



College of Media

ADVANCING EXCELLENCE



Message from the Dean

As we embark on a new academic year, the College of Media is excited to launch a strategic planning process aligned with the University's Boldly Illinois framework that will guide our priorities and growth in the years ahead.

The Boldly Illinois values emphasize collaboration, inclusion, and empowerment, which have long defined our college community. These underlie the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and College of Media goals of fostering scholarship, discovery, and innovation; providing transformative learning experiences; making a visible and meaningful societal impact; and responsibly stewarding our resources.

Throughout the fall, faculty and staff are engaging in college-level planning, followed by department- and unit-level discussions in the spring. We'll consider a wide range of priorities in our research, education, and engagement missions, including possibilities for collaborative curricula with other units, the bolstering of our general education offerings, initiatives to support first-generation and transfer students, new directions for interdisciplinary research, and our centennial celebration in 2027.

The continued support and engagement of our alumni and donors are vital to our success. You inspire our students, strengthen our network, and help us tell the story of what a College of Media education makes possible. We look forward to sharing updates with you as our vision takes shape.

Thank you for being part of our community—and for helping us build a bold future.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy Sulkin".

Tracy Sulkin
Dean

Message from Advancement

We are always delighted to welcome alumni and friends back to campus, and we encourage you to visit and see firsthand the exciting updates to our teaching facilities. Recent upgrades to our learning spaces and equipment in Gregory Hall and at Richmond Studio reflect our commitment to innovation and excellence—and we'd love to show you around.

Much of this progress has been made possible through the generosity of individual donors. Philanthropic support has not only enhanced our programming but also helped us attract exceptional faculty, increase student enrollment, and inspire others to invest in our mission. These gifts have a ripple effect, creating opportunities that benefit our entire College of Media community.

Please read more about the generous gift from Rich and Leslie Frank for substantial improvements to Gregory Hall (page 2). Additionally, several donors have supported faculty-led international and domestic educational experiences (page 8), including funding for an award-winning documentary filmed in Sierra Leone (page 6) and a student trip to Washington, D.C., to meet with journalists. Because of donor support we also had several experts return to campus and work with our students.

We are deeply grateful for the impact our alumni and friends have made—and continue to make—on our college's growth and success. Your support fuels our future.

If you are inspired to work with us to continue creating transformative opportunities, it would be my pleasure to speak with you. You can call me at 217-333-0752 or email me at jhns@illinois.edu.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deanne Johnson".

Deanne Johnson
Senior Assistant Dean for Advancement

Advancing Excellence is an annual publication of the College of Media Office of Advancement at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

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To read the latest news, and the full versions of these stories, visit media.illinois.edu/news.

Questions? Email media-giving@illinois.edu.

*Cover: The Roger Ebert Center for Film Studies kicked off the new academic year with a welcome event and screening of the 2025 blockbuster hit *Sinners*, which was introduced by Ebert Fellows and their mentor Michael Phillips, former film critic for the Chicago Tribune. All Ebert Center events are free and open to the public. (Photos by Kris Modi, Mark L. Brandt Public Engagement Fellow for the Ebert Center.)*

FALL CLASSROOM SCENES



Students collaborate on advertising projects in ADV 333: Agency Experience.



Doctoral student Selene Kim gives a presentation to her peers in a small class of first-year PhD students in MDIA 571: Proseminar 1.



Alison Davis, senior lecturer of journalism, discusses tips for shooting B-roll footage with her JOUR 215: Multimedia Reporting class.



Students film a scene for MACS 370: Cinematography and Sound Design.



College of Media offers new online degree completion program: BA in Media

This new bachelor's degree is designed to remove barriers for non-traditional students across Illinois and beyond, providing an accessible, high-quality education that empowers graduates to contribute meaningfully to their communities and industries. Learn more:

go.illinois.edu/MediaOnline

GIFTS IN ACTION

Gregory Hall gets glow-up throughout lower level thanks to \$2.5M gift from Richard and Leslie Frank

Thanks to a \$2.5 million gift from Richard and Leslie Frank in 2024—who endowed the Richard and Leslie Frank Center for Leadership and Innovation in Media in 2020 and enabled the renovation of Richmond Studio—exciting upgrades in the lower level of Gregory Hall began in Spring 2025. This will result in the creation of a new hybrid/flexible, state-of-the-art classroom, which will open in Spring 2026, and a renovated main corridor, plus updated flooring throughout, including in faculty offices. See photos depicting the original spaces, the renovation process, and the architectural renderings.

