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## WRFL 88.1FM Strategic Plan

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WRFL 88.1 FM STRATEGIC PLAN

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Spring 2022 Capstone Project

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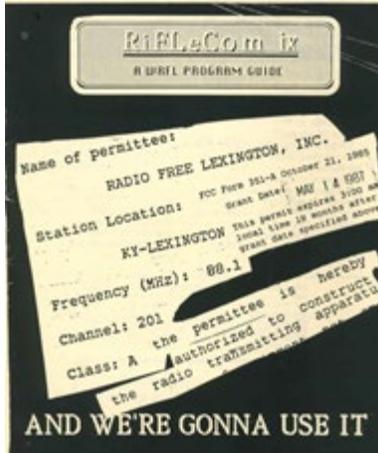
## **Executive Summary**

WRFL 88.1 FM (WRFL) is a student-run radio station at the University of Kentucky that has existed on the University of Kentucky's campus since 1988. As the station recently turned 34 years old in March 2022, it has never had a strategic plan or gone through the strategic planning process. The strategic planning process was facilitated by the Principal Investigator and involved members of WRFL's leadership team, and general student and community members. Using multiple data collection methods to gather feedback, the Principal Investigator was able to present WRFL's leadership team with a plan that they believe will provide WRFL with a better future and will be implemented starting in the fall of 2022. This strategic plan will be implemented to help the station increase student involvement and engagement, improve the station's morale, and strengthen community relationships and events.

## **Background**

WRFL 88.1 FM, the University of Kentucky's student-run radio station, operates as a non-commercial radio station, giving listeners endless hours of uninterrupted access to music from various disc jockeys who spin tunes over the airwaves. WRFL 88.1 FM made its first broadcast on March 7, 1988. The station, now in its 34th year of broadcasting across UK's campus, the city of Lexington and the central Kentucky region, has played an integral role in the campus and local community. WRFL 88.1 FM operates on a 24-hour live broadcasting scheduling. For 365 days a year, the station has a live DJ running the board. This has been the case since the station's inception. WRFL 88.1 FM is known for its "alternative" programming, meaning that it strives to play music that is not traditionally heard on other traditional radio stations. Its famous slogans include, "All the way to the left" and "the only alternative left," signifying the 88.1 being the farthest left radio dial.

WRFL 88.1 FM has a current membership base of 84 students and community members. Membership is open to anyone – current UK students, former UK students and community members. Members at WRFL can be DJs or volunteers, who help with events and other station initiatives. There are 14 members that make up the station's leadership team. The leadership team meets weekly to discuss ways to plan and implement initiatives related to the well-being and success of WRFL. The station collaborates with local artists and music venues to host concerts and other events in the Lexington/central Kentucky community. One of the most rooted traditions at WRFL 88.1 FM is 'The RiFLe,' the station's long-running publication that includes articles, music review poetry, comics, photography and more. The first publication launched in 1987 and is distributed free of charge to local businesses and friends of the station. There are over 60 editions of the magazine, with more to come.



*A copy of WRFL's first 'RiFL' magazine in 1987*

All of this to say, WRFL has a rich history steeped in a tradition that celebrates independent music and local culture.

In the fall of 2021, WRFL's station advisor, a University of Kentucky staff member who helps advise the station's student leaders, was approached by the PI. He offered to work with the station's leadership and its members to create a strategic plan for the station. The station advisor agreed that this was a good idea and would be a much needed step in the right direction for the station. In working with WRFL, the PI is hopeful that this strategic plan will help the station build upon its successful past to create an even brighter future.

## **Problem Statement**

How can a strategic plan help WRFL better implement initiatives to help improve its future and build upon past successes?

## Literature Review

### Introduction

While its origins are somewhat unclear, we know that college radio has been on the airwaves in the United States for over 100 years. Kyle Miller, Professor at the University of Iowa, says that multiple scholars believe college radio's roots can be traced back to the 1910s and 1920s at universities in Wisconsin and Minnesota (Miller, 2017). WRUC 89.7 FM at Union College in New York claims to be the first college radio station, with its first broadcast on October 14, 1920. The broadcast, created by William G. Craig and Glen C. Mercer, lasted 30 minutes and helped usher in the era of college radio that would expand to institutions across the country (WRUC). Wherever and whenever college radio was officially founded, we know that college radio stations have and continue to play a unique and important role in the communities they inhabit.

