

New Undergraduate Program (Majors, Minors, Sequences) Proposal
Illinois State University - University Curriculum Committee

Program Department School of Communication
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Title of New Program Sports Communication

Submission Date Monday, April 24, 2023
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Campus Address 4480 School Of Communication
Version 1 **ID** 434
Proposed Starting Catalog Year 2024-2025

1. Proposed Action

- ✓ New Major **Major CIP Code** 90.0906
- New Minor
- New Sequence
- More than 50% of courses in this program are Distance Education

Degree Type(s)

Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science

2. Provide *Undergraduate Catalog* copy for new program.

Major in Sports Communication

The program in sports communication builds students' knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes in the ideation, planning, implementation, and evaluation of communication efforts specifically meant for sports and athletics organizations. The breadth and depth of sports includes all types, from professional and e-sports teams, to community programs and semi-professional leagues, to equipment manufacturers and venues for digital and physical action. Students will gain a robust foundation of theory and practice to understand why and how ethical and effective communication in the context of sports/athletics has a great impact on society. This broad-based program, then, prepares students for the variety of careers as a sports communication professional, such as sportsbrand manager, sports promotion (public relations or advertising), broadcasting, sports agent, blogger, and many others.

Major Requirements

Minimum required credit hours: 42

COM 111
COM 160
COM 161
COM 178
COM 259
COM 297
COM 341
COM 367
COM 329 or COM 364

Take an additional five (15 credit hours) 200-300 level COM electives. KNR 354 and SOC 317 may also be taken as elective options. A minimum of 9 credit hours of electives must be taken at the 300 level.

Notes

- Students are strongly encouraged to complete at least one internship for credit.
 - Students may choose to participate in a "professional mentorship program" that pairs them with a sport communication professional to learn the business.
 - A maximum of 6 hours of COM 398aXX may count as major electives.
 - Only 3 hours of COM 398aXX will count toward the 300-level course requirement.
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3. Provide a description for the proposed program.

The program in sports communication is designed to capitalize on an enormous opportunity to attract students to ISU and its School of Communication (see rationale section). Broadly speaking, the program would educate students in the principles and practices in sports/athletics communication that would prepare them for a career as sports communication professionals of any capacity. More particularly, the program would feature courses specifically in sports communication in multiple areas (e.g., mass media, public relations, digital channels) while also building students' knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes in the ideation, planning, implementation, and evaluation of ethical communication efforts for sports and athletics organizations. Particular courses (e.g., COM 341 and KNR 354) in the program would cover, for example, identity and culture as it relates to race/gender/sexuality, DEIA, nationalism, commercial inequity, civic engagement, critiques of capitalism, hyper-masculinity, and others. The breadth and depth of sports includes all types, from professional and e-sports teams to equipment manufacturers and venues for digital and physical action. This program's design, with a favorable number of required credit hours compared to other major programs and a respectable number of elective credit hours, allows students to learn foundational principles and practices while also giving them great flexibility in exploring other dimensions of sports/athletics communication that most interest them and leads to their degree. An additional feature of the proposed program is an optional "Professional Mentorship Program" that would pair students interested participating in it with a sports communication professional during their enrollment in the program, with the objectives being (at least) becoming aware of possible career paths, duties and responsibilities of sports communication professionals, connections between academic study and possible career path, activities and organizations that promote professional sports communication, and habits and savviness of successful sports communication professionals. This program's objective, then, is to engender great appreciation and competence about the role of sports in society and, most importantly, prepare students with the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes to be successful sports communication professionals, wherever that takes them.

4. Provide a rationale of proposed program.

Sports garners an enormous amount of attention in our culture in the United States. The business of "major league" professional sports in the United States (e.g., auto racing, baseball, basketball, bowling, boxing, football, golf, hockey, jai alai, motorcycle racing, rodeo, skiing, soccer, tennis, wrestling), according to IBIS World industry reports by Ristoff (2021, report 71121a) and Daly (2021, report 71121b), is forecasted to bring in \$57.9 billion in revenue by 2026. This result includes minor league professional and semiprofessional sports portion of the industry, which are usually training grounds for athletes who want to get into the major leagues and tend to garner great community support at very high levels. (Add national collegiate sports, and the annual industry revenue is much greater.) With so much money on the line in the overall business of spectator sports in America, effective sports/athletics communication as well as image management (and repair, when necessary) is absolutely essential.

