

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

Metcalf Institute Strategic Plan 2020-2023

Approved 10/8/2019

This plan represents the first of two strategic phases. In Phase I (2020-2023), Metcalf Institute will expand training partnerships and build and strengthen URI relationships and infrastructure to increase capacity and financial resources that will enable implementation of a larger-scale plan. In Phase II (2024-2029), Metcalf will implement training for global audiences and, in collaboration with URI's College of the Environment and Life Sciences, Harrington School of Communication and Media, and other key partners, assist in raising URI to national prominence in science communication education, research, and practice.

METCALF TODAY

Metcalf Institute was established in 1997 at the University of Rhode Island (URI) to support accurate environmental reporting by connecting professional journalists and academic researchers. Metcalf training for journalists emphasized immersion in coastal and marine environmental science and the research process, a model that has since benefitted more than 800 journalists, and has evolved to include intensive seminars, webinars and resources on a wide range of environmental topics beyond marine settings. While journalists need skills to translate science and technology, researchers, agencies and NGOs, among others, also need communication competencies to engage public audiences in scientific discovery and applications. Recognizing this, our training for scientists and engineers addresses this growing demand. Today, URI's Metcalf Institute is an internationally recognized science communication resource that unites researchers, journalists and science communicators in non-profit, government, and private sectors through a wide range of collaborative training opportunities and discussions. In addition to Metcalf's global impacts in the training sphere, the Institute's 2017 move to the URI College of the Environment and Life Sciences (CELS) helped to root its work more deeply in URI, creating new synergies and greater financial opportunity. A central mission of URI CELS is the extension of environmental knowledge through community engagement. Metcalf Institute's focus on environmental communication embodies this facet of the CELS mission as well as the strengths of URI's Harrington School of Communication and Media, whose faculty provide a range of science and environmental communication backgrounds and a focus on experiential learning. Combined, the expertise and networks of these URI colleges and programs can be leveraged to benefit the university community and far beyond.

DEMAND AND OPPORTUNITY

Metcalf Institute has a demonstrated ability to connect, attract and engage audiences. Our collaborative approach to training expands global dialogues with profound implications for society and the natural environment. Further strategic integration across the education, research, and public engagement missions of both CELS and the entire University will allow Metcalf to contribute to and benefit from URI's science and environmental communication programs for students, staff, faculty, and international partners. This integration will yield positive results: the Institute will have greater financial stability and programmatic opportunity from university-wide investments, thereby helping to advance URI's leadership in science and environmental communication, which will attract new external funding. The timing for new growth is critical.

- Environmental challenges play a large role in the daily lives of people around the globe; the impacts are increasing every year.
- We urgently need substantive and equitable solutions to the disruptions posed by environmental change.
- Misinformation about science and environment is rampant, impeding productive dialogue.
- News consumers face daily information overload and struggle to discern fact from spin.
- Most journalists lack a science background or training, and many newsrooms have eliminated dedicated science and environment reporters.

- Scientists and engineers are increasingly encouraged to engage directly with public audiences but lack training in effective communication with public audiences.
- Demand has grown for science communication training during post-secondary education.
- Need has increased for more inclusive and equitable science communication and public engagement.
- Metcalf Institute has built a reputation for excellence with a global network of 3200+ journalists and researchers.
- URI has world-class expertise in environmental science across programs in the College of the Environment and Life Sciences, the College of Engineering, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Graduate School of Oceanography, and in its Land and Sea Grant programs.
- URI CELS and the College of Arts and Sciences' Harrington School of Communication and Media are actively investing in efforts to integrate realistic science communication challenges and skill-building across the curriculum in ways that will leverage and complement interdisciplinary expertise.

MISSION

Metcalf Institute provides education, training and resources to journalists, scientists and science communicators across career stages to engage diverse public audiences in conversations about science and the environment.

VISION

Metcalf Institute envisions broad and inclusive public engagement in environmental challenges, solutions, and relevant science through effective and frequent communication by news media, science communicators, and researchers.

OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

- Metcalf Institute seeks and promotes diversity and inclusion among staff, Advisory Board members, program participants, and partners.
- Metcalf Institute programs strive to provide an objective introduction to the science underlying current environmental and science communication issues. They explore the societal implications of scientific research and findings, ranging from the development and funding of research questions and science communication efforts to economic impacts and applications of science for environmental policy and management. Metcalf Institute does not advocate for any specific economic, policy, or management approaches, but seeks to provide an accurate and balanced presentation of the ways in which science informs these topics.
- Metcalf Institute develops and implements its programs while working collaboratively with partners to accomplish shared goals. Apart from meeting the specific requirements of requests for proposals and legal obligations, Metcalf Institute programs shall not be prescribed by a funding source.

STRATEGIC GOALS 2020-2023

Goal One: Metcalf Institute will collaborate with URI administrators, faculty, staff, and students to position the university as a national leader in science communication.

Strategy: Align URI and Metcalf Institute resources and networks, leverage expertise, and secure sufficient investment to build Metcalf Institute capacity toward a central and sustained coordinating role in science communication activities and programs that connect and engage URI and Metcalf constituencies.

Action: Identify existing URI faculty and staff (across colleges and programs) aligned with Metcalf mission and training, explore ways they can engage with the Institute, and from this, convene a working group to design and propose innovative, diverse and inter-disciplinary academic offerings (courses, certifications, degrees) related to science communication for undergraduate and graduate students.

Action: Develop new URI online certificate(s) to provide education and training opportunities for students and professionals in environmental communication and/or inclusive science communication.

Action: Establish framework for Metcalf Institute Affiliated Faculty as mechanism for increasing Metcalf capacity in program implementation and assessment and proposal and partnership development.

Action: Partner with the URI's Harrington School, Office of Advancement of Teaching and Learning, Division of Research and Economic Development, and Office of External Relations and Communications to offer science communication training to students, post-doctoral scholars, staff, and faculty.

Action: Partner with URI Harrington School, Continuing Education and Cooperative Extension to expand science communication training and practice opportunities.

Goal Two: Metcalf Institute will engage new audiences and partners to expand effective, inclusive communication and action on urgent environmental issues.

Strategy: Expand Metcalf staff capacity in training and operations to create innovative opportunities for core constituencies of journalists and researchers as well as for new constituencies and new public audiences.

Action: Diversify Metcalf training audiences to include policymakers, corporate communications teams, NGOs, academic administrators and others.

Strategy: Leverage Metcalf networks to promote the Institute's value, develop new collaborations and facilitate training opportunities.

Action: Explore train-the-trainer programming to share best practices and approaches.

Action: Assess and design new adaptable programming and platforms (online or onsite) to meet demand.

Strategy: Integrate Metcalf Institute's national leadership in inclusive science communication across URI and leverage this leadership to develop new national collaborations.

Strategy: Align Metcalf Institute with URI Global Initiatives to support and expand international partnerships.

Goal Three: Metcalf Institute will diversify revenue streams to build capacity for greater impact.

Strategy: Develop fee-based programming.

Action: Partner with CELS and URI College of Business to develop business model for fee-based programs

Action: Categorize, monetize and market selected Metcalf programming in a fee-based service/product model.

Action: Use CELS online certificate model to expand Metcalf Institute revenue (see Goal One).

Strategy: Identify funding stream(s) for Metcalf Institute Affiliated Faculty and other aspects of capacity-building.

Strategy: Leverage donor loyalty and URI CELS support (for example, via the URI Capital Campaign) to build capacity and implement Metcalf Institute succession plan.

Metcalf

Metcalf Institute for Marine & Environmental Reporting