College radio stations serve as a “trusted source,” according to a college radio program director located in Austin, Texas (SPIN Staff, 2020). They help guide listeners to discover new music, as many college radio stations play music that would not be typically heard on mainstream radio stations. Another important element of what makes college radio special is the human element. Most college radio stations offer live programming around the clock that features a DJ who can give listeners more insight into the music they are listening to. Amanda Roussel, who works at Boston College's student-run radio station, says that there is “something more human” about discovering music from a live human being (SPIN Staff, 2020). Even former President Barack Obama has acknowledged the role college radio plays in our society, saying on World College Radio Day in 2013, “By empowering students to add their voices and opinions to the airwaves and connecting listeners to new ideas and artists, college radio fosters creativity, promotes emerging musicians, and serves as a platform for students to engage with one another.” (Waits, 2013)

As of January 19, 2018, [Radio Locator](#) lists 441 licensed radio stations that are classified as “college radio” in the United States and Canada. Most college radio stations are designated as ‘non-commercial,’

meaning that they do not accept on-air advertisements. This gives the stations more freedom to play music they want and not be dictated by advertising money. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) restricts non-commercial radio stations from “promoting the goods or services of an entity or person in return for consideration.” (Miller, 2017) These types of radio stations are owned by nonprofit groups, including colleges and universities.

### **College Radio Impacts**

College radio stations play an important role in engaging students, community members, and university faculty and staff on campus. These stations are diverse, playing different kinds of music, hosting news and sports shows, and more throughout the day. They engage with local businesses, in turn helping those businesses grow and thrive in the local economy. Lea Mercado from KSTW 89.9 writes, “College radio is incredibly unique because it is ever-evolving as each new class of students comes in to run the station and further their impact on the air. As new voices take to the radio, so do new departments and initiatives to tailor the listener’s experience further and spread news and education, as well as consistently promoting new music.” (Mercado, 2021) Many college radio stations, including WRFL 88.1 FM, have partnerships with academic colleges on campus. WRFL 88.1 FM partners with the College of Communication to allow journalism students to get experience on the air while receiving college credit. This not only engages students, but also faculty who are facilitating the courses that utilize the radio station.

In terms of engaging the local community, Mercado goes on to say, “college radio stations are inherently invested in the surrounding community, from issues varying from campus life to city-wide politics and local events.” (Mercado, 2021) In looking at WRFL 88.1 FM’s event calendar on its website, you can find the station hosting events that include discussions on Jewish Art, Faith and Identity and an auction that supports funding for Lexington’s ‘Pride’ parade, celebrating members of the LGBTQ+ community.

College radio stations often serve as a positive externality for colleges and universities. They foster an environment of creativity and innovation, while engaging students who have a passion about radio and

media. They serve as recruiting tools for students to come to campus and stay until they graduate. It's helpful to many institutions, including the University of Kentucky, to have a college radio station on campus that can help recruit, retain and engage students.

Many college radio stations are known for their 'alternative' programming. This programming consists of music that does not have commercial radio exposure on major FM commercial stations. Oftentimes, college radio stations will use their platform to play music by artists who are local to the area, are not signed to a record label and need any help getting their music on the airwaves. George Gimarc, a Texas based American disc jockey and radio program producer calls college radio stations 'a safety valve in the sanity of the music world' and 'the lifeblood of the independent record industry.' (Sauls, 2017) College radio stations play an important role in the local music scene, helping lift up musicians who may not have another avenue of getting their music on the airwaves. The survival of college radio stations is important for the survival of alternative, lesser-known musicians.

### **Strategic Issues Facing College Radio**

One of the biggest challenges that college radio stations potentially face is appropriate funding. College radio stations receive financial support from the university with which they are affiliated. For example, WRFL receives \$5.50 from each full-time enrolled undergraduate student at the University of Kentucky to assist with its day-to-day operations. The allocation in 2021-22 totals approximately \$286,000. While university funds immensely help, many college radio stations depend on underwriter support.

Underwriters are local businesses that financially support college radio stations. Underwriters allow college radio stations to remain 'non-commercial.' They provide financial support for the station in exchange for some kind of benefit, usually an on-air mention. Underwriting is an important way for college radio stations to stay financially afloat and be able to afford other expenses that may not be covered by university funds. WRFL 88.1 FM has strong relationships with many local businesses that serve as their underwriters. Their underwriters help them fund their "donor account," which helps pay for

new station equipment and repairs and serves a general emergency fund as well. Many college radio stations saw funding issues increase during the pandemic. Mark Maben, who served as General Manager for Seton Hall's college radio station in 2020 told InsideRadio that "the kinds of underwriters we've had for years are the people getting hammered right now." (InsideRadio, 2020) A college radio station at the University of Richmond was told in 2020 that \$50,000 of student funds were being transferred to pay for COVID-19 related expenses. Gabby Kiser, who works at the station on UR's campus, called those funds "our only lifeline." (InsideRadio, 2020)

Membership growth and retention are both challenges that many college radio stations face. College radio stations often depend on volunteer student and community member programming to fill the daily program schedule. With many college radio stations broadcasting live 24/7, it can be challenging to maintain staffing. Stephen Merrill from Bowling Green State University states "retention of personnel is an important factor to consider for providing continuity and success with an operation such as college radio that has a high turnover of personnel on a yearly basis." (Merrill, 2008) As college students graduate, get involved in other organizations, etc., it is important that college radio stations have plans in place to maintain healthy membership numbers that will allow the station to successfully operate and in an ideal world, experience steady growth.

