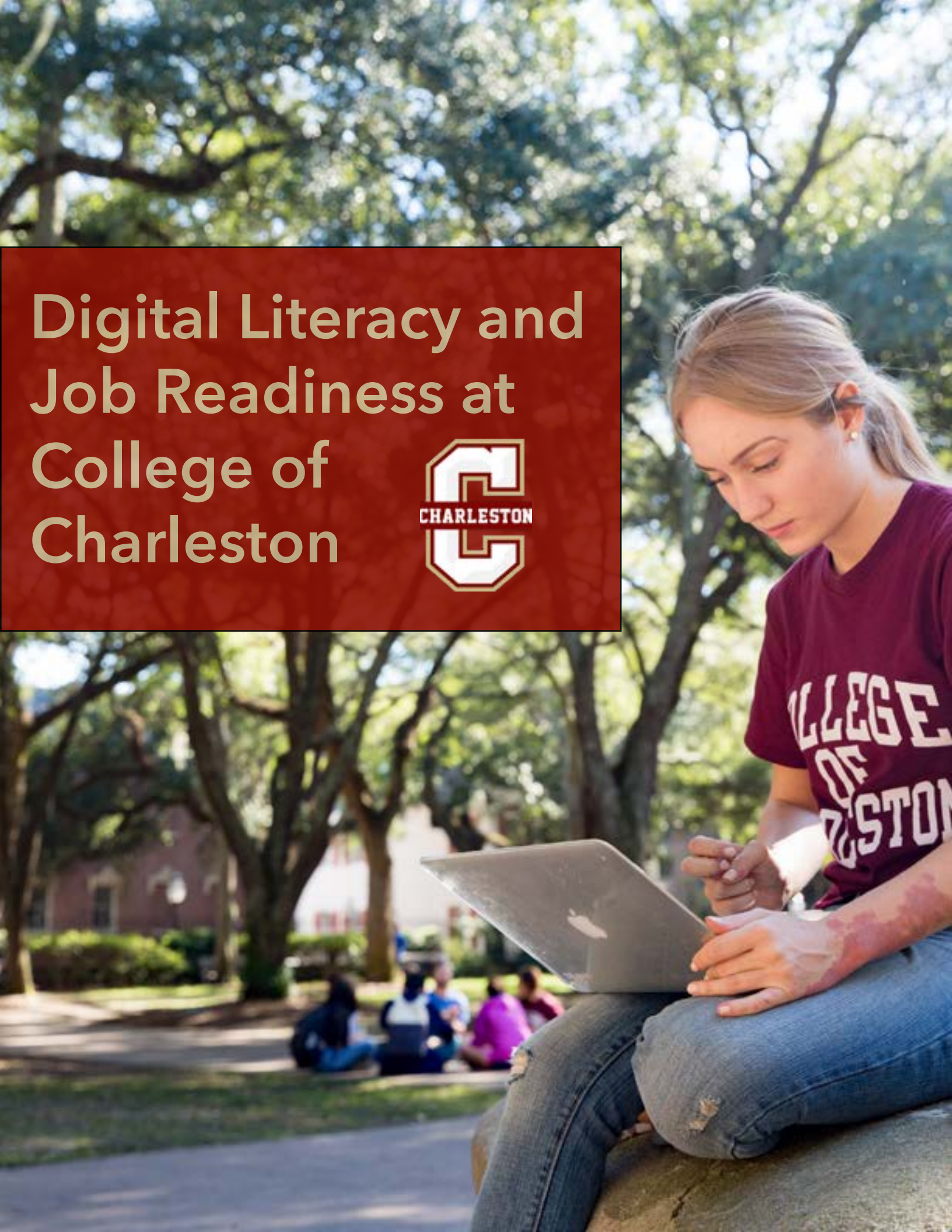


Digital Literacy and Job Readiness at College of Charleston



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The College's Current Digital Literacy Initiative

College of Charleston's current Strategic Plan currently briefly mentions digital literacy under the category "Academic Distinction" and makes the following statement:

"Strategy 1: Establish an integrated, interdisciplinary, experimental liberal arts core. Form a multi-disciplinary, cross-functional task force to re-imagine the liberal arts core curriculum/experience. Key considerations: Technical/digital literacy."

The statement above shows an initiative by College of Charleston to discuss digital literacy, however it can added upon to not only discuss digital literacy at The College, but also in the work force. Digital literacy isn't only important in academia, but in the job force as well. Long-term benefits of digital literacy are what make it important at the university level. Thus, it is important to consider how The College chooses to implement digital literacy programs into the curriculum. It should not only be, as the Strategic Plan states, to re-imagine the liberal arts core curriculum but also to prepare students for their future life outside of college.

College of Charleston's strategic plan does currently discuss a "cross-functional and multi-disciplinary task force," which will be helpful in basic digital literacy skills. This current emphasis on the liberal arts curriculum can potentially be expanded upon by tailoring specific digital technologies to specific majors to help prepare students for the workforce. While technology is important in the success of students at College of Charleston, it is also important in specific jobs after graduation. The curriculum can expand match this need, and offer specific, resume-building skills that will benefit students in the present *and* the future.