Lower-Level Corridor



Gregory Hall lower-level corridor before renovations.



Lights installed and floor removed.



Crown molding details.



New carpet was installed in faculty offices. New doors with uniform nameplates will be added by winter break.



Corridor renovations were completed before the first day of classes. New digital signage will be installed this spring.

Room 1



Rooms 1, 2, and 3 on the east wing were two smaller classrooms and a faculty office.



Renovations included knocking down walls to combine Rooms 1, 2, and 3. Substantial completion is scheduled for mid-December.



A new hybrid/flexible, state-of-the-art classroom, pictured in this architectural rendering, will open this spring.



Patricia Aufderheide, University Professor of Communication Studies at American University, engages with the audience during the 2024 Ebert Lecture. She presented “Documentaries on the Frontlines of Democracy: How Kartemquin’s Storytelling Works for Stronger Publics.”

Media studies scholar Denise Bielby inspired to support Ebert Center through blended gift

It’s no surprise that renowned media studies scholar and two-time University of Illinois alum Denise Bielby (BS ’71, MA ’72, ACES), Distinguished Professor of Sociology, Emerita, at the University of California, Santa Barbara, was interested in fellow alum Roger Ebert’s work and helping preserve his legacy.

Bielby, whose research focuses on the culture-producing industries of film and television, has had a long appreciation for the scholarly value that the late Roger Ebert, Pulitzer Prize-winning film critic and journalism alum, brought to film criticism.

As a major donor to the Roger Ebert Center for Film Studies—which launched in 2022 with a special video message from Martin Scorsese—Bielby offered a blended gift, which includes a multi-year current use cash gift as well as deferred estate gifts.

Bielby said it was important to support the research of faculty in the College of Media, and the training of their graduate and undergraduate students.

“Denise Bielby’s generosity is a distinct example of a transformative gift,” said Tracy Sulkin, dean of the College of Media. “The Ebert Center cements the College of Media as a supportive and enriching destination for academics pursuing film studies.”

After attending Ebertfest regularly, Bielby observed that “Roger’s thematic programming for each festival was not only intriguing, it was culturally important, and over time the scholarly value of that came into focus and relevant to how scholars understand and analyze the social value of film.”

Bielby’s own research on media fandom developed as an outgrowth to her research on the film industry.

“Because Hollywood produces culture through its products, I wanted to better understand the process of audience reception that made media so engaging,” she said. She has co-authored two books, *Global TV: Exporting Television and Culture in the World Market* (2008) and *Soap Fans: Pursuing Pleasure and Making Meaning in Everyday Life* (1995).

Journalism alumna Marilyn Preston supports well-being initiatives for College of Media students

From her standing desk at her home office in Northern California, Marilyn Preston (BS ’67, journalism)—journalist, healthy lifestyle expert, and Emmy-winning TV producer—spoke with zeal about the role health and wellness has played in her life and why she’s inspired to share her passion with students in the College of Media.

“Media is so changed now as a profession. It’s a high-risk, high-stress profession that you have to train for in a way that just didn’t exist before,” Preston said. “If journalism students can learn these valuable self-care skills in college, calming their minds and strengthening their ability to focus and perform under pressure, they can benefit and thrive for the rest of their life.”

Preston’s generous support of a multi-year series on wellness and self-care is aimed at helping nurture students while on campus and prepare them for a career in a demanding field that can take a physical and emotional toll on its professionals.

Deadlines, covering traumatic events, and avoiding burnout are just a few of the stressors a journalist may face throughout their career.

So far, two wellness events have been organized through the Richard and Leslie Frank Center for Leadership and Innovation in Media—a well-being open house for students in Spring 2024 and a breath workshop and presentation with James Nestor, author of *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art*, in Fall 2024.

Another wellness event for Media students is planned for this spring, focusing on the power of nasal breathing and stress reduction. College of Media faculty and staff are also welcome at these events.