## **Data and Methodology**

The PI utilized multiple data collection methods to help discover themes and trends that would help WRFL create its strategic plan. He utilized three different methods: individual interviews, a survey and focus groups. The order of the data collection went as follows:

Individual Interviews —> Focus Group #1 —> All-Member Survey —> Focus Group #2

The PI chose to order his data collection this way because he felt that each step in the process directly helped him prepare for the next one. This section will explain the approach to each of these collection methods and how the plans for them were executed.

### **Individual Interviews**

The first step of the data collection process was conducting individual interviews. The PI conducted three individual interviews. These three individuals are highly involved at the station; the staff advisor, the current General Manager (GM) and the GM-elect. Each interview took place in person at WRFL's station, which is located on the first floor of the Gatton Student Center on the University of Kentucky's campus. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. The main purpose of this was information gathering, so the PI could conduct individual SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analyses and learn more about the current state of the station from those who are heavily involved daily. The SWOT analysis gave the PI a better idea of what was currently working and not working at the station. It also gave the PI some insight on opportunities that are on the horizon and threats that could present themselves. These are all important factors for an organization to consider when going through a strategic planning process. It is important for organizations to conduct SWOT analysis periodically, as they serve as assessments for internal and external operations.

The PI wrapped up each interview by asking the interviewee why they became involved with WRFL. This gave the PI the ability to hear personally why members are so passionate about the station. The questions the PI asked each interviewee are listed below:

- What are WRFL 88.1 FM's strengths?
- What are WRFL 88.1 FM's weaknesses?
- What are WRFL 88.1 FM's opportunities?
- What are WRFL 88.1 FM's threats
- How would you describe the culture at WRFL?
- What made you want to get involved at WRFL?

### **Survey**

Because the PI wanted to involve as many members of the WRFL community as possible, he created an all-member survey to be sent out to the general WRFL members in between the first and second focus groups. The survey helped the PI learn more about the station from the general members' perspective and helped him in his discussion with the leadership team during the second focus group. The survey was anonymous and created through Qualtrics. The PI sent the survey link to the station advisor, who distributed it to the general members through the station's listserv. Members had one week to fill out the survey and the PI had the station advisor send two reminders out throughout the week it was open. Below are a few of the questions asked in the survey (see Appendix C).

- What is your membership status with WRFL? (Multiple Choice)
- How much time do you devote to WRFL 88.1 FM per week? (Multiple Choice)
- Here is WRFL 88.1 FM's vision statement: 'WRFL envisions a Lexington and University of Kentucky community that regards local and independent music and art as essential to its culture.'  
Do you feel this appropriately illustrates the vision of WRFL 88.1 FM? (Multiple Choice)
- Here is WRFL 88.1 FM's current mission statement: 'WRFL's mission, as an FCC licensed, non-commercial, educational radio station and a student organization of the University of Kentucky, is

to (1) provide its members professional training and guidance in radio operations management, program development, and quality broadcast performance while (2) offering its listeners a source of music, news, and other programming not regularly found through other media outlets in central Kentucky and (3) supporting arts and music in the Lexington community.' Do you feel this appropriately illustrates WRFL 88.1 FM's mission? (Multiple Choice)

- WRFL 88.1 FM's core values are currently listed as 'Community, Openness, Creative Freedom, Education, and Accountability.' Are there any other values you would add to this list? (Open-Ended)

## **Focus Groups**

The PI conducted two focus groups with WRFL's Board of Directors. The purpose of the focus groups was to get direct and honest feedback from the student leaders who have a daily impact at the station. They make decisions that directly impact the operations of the station and are a group that the PI wanted to make sure had their voices heard in this process. They were scheduled two weeks apart, to give the PI time to analyze the findings from the all-member survey, and use the findings from the first focus group to help lead the discussion for the second focus group. The first focus group took place on Friday, February 25 and the second focus group took place on Friday, March 11. They both lasted approximately two hours and were recorded on the PI's phone. The PI did not transcribe the focus groups, rather he took notes as they were happening. The PI created Google slides (see Appendix A) to facilitate the focus group discussions. As mentioned earlier, WRFL's Board of Directors (BoD) is made up of 14 current UK students. The GM was gracious enough to let the PI conduct the first focus group during the same time as the BoD's normally scheduled weekly meeting. The meeting only consisted of the focus group content, and no general station information was discussed. Each focus group was voluntary. While the focus group was led by the PI, he made sure that the discussion was led by the BoD members and gave them the space to take the conversation how they felt appropriate. The BoD members understood the importance of these meetings and stayed on task, allowing the meetings to be effective and efficient. The first focus group had

all but one of the members of the BoD present. To help provide the PI with more helpful information before the first focus group, the station advisor provided the PI with the findings from WRFL's listenership survey it had conducted in the Fall of 2021. The results of the survey (see Appendix B) provided the PI with feedback from those not directly involved at the station. The agenda for the first focus group consisted of the following:

- Introduction and overview of the strategic planning process
  - Why are we doing this?
  - How can this benefit WRFL?
- Review of themes from individual interviews
  - How can these themes guide our conversation?
- Conduct a group SWOT analysis
  - As a group - what are WRFL's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats?
- Review of the station's current mission statement, vision statement and core values
  - Do these need revisions?

