attracts hundreds of sports fans from the Mid-Atlantic. Recent graduates have landed at ESPN, Monumental Sports, and Comcast Sports Net. The College has capitalized on the nation’s hunger for sports news. Merrill also is host to the National Association of Black Journalists and the Society for Features Journalism, drawing a parade of speakers and experts through Knight Hall on a weekly basis.

**International Scope** – Merrill is building its presence and brand on the international level. Each academic year, the College hosts (for an academic year) more than a dozen international journalists, part of the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellows program funded by the U.S. Department of State.
The College partners with the U.S. China Education Trust, and provides faculty, as well as student participation, at the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change program each summer in Austria. The College also sponsors faculty-led international reporting projects for credit that in recent years have taken students to Vietnam, Mexico, Iceland, Latvia, Slovakia, and Hungary. A significant proportion of the Ph.D. students are from overseas and the program has a strong tradition of the global study of journalism.

**Internal Reputation** – Merrill is rapidly building a reputation on campus as a “go to” partner in University committees and projects. For example, a recent survey conducted by the National Science Foundation-sponsored ADVANCE Professor initiative found that the campus-wide average rate of service participation by full-time faculty hovers around 33 percent. Merrill College’s service participation rate for the same period exceeded 65 percent.

**Weaknesses:**

**Chronic Underfunding** – Merrill has operated for many years with financial constraints that have limited its ability to innovate and adapt to changes in technology, in journalism education, and in the industry. The additional support that often came from media partners can no longer be expected as the traditional news industry’s funding model continues to erode. The college continues to receive contributions from graduates and distinguished professionals, but without the generous corporate matches many journalists used to count on from their employers. While state and federal grants are available to most of the University of Maryland’s colleges, conflict of interest concern and ethical concerns limit the type of government grants available to Merrill College. A severe financial crisis in 2010-11 led to several staff layoffs, nearly crippling Merrill’s support services. As a result, budget woes afflicting the University of Maryland System have a disproportionate effect on Merrill College.

**Research Faculty** – In recent years, through deaths or retirements, Merrill has lost 12 senior faculty members and has been able to replace only six of them due to declining state support, which is especially detrimental to the College’s doctoral and research programs.

**Diversity** – The College continues to struggle with faculty diversity, especially at the ranks of tenured, and tenure-track faculty. There are currently no tenured faculty members of color; however, there is one faculty member of color on the tenure track.

**Outdated Student Broadcast Equipment** – The equipment that drives the backend of student curriculum at the Richard Eaton Broadcast Center is out of date and often subject to lengthy and costly repairs. The need to upgrade this equipment to prepare broadcast students for the working world has reached the critical stage.

**UMTV** – Merrill acquired the University’s Flagship Station, now UMTV, in 2001. The aim was to use the facility not only as a laboratory to carry out the College’s broadcast news program, but to provide programming to the public that would reflect the dynamic intellectual life of the University. Funding that would allow the College to meet that ambitious goal has never materialized.
Inadequate Level of Administrative Support – Merrill has critical holes in the support staff required for implementation of its goals. More assistance is needed to meet University expectations, particularly in the areas of recruitment, communications, development, and alumni relations.

Opportunities:

A Digital-Age Facility – Completion of the $30 million John S. and James L. Knight Hall at the end of 2009 marked the beginning of a powerful new era of education, innovation, and research for the Merrill College. The new building, equipped with state-of-the-art digital technology for students studying multi-platform journalism, has ensured the preeminence of the Merrill College for many years.

The Crisis in the Media Industry – As traditional mainstream media companies struggle for sustainability, the Merrill College has a great opportunity to help advance the values and principles of accurate, reliable, objective information dissemination to a whole host of developing media.

Emerging New Models for News and Information – The College will be at the forefront in creating new ways of presenting information through programs such as Capital News Service and a new collaboration with the Washington Post, and through research made possible by the capabilities of Knight Hall.

Expanding Curriculum Beyond the Classroom – Technology has broken barriers of space and time in education. As new methods of interactive learning emerge, the College can extend its reach beyond traditional degree studies to include certificate programs and electronic training programs for journalists and news gatherers without regard to their physical location.

