Approved by the Board of Trustees

March 17, 2022

**21**

Board Meeting

March 17, 2022

## ESTABLISH THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA,

## COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND ADMINISTRATION, SPRINGFIELD

**Action:** Establish the School of Communication and Media, College of Public

Affairs and Administration

**Funding:** No New Funding Required

The Interim Chancellor at the University of Illinois Springfield, and Vice President, University of Illinois System with the advice of the Springfield Senate recommends approval of a proposal from the College of Public Affairs and Administration to establish the School of Communication and Media.

Currently, the Department of Communication (COM) is housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) and offers a Master of Arts, Bachelor of Arts, and a minor in Communication. The Department of Public Affairs Reporting (PAR) is housed in the School of Politics and International Affairs in the College of Public Affairs and Administration (CPAA) and offers a Master of Arts in Public Affairs Reporting.

A component of the academic reorganization at the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS), this proposal seeks to move the Department of Communication from CLAS to CPAA and to combine the COM and PAR departments into a single administrative unit to be called the School of Communication and Media (SCM).

Communication is embraced at UIS as the act and/or the process of communicating from the perspectives of both interpersonal and mediated communication, while recognizing cultural influences upon both. Although the foci of the COM and PAR departments are varied, they are intertwined. Both departments currently work cooperatively to recognize how each area of study helps inform the other and how each program can best prepare students to succeed in their professional lives. Currently, several COM and PAR classes count toward either area of specialization, and courses in both interpersonal/organizational communication and mediated communication are required of COM and PAR students.

Despite this close academic and collegial relationship, the COM and PAR programs are currently housed in separate colleges and located in separate buildings, making it difficult for faculty and students to interact. Because many undergraduates in COM are exploring careers in journalism and the PAR graduate program has launched the careers of hundreds of journalists who work throughout the world, bringing both the COM and PAR programs together into a single unit is an efficient, and perhaps overdue, alignment. The proposed SCM will capitalize on the expertise of both programs, combine resources, and reduce administrative duplications while providing increased opportunities for students and faculty. In addition, the goals, values, and mission of the SCM align closely with those of the CPAA.

The creation of the SCM is expected to enhance the curricula of both the COM and PAR programs by bringing faculty together to share expertise. More closely-aligned collaboration between the programs is expected to launch new opportunities, such as the possibility of creating an undergraduate journalism degree for the COM department while establishing a formal pipeline program that will encourage high-performing COM undergraduates with an interest in journalism to enter the PAR master’s program. Although some PAR students currently take COM courses and a PAR faculty member has begun teaching courses in COM, a formal plan to share faculty between COM and PAR will broaden educational content to all students in the new SCM. The combination of programs will enhance the content of both of the current programs.

Finally, the school model will allow both programs to share facilities and resources to best utilize the current student newspaper and radio and media studio, as well as to enhance opportunities for growth through concentrated efforts. The SCM hopes a new sense of synergy will help grow its vision for developing various lab spaces, updating equipment, and expanding outreach through these spaces in creative ways to connect with the Springfield community.

The SCM will be comprised of a mix of nine full-time non-tenure, tenure-track, and tenured faculty.  To provide appropriate support and guidance of the Public Affairs Reporting graduate program, the Academic Program Coordinator will report to the School Director.

The creation of the SCM was voted on by the Curriculum Committees of both the CLAS and CPAA and is supported by the deans of both Colleges.

No additional funding is requested to establish the SCM. Additional costs associated with the formation of the School will be provided by administrative cost-savings that result from the overall academic reorganization.

The Board action recommended in this item complies in all material respects with applicable State and federal laws, University of Illinois *Statutes, The General Rules Concerning University Organization and Procedure*, and Board of Trustees policies and directives.

The Interim Executive Vice President and Vice President for Academic Affairs concurs with this recommendation. The University Senates Conference has indicated that no further Senate jurisdiction is involved.

The President of the University of Illinois System recommends approval. This action is subject to further review and approval by the Illinois Board of Higher Education.