

# BRANDCENTER

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## Brandcenter at VCU

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The Brandcenter offers a two-year, full-time master's program for students interested in careers in marketing, advertising, branding, communications and innovation. Graduates earn a master's degree and build a robust portfolio of creative work.

Brandcenter students concentrate in one of five areas of study (sub-concentrations): art direction, copywriting, creative brand management, experience design and strategy. They study within their chosen concentration, as well as collaboratively across concentrations on team projects that culminate in presentations to faculty, peers and real-world clients.

The Brandcenter program is focused on preparing students for successful careers. During the summer between their first and second year, qualified Brandcenter students can take part in internship opportunities to gain experience and foster industry relationships. Throughout the program, students have the opportunity to network with professional mentors, guest speakers, alumni and recruiters from agencies and organizations around the country. Once students graduate, they become part of a tight-knit, far-reaching alumni network.

## Mission

The Brandcenter inspires and develops the next generation of creative leaders to craft solutions, advance brands and bring new ventures to life.

- Business, Master of Science (M.S.) with a concentration in branding/art direction (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-business/brandcenter/business-ms-branding-art-direction/>)
- Business, Master of Science (M.S.) with a concentration in branding/copywriting (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-business/brandcenter/business-ms-branding-copywriting/>)
- Business, Master of Science (M.S.) with a concentration in branding/creative brand management (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-business/brandcenter/business-ms-branding-creative-brand-management/>)
- Business, Master of Science (M.S.) with a concentration in branding/experience design (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-business/brandcenter/business-ms-branding-experience-design/>)
- Business, Master of Science (M.S.) with a concentration in branding/strategy (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-business/brandcenter/business-ms-branding-strategy/>)

### BRND 591. Topics in Branding. 1-3 Hours.

Semester course; 1-3 lecture hours. 1-3 credits. A course for the study of current trends and opportunities in branding. See the Schedule of Classes for topics offered each semester and prerequisites as determined by the department.

### BRND 608. Accounting for Communication Professionals. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Restricted to Brandcenter students. Course goal is to equip nonfinancial advertising students with the basic concepts of accounting and to apply their understanding of these principles to specific managerial situations within the advertising agency, brand management and marketing department environments. Students will also develop a framework for analyzing media results, ROI and various market/brand plan outcomes.

### BRND 620. Brand Design for Brand Managers. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Restricted to Brandcenter students only. Building student understanding of the role of design in its various forms within the marketing mix. Focused on design theory and covers all aspects of design and platforms and how consumers perceive brand essence.

### BRND 621. Strategy and Design. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to Brandcenter students. Building students' understanding of the role of strategists and experience designers working as a team.

### BRND 622. Visual Storytelling. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to Brandcenter students. The goal of this class is to take a story and translate it successfully to the screen. Class will include lectures and technology sessions. Classes will be divided between discussions about existing films and spots, and classes devoted to learning the use of lights, cameras and software editing. Three short films will be produced.

### BRND 623. Physical Computing I. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Restricted to Brandcenter students only. Conceptualizing projects with brands in mind and creating prototypes and making sure the final output fits the brand it is paired with. This class will yield actual working prototypes that can help get across the function and look to a design/engineering team to create a production model.

### BRND 624. Physical Computing II. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: BRND 623. Restricted to Brandcenter students only. Dives deeper and builds off the content learned in the prerequisite course.

### BRND 625. Comms Planning and UX. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to Brandcenter students. This class will instruct students on traditional tools such as Simmons, add in new media channel tools such as Sysomos and give students a foundation on the skill set of comms planning and the incorporation of UX attributes into their strategic work.

### BRND 627. Visual Storytelling and Design for Strategists. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to Brandcenter students. The goal of this class is to take a story and translate it successfully to the screen. Class is geared to strategy students. Basic production techniques will be taught. By the end of the semester, students will be able to write, produce, shoot and edit a variety of commercial and viral video pieces. Short films will be produced. In order to bring this visual sensibility to all their work, strategists will be taught key design software that will enable them to improve the communication value of their written and presentation work.

**BRND 629. Strategic Thinking. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to Brandcenter students. Contrasting historically rigid ways of approaching problems to newer, more dynamic approaches will prepare students to professionally engage a constantly shifting world of business, consumer, political and economic forces. Students will engage in semester-long projects to develop new ways of thinking strategically, including writing a strategic plan and scenario plans (the art of looking ahead and envisioning various realities for a company). Students will work directly with local small business owners in developing and formally presenting relevant strategies.

**BRND 630. Problem Solving for Art Directors. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 2 laboratory hours. 3 credits. Restricted to Brandcenter students only. Explores the media of print, Internet and television to develop and understand the basis of good design and art direction. Will work through the process of visual concepts and execution.

**BRND 631. Craft. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 2 laboratory hours (delivered online, face-to-face, or hybrid). 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to Brandcenter students or by permission of instructor. Explores the delivery of concepts to an audience to determine how the message is received. Will teach how to attack a problem, how to work through a creative block and how to be a better judge of your own work.

**BRND 633. User Participation Platforms. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Harness the power of Web users by designing within the architecture of user participation. Branding is no longer a one-way communication model. This course focuses on understanding and managing the communications from consumers to other consumers via the Web. Students will learn to cultivate organic growth and orchestrate grassroots efforts, as well as explore considerations in physical computing and augmentation of technology within someone's reality.

**BRND 635. Creating Gravitational Pull. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Driving traffic to websites. Includes search engine optimization and search engine marketing, but goes way beyond. Designing integrated brand campaigns linking different channels and media types to take consumers on a journey with different touch points, channels and devices. Students will use proven strategies and design campaigns to have a live website and pull visitors to it. Students are expected to demonstrate their abilities on live sites where the effectiveness of their efforts is realized in real-time results.