“I’m just so grateful that the College of Media sees the value of self-care as a way to deal with anxiety in these destabilizing times. I hope to see the self-care program grow and pick up steam. It’s a great new initiative and I’m excited to see where it goes,” she said.

Preston is a verifiable expert when it comes to the subject of health and personal well-being.

She’s the creator of *Energy Express*, America’s longest-running syndicated fitness column that ran for 43 years, reaching millions of newspaper readers across the country. She’s had three books published, with her most recent deemed an Amazon best-seller.

She also created, wrote, and produced the *Energy Express* TV series beginning in the 1990s that ran in 120 cities, won two Emmys, and a Women’s Sports Foundation award.



—Kelly Youngblood

RESEARCH IN MEDIA

Media literacy research and engagement initiatives address societal challenges

Faculty and graduate students across the College are pursuing a range of activities aimed at understanding challenges to media literacy and developing interventions to improve it. Recent activities include:

- A team including Michelle Nelson, professor of advertising, Amanda Ciafone, associate professor of media and cinema studies, Stephanie Craft, professor of journalism, ICR doctoral student Gillian Paxton, and undergraduate student Maaïke Niekerk, is **investigating older adults' media use, media literacy, and the role of media in fostering social connection**. The research seeks to understand how older adults use media across a broad range of platforms and tools, including generative AI, and the challenges they face in doing so. The aim is to explore how improving media literacy may help them better navigate the media environment to meet their social and information needs. The study involves interviews with those who offer help and instruction regarding media and technology use through senior centers, public libraries, park districts and the like, and focus groups with older adults. This project is funded by a College of Media seed grant.

- Related to this project, Ciafone was awarded funding to **organize media and digital literacy workshops with European scholars and advocates** to advance research, education, and transatlantic dialogue on older age and media literacy under the Jean Monnet Center of Excellence grant awarded to the European Union Center at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Ciafone said Europe has more rapid “demographic aging,” where a population’s average age increases, than the United States and robust models for media literacy policy and education.

- As part of its mission to bolster research in media literacy, **the College of Media hosts a regular gathering of faculty across campus to discuss research in media literacy across disciplines and to identify potential opportunities for collaboration**. These conversations have so far included faculty in the College of Fine & Applied Arts, University Library, School of Information Sciences, College of Education, and College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

- The Initiative for Media Education Inquiry and Action, a collaboration between the College of Media and College of Education, is **developing a media literacy micro-credential for teachers**. IMEDIA was created in 2021 to help teachers in Illinois fulfill the mandate of a state law requiring media literacy instruction in public high schools. IMEDIA has offered in-person workshops for teachers to help them incorporate media literacy into their current teaching. The aim of the micro-credential is to broaden the reach of workshops by making the instruction and resources available online in a way that also offers teachers the opportunity to add a media literacy credential to their licenses.

- A research study conducted by Nelson, ICR doctoral student Sakshi Bhalla, and Michael Spikes, co-founder of the Illinois Media Literacy Coalition, emerged from IMEDIA’s teacher workshops. The study, which included interviews with 20 educators from across the state of Illinois about the nature and challenges of media literacy education in their schools, **found several digital divides that undermine the efficacy of state-mandated media literacy instruction in Illinois high schools**. Their findings were published in the *Journal of Media Literacy Education*.

- IMEDIA also is **updating its eText, *MEdia Matters***, which is currently used in a variety of introductory undergraduate courses. The text will be a key resource for teachers pursuing the micro-credential and will be freely available for use in their classrooms.

- Craft is part of a team comprising faculty from five universities engaged in a **long-term research initiative to build a model of news literacy behavior that will inform efforts to increase people’s resistance to misinformation**. The team has developed a widely used measure of news literacy knowledge and most recently has been investigating how greater news literacy knowledge translates into better news consumption behaviors reflecting that greater knowledge. The most recent study was presented in August at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

I on the Media: Faculty share insights on current topics in the news

What have you learned about artificial intelligence so far through your research?