Digital Literacy:

Digital literacy is the ability to interpret, analyze, evaluate, and use digital platforms across multiple disciplines to communicate and distribute information. The skills involved within digital literacy can be built upon, relearned, and redirected as technology continues to evolve and get more advanced.



Digital Literacy & the Work Force



Digital technology has not only become a prevalent part of the college experience, but also a necessity to compete in the job market. A case study done by *Education Week* looked at different level jobs within Christiana Care Health System in Delaware, the largest private employer in the state with 11,600 employees and 1,500 expected new hires in 2018. To compare, MUSC has 14,000 employees (1 out of every 12 jobs) and is the second-largest employer in Charleston, after Joint Base Charleston. The study shows that employees at every level work with technology in some form, which is just as important in Charleston as in Delaware. The study is as follows:

Service Assistant, Environmental Services:

- Uses mobile apps for communication and task management
- Increase in new technology, beginning to use a new high-tech, UV light cleansing system which is digitally operated and needs extensive training
- In order to get promoted to the next position an assistant must be able to use computers and software comfortably. They must also be able to enter and read digital information with ease.

Production Supervisor, Food and Nutrition Services:

- Uses digital touch screen programs to navigate kitchen technology like kettles
- Navigate and process software that patients use to place meal orders
- Review predictive analytics for how much food to order

Registered Nurse:

- All patient documentation is on a computer-- use multiple software programs at once. One system to submit patient notes, one to move and locate patients, and another to order medications and enter blood work
- Looking at new ways to manage communications via technology

TAKEAWAYS

According to the case study, a vital lesson for schools is that students need broad exposure to office and productivity software. Students need to be able to read and analyze text, images, data, and other digital information in a variety of places. The ability to adapt and learn and relearn digital technology is more important than specific coding lessons. College of Charleston should take these suggestions into consideration when designing a digital literacy program.

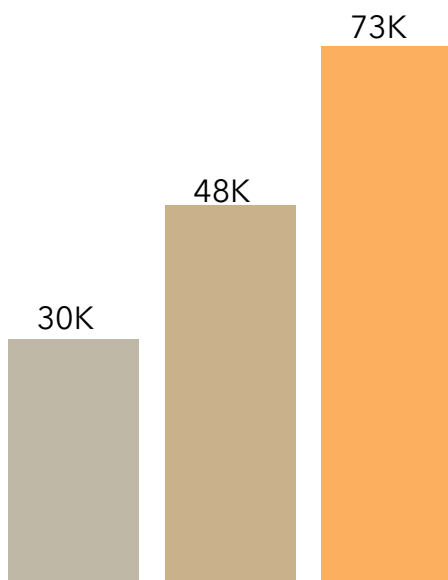
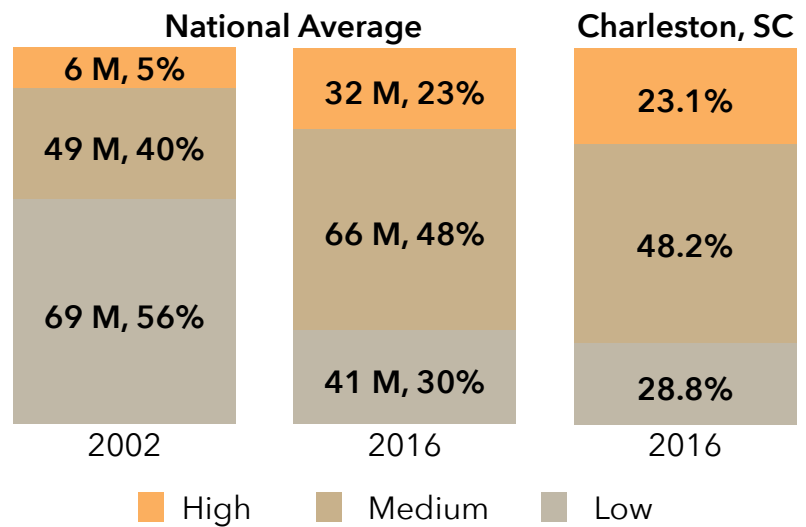
Another study done by Brookings Institution analyzed 545 occupations covering 90% of the US workforce in all industries to look at changes in digital content from 2001 to 2016. The study categorizes occupations into jobs that require high, medium, or low digital skills and the impacts of the change in emphasis of digital literacy.

According to the full report, the overall takeaway is that digital technology is expanding the potential of the American economy and generating opportunities. However, it requires “significant improvements in digital education and training, both to broaden the high-skill talent pipeline and ensure underrepresented groups can connect to an increasingly digital economy.”