Research – The endless uses and possibilities of the internet for information distribution present an opportunity for Merrill to become a leader in understanding and implementing new media models as well as preparing tomorrow’s journalists in cutting-edge computational journalism skills. One such model is the computational journalism lab started by a tenure-track journalism professor with a Ph.D. in computer science.

Interdisciplinary Ventures - In the past four years, a faculty member co-founded and co-directs the Future of Information Alliance, a broadly interdisciplinary center that serves as catalyst for transdisciplinary dialogue and research on evolving issues related to the role of information in our lives. With more than $1 million in external foundation funding, $500,000 in university support, and more than $300,000 of in-kind support from external partners, FIA has helped the college build bridges across and beyond campus, leading to collaborations with entities ranging from Google and the Newseum to the National Archives and National Park Service. Similarly, the College is planning joint ventures in computational journalism with the iSchool and Department of Computer Science, as well as global security journalism with the School of Public Policy, the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, the Department of Computer Science.
Threats:

**Unstable and Unpredictable Funding** – Combined with the vicissitudes of the economy, to which all are subject, the College now has a much narrower base of historical funding sources.

**Uncertainty of the Field** – In an era of on-demand media and limitless choice, traditional news organizations find their audiences splintered. One result is that advertisers are less willing to buy as much time or space. That cycle is at the core of the troubles that beset the industry and threaten its existence. For journalism education, the uncertainty calls for rapid reassessment of curricular needs in areas as computational and visual journalism as well as media economics.

**American Journalism Review** – One of only two national publications assessing the performance of the news media, AJR was a “watchdog of the watchdogs,” providing in-depth, ideology-free coverage of the industry for more than 30 years. While its mission was essential, inadequate funding from all sources threatened its viability. Despite its transformation to an all-digital format produced by students, the college cancelled the capstone class that produced AJR for 2015-16.

**Centers** – The College’s professional outreach centers were similarly threatened by fiscal crises. New revenue sources must be identified and operations must be adjusted to the new environment. Over the past five years, the Knight Center for Specialized Journalism and the Journalism Center for Children and Families, both projects founded by the college more than 20 years ago, have closed. The College continues to host the National Association of Black Journalists and the American Association of Sunday and Features Editors, as well as the Shirley Povich Center for Sports Journalism.

**Strategic Themes and Outcomes**

The Merrill College has identified three overarching themes to guide the College’s strategic transformation. These imperatives will be closely integrated, and every goal and strategy in this plan will be undertaken in fulfillment of one or more of these precepts. These themes position the College as a leader in an evolving industry. They solidify the reputation and engagement of the school, and they help citizens become better-informed users of media.

1. “Launching the Next Era of News”

   News delivery is undergoing a radical transformation. As one of the nation’s premier journalism schools, Merrill must embrace the revolutionary power of technology. It must educate its constituents in methods to ensure that those who call themselves journalists stay relevant in a very complicated age — an era where “mainstream media” will not dominate as before. News — and journalism — will continue to change in ways that no one could have predicted.
The kind of centralized, common-ground structure of news, which was the norm for the great newsrooms and news organizations, must be viewed in a different way. In the coming years, Merrill will think forward in new ways, continuously assessing and revising curriculum and ensuring the verities of journalism as we know it, regardless of the method of delivery. The College will accomplish this in three ways:

Producing leadership: Merrill will educate leaders to carry forward the core values and ideals of journalism in an era of constant change.

Research to show the way: Merrill will innovate and partner with others to provide qualitative studies and quantitative data for journalists and news leaders.

Professional education: Merrill will expand its reach beyond the campus, ensuring that high quality and relevant training and resources are made available to educators and journalists across the nation and beyond.

2. “A National Force, Globally Involved”

As a Carnegie-Knight Consortium school, Merrill’s reputation in the United States is well established. It has the potential to be not only one of the nation’s best, but one of the best in the world. It will grow its reputation as a destination for journalists from around the globe. It will spread its intellectual assets beyond the borders of the campus and the nation. It will expand its encouragement of students to study abroad and will provide opportunities to connect journalism with an international experience. Merrill will be fully involved in what is now a global media and information revolution.

The College will build on the historic strengths of alliances such as the Hubert H. Humphrey International Fellows program, providing more opportunities for international leaders to study for significant periods at the University. In addition, Merrill will establish a unique curriculum and center focused on global security, intelligence agencies, and the military, taking advantage of the recent hiring of a multi-Pulitzer Prize winning journalist as the successor John S. and James L. Knight Chair in Public Affairs Journalism.

