

Idea Pitch - Persuasion Prompt

Carol Whitmarsh

ComStrat 701

Introduction

My name is Carol Whitmarsh Moon. After a short teaching stint, I fell into the technology field as a web developer, turned web producer, and then turned product marketer. For more than 20 years, my experiences have ranged from website development to product marketing to developing product training for global partners.

I started my career in technology when the internet was just newly born. I was at the forefront of building social media platforms when social media began. I now work at the forefront of AI as we continue marching forward in this new frontier.

I love connecting complex ideas to audiences through clear messaging, compelling content, and creative strategy. With a background spanning press communications, product launches, corporate and partner sales enablement, and teaching experience, I believe I bring a unique perspective that bridges industry practice with education.

In my spare time, I love to travel with my husband and hang out with my three adult daughters, who keep me in touch with the latest trends.



Vision: Strategic Communication in the Age of AI

Topic Overview	Generative AI (Gen AI) is transforming the communication field, from audience analytics and media monitoring to content creation and campaign strategy. Yet, while industry adoption is rapidly growing, universities have been slow to equip communication majors with AI literacy. As a result, graduates often enter the workforce underprepared for tools and practices that are already considered essential.
Target Audience	Primary: Faculty seeking to modernize curriculum and industry partners eager to hire graduates with AI-ready skillsets. Secondary: University administrators, board of trustees/governing boards, and accrediting bodies. Tertiary: Undergraduate and graduate students in strategic communication, journalism, marketing, and public relations.
General Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AI literacy: understanding capabilities, limitations, and ethical considerations.• AI in communication workflows: content drafting, research, social media management, media analysis.• Ethical frameworks: transparency, bias, authenticity, and responsible use of generative AI.• Strategic applications: campaign planning, storytelling, crisis communication, and audience engagement.• Hands-on learning: students practice using real AI tools within case studies and projects.
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industry Demand: AI literacy is increasing sixfold year-over-year.• Skill Gap: Surveys show that a majority of students feel unprepared to use AI in the workplace.• Professional Relevance: Many new graduates lack training in AI-powered tools, leaving a gap between academia and practice.
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equip WSU students with essential AI skills to enhance employability.• Position WSU as a leader in forward-thinking communication education.• Provide hands-on, ethical AI training that balances innovation with responsibility.• Build a foundation for future electives, certificates, or interdisciplinary programs in AI and communication.
Desired Outcomes	By introducing this course, WSU will bridge a critical skills gap, preparing graduates not only to adapt to an AI-driven communications landscape but to lead it. The program will enhance WSU's reputation as an innovator in higher education, attract new enrollment, and strengthen connections with employers seeking AI-literate communicators.



Paving the Way
for the Future

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION & AI IN PRACTICE: A COURSE PROPOSAL

Preparing communicators for the future

Artificial Intelligence is changing the way we communicate. From press releases generated in seconds to campaigns optimized by algorithms, today's communicators are entering a job market where AI isn't optional. It's expected. Yet, many communication programs still don't teach students how to apply AI responsibly and strategically. We have a chance to change that.



Proposal: New **Upper-Level** Electives

Courses

Courses would blend academic theory with industry application

Integration

Courses would prepare students for a world where AI is integrated into communication strategy.

Leadership

Courses would leverage Washington AI industry leaders.

Success

Courses would become a differentiator for the WSU program.

**Strategic
Communication &
AI in Practice**



The Persuasive Argument for Preparing Students to Lead in an **AI-Driven** World

Credibility

- As a professional with over 20 years of industry experience in PR, storytelling, and marketing, I've witnessed firsthand how organizations use and misuse communication technologies.
- In my professional work with AMD and global partners, I've led product launches, demand-gen campaigns, and other storytelling initiatives increasingly shaped by AI tools.
- As a student, I bring academic preparation in Strategic Communication (WSU), which positions me to connect theory and practice.

Logic & Data

- **Industry demand:** A recent LinkedIn jobs report found that *AI literacy* is now one of the top skills requested in communication roles. (Forbes, 2025)
- **Skill gap:** In a recent survey from *Cengage Group*, 70% of recent graduates believe that generative AI training should be incorporated into college courses, and over half of them report feeling unprepared for the workforce. (Cohen, 2024)
- **Competitive advantage:** There is a *huge potential* for WSU to tap into massive numbers of interested students, as fewer than 7,000 (0.2%) credit-bearing AI programs exist from higher education institutions. (Jack, 2025)

Emotional Appeal

- Students want to feel prepared for the future when graduating from college. Without AI fluency, they may feel overwhelmed or underqualified when stepping into professional roles.
- These courses would empower them to see AI as a tool, not a threat, giving them confidence and a sense of control in a changing field.
- Parents and employers alike want to know that graduates are leaving with the skills to thrive. These courses signal that commitment.