FINDINGS

- By 2016, the share of employment in occupations with high digital content more than **tripled**
- More than **32 million** workers are employed in highly digital jobs
- **66 million** workers hold moderately digital jobs
- Only **41 million** jobs require only low digital skills

Employment by Levels of Job Digitalization



Mean Annual Wage by Digitalization Level

High Medium Low

- Employees are rewarded for digital skills through increased wages, workers in occupations with medium to high levels of digital skills were **paid significantly more**
- Employees with high digital jobs were paid an average of **\$72,896**
- Workers with middle-level digital jobs were paid an average of **\$48,274**
- Low-digital positions paid an average of **\$30,393**
- Even when accounting of education differences, there was **statistically significant wage difference** for computer skills that doubled since 2002



IMPLICATIONS

According to the Brookings study, there are several strategies to adjust to the increased digitalization of jobs. Entire markets are being dramatically changed by the continued increase of technology usage. Universities, one of the most important systems in place to prepare students for the workforce, should change accordingly. Brookings states that “acquisition of digital skills has now become a prerequisite for individual, industry, and regional success.” This need requires initiatives to improve access and knowledge of digital literacy.

These case studies and statistics show the rapidly changing digitalization of the work force. Not only do jobs of every level contain some level of technology usage, wages and raises also rely on knowledge surrounding digital technology.

A key element in implementing the current Strategic Plan is a digital literacy initiative that meets the needs of the job force. These studies show basic skills of using, analyzing, learning, and creating digital technology will be important across all fields, and it is imperative the College adds coursework to meet this need.



PLAN PROPOSAL

In order to create a digital literacy initiative to prepare students for the workforce while also adding to the liberal arts curriculum a two-part process is suggested. The first part is to add a cross-curriculum digital literacy program as part of the pre-existing First Year Experience seminar class. The second part is to add a major-based digital literacy initiative tailored to specific student career paths and interests.

PART ONE

Currently, every student at College of Charleston must take a First Year Experience (FYE) class along with an FYE seminar taught by a Peer Facilitator (PF). Curriculum should be added to this course in order to teach students basic technological skills that can be applied across disciplines, similar to what the study in *Education Week* suggests.

Students should learn that they have access to programs such as Apps Anywhere Adobe programs, Microsoft downloads, etc and basic instructions on how to access the programs. Basic strategies of how to work OAKs, Microsoft Word, Google Docs, and other basic skills will be taught so students have an understanding of the programs.

This introduction will:

- Teach students how to use basic programs that are emphasized in classrooms across campus
- Show students resources available to them as students at College of Charleston
- Allow students to begin learning basic technological skills that can be applied in a wide range of disciplines and circumstances

PART TWO

In addition to adding basic technology skills to the FYE program, each major should add either (a) a course allowing students to learn technology related to the field they are studying or (b) curriculum within a pre-existing prerequisite that allows students to explore and learn technology that will help them in the job force. Depending on how in-depth the course goes, students will not only have an opportunity to use programs in a hands-on environment, but also give them skills to put on a resume that would make them a more valuable employee.

For Example:

- Adding a section to English 225, which all Writing, Rhetoric, and Publication concentrators must take that allows students to download and use Adobe InDesign.

OR

- Create a Special Topics class that explores digital technologies that English majors might encounter after graduation. The class could go in depth about creating Microsoft Word styles or how to use InDesign to create a layout.

IMPLEMENTATION

In order to successfully put this digital literacy initiative into place at College of Charleston, we must start small. Start implementing part one by adding digital literacy to a couple of FYE classes follow up with professor, PF, and student responses to the new information.

Similarly, one or two departments should put digital technology into their major curriculum. After each semester, professor and student responses can be taken and the information and/or structure can be altered to best fit the needs that are expressed.



In Conclusion...

As the studies above show, technology has become a big part of job positions across different subject areas. Almost every student once they graduate will have to deal with some sort of technology in the field they wish to pursue. Allowing students to learn these skills now, in a classroom setting will set students up for success after graduation.

As the Brookings study states, it is important to understand basic technological skills that can be applied to wide range of contexts. Learning basic skills will allow students to learn and relearn technologies as they become more complex and grow to meet the needs of each field. However, it is just as important to learn specific skills that can be added to a resume and give students an advantage when applying for jobs. Having job-specific technological skills will help give students an advantage when applying for jobs after graduation.

The proposed plan above is a hopeful initiative that is a mixture of both the basic and specific skills needed. While it may seem complex, it is a solution to two problems. It is always hard to change a system that has been in place for years, however, the world *is* changing, and College of Charleston must change with it. If a digital initiative is to be added, students need to *care* about the new infrastructure in place, they have to *want* to succeed in order for the program to succeed. Adding something that is not just busy work, but a platform to build an expertise that will help not only today, but after graduation, and ten years after that. College of Charleston can not only help build technology, but give students the ability to master it, relearn it, and use it to their advantage for the rest of their lives.

READ MORE

College of Charleston Strategic Plan

[Strategic Plan Presentation](#)

the digital literacy initiative is on page 8

Studies on Technology in the Work Force

[Education Week](#)

case study on jobs at Christiana Care Health System in Delaware

[Brookings Institute](#)

study on changes in digitalization from 2002 to 2016

NOTE: also includes an interactive map that shows digitalization of jobs in Charleston in particular

Charleston Employer Information

[MUSC](#)

the total number of employees and other statistics are found on page 3

[Charleston County](#)

comprehensive list of employers in the Charleston area