3. “Spreading the Tools of a Free Society”

The ability to identify information that adheres to the verities of credibility and reliability, information that does not fall into conjecture, is a skill that all responsible citizens in a democracy should possess. We have arrived at a time when anyone who wishes to do so can observe and transmit information. The state of information sharing has gone from the traditional model of one to all, to a model of all to all. Merrill will become a major hub for fostering improved understanding, an understanding that is essential to our democracy. We will do this by:
1. Offering courses in media literacy to the University community (e.g., JOUR 150, 175, HONR 278E).
2. Strengthening the activities of our professional outreach operations to provide resources directly to the public.
3. Conducting research to examine, clarify, and provide empirical data on how the digital communication revolution is affecting the processing and sharing of information.

As the strategic plan is put into place, we will accomplish three transformational outcomes:

Outcome 1: Merrill will lead the transformation of journalism in a new era. Our graduates and faculty will be sought-after media leaders. They will be known for their innovative thinking and entrepreneurial spirit.

Outcome 2: Merrill will become an international hub for the study of journalism. Students and scholars will know of Merrill and the school will operate across the globe.

Outcome 3: Merrill will be a catalyst for empowering the people of a free society. The College will be an indispensable partner to the University, and beyond, preparing citizens to be engaged on a global scale.

Core Priorities

- Undergraduate Education
- Graduate Education
- Partnerships and Outreach
- Research and Scholarships

Core Priority: Undergraduate Education

The Philip Merrill College of Journalism offers undergraduate students an outstanding and rigorous education through its liberal arts-based curriculum, stressing the professional skills needed to succeed in a rapidly changing media industry. Merrill’s location exposes our students to an atmosphere that challenges them intellectually, enriches them culturally, and requires them to think globally. We do this as we provide significant hands-on experience in journalism at the professional level.

Merrill’s undergraduate programs historically have been a major strength of the school. Our analysis shows that Merrill already exceeds the benchmarks for many of the University’s objectives for undergraduate education. They include:

Retention and graduation rates: Merrill’s 97.4 percent one-year retention rate already exceeds the University’s 10-year goal of 96 percent; our 90.6 percent six-year graduation rate exceeds the goal of 86 percent; Merrill’s six-year graduation rate for underrepresented groups currently stands at 92.5 percent, the University’s corresponding rate is 82.7 percent.
**An unparalleled location:** Merrill College’s location within the Washington, D.C. Beltway offers students the opportunity to study in the world’s journalism capital. It is a “destination school” for aspiring journalists for the last several years, with 60 percent of its Journalism class of 2019 from out-of-state, the highest rate of any University of Maryland college. Indeed, 41.9 percent of Merrill College's total undergraduates in Fall 2014 were from out-of-state compared to the University of Maryland's overall 23 percent, signifying Merrill College’s national reputation for excellence.

**Taking learning outside the classroom:** The physical location of the school within the nation’s major media hub, our reputation for excellence, and our vast network of media contacts are all factors in our ability to place students in valuable internship experiences. All undergraduate students work in at least one professional internship.

**Involvement in the community:** Merrill’s students are strongly encouraged to participate in the community through professional organizations, training and mentorship. Programs such as the Media, Self and Society Program of College Park Scholars, which is sponsored by the College, help us engage with the community. Student chapters of the national Society of Professional Journalists and National Association of Black Journalists provide opportunities for our students to engage with professionals across the country and provide leadership within the College.

In the short term, much of the emphasis of the strategic plan will be on graduate education and partnership building. However, Merrill will not lose sight of the core undergraduate programs. By the end of the strategic plan cycle, the college will implement the following goals:

**GOAL 1: Merrill will become the journalism school of choice for high-achieving students from the state and the region. In accomplishing this we will enroll more students from underrepresented groups as well as an increased number of academically talented freshman and transfer students.**

**Strategies:**

- Merrill will vigorously recruit and admit students of various nationalities, ethnic groups, and socio-economic backgrounds. In 2009, the percentage of students from underrepresented groups of the visible minorities in Merrill College was at 28.2 percent and the goal was to rise to at least 33 percent by 2019. But by Fall 2014, Merrill’s number of minority students stood at 36.6 percent, exceeding the goal. Nevertheless, Merril will continue to develop scholarship assistance, with the goal of creating a Merrill-specific program that mirrors the Incentive Awards Program and the Banneker-Key scholarships providing significant support for high-achieving students.

