



I ILLINOIS

College of Media

STRATEGIC PLAN

2020



INTRODUCTION

The College of Media at Illinois has a proud history.

Throughout its 93 years, since its inception in 1927 by an act of the Illinois Legislature establishing the University of Illinois School of Journalism, the College and its alumni have had a profound impact on media. Advertising education was born at Illinois, as was the foundation of the U.S. public broadcasting system, and the Institute of Communications Research is the oldest doctoral program in communication and media studies in the world.

Today, we continue to build on this storied legacy, through our scholarship, teaching, and public engagement missions. The College's four undergraduate majors (Advertising, CS + Advertising, Journalism, and Media and Cinema Studies) enroll over 1,000 students, and all combine opportunities for rigorous pre-professional training with a rich liberal arts education. At the graduate level, we offer M.S. degrees in Advertising, Journalism, and Strategic Brand Communication, and a cross-department interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Communications & Media. The College recognizes the centrality of media to a democratic society, and our undergraduate and graduate programs prepare new generations of leaders committed to facilitating enlightened public decision making; providing fair, accurate, balanced, and contextual representation of all groups; advancing our understanding of the role and effects of the media in public and private life; and serving as industry innovators.

Our faculty work at the cutting edge of their fields, and benefit from being part of an interdisciplinary community of scholars both within and outside the College. Their research and creative endeavor crosses theory, methods, and practice, from traditional and digital communication and storytelling to the history and political economy of media industries to new frontiers such as social media, augmented and virtual reality, computational advertising, and data journalism.

The College is also fortunate to have Illinois Public Media (IPM) as part of the unit. As one of the most progressive and creative public broadcasting entities in the nation, IPM is a major asset to the campus and community. As befitting this status, it is recognized as a centrally-budgeted campus good.





STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The College of Media initiated strategic planning in September 2019 and focused early discussions on the creation of a comprehensive, consultative, and inclusive process. A robust series of conversations with stakeholders on topics central to our mission kicked off in January 2020 and included faculty-led town halls on undergraduate education; graduate education; research and creative endeavor; campus collaborations; public engagement; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and alumni engagement and industry connections. These were supplemented by small-group discussions within each academic and service unit in the College, as well as meetings with cross-unit groups of faculty, staff, students, and alumni, including the College Executive Committee and Administrative Council, junior faculty, the College academic leadership group, specialized faculty, the main office staff, ICR cohort representatives, the Undergraduate Advisory Board, and the Alumni Leadership Council.

From these discussions, a set of common themes emerged about our identity as a unit, our strategic priorities, and our aspirations. At a College Assembly

meeting in late February 2020, participants agreed by consensus to use these themes as the basis for the strategic plan. What follows is a presentation of the themes and an incomplete list of actionable items to enable the College to pursue and realize its goals. The planning stage of the process concluded in May 2020 with a final College Assembly meeting, and implementation will start in summer and fall of 2020.



THEMES AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The College community identified common themes and priorities that crossed units and disciplines, and defined Media at Illinois in each of the three pillars of our mission: education, research and creative endeavor, and public engagement.

I. Education

- We value the rigorous and personalized experience we offer for our majors, as well as programs and courses that open up the opportunities of a Media education to non-majors.
- We see our focus on experiential learning and openness to pedagogical experimentation as hallmarks of our undergraduate program.
- We want to enhance our ability to collaborate across department lines in curricular and co-curricular matters.
- We view graduate education as central to our past and to our future. In our doctoral degree program, we are exploring ideas about embracing interdisciplinarity while also leveraging the unique opportunities provided by individual departments. At the master's level, our departments are actively evaluating current and future offerings to respond to areas of emerging demand.
- We recognize the importance of meeting the needs of a diverse community to support and sustain an inclusive environment.