By the Numbers, Students are **Not Ready** & **Lack Opportunity**

90%

Communicators Using More Gen AI

Ragan's 2024 CommTech Report found that approximately 9 in 10 communicators plan to utilize generative AI more in 2025, versus 23% in 2023.

Gen AI is proving transformative for communications. (Ragan, 2024)

70%

Job Skills Changing by 2030

LinkedIn's report notably accounts for the proliferation of AI skills mentioned that will be expected in the workplace, with **AI Literacy** landing the top spot on the list. (Gutierrez, 2025)

3%

Students See AI Literacy Essential for Future

Only 3% of students felt very confident that their education would help them secure a job in a field involving AI. It is evident that the opportunity for furthering AI education at the university level has room to grow. (McMillian, 2025)

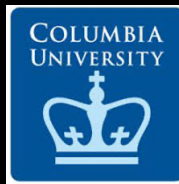
>10

Few Programs Exist

Although needed by students and expected by employers, only a handful of higher education institutions offer formal AI literacy graduate-level coursework & certificates.

Other Universities Are Moving Ahead

- Universities from Columbia to Loyola and NYU are already introducing courses that merge communication and AI.
- This validates the demand in higher education and signals where the industry is heading.
- WSU differentiator: Instead of treating AI as a side certificate or optional add-on, WSU can embed *Strategic Communication & AI in Practice* directly into the curriculum, giving students hands-on, applied experience in campaigns, storytelling, and ethical communication, preparing students not just to catch up, but to lead.



WSU Opportunity

- Build on the momentum
- Offer credit-bearing courses tied to the Strategic Communication curriculum
- Position the WSU program as a leader, not a follower



Timeline

01

0–6 months: Curriculum design, faculty training, and resource allocation.

02

6–12 months:
Launch as a pilot elective

03

12–18 months: Evaluate pilot, scale course availability, expand faculty adoption.

04

2 years: Establish AI and Communication as a concentration or certificate program, positioning WSU as a national leader.

Implementation Plan

Implementation

- **Phase 1: Curriculum Development**
Faculty committee drafts syllabus & learning outcomes focused on AI literacy, ethical frameworks, and strategic application.
- **Phase 2: Pilot Course**
Offer the course as an elective to graduate students in Strategic Communication. Gather student feedback, refine assignments.
- **Phase 3: Scaling**
Expand to undergraduate electives and consider a certificate program in AI and Communication.
- **Phase 4: Integration**
Incorporate AI literacy modules into core communication courses.

Who Needs to Be Involved

- **Faculty Leadership:**
Department of Strategic Communication and the Murrow College curriculum committee to approve and integrate the course.
- **Industry Advisors:**
Collaboration with PR Council, local PRSA chapters, and industry partners to ensure real-world relevance.

Resources Needed

- Access to AI platforms
- Industry guest speakers
- Budget for course materials and ongoing updates

Suggested **Course** Modules 1-5

Foundations of AI Literacy

Course Description:
Learn the basics of artificial intelligence, generative AI, machine learning, and how they intersect with communication.

Learning Outcomes:

- Explain key AI concepts in plain language.
- Identify communication tasks where AI can augment human work

Real-World Application:

Employers expect graduates to understand what AI can and cannot do.

AI Content Creation Tools

Course Description:
Hands-on practice with tools like ChatGPT, Jasper, MidJourney, Synthesia, and Canva's AI suite.

Learning Outcomes:

- Generate campaign drafts, press releases, and creative assets w/ AI.
- Edit and refine AI outputs for accuracy and brand voice.

Real-World Application:

PR pros already use AI to draft, brainstorm, and edit content.

Audience & Media Analysis

Course Description:
Learn how to use AI for sentiment analysis, trend forecasting, media tracking, and audience segmentation.

Learning Outcomes:

- Apply AI tools to analyze audiences and social sentiment.
- Use insights to inform campaign strategy.

Real-World Application:

AI enables communicators to deliver data-driven campaigns, which employers increasingly demand.

Ethics, Bias & Transparency

Course Description:
Explore issues of bias, misinformation, copyright, and disclosure in AI use.

Learning Outcomes:

- Evaluate ethical risks and apply professional codes
- Recommend transparent AI disclosure policies.

Real-World Application:

PR Council reports most graduates lack training in AI ethics for campaigns, creating risk for employers.

AI Strategic Campaigns

Course Description:
Integrate AI into campaign ideation, benchmarking, and project management tools.

Learning Outcomes:

- Build campaign strategies that incorporate AI-enhanced insights.
- Compare AI-supported vs. traditional campaigns

Real-World Application:

Companies are seeking AI-fluent communicators who can design smarter, more efficient campaigns.

Suggested Course **Modules** 6-8

AI in Crisis Communication

Course Description:

Use AI for early detection of issues, rapid response messaging, and misinformation monitoring.

Learning Outcomes:

- Apply AI to monitor crisis signals in real-time.
- Draft AI-assisted crisis messaging with human oversight.