- The College will create a position for a full-time recruitment officer who will actively and continuously reach out to the most talented students.
• The College will double the amount of scholarship aid available to undergraduate journalism students through private gifts and grants. A specific aim will be to reduce the debt burden on our students, particularly those from underrepresented groups.

• Merrill will significantly increase its community building programs for high school journalists through a variety of programs, including weekend and summer sports journalism “camps” and enhanced participation in the university’s Young Scholars summer “camp” for young journalists through its “Lee Thornton Young Scholars Scholarship Program” for minority students in Maryland and the District of Columbia.

GOAL 2: The undergraduate curriculum will adapt to the quickly changing realities of the media industry to ensure that students are prepared to work in innovative, collaborative, entrepreneurial, and creative ways.

Strategies:

• There will be regular reviews of course syllabi.

• Where possible, efforts will be made to reduce the College’s dependence on part-time adjunct faculty in undergraduate education. All adjunct instructors will be required to attend a training session on teaching techniques and university procedures at the start of each semester.

• Where appropriate, a lead instructor will be designated for multi-section skills courses. Syllabi for these courses will be standardized.

• Where appropriate, core modules for skills courses will be standardized and administered centrally through electronic classroom tools.

GOAL 3: Merrill will maintain high expectations for student success and will ensure that undergraduate students meet their goals in a timely fashion.

Strategies:

• Merrill will increase resources dedicated to the rigorous implementation of high-quality, one-on-one advising. Merrill’s advising rates are and have been near the top among campus programs in student satisfaction. These efforts will include intensive orientation for new students, personalized four-year academic plans, and education in the benchmarks for academic progress. In addition, the advising office will be staffed at an appropriate level, including full-time counseling professionals and well-prepared graduate assistants.

• Merrill will provide clear, complete, and consistent Web-based information about program and course requirements including a requirement that all course syllabi be posted online.
GOAL 4: Merrill will provide opportunities for students to complete at least one international study experience.

Strategies:

• Drawing on the success of international journalism class excursions to Mexico, Vietnam, Iceland, Latvia, Slovakia, and Hungary, the College will provide similar courses in which students report from an international location, producing and publishing multi-platform journalism.

• Through two existing endowed travel funds, and supplemented with new funding, Merrill will expand opportunities for study abroad experiences for undergraduates.

Core Priority: Graduate Education

Over the next several years, special priority will be placed on graduate education. While the underlying concepts, ideals, and principles of the curricular programs are sound, significant vulnerabilities exist in the College’s ability to execute the programs.

The College’s graduate programs have different missions and different constituencies. The master’s program offers a professional M.J. degree, without a thesis, and an M.A., with thesis. The doctoral program focuses on the theories and pedagogy of journalism education and scholarly work. Each degree program requires a different skills set for instruction, and although there is some overlap, the programs today are largely independent of each other.

During the next five years, the Merrill College will bring the caliber of all graduate programs to the same level of rigor, building on the historic strength and reputation of the master’s program and re-energizing and growing the prestige of the doctoral and research programs.

GOAL 1: Merrill will continue to improve the quality of the doctoral program, bringing it to parity with the reputation of the undergraduate and master’s program. Building on the success of high job placement for its doctoral graduates, the Merrill doctoral program will pursue innovation and entrepreneurship in scholarship to address the key needs of journalism and journalism education in a time of information transition. The College will also provide coursework addressing a wide range of theories; emphasize the highest standards of scholastic inquiry; and prepare students to explain the U.S. media system to the world in a way that provides critical insight into how various media influence the formulation of domestic and foreign policy and shape culture.
Strategies:

• The College will place top priority on enriching and diversifying the ranks of the research faculty, adding faculty with doctorates and diverse backgrounds. This will allow the school to have enough scholars to deliver courses, mentor students, guide research, and advise dissertation research.