Conducting multiple SWOT analysis' (during individual interviews, survey and focus group #1) allowed the PI to hear from a wide group of WRFL members and ultimately learn more about the station's inner workings.

At the second focus group, six of the 14 BoD members were in attendance. The PI provided a doodle poll for the BoD members to fill out their availability, and unfortunately it was very challenging to find a time when the PI and the vast majority of BoD members were available between school, work and other conflicts. The second focus group was still productive and the PI felt it met his expectations of what he was hoping to get out of it. The second focus group consisted of the following:

- Discuss all-member survey findings
  - Any new information that hasn't been discussed or discovered yet?

- Review revised mission statement, vision statement and core values
  - Do we approve these revisions for the strategic plan?
- Goal setting and performance measures
  - What tangible goals and metrics can we set for this plan to meet during its lifetime?

## Findings

Once the second focus group concluded, the PI began organizing all his notes and findings from each step of the data collection process to help the station craft its strategic plan. The findings from each data collection step are below.

### Individual Interview Findings

First, each interviewee agreed about the importance of the station creating a long-term plan. All three interviewees told the PI that a lack of forward-thinking approach to how WRFL is run has been a hindrance. They were each very grateful and excited that this process was taking place. Through my SWOT analysis with each interviewee, I discovered some prominent strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. These were organized in the below chart and shared with the BoD during the first focus group.

*SWOT Analysis from Individual Interviews/First Focus Group*

<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Diverse programming</li> <li>-Connection to the local community</li> <li>-Relationship with underwriters</li> <li>-Human element of the station</li> <li>-Our History – “we are unique”</li> <li>-Freedom, creative freedom, freedom to make mistakes</li> <li>-Student Involvement</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Student engagement, not student involvement</li> <li>-Overall student listenership</li> <li>-Lack of a long-term plan</li> <li>-Focus too much on community support, not relationship with university</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Making it easier for students to get involved</li> <li>-Improving events</li> <li>-Student-focused events</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Streaming</li> <li>-Universities selling off student-run stations for the money</li> </ul>
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The PI learned that WRFL has many strengths that make the station successful. However, many weaknesses have arisen over the last few years since the interviewees became involved with the station, and those weaknesses need to be addressed to help the station remain successful. From the SWOT analysis and the other questions asked by the PI, he pulled out the following ‘big picture’ themes:

- Finding the balance between being a student organization and serving the greater Lexington community
- Improving student involvement
  - Ways for students to be involved at a smaller level
- Opportunities for improving membership retention
- Improving events
  - How can events be more engaging for the UK and Lexington communities?
- WRFL’s individualistic/unique culture is a positive
- Diverse programming
  - WRFL plays music not heard on any other radio station
- WRFL plays an important role in the community
  - UK and Lexington communities
  - ‘Cultural Touchstone’ in Lexington

The PI’s individual interviews enlightened him on the strengths that WRFL has as an organization that is individualistic, unique, diverse and committed. It helped him learn about the weaknesses related to a lack of a long-term plan, student engagement and listenership, and hosting events. He discovered the threats

that present themselves in complacency, streaming services and some universities selling off their radio stations for money. The opportunities that arose correlate with the weaknesses, as they hope to improve student engagement and involvement moving forward.

### **All-Member Survey Findings**

The all-member survey was open to all 84 station members. The survey had a 32 percent response rate, with 27 members responding. Respondents could voluntarily skip any question on the survey.

Of the 27 respondents, 18 identified themselves as *General Member - Community Member*, seven identified as *General Member - UK student* and two identified as *Member of the Leadership Team*.

Overall, results from the survey were positive. The PI learned that most respondents agreed that WRFL is headed in the right direction, and that the current mission statement, vision statement and core values appropriately represent WRFL. Many of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats listed in the survey findings aligned with those discovered during the individual interviews and the first focus group. The most glaring weakness discovered in this survey was the disconnect the general members felt towards the BoD in terms of communication. While this was an important discovery, the PI did note that the majority of respondents were not University of Kentucky students. This will be an important discussion in the focus group findings section and provide more context to this issue. It is also a limitation in this study. Below are the four main takeaways the PI had from the all-member survey (see Appendix B) that was shared with the BoD:

*Finding #1: Overall, results were positive!*

*Finding #2: Most prominent weakness seems to be disconnect between members and BoD*

*Finding #3: Importance of emphasizing diversity and inclusiveness as a strength and core value*

*Finding #4: Improving events is a priority*

### **Focus Group Findings**

### *Focus Group #1*

To begin the first focus group, the PI spent a few minutes giving background on himself and why he was leading this planning process for the station. The BoD members were receptive to his help and effort in creating the plan. He defined a SWOT analysis for the group and laid out what would take place during the two meetings. After reviewing the findings from the individual interviews, the PI led the SWOT analysis and showed the BoD members the above chart to see if the group had any additions. While there were a few additions to the list, the BoD agreed that the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were appropriately illustrated during the individual interviews.