**BRND 638. Brand Engagement. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Restricted to Brandcenter students only or by permission of instructor. Enhancing consumers' brand experience. Students explore interactive ways to engage consumers. Core aspects of the future of the Web are explored. Students will be familiar with current engagement techniques, and they will create new ways to connect with consumers. Emphasis on the creation of ideas of sufficient scope as to become the basis for ad campaigns covering many platforms, especially including the Web.

**BRND 639. Cultural Impact: Advanced Account Planning. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face, or hybrid). 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to Brandcenter students or by permission of instructor. Identify a cultural issue that can impact business results and formulate a hypothesis for investigating the issue. Students gain experience in identifying a research need, in developing a research plan and methodology and in fielding the plan. After research, students get experience determining what they have learned and knowing what it means to the client.

**BRND 640. Problem Solving. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Restricted to Brandcenter students only or by permission of instructor. Focuses on developing ability to create well-written, creatively focused advertising copy that solves communications problems. Addresses headline and body copy issues through presentation of students' work and research on major copywriters and their work.

**BRND 648. Innovation. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to Brandcenter students or by permission of instructor. This course will challenge students to learn the techniques of innovators in business and the community. The course combines lectures and instruction with a semester-long innovation competition in partnership with global brands. Both invention and execution will be explored.

**BRND 649. Brand Analytics. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Restricted to Brandcenter students only. Learning and applying statistical methodologies for analytics in order to make smart decisions for effective brand management. Techniques for decision-making are explored along with Web analytics, performance metrics and ROI.

**BRND 651. Creative Thinking. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 2 laboratory hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid.) 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to Brandcenter students. Focuses on developing the creative skills necessary for solving advertising communication problems. Enables students to maximize and strengthen creative abilities through lecture, brainstorming sessions and team-oriented strategy sessions focusing on real case projects.

**BRND 652. Concept Development. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: BRND 651. Develops students' ability to create visually effective work that targets specific groups of consumers through ongoing review and discussion sessions designed to pinpoint strategies and create relevant visually oriented ideas quickly. Emphasizes a teamwork approach to art direction and concept development.

**BRND 653. Portfolio Development. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: BRND 652. Focuses student toward creative solutions to communication problems. Addresses specific strategies including briefs and concept work that require extensive copy. Emphasizes a team approach to copywriting and art direction.

**BRND 659. Brand Experiences. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to Brandcenter students. Provides thorough coverage for designing comprehensive brand communications for real-world clients that involve physical experiences for consumers. Projects will force students to think about every aspect of the consumer experience including store appearance, product selection, employee behavior and the purchasing process. An emphasis will be placed on producing comprehensive campaigns that develop strategic and creative brand experiences for customers.

**BRND 662. Research Methodologies. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Restricted to Brandcenter students only or by permission of instructor. Review a variety of qualitative and quantitative research techniques as well as an introduction to writing creative briefs. Students will learn how to translate research into insightful creative and business platforms. This is a practical course that prepares students to be senior-level strategic thinkers throughout their careers.

**BRND 664. Persuasion. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to Brandcenter students or by permission of instructor. This course offers an intensive in skills necessary to persuade when presenting work and ideas. Topics such as voice delivery, personal style, effective presentation of creative work, storytelling and capturing audience attention will be covered. Student presentations will be critiqued and videotaped for analysis.

**BRND 667. Applied Brand Management. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Restricted to Brandcenter students only. Exposes students to detailed, practical information about the tools and tactics used to apply inventive brand strategies. Students will be exposed to managerial functions involving marketing and project management, while being challenged to synthesize and simplify complex information in order to create actionable plans. A portion of the course is dedicated to the use of a simulation case, "Pharmasim," which allows students to test theories and get real-time feedback on the likely results of their decisions.

**BRND 668. Advanced Brand Management. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Restricted to Brandcenter students only. Involves intensive, interactive exploration of factors that affect the success of brands. Students study brand delivery systems from product and packaging design through sales channels to the ultimate consumer. The curriculum combines individual casework and team assignments to ground students in the art and science of strategy development. Students are also exposed to guest lecturers with brand management and integrated marketing expertise. Since brand managers must direct and manage the efforts of colleagues and agencies not under their control, there is a concentration on developing forceful, persuasive communication skills.

**BRND 670. Creative Fusion. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 2 laboratory hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to Brandcenter students. Integrating new branding methods with traditional approaches (like advertising, public relations and direct marketing) to develop powerful, coordinated and synergistic campaigns.

**BRND 673. Experimentation. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Restricted to Brandcenter students only. Creative tracks working together in teams to create shifts in established paradigm and executing a prototype of these solutions.

**BRND 677. The Business of Branding. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Requires students to develop ideas ranging from strategic to tactical and from rational to emotional. Students will be called on to develop and examine ideas that differentiate brands, build sales and affect market share. The new business process will be considered and successful presentation techniques will be evaluated. Ethical considerations faced by industry practitioners will be explored.

**BRND 691. Topics in Branding. 1-3 Hours.**

Semester course; 1-3 lecture hours. 1-3 credits. A course for the study of current trends and opportunities in branding. See the Schedule of Classes for topics offered each semester and prerequisites as determined by the department.

**BRND 695. Internship: Brandcenter. 1 Hour.**

Semester course; 1 credit. Restricted to Brandcenter students only. Selected students will receive on-the-job training under the supervision of the instructor and employer. Internships are available in a variety of branding opportunities.

**BRND 696. Advanced Portfolio. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to Brandcenter students. Continues the development and demonstration of conceptual and creative abilities and insights in a variety of areas sought by agency art directors, copywriters and recruiters. Individual development of concepts and materials necessary for the creation of mini-books and portfolios under one-on-one instruction. Independent projects pursued specifically for individual portfolio development.