• Building on the success of high job placement for its doctoral graduates, the Merrill doctoral program will pursue innovation and entrepreneurship in scholarship to address the key needs of journalism and journalism education in a time of information transition.

• After identifying key strengths through a research mapping exercise in 2014, the research faculty and students will focus on developing core projects and bids for external funding with a focus on the following four themes: International Media, Journalism Practice and Ethics, History and Media, and Emerging Technology and Audiences.

• The faculty will ensure that doctoral students are meeting the benchmarks set for the program building on a system of annual review and assessment implemented in 2013.

• The faculty will ensure that students are learning to incorporate emerging technologies to enhance scholarship as well as classroom instruction.

• The College will increase and enhance mentoring, advising, and professional/scholarly preparation of our students. We will be proactive in assisting graduates find desirable placement upon completion of the program.

• The College will increase funding for full-time Ph.D. students to a period of four years through a combination of fellowships, graduate assistantships, and scholarships. The size of each new cohort will reflect the ability of the college to support fully each full-time student.

• The College will work with other units on campus to offer interdisciplinary and multiple methodological approaches that introduce graduate students from across the University to computational journalism. The program will draw on coursework and research in various units, with a particular emphasis on study at Merrill College, and in the iSchool and Department of Computer Science.

• Similarly, the College will work with other units on campus to develop interdisciplinary and multiple methodological approaches that introduce graduate students from across the University to visual design. Ideally, the program will draw on coursework and research in various units including Merrill, the College of Arts & Humanities, and the School of Architecture.

• The Merrill Graduate Student Association will continue to engage in organizing events to enrich the doctoral experience at Merrill; make recommendations to enhance the curriculum; and help to orient new students to the program.
GOAL 2: The Philip Merrill College of Journalism will build on its reputation as one of the nation’s top professional master’s programs. It will introduce a new focus on mid-career journalists to become even more competitive in a changing media marketplace.

Strategies:

• Recognizing the value of our master’s students as ambassadors of the program, the College has redesigned and reinvigorated the orientation process for incoming students. In addition, the College will step up its efforts to provide career guidance and will engage in active outreach to master’s students following completion of the degree.

• The College will periodically review and adjust the master’s curriculum for currency and quality, consistent with the University’s strategic plan. Merrill will prepare students to thrive in the operational and economic realities of the 21st century.

• Merrill will expand its cross-disciplinary multiplatform graduate certificate program for journalists. The certificate is distinct from our master’s degrees and advances the goal of cultivating journalists who are both well-trained and steeped in knowledge of the subjects on which they report. Special emphasis will be placed on providing training on emerging technologies.

GOAL 3: Merrill will enroll master’s and doctoral students of the highest academic achievement and greatest creativity.

Strategies:

• The College will develop formal recruitment methods through faculty outreach. Faculty will have a more direct role through contact with prospective students and with faculty peers at other institutions to outline the strengths of the Merrill master’s programs.

• The College will improve the affordability of the master’s programs through additional fellowships, scholarships and assistantships.

Core Priority: Partnership and Outreach

The Philip Merrill College of Journalism has a long and distinguished history of outreach and advocacy in the profession. The College will build on this tradition pursuing additional partnerships in the coming decade.

GOAL 1: Taking advantage of its special location, Merrill will strengthen its outreach by further expanding partnerships, nationally and internationally, for mutual benefit, including the sharing of personnel, expertise, project costs and use of facilities.
GOAL 2: Merrill will actively work with its faculty and staff, its funding organizations and its external partners to create new centers and professional outreach organizations to address trends and challenges in the industry.

GOAL 3: The College will leverage the potential of the Capital News Service bureaus and build the CNS Washington Bureau into a multi-state news service offering journalism students from across the country the opportunity to spend a semester covering their state’s congressional delegation. Initial invitees to participate in this effort will be from Big 10 journalism schools.

GOAL 4: Merrill will initiate a series of continuing education programs and courses for mid-career journalists focused on updating technology and computational journalism skills and preparing professional and international journalists to report on national and global security issues.

Core Priority: Research and Scholarship

The Merrill College understands that the importance and value of applied research in the new world of journalism cannot be overstated. Citizen journalism, mobile technologies, and the internet are challenging virtually every method by which journalism is being taught, learned and practiced. Production, delivery, and reception of news and information matter at all levels, from the hyper-local to the global. Sound empirical research, conducted by one of the nation’s leading journalism institutions, helps to better prepare future journalists and responds to the needs of an industry seeking answers about the future.