Following the SWOT analysis, the PI led the BoD in a review of the station's current mission statement, values statement and core values. These were created in 2015 by the BoD at the time. The PI defined the purpose of the mission statement, vision statement and core values and asked BoD members if they thought each appropriately reflected WRFL's mission, vision and values. Before the PI led these exercises, he referenced Paul Niven's 'Balanced Scorecard' book to help make sure that he was leading the group effectively. As Niven writes in his book, it's important to craft a mission statement that inspires change, is long term and easily understood and communicated. (Niven, 2008).

WRFL's current mission statement reads as follows: *"WRFL's mission, as an FCC licensed, non-commercial, educational radio station and a student organization of the University of Kentucky, is to (1) provide its members professional training and guidance in radio operations management, program development, and quality broadcast performance while (2) offering its listeners a source of music, news, and other programming not regularly found through other media outlets in central Kentucky and (3) supporting arts and music in the Lexington community."*

After a brief discussion, the BoD determined this mission statement still appropriately illustrated the mission of the station and that no changes needed to be made. Niven recommends that if an organization already has a mission, its leadership asks these three questions: *Is the mission up to date? Is the mission*

*relevant to your clients and constituents? Who is being served?* (Niven, 2008) They answered ‘Yes’ to all these questions, and we were able to move on to discuss the vision statement.

WRFL’s current vision statement reads as follows: *“WRFL envisions a Lexington and University of Kentucky community that regards local and independent music and art as essential to its culture.”*

The PI explained to the BoD that vision statements are meant to be forward thinking and that the vision follows the mission and the values (Niven, 2008). As Niven writes, “a vision without a mission is simply wishful thinking, not linked to anything enduring (Niven, 2008).” The PI wanted to make sure the BoD understood this as it approached reworking the vision statement, which all members of the leadership agreed needed to be done. The BoD wanted to rework the second half of the sentence that reads “that regards local and independent music and art as essential to its culture.” They wanted the vision statement to better explain how WRFL can help lift up and celebrate the already great culture of diverse, local and independent music and art. After working through the sentence a few times, they came up with the revised vision statement: **“WRFL envisions a *University of Kentucky and Lexington community that celebrates the culture of diverse, local and independent music and art.*”** By flipping the order of “Lexington and University of Kentucky community” to “University of Kentucky and Lexington community,” the BoD believes this will put more emphasis on the fact that WRFL is a student organization first and a community organization second. While the community aspect is very important to the station, it is important that WRFL remembers it is a radio station that first serves students at the University of Kentucky.

WRFL’s current core values are: *“Community, Openness, Creative Freedom, Education, and Accountability.”* The PI explained to the BoD that values serve as “timeless principles” for the organization and that they serve as “deeply held beliefs within the organization.” (Niven, 2008) The BoD wanted to make changes to the core values as well, realizing that there were certain words that better defined the organization and its culture. They decided to keep the following words: Community, Creative

Freedom and Education. They decided to get rid of the following words: Openness and Accountability. They agreed that ‘Openness’ was too vague and “Accountability” was too intimidating. To better illustrate the values of WRFL, they added the following words: “Diversity, Inclusivity, Support and Responsibility.”

WRFL’s revised core values are **“Community, Diversity, Inclusivity, Creative Freedom, Education, Support and Responsibility.”**

The revision of the mission and vision statements, and the core values concluded the first focus group.

#### *Focus Group #2*

The second focus group began by the PI summarizing the findings from the all-member survey. The discussion around this was passionate, as the BoD members present did not agree with some of the responses shared by the members. Some of the general members stated that a weakness was how the BoD treats them. One of the respondents said ‘Volunteers are treated like cogs, spoken down to, and their experience and knowledge is not respected enough.’ The BoD responded by saying that the general members (mostly non-UK students) who feel this way are the ones who are disrespectful to them. They listed off numerous instances where a BoD member or UK student member was verbally accosted for a mistake that was made. The PI asked pressing questions to learn more about this division, and it made him realize that part of the strategic plan should address this issue.