Capitalizing on this level of socio-economic importance of sports, research specifically on the growth of sports communication programs in higher education shows definitively that the demand for sports communication is very much on the rise and that those higher-ed institutions that provide requisite resources for those programs sooner than later shall benefit and grow greatly (Hull, Choi, & Kian, 2019; <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077695819835044>). Data from ISU Admissions' "major search" page (in Oct. 2021) shows 286 unique events for sport or sports management within the last year. Additionally, for the same period of time, the key terms of "sport" or "sports" adds another 667 unique searches. ISU is, in effect, missing out on a very significant area of student demand but, fortunately, has the untapped current resources to begin to meet that demand and, most important, grow with demand with additional resources.

Most important are competing institutions that offer successful majors in sports communication that attract students away from ISU because we do not have such a program, as the amount of searches for it show. Examples of competing schools include Ashland, Ball State, Bradley, Butler, Campbell, Clemson, Columbia College (Chicago), Marist, and Quinnipiac. Additionally, from our professional contacts, we know of examples of other successes, such as the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Oklahoma State University, and the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa (the sizes of their respective student populations notwithstanding) that overall unit enrollment jumped when their programs were added, and each has been tremendously successful (with 200 or more students each). (One caveat here: Alabama, Nebraska, and OSU programs are housed in distinct journalism or mass communication units, unlike ISU's more comprehensive School of Communication.) Very importantly, these institutions' programs have been successful with a great many students from Illinois. According to Dr. Jana Albrecht (Oct. 20, 2021), "We believe most of our students found out about our majors through the web, but we can help you all market the new major in a number of different ways."

NOTE: See Sections 4, 5, and 6 of the attached IBHE application for the new major program.

5. Describe the expected effects of the proposed program on existing campus programs (if applicable).

We expect the number of students enrolling in the School of Communication to expand significantly, as the rationale section asserts. While we have a minimum of faculty who can lead courses for this new major program as proposed and launch the program successfully, we fully expect to need additional faculty focused on sports/athletics communication who also would develop new courses and refine/improve the program's curriculum. In fact, if the newer sports communication programs at competing institutions are any indications, rapid growth of our proposed program should meet or exceed enrollment projections very soon after offering it. See the attached IBHE application for the program for additional details.

6. **Provide a sample four-year plan of study that fulfills the following requirements:** 120 hours, 42 senior college hours (200 and 300 level courses), and 39 General Education Program hours or 36 hours with exemption. If the program is a BS program, show the BS-SMT degree requirement. If the program is from CAS, show Foreign Language Requirement (LAN 111/LAN 112). Confirm General Education requirement exemptions on the General Education page of the current Academic Catalog. *4-year plans are not required for minor program proposals.*

Sports Communication – new major

27 credit hours required

15 credit hours of electives

First Year – Fall Semester (15 credit hours)

ENG 101 or COM 110 (General Education) (3)

General Education course (3)

General Education course (3)

General Education course (3)

University-wide elective (3)

First Year – Spring Semester (15 credit hours)

ENG 101 or COM 110 (General Education) (3)

General Education course (3)

General Education course (3)

General Education course (3)

University-wide elective (3)

Second Year – Fall Semester (15-16 credit hours)

COM 111 Introduction to Communication Theories (3)

COM 160 Introduction to Mass Media (3)

Foreign Language course 111-level or University-wide elective (3-4)

General Education course (3)

General Education course (3)

Second Year – Spring Semester (15-16 credit hours)

COM 161 Convergent Media Writing (3)

COM 178 Introduction to Public Relations (3)

Foreign language course 112-level or university-wide elective (3-4)

General Education course (3)

General Education course (3)

Third Year – Fall Semester (15 credit hours)

COM 297 Communication Research Methods (3)

B.S.-SMT or B.A. language (3)

Senior-level COM major elective (3)

Senior-level COM major elective (3)