II. Research and Creative Endeavor

- We are committed to methodological pluralism, and to the value of media practice as research.
- We believe in the power of research and creative endeavor to address real-world problems and issues.
- We see clear ties between the work done by faculty in the College and the campus aspiration to “establish Illinois as the global leader in digital transformation at the service of society” (The Next 150, 2018-2023 University of Illinois Strategic Plan) and believe that, as a community of social scientists, humanists, creative artists, and practitioners, our faculty and graduate students can contribute to and help bridge discussions across the university.
- We perceive strong potential for research collaborations across campus and on an international scale, and would like to further raise the profile of the College of Media and its faculty in interdisciplinary and convergent research initiatives.

III. Engagement and Outreach

- We view public engagement as inextricably linked with experiential learning, and feel a special responsibility to the needs of Champaign-Urbana and downstate.
- We believe in the value of strong relationships with our alumni, and seek to engage them in new and meaningful ways.
- We see the potential for more cross-unit collaborations within the College, and want to create opportunities for faculty and staff to come together on a regular basis to brainstorm about new directions and to interact with campus service units around areas of shared interest.
- We perceive our engagement mission to include the translation, application, and communication of research to address society’s urgent need to navigate a complex media and information environment undergoing significant technological disruption.





ACTIONABLE STEPS, 2020-2025

To advance these strategic priorities, our faculty and staff have identified a series of actionable steps to take over the next five years. The first stage of our implementation phase will be to classify each of these steps as a short-term, medium-term, or long-term goal. We expect this list to grow as we encounter new opportunities and address challenges that come our way. Although our University community and the world find ourselves in uncertain times, we are confident that, with the energy, creativity, and commitment of those in the College will enable us to achieve these goals.

- Adopt (opt-in) yearly themes that bridge courses across departments in the College.
- Evaluate current platforms for student work and consider whether creation of new platforms would be desirable.
- Raise funds (from alumni or foundations) for an initiative/program/center in Media Leadership and Ethics—professors in residence, speakers from industry, distinguished alumni awards, faculty and student research projects, media literacy projects, pedagogical initiatives related to entrepreneurship and managerial strategies, etc.
- Deepen connections with IPM to provide unique opportunities for students in all of the College's majors.
- Develop ICR's capacity to serve as locus of information and programming about collaborative research opportunities that connect faculty within, across, and beyond the College.
- Seek to participate in campus-supported strategic faculty hiring initiatives.
- Establish a Dean's Fellow program to enable faculty to assume leadership roles on critical strategic initiatives and projects within the College, beginning with a Fellow to serve as the College's senior diversity officer.
- Explore opportunities for joint/dual degree programs with other campus units.

- Conduct an audit of college-level rules and requirements to ensure that we are not creating unnecessary and unintentional barriers to students' abilities to explore interests, dual/double/joint major, etc.
- Consider summer or winter break professional development programs for freshmen and sophomores that would make connections with alums.
- Create an opt-in system for managing relationships with alumni and connecting them with students and faculty.
- Consider professionally-oriented certificates, badges, etc. at the graduate level.
- Identify a one hour weekly timeslot where no classes meet or committee meetings are scheduled and use that time for a series where we invite in campus guests or discuss amongst ourselves initiatives related to our research, teaching, and engagement missions.
- Provide support to student groups related to college mission, and create a "council of leaders" from these groups.
- Offer further connection with and support to Illini Media.
- Pursue opportunities/collaborations to procure a screening room space to which the College would have regular access.
- Produce an ad campaign for the college and/or programs/units to raise awareness and attract students.
- Compile templates for travel-based experiential learning to standardize processes and allow students and faculty to plan ahead.
- Ensure that we provide a suite of opportunities that are accessible to all students, regardless of financial situation.
- Create initiatives that build a sense of community within the College.





CONCLUSION

The completion of our strategic planning process marks a beginning, not an end. The College of Media intends this document to be a living one that will guide our decision making over the years to come, as we continue the trajectory of excellence and innovation that has long been our hallmark.

The College of Media at Illinois is positioned to play a central role in addressing some of the most important questions of our times about the newly critical and

immersive role that media plays in shaping individuals' lives and the world in the 21st century. Through the work of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni, we seek to advance media literacy and expertise in all its social, technological, psychological, economic, ethical, and moral dimensions.