After this discussion, the PI presented the BoD with the revised vision statement and core values. The BoD approved the changes. Following the approval, the PI presented the BoD with three strategic objectives, which will serve as the big-picture focus areas in this strategic plan. Based on the findings from the interviews, survey and focus groups, the PI proposed the following objectives:

1. Transparency and Communication

In conversations with the BoD and by reviewing the member survey results, it was very clear to the PI that there is a lot of tension between WRFL's leadership and its general staff members. This is mainly between the community/non-student members and the student leaders. It was important for the PI to have the BoD think of ways to better communicate and engage with the staff, but also for them to come up with ideas for how to address the apparent lack of respect that is coming from the general members.

## 2. Student Engagement and Involvement

As discussed multiple times, a common theme the PI discovered is the need for WRFL to improve the work it does with University of Kentucky students. The PI encouraged the team to think about new kinds of events and communication efforts that can help the station improve in this area.

## 3. Community Relations

As an organization that also serves the Lexington community, the PI encouraged the BoD to think about ways that WRFL could better engage in the community. Multiple BoD members recommended different types of events that could allow for local bands, musicians and artists to promote their work. Through partnering with local venues and other community partners, the BoD believes this is an area that can continue to grow and flourish.

The BoD agreed these three areas were a good focal point for the strategic plan. Following the outline, the PI began a goal setting session. Under each objective, the BoD came up with multiple goals. Following that, they came up with performance measures for how those goals would be achieved and who would be responsible for seeing them through. The PI provided a template, where he discussed with BoD members the goal itself, who oversaw implementing it, and the performance measures. Performance measures help organizations track progress in the goals that are being implemented. Effective performance measures

give better direction to organizations and can encourage leaders and members to align in the mission and purpose of the strategic plan. (Niven, 2008) Here are two examples of the template the PI used during the goal setting portion of the focus group.

*Category: Community Relations*

Goal:	Improve relationships with local venues
Who is in charge:	Development director, who oversees relationships with underwriters and community members.
Performance Measures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Send a postcard out to local venues we do and don't have current relationships with at the start of the Fall 2022 semester.</li> <li>● Have monthly communication with local venue owners via email and phone call to provide updates on WRFL.</li> <li>● Offer to host two events at local venues we have existing partnerships with in the fall and spring.</li> <li>● Offer to host two events at local venues we don't have existing partnerships with in the fall and spring.</li> <li>● Tabling for WRFL at local venues. Reaching out to local venues in August to see when we can table at their venue during shows and other events.</li> </ul>

*Category: Transparency and Communication*

Goal:	Create an official 'training guide' for new members of the Board of Directors that can be passed down each cycle.
Who is in charge:	Each individual BoD member
Performance Measures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The GM will meet with the BoD in August 2022 to discuss each member's plan to create a training guide.</li> <li>● By the end of the fall 2022 semester (December 2022), each BoD member will have a rough draft of its training guide. The GM will check in with each BoD member to make sure the draft is finished before members head home for winter break.</li> <li>● In March 2023, the BoD members will finalize and present their training guide to the GM, as they prepare for the incoming BoD to assume their positions.</li> </ul>

The PI proceeded to walk through this template for each goal that was created by the BoD. Most of the goals the BoD came up with were short term, that could be implemented in the next one to three years.

The performance measures are easily measurable and the BoD has a good grasp of how they will manage

checkpoints throughout the lifespan of the plan. Because of that, the PI recommended to the BoD that this strategic plan last for the next two years, with a progress check at that point. That will allow the BoD to see if they need to reevaluate the plan and think of new goals and initiatives for a new plan. This strategic plan will be implemented in August 2022, when the University of Kentucky's fall semester gets underway. The strategic plan will be posted to the website for all WRFL members, listeners and community members to access. The BoD will present the strategic plan to the general members at the August all-membership meeting.

## **Limitations**

There were multiple limitations during the strategic planning process for WRFL. The majority of respondents to the all-member survey were non-students members, which made it difficult for the PI to analyze any feedback, thoughts about WRFL's current state and future from a student's perspective. It was evident that the non-student members felt a certain way about the student leadership through the survey results, and those responses seemed to be most responses to the question: "What are WRFL's weaknesses?" This was not received well by the BoD, who believe they are the ones mistreated by non-station members. This was an issue that took up more time than needed during the second focus group, and caused the PI to lose valuable time planning goals and measurables with the leadership team.

Another limitation was the availability of the BoD for the second focus group. The PI provided the BoD with five different dates and times for the second focus group during the week of March 7-11. The majority of the BoD was unavailable for all of them, and the PI had to resort to meeting with six of the 14 members for the second focus group. These participants were vocal and engaged, and provided good feedback, ideas and insight, but the PI hoped to be able to meet with most members like he did in the first focus group. In the second focus group, there was a lot of disagreement when it came to goal setting. One BoD member would propose an idea and another member would quickly voice opposition. This happened

multiple times and there was clear tension in the room. The PI had to redirect the conversation multiple times because the members would be arguing in circles.

