



WCBU Vision, Mission, Strategic Objectives and University Alignment

2022-2026

Vision

WCBU aspires to be Peoria's leader in local news. As one of the only nonprofit media organizations in Peoria that is freely accessible to all, we strive to continuously earn the trust and support of our audience with quality content and integrity in our reporting. WCBU will serve a thriving community from our learning laboratory on the Bradley University campus where new and experienced journalists join students with diverse backgrounds and visions for the future to find purpose, mentorship, and camaraderie. Using our first-in-the-industry partnership between Bradley and Illinois State universities as inspiration, WCBU will continuously innovate to develop staff and service to Greater Peoria.

Mission

WCBU is a champion for all things Peoria. We provide award-winning journalism as a public service that spans substantive daily coverage of international and national news from the NPR Network paired with current events and in-depth human interest stories from Greater Peoria. Peoria is our home, allowing WCBU to provide local coverage with nuance and to feature the real voices of Peorians to inform, discuss, and connect.

Strategic Objectives

1. Strengthen WCBU's financial position to support intentional, sustainable growth, and resilience

- Establish an ongoing balanced budget, monitor finances weekly, and check cumulative variances every 3-6 months
- Demonstrate the station's value in advancing Bradley's mission to university leadership to justify a funding floor and in-kind support
- Increase and diversify revenue via grants, plus existing and new donors, including:
 - Ways to engage with WCBU's core audience
 - Ways for interns, interviewees, and listeners on all platforms to become WCBU supporters
- Maintain a dedicated coalition of community leaders to act as advocates for public radio as part of the Community Advisory Board
- Stay informed and leverage the NPR Network for monetizing new revenue streams, including online and digital media products, and engage in pilot projects where applicable

2. Grow WCBU's reporting staff to support thorough, nuanced, high-quality coverage of Peoria news

- Hire a station manager with media (or related) experience to be based at the WCBU station headquarters in Peoria.
- Increase the size of the newsroom to include at least five Peoria-based reporters
- Proactively recruit, hire, and mentor staff with historically marginalized voices to ensure diversity of viewpoint in the newsroom and ensure WCBU represents the communities it serves
- Develop basic training on particularities of radio operations to support the hire of qualified journalists or interested students with limited radio-specific experience

3. Promote and extend WCBU's regional partnership with WGLT

- Collaborate with WGLT, Illinois State University, and Bradley to write and publish an explanation of the history and mutual benefits of the stations' operational partnership
- Where possible, align internal planning and operating systems of the two stations for smooth communication and resource sharing, including periodic collaborative editorial meetings and staff rotations
- Maintain open communication with NPR to share lessons learned through the partnership and from other partner stations across the national network
- Serve as a role model and example of an industry-best practice by mentoring other news organizations

4. Expand and deepen WCBU's connection to Peoria community members and organizations

- Finalize, publish, and publicize WCBU's mission and vision statements and strategic plan to attract like-minded individuals and groups to support the station and its goals
- Educate major employers about how WCBU contributes to high quality of life and differentiates Peoria from other localities to support workforce attraction, recruitment, and retention efforts
- Partner with community leaders to develop stories on relevant and important local issues requiring community input, such as elections and major property development or capital improvement projects

5. Integrate and align WCBU operations with Bradley through curricular and co-curricular action learning and community engagement

- Seek out and lean into complementarity between WCBU goals and resources and those of the Bradley's School of Communications and other departments and centers, including the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)
- Welcome students, faculty, staff, and community members to engage with WCBU at its physical headquarters on Bradley's campus
- Build and experiment with new opportunities for student-driven projects and beats covering Bradley University stories, such as those coming from the Peoria NEXT Innovation Center
- Engage *The Scout* in partnered coverage of Bradley events and look for ways to connect the student-run outlet with professional resources and opportunities through WCBU and NPR
- Solicit support from Career Services in identifying and applying for available funding to support WCBU connection with student research and academic programs

Bradley Strategic Imperatives Alignment

Welcoming, Caring, Diverse, and Inclusive

- WCBU programs cater to diverse demographics reflective of Peoria, including stories produced and voiced by members of the local community.
- WCBU's partnership with WAZU brings NPR programming to a wider and more diverse audience.
- WCBU is a campus-community connector, drawing people to the Bradley campus, often for the first time.
- WCBU is Bradley's association with NPR, which itself has a reputation for similar values.

Personalized Life Path

- Local public radio offers balanced coverage as a counterpoint to the echo chamber of online/social media-driven news.
- Peoria relies on WCBU to support an informed citizenry.
- WCBU offers a platform for Bradley students who want to experiment with trades associated with journalism.
- WCBU staff and partners offer students access to professional networks in communication and journalism fields.
- As partners on WCBU projects, students explore places and communities they may have never otherwise seen or come to love.

Return on Educational Investment

- WCBU builds multimedia literacy among Bradley students and listeners in the broader Peoria community.
- WCBU's reporting on current events shows students how lessons from their coursework relate to the real world.
- WCBU student internships demonstrate Bradley's commitment to experiential learning, positioning interns to benefit from mentorship of staff and from professionally produced spots for their portfolio.
- WCBU staff, alumni, and community champions are evidence of how transferrable journalism-related skills can be in practice.
- WCBU serves curious, engaged life long learners well beyond their degree.

Boundary Breaking Innovation

- WCBU has a long history of innovation, starting with its remarkably wide-reaching radio frequency in the early 80s, continuing through the transition to HD radio in 2007, and now taking on new life with podcasting, social media, and other new kinds of content.
- The WGLT-WCBU partnership is first-of-its-kind and has the attention of NPR as a promising way to preserve key stations by sharing staff and other resources within a region.
- WCBU also covers the boundary-breaking innovation happening at Bradley, including at the Turner Center for Entrepreneurship, the Peoria Next Innovation Center (NEXT), the Department of Interactive Media, and more.
- WCBU's free, user-friendly public news offerings shouldn't be groundbreaking, but they are.

Financial Strength and Operational Excellence

- WCBU budget and operations are balanced and stable.
- On-campus public radio differentiates Bradley and appeals to students who strive to be the change they want to see in the world.
- WCBU offers award-winning operational excellence and quality news as recognized by the Illinois News Broadcasters Association (INBA) Crystal Mic awards for Best Station and Best Digital Presence in the Small Market categories, and the Edward R. Murrow Award for Overall Excellence among small market radio stations from the RTDNA (Radio Television Digital News Association).