A Carolina First priority: electronic communication

By Juanita Covert

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The School is increasing its focus on electronic communication, its smallest sequence in terms of enrollment, to keep up with its growing popularity.

"Electronic communication is a priority because it's one of our growing sequences, but its growth is limited to the technology and faculty that we have," explains Beth Braxton, assistant dean for development and alumni affairs.

The electronic communication sequence includes courses in television production, broadcast journalism, and electronic media regulation and policy. It has a special emphasis on learning in a realistic work environment, with up-todate technology and deadlines.

"Every bit of it is hands-on," says Associate Professor C.A. Tuggle. "It's real world — as close as we can get it."

Tuggle adds that, in the fall, students will have the chance to work in a variety of media in one course. He describes it as a "convergence" course, in which teams of students from different sequences will work together to produce reports for the Web, print, radio and television.

Dean Richard Cole says the point is "to turn out the best people we can to do full, fair and accurate reports no matter what the platform is." To prepare students for careers in any platform, the School must keep up with the pace of technology. Cole says the School invests in maintenance and new equipment every year.

"We're much more up to date than any other journalism and mass communication school in the country — in the world, for that matter," he says.

Students take advantage of state-ofthe-art technology in courses such as "Producing Television News," in which they produce the award-winning news show *Carolina Week*, which now has Monday and Wednesday episodes.

Jenny McLendon, a junior reporter and anchor for the Wednesday edition, says faculty members encourage students and emphasize that the program is a group effort.

"We have a big advantage because we have professors that have significant experience in the real world," McLendon says.

The School is in the process of hiring a new faculty member in electronic communication and plans to create an endowed professorship for the sequence. Braxton says endowed professorships are crucial in recruiting and retaining outstanding faculty members.

She says the School also hopes to raise funds for students who accept unpaid or low-paying internships in other cities and for students who incur costs when they enter competitions.

"It's an expensive program," Tuggle says. "We need to stay on top. Right now we're on the edge of the curve, and we need to stay there."

Juanita Covert is a first-year master's student in the professional sequence.

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