## **Conclusion**

This strategic planning process was completed during an important time for WRFL. The station, which is an important staple in the University of Kentucky and Lexington communities, has the opportunity now to set a more defined path forward and meet attainable goals that can improve the internal and external functions of the organization. The members of WRFL's leadership were excited to participate in the focus groups and provided insight, ideas and new initiatives that will positively benefit the station. The PI used methods and techniques learned in this program to gather and analyze data to ultimately present WRFL with a strategic plan that was approved by the station's leadership team and will hopefully bring positive change to the organization starting this fall.

# Appendix A

## Focus Group Slides

**1 WRFL 88.1 FM**  
Strategic Planning Process

**2 Background**

- Customer Project
- Experience with strategic planning
- Goals for the business plan at WRFL
- The timing of timing of the student organization, who values WRFL
- The team that was in its 20 year period of existence
- Though this would be a good way to help shape a better future for the station

**3 Planning Meeting #1:**

- Review themes from individual interviews
- Conduct a SWOT analysis
- Mission, Vision and Core Values

**4 Themes from individual interviews conducted**

- Improving student involvement
  - o More for students to be involved at a smaller level
- Opportunities for improving membership retention
- Getting up with a long term plan for the station
- Improving events
- WRFL's individualistic/culture culture in a positive
  - o Cultural traditions/culture in a positive
  - o Cultural traditions/culture in a positive
- Discuss programming
- Important role in the community

**5 SWOT Analysis**

Taking a look at WRFL 88.1 FM's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

- Strengths: What does WRFL 88.1 FM do well?
- Weaknesses: What are areas where WRFL 88.1 FM could improve?
- Opportunities: What opportunities are available?
- Threats: What threats could harm WRFL 88.1 FM?

**6**

**7 Re-evaluating mission:**

- A **mission statement** is a concise explanation of the organization's reason for existence.
- WRFL's mission statement: WRFL's mission is an FCC licensed, non-commercial, educational radio station and a student organization of the University of Kentucky, Inc. (U) provide the most professional looking and polished in radio operations management, program development, and quality broadcast performance with (U) offering to receive a course of study, news, and other programming not regularly found through other media outlets in a local Kentucky and (U) supporting arts and music in the Lexington community.
- Do you feel this appropriately describes WRFL 88.1 FM's mission?

**8 Re-evaluating vision:**

- A **vision statement** looks forward and creates a mental image of the ideal state that the organization wishes to achieve. It is inspirational and aspirational and should challenge employees.
- WRFL's vision statement: WRFL envisions a Lexington and University of Kentucky community that respects local and independent music and art as essential to its culture.
- Do you feel this appropriately describes WRFL's vision?

**9 Re-evaluating core values:**

- A **values statement** lists the core principles that guide and direct the organization and its culture.
- WRFL's core values are: Community, Openness, Creative Freedom, Education, and Accountability.
- Are there any other values you would add to this list?

**10 Planning Meeting #2**

Agenda:

- Discuss member survey
- Review Mission, Vision and Values
- Goal setting and performance measures

**11 Key findings from member survey**

Finding #1: Overall, results were positive!

Finding #2: Most prominent weakness: seems to be disconnect between members and staff.

Finding #3: Importance of prioritizing diversity and inclusiveness as a strength and core value.

Finding #4: Improving events is a priority.

**12 Revised Mission statement**

WRFL's mission is an FCC licensed, non-commercial, educational radio station and a student organization of the University of Kentucky, Inc. (U) provide the most professional looking and polished in radio operations management, program development, and quality broadcast performance with (U) offering to receive a course of study, news, and other programming not regularly found through other media outlets in a local Kentucky and (U) supporting arts and music in the Lexington community.

**13 Revised Vision statement**

WRFL envisions a Lexington and University of Kentucky community that respects local and independent music and art as essential to its culture.

**14 Revised values**

WRFL's core values are: Community, Openness, Creative Freedom, Education, and Accountability.

**15 Goal setting and Performance measures**

**16 Student Engagement and Involvement**

**17 Student Engagement and Involvement**

**18 Transparency and Communication**

**19 Community Relations**

## Appendix B

### WRFL All-Member Survey Findings

- 27 total responses (~32% response rate)
  - o 18 identified as *General Member - Community Member*
  - o 7 identified as *General Member – UK student*
  - o 2 identified as *Member of Leadership Team*
- How much time do you devote to WRFL 88.1 FM per week?
  - o 1 said *Less than 1 hour*
  - o 7 said *1-2 hours*
  - o 12 said *3-5 hours*
  - o 5 said *5 or more hours*
- Mission Statement
  - o 21 respondents said they agreed that the mission statement appropriately illustrated WRFL’s mission
  - o 3 respondents said they did not think the mission statement appropriately illustrated WRFL’s mission
- Vision Statement
  - o Everyone who responded said they agreed that the vision statement appropriately illustrated WRFL’s vision
- Core Values
  - o Respondent recommendations
    - § Creative Expression
    - § Exploring and expanding conventional music boundaries
    - § Good music
    - § Inclusive/Inclusiveness (mentioned three times)
    - § Independence
    - § ‘Keep the Radio Running’

## § Social Justice

· Does WRFL 88.1 FM's leadership team provide clear and effective communication to members regarding meetings, events, etc.?