GOAL 1: Merrill College of Journalism will engage in new research in emerging media, mobile technologies, and social networking to add to an already robust research agenda in media literacy, diversity, journalism ethics, and media criticism.

Strategies:

- Faculty will establish laboratories for experimental research that will assist the industry in better understanding how the next generation will attend to and share information about the communities in which they live. Such understanding will lead to innovative ways in which news is produced and disseminated.

- The College’s faculty and doctoral students will collaborate in exploring how new media are being utilized by audiences. Technological innovation by other disciplines will further the College’s research agenda of measuring how individuals seek, select, and share information. For example, faculty will research text messaging and text alerts to track the effects of mobile news technology on everyday life.

- Merrill faculty will continue an examination of established, but expanding, online sources of information, such as Wikipedia, to measure audience perceptions of the accuracy and credibility of information.
• Faculty will engage in new research to trace how the internet’s overwhelming amount of information will influence audience reception of complex but important issues, such as information about health, science, and technology.

GOAL 2: Merrill College of Journalism recognizes that the challenge for researchers of technology is to keep pace with the rapid changes in that technology and that it is necessary to redouble the commitment to do so.

Strategies:

• Research faculty at the College will initiate groundbreaking projects by establishing new collaborations across the campus, the nation, and around the globe.

Key examples of these projects are: The annual “Journalism Interactive” conference created by Merrill College in 2012 and now co-sponsored by the schools of journalism at the Universities of Missouri and Florida. The conference provides technology and data training for teachers of online media. Merrill College continues to support the research efforts of the Future of Information Alliance in collaboration with faculty and students from a broad array of disciplines across campus, the university’s Division of Research, the university’s leadership, and a host of high-profile external partners and corporate affiliates, including Google.

GOAL 3: Merrill College recognizes the need also for an effective and ongoing program of research to examine crucial questions in American journalism. Many of these issues are at the heart of the efforts of news organizations to restructure themselves in ways that preserve their economic viability as well as their potential to continue to serve democracy. Central questions for the coming decade have important social, political, and economic implications and will be a major component of the College’s research agenda.

Strategies:

• The faculty and graduate students at the College will study the crucial question of how changes in the very definition of news affect journalism as a profession and, in turn, the ways in which journalism education should change.

• Another important area of concentration will be unfiltered news—news not subject to the traditional safeguards—and whether it can be produced ethically to meet the needs of democracy.

• Faculty and doctoral students will also study ways of delivering news that maximize the likelihood that citizens can find, understand, and use the news they seek. They will seek to share the results with media outlets.
• Merrill researchers will study how new technologies not only change the way news is transmitted, but ask whether the new technologies change the nature of news itself, including what is seen as newsworthy. Scholars will examine the political, social, and cultural implications of these changes.

• The faculty and graduate students at Merrill will examine how news organizations serve the common democratic culture of the U.S., and whether those organizations can serve the differing news needs of diverse populations, people who differ by race, ethnicity, language, age, economic circumstances, and technological expertise. Attention will also be given to the larger question of whether news organizations can or should promote diversity itself.

Critical Enablers

Faculty

The quality of the faculty at Merrill College is the most important factor in the success of the school. In the next five years, special attention will be paid to hiring tenure-track faculty and senior scholars to reinforce research and scholarly output and strengthen the doctoral program.

GOAL 1: Merrill College will recruit and retain a number of outstanding new tenure-track faculty and build the ranks of tenured faculty.

Strategies:

In 2009, Merrill College pledged to hire faculty in a variety of areas within five years of implementation of the strategic plan. At the time, Merrill sought:

• A media economist
• A broad-based media studies theoretician
• A scholar whose research interest is in global media systems
• A media historian

By the completion of the plan, Merrill was also to have hired:

• An expert in emerging media, including the fields of social media and citizen media
• A research scholar with a specialty in science reporting or environmental reporting
• A political communication analyst specializing in politics and government
• A distinguished professional journalist

Some of those goals have been met, despite severe budget constraints. Merrill has hired a senior scholar specializing in political communication, a distinguished investigative journalist, a media studies theoretician, and a media historian. Due to changing needs, however, Merrill hired a computational journalist instead of a media economist. Its next tenure/tenure-track hire will likely be a visual communicator/designer.
Staff

GOAL 2: Merrill College will ensure that the administrative functions of the unit are met efficiently and effectively, and that the College is staffed at an appropriate level. The goal will be to hire, develop, and retain highly talented individuals to carry out these functions.