Real-World Application:

Organizations face fast-moving crises where AI accelerates monitoring and initial response.

AI & Humanity Creativity

Course Description:

Learn how to blend human strategic thinking with AI efficiency.

Learning Outcomes:

- Distinguish between tasks best done by humans vs. AI.
- Collaborate effectively with AI as a creative partner.

Real-World Application:

Employers want graduates who can use AI without losing human creativity and judgment.

AI in Real-World Application

Course Description:

Students design and execute a strategic communication campaign using AI tools.

Learning Outcomes:

- Develop an end-to-end campaign powered by AI.
- Present results and reflect on ethical and professional implications.

Real-World Application:

Portfolio-ready proof of AI skills helps graduates stand out in competitive job markets.

Metrics Defining **Success**



Student Engagement

Enrollment numbers and waitlist demand for courses.



Learning Outcomes

Demonstrated AI proficiency across communication workflows.



Industry Alignment

Workforce-ready graduates, meeting employer demand for AI skills



Reputation & Recognition

WSU is positioned as an innovator in communication education.



Growth Potential

Degree expansion to attract non-WSU students.

Summary

Despite growing institutional interest in AI and digital communication, there are not enough existing courses at WSU focused on Strategic Communication & AI that blend ethics, storytelling, campaign strategy, and hands-on AI tools within a student-facing, credit-bearing format.

This gap highlights a prime opportunity for WSU to take the initial steps of developing AI guidelines and hosting workshops to create a formal curriculum integration.

The newly proposed curriculum would provide students with a transformative educational experience that bridges theory, ethics, and practice at the intersection of AI and communication.

Call To Action

- Turn this proposal into action
- Create electives that lean into AI within WSU 's strategic communication curriculum
- Offer hands-on learning tailored to public relations, marketing, and communications students.
- Blend ethics, messaging strategy, storytelling, and practical application in a unified framework
- Demonstrate WSU industry credibility and leadership in AI education



Sources

Cohen, L. (2024, July 23). *Majority of grads wish they'd been taught AI in college*. Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/tech-innovation/artificial-intelligence/2024/07/23/new-report-finds-recent-grads-want-ai-be>

Forbes, article “*LinkedIn Reveals The Most In-Demand Skills On The Rise ...*” (Mar 19, 2025) also highlights that *AI Literacy* tops the list of in-demand skills.

Gutierrez Chavez, M. J. (2025, March 20). *LinkedIn fastest-growing skills 2025: AI literacy, conflict mitigation*. Fast Company. <https://www.fastcompany.com/91302047/linkedin-fastest-growing-skills-2025-ai-literacy-conflict-mitigation>

Jack, P. (2025, August 1). *Colleges meet just a fraction of demand for AI training*. Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/tech-innovation/artificial-intelligence/2025/08/01/universities-meet-just-fraction-demand-ai>

McMillian, C., & Schwaba, P. (2025, June). *Students speak: Survey indicates students feel unprepared to use AI in the workplace*. EdTech Magazine. <https://edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2025/06/students-speak-survey-indicates-students-feel-unprepared-use-ai-workplace>

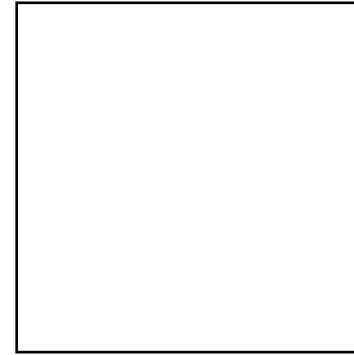
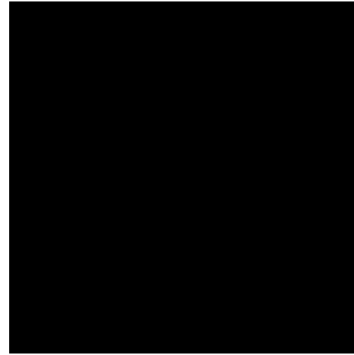
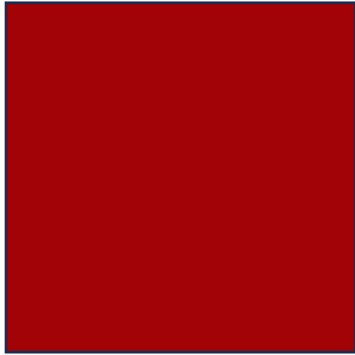
Prokopeak, M. (2025, January 7). *What now for AI in communications?* PR Daily. <https://www.prdaily.com/what-now-for-ai-in-communications>

Ragan Communications. (2024). *2024 CommTech report*. Ragan Communications. <https://www.ragan.com/research/>



Branding

Brand Colors



Brand Fonts

Helvetica Neue Bold (Headlines)

Helvetica Neue Medium (Subheads)

Cambria (Body)

Message Tone

Professional, yet innovative.