

**ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY**

**BOARD OF
TRUSTEES**

Resolution No. 2024.02/08
Approval of B.A., B.S. in Sports
Communication

Resolution

Whereas, the Board of Trustees, as authorized by the Board of Trustees Governing Document, Section A, Government Statutes, Subsection 5, Reservation of Powers, has reserved to itself the final decision-making authority for the establishment of any new unit of instruction requiring approval by the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Trustees approves the proposal for degree granting authority for the B.A., B.S. in Sports Communication.

Whereas, the Board of Trustees, as authorized by the Board of Trustees Governing Document, Section A, Government Statutes, Subsection 5, Reservation of Powers, has reserved to itself the final decision-making authority for the establishment of any new unit of instruction requiring approval by the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Trustees approves the proposal for degree granting authority for the BA., B.S. in Sports Communication.

Board Action on:	_____	Postpone:	_____
Motion by:	_____	Amend:	_____
Second by:	_____	Disapprove:	_____
Vote:	Yeas: _____ Nays: _____	Approve:	_____

ATTEST: Board Action, February 16, 2024

Secretary / Chairperson

**Board of Trustees
Illinois State University
Approval of B.A., B.S. 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 sports brand manager, sports promotion (public relations or advertising), broadcasting, sports agent, blogger, and many others.

Research specifically on the growth of sports communication 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). More importantly, competing institutions offering successful sports communication degrees are attracting students away from Illinois State. Additionally, from our professional contacts in higher education, we know of examples of other successes, such as the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa that each has been tremendously successful with their newer sports communication programs (with some 200 students each) and, very importantly, have done so with a great many students from Illinois.

An increase in employer demand and a large number of relevant job postings indicate strong need for program graduates. The US Bureau of Labor Standards reports overall employment in entertainment and sports occupations is projected to grow 13 percent from 2021 to 2031, faster than the average for all occupations; this increase is expected to result in about 95,500 new jobs over the decade. More specifically, in the subcategories of *Entertainers and performers, sports and related workers* and *Media and communication workers* projected employment growth by 2031 is 34.1% and 40.6%, respectively. Within the state of Illinois projected employment growth is 8 percent by 2030 (more specifically, *Entertainers, Performers, and Sports Workers* has a projected employment growth of 14.83 percent by 2030 and *Media & Communication Workers* has a projected growth of 5.7%). This projected growth in these occupations signals a growing and lasting demand for competent entry-level (or better) higher-education graduates from programs in sports communication. The projected growth of occupations and the industry bodes well for Illinois higher-education graduates of sports communication programs. The opportunity for Illinois State to offer a new program in Sports Communication is both very timely and greatly needed.

The program will be administered by the School of Communication in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The program was developed in response to a high need in the state and many requests for such a program from prospective students. The program is expected to enroll up to 45-50 new students in its initial year, reaching an anticipated steady state of 250 students. Faculty teaching in the program will deliver the new program at its inception, with additional instructional capacity provided by the Office of the Provost as necessitated by enrollment growth. Existing courses can be used to deliver the program.

The curriculum will include 42 credit hours of Communication courses (27 hours of required core courses and 15 hours of elective courses).

The proposal was approved by the Academic Senate on December 6, 2023.