University-wide Elective (3)

Third Year – Spring Semester (15 credit hours)

COM 259 Strategic Communication in Sports (3)

AMALI course or University-wide elective (3)

IDEAS course or University-wide Elective (3)

University-wide Elective (3)

University-wide Elective (3)

Fourth Year – Fall Semester (15 credit hours)

COM 341 Media, Society & Sport (3)

COM 364 Media Management (3) or COM 329 Organizational Communication (3)

300-level COM major elective (3)

Senior-level University-wide Elective (3)

Senior-level University-wide Elective (3)

Fourth Year – Spring Semester (15 credit hours)

COM 367 Ethical Problems in Mass Media (3)

300-level COM major elective (3)

Senior-level University-wide Elective (3)

Senior-level University-wide Elective (3)

Senior-level University-wide Elective (3)

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7. **Describe the expected curricular changes required, including new courses. If proposals for new courses have also been submitted, please reference those related proposals here:**

No new courses have been proposed for this new program, although two courses (COM 259 Strategic Communication in Sports and COM 341 Media, Society, and Sport) were approved recently for the university catalog, have been offered with strong enrollments, and are included as required courses. After a couple/few years of offering the program, we anticipate increasing demand and needing to propose new courses (i.e., to accommodate fast-moving industry changes as well as to address topics such as the rhetoric of sports and ethics of sports communication) that would strengthen the curriculum, especially as we hire new faculty who specialize in sports communication. See the attached supporting document for additional details.

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8. **Anticipated funding needs and source of funds.**

We believe we need at least two new faculty for this major by its fifth year of operation. The funding source would be the Provost's Office. Additional funding for new office spaces for faculty, necessary technology, and other programmatic needs would be required, as we need to renovate existing spaces in the School's domain. See the Financial Implications Form in the attached file.

9. No Does this program count for teacher education?

10. No Is this an Interdisciplinary Studies program?

11. The following questions must be answered.

Yes Have you confirmed that Milner Library has sufficient resources for the proposed program?

No Are more than 120 hours required to complete a degree with this major?

No Beyond General Education, does the major require more than 66 semester hours?

No Does this B.A., B.S., B.S.Ed. require more than 55 semester hours of major courses?

No Does this program stipulate specific general education courses offered in the major department/school as a part of the major requirements only if such courses serve as prerequisites for other courses required by the major?

No Does this program stipulate specific course requirements (majors/sequences only) that also satisfy general education and/or IAI requirements?

No Is the proposed program intended to be longer than four years (as indicated by the plan of study)?

Yes Have letter(s) of concurrence from affected departments/schools been obtained?

A departments/school is affected if it has a program with significant overlap or if it teaches a required or elective course in the program.

12. Routing and action summary for New Program:**1. School of Communication Department Curriculum Committee Chair**

<u>Peter Smudde (website)</u>	<u>Peter Smudde</u>	<u>4/24/2023 8:58:02 AM</u>
Signature	Print	Date

2. School of Communication Department Chair/School Director

<u>Stephen Hunt (website)</u>	<u>Stephen Hunt</u>	<u>4/24/2023 1:13:37 PM</u>
Signature	Print	Date

3. College of Arts & Science College Curriculum Committee Chair

<u>Todd Stewart (website)</u>	<u>Todd Stewart</u>	<u>9/6/2023 9:41:50 AM</u>
Signature	Print	Date

4. College of Arts & Science College Dean

<u>Rocio Rivadeneyra (website)</u>	<u>Rocio Rivadeneyra</u>	<u>9/6/2023 11:53:14 AM</u>
Signature	Print	Date

5. University Curriculum Committee Chair

<u>Joshua Newport (website)</u>	<u>Joshua Newport</u>	<u>11/6/2023 6:57:38 PM</u>
Signature	Print	Date

All new programs (majors, minors, sequences) are routed by the U.C.C. to the Academic Senate

Peter Smudde (School of Communication Department Curriculum Committee Chair):

This proposal for a new major in the School of Communication was passed by the School's graduate faculty on April 21, 2023.

Stephen Hunt (School of Communication Department Chair/School Director):

Let's do this!