Strategies:

The dean will ensure that all administrative functions of the College are staffed at an appropriate level. Needs have been identified in the following areas:

- Recruitment
- Communications and Marketing
- Advising
- Career Services
- Development and Grant Assistance

GOAL 3: Through the mechanisms prescribed in the College’s diversity plan, Merrill will make hires that reflect the demographics of the nation.

Outreach

This plan enhances Merrill’s excellence, and as public awareness of the College and its programs increases, so should external support. The College will leverage its historically strong and often untapped alumni goodwill to further Merrill’s aspirations. Fundraising will be vital to this plan and to the innovation so necessary for its success.

GOAL 1: Merrill College commits to designing and carrying out an ambitious fundraising initiative involving all of its stakeholders, including but not limited to its faculty and staff, alumni, Board of Visitors, and traditional funding organizations. Special attention will be given to identifying new and untapped sources of funding.

Strategies:

Fundraising for the College will fall into four main categories:

- Funds to support program innovations, research, and College operations
- Funds for scholarships and fellowships
- Funds to attract and retain outstanding faculty, establish new professorships, and endow new chairs
- Funds for infrastructure, including critical updating to broadcast facilities
GOAL 2: Merrill College will create programs, in collaboration with the University, to instill a sense of lifelong loyalty in students and alumni to the school and to the campus.

Strategies:

- Upgrade the College’s website and Facebook presence to provide frequent opportunities to promote the accomplishments of our students, faculty and alumni.
- Strengthen the Dean’s Circle (a formal recognition of donors who give at least $1,000 annually to the College).
- Develop outreach programs that reach all alumni, regardless of current giving capability.

GOAL 3: Merrill College will strengthen its marketing and communication programs to raise public awareness of the accomplishments of the school.

Strategies:

- The College will reinvigorate the branding and communication plan for the College. Outreach strategies will include email newsletters and development of a redesigned Web presence consistent with the University’s outreach strategy.
- The College will hire a full-time Web developer for intensive outreach campaigns. Other functions of this position will include direct assistance to the unit’s development office, and constant attention to the faculty’s instructional needs.

Infrastructure/Academic Support

As outlined in this plan, the state-of-the-art Knight Hall will be a source of operational and technological innovation for the next era in American journalism.

THE GOAL: Within Knight Hall, Merrill College will operate up-to-date, specialized teaching and research facilities that support its mission. The College will leverage its facilities in recruitment of students and faculty, classroom and laboratory instruction, and the operations of its vitally important bureaus and centers. We will keep current with technological developments and upgrade needs and integrate those with the College’s overall development plan.

Strategy:

A hallmark of Knight Hall’s design is informal spaces for students and faculty. A survey conducted by the building’s architect after three years of constant use revealed that those informal spaces are highly valued by students and faculty. In fact, most university tours for prospective students include Knight Hall and student tour guides wax eloquent...
about its considerable attributes. We view these spaces as essential to the unique character of Knight Hall. We commit to their preservation. Faculty will be encouraged to make maximum use of, and inculcate into the curriculum, all spaces within the College that can be used to enhance learning; such spaces include the Richard Eaton Theater with its capability to stream and broadcast lectures, panel discussions and gatherings of all kinds.

**Implementation**

The goals set forth in this vision for the Philip Merrill College of Journalism are ambitious, but achievable. It will require new resources and broad participation by people at the University and beyond. It cannot be achieved at current funding levels or without relentless and sustained effort.

Implementing the next phase of the strategic plan will cost an estimated $15 million — in 2015 dollars — above normal and expected baseline budget growth. We plan to generate much of the necessary support through methods under our control and new revenue streams, including: resource reallocation, research grant funding, increased philanthropic support and entrepreneurial initiatives.

The College will develop a comprehensive plan that sets timelines for development goals that support implementation of this strategic plan. Progress will be reported periodically to the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.