- o 19 respondents said yes
- o 5 respondents said no

· WRFL's Strengths

- o 'Openness to all individuals'
- o 'Viability. The fact that it has managed to keep going, and going, and going...'
- o 'Good programming, fun and interested staff'
- o 'Creative freedom, offers opportunities to a wide variety of types of people, good training ground for students'
- o 'diversity of programming; dedicated staff and DJs'
- o Inclusivity, creativity
- o 'Longtime community volunteers, variety of music played, exposing students to broadcasting'
- o 'Not beholden to serving advertisers; Ability to take artistic/financial risks on programming'
- o 'Passionate membership and student leadership'
- o Efficiency, Diversity, Team-Oriented
- o **Community and Commitment**
- o Music as bond between UK and community, also transfer values as a media.

· WRFL's weaknesses

- o 'Not enough training and professional radio equipment.'
- o 'It can be a very intimidating place to noobs and outsiders.'
- o 'Lack of communication with DJs and staff, treatment of nonstudent DJs'
- o 'communication to community members, and communication in general in 2020-21.'
- o 'Could have more social activities'

- o 'Division between directors and volunteers. Volunteers are treated like cogs, spoken down to, and their experience and knowledge is not respected enough.
- o 'Appreciation of volunteers, community cohesion, community outreach'
- o 'Lack of engagement of DJs. Lack of interest. Stuck in the past.
- o 'Indistinct (boring) programming; Lack of cohesion & interconnectedness among BoD, General Staff, all members'
- o 'We could improve on our 'follow up': often times, we commit to courses of action that we do not follow up on. e.g. the "That's what makes WRFL" project from summer 2020, the agreement to put the IRB Relay numbers for grant spots in the traffic guide,etc.'

· Does WRFL do a good job of engaging with the Lexington community?

- o 18 respondents said Yes
- o 6 respondents said No

· How could WRFL 88.1 FM engage more with the UK and Lexington communities?

- o More events like outside the spotlight that highlight unique artists, more awareness of events going on around Lexington, more audience interaction with the DJs
- o the attempt is often there, but not always results. Could be too UK campus centric.
- o Increase it visibility in the community by sponsoring more events, collaborating more with area musicians/venues and doing a better job of getting the word out about emerging area artists

- o Bring in more bands to put on more shows in non-campus environments, if community engagement is your goal.
  
- o Big events like FreeKy Fest and Boomslang really help raise the bar and solidify WRFL's status in the community - along with continuing to be actively involved in Outside The Spotlight Jazz Series, and some other misc events that seemed to strengthen WRFL's brand and reach. It feels like that has lessened over the last number of years.

## Appendix C

### WRFL All-Member Survey Questions

- What is your membership status with WRFL? (Multiple Choice)
  - General member - UK student
  - General member - Lexington community member
  - Member of the leadership team
- How much time do you devote to WRFL 88.1 FM per week? (Multiple Choice)
  - Less than 1 hour
  - 1-2 hours
  - 3-5 hours
  - 5 or more hours
- Here is WRFL 88.1 FM's vision statement: 'WRFL envisions a Lexington and University of Kentucky community that regards local and independent music and art as essential to its culture.'  
Do you feel this appropriately illustrates the vision of WRFL 88.1 FM? (Multiple Choice)
  - Yes
  - No
- Here is WRFL 88.1 FM's current mission statement: 'WRFL's mission, as an FCC licensed, non-commercial, educational radio station and a student organization of the University of Kentucky, is to (1) provide its members professional training and guidance in radio operations management, program development, and quality broadcast performance while (2) offering its listeners a source of music, news, and other programming not regularly found through other media outlets in central Kentucky and (3) supporting arts and music in the Lexington community.' Do you feel this appropriately illustrates WRFL 88.1 FM's mission? (Multiple Choice)
  - Yes
  - No

- WRFL 88.1 FM's core values are currently listed as 'Community, Openness, Creative Freedom, Education, and Accountability.' Are there any other values you would add to this list? (Open-Ended)
- Does WRFL 88.1 FM's leadership team provide clear and effective communication to members regarding meetings, events, etc.? (Open-Ended)
- What would you consider WRFL's strengths to be? (Open-Ended)
- What would you consider WRFL's weaknesses to be? (Open-Ended)
- Do you believe WRFL does a good job of engaging with the Lexington community? (Multiple Choice)
  - Yes
  - No
- **\*If the respondent selected 'No' to the above question\*** How could WRFL 88.1 FM engage more with the UK and Lexington communities? (Open-Ended)

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