We are only beginning to gather empirical evidence about how relationships [with AI] form, what they mean, and how they might shape human-to-human communication. AI’s conversational design fundamentally changes how people use and think about technology, creating opportunities but also raising complex questions about boundaries, responsibility, and human well-being.



Mike Yao, professor of digital media

KPop Demon Hunters became a global phenomenon. Does its success show a shift in who’s shaping pop culture today?

Its success goes beyond viewership numbers. It illustrates how the center of popular culture has expanded. What feels ordinary and familiar to one community may appear fresh and captivating to another, and this interplay of familiarity and novelty has become a powerful force in shaping global culture.



Sang-Hwa Oh, associate professor of advertising

What should be considered before using AI chatbots?

Overuse and emotional overdependence are growing concerns. Delegating cognitive tasks to AI may impair critical thinking, and outsourcing emotions and empathy may hinder the development of interpersonal skills. We have to rely on the companies behind these tools to protect our data and not use the data to train their algorithms or try to manipulate us.



Ewa Maslowska, associate professor of advertising

FACULTY & STUDENT UPDATES

Faculty promotions and leadership appointments announced

This fall, the College of Media announces two new department heads, seven faculty promotions, and one new faculty member

In the **Charles H. Sandage Department of Advertising**, Sang-Hwa Oh has been promoted to associate professor with indefinite tenure. Carrie Wilson-Brown has been promoted to senior lecturer. Penne Heede joins the department as a new lecturer.

In the **Department of Journalism**, Professor Jeffrey Magee has been named interim head. He previously served in the College of Media as associate dean for academic affairs from 2019 to 2022. Alison Davis and Josh Heuman have both been promoted to senior lecturer.

In the **Department of Media & Cinema Studies**, Professor James Hay has been named interim head. Anita Say Chan has

been promoted to full professor. Jenny Oyallon-Koloski has been promoted to associate professor with indefinite tenure. Josh Heuman, Jonathan Knipp, and Carrie Wilson-Brown have each been promoted to senior lecturer.

In the **Institute of Communications Research**, Amanda Ciafone, associate professor of media and cinema studies, will serve as interim director of graduate studies for Fall 2025. Derek Long, associate professor of media and cinema studies, will return as director of graduate studies in Spring 2026.

Continuing for a second term within the **college administration**, Jason P. Chambers, professor of advertising, will serve as associate dean for access and engagement, and Stephanie Craft, professor of journalism, will serve as associate dean for academic and faculty affairs.

New lecturer in advertising

Penne Heede, a 30-year veteran in the ad industry, brings her agency expertise to the classroom this fall as a new lecturer in the Charles H. Sandage Department of Advertising. Heede (MS '23, strategic brand communication) is teaching undergraduate and graduate classes including Advertising Design and Direction, Experiential Branding, and Creativity: Concept and Ideation.



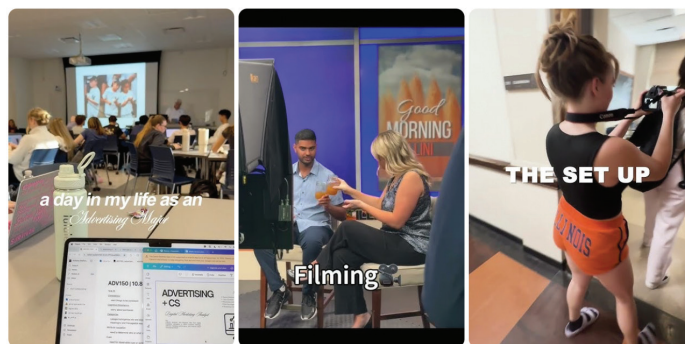
Heede started her career with a technical degree in graphic design and worked her way up to creative and strategy director for an elite ad agency in Denver, Colorado, before working towards a formal education in branding to open the door to a career in post-secondary teaching.



(Photo by Dwayne Banks Jr., photography intern.)

Digital media interns create videos about college experiences

Follow along this semester as our talented College of Media digital media interns take you behind the scenes of student life. Featuring advertising, journalism, and media and cinema studies, get an inside look at what it's like to be a student today, from classes to clubs, campus vibes, and more! Watch new videos each week on YouTube Shorts (youtube.com/@MediaAtIllinois) or Instagram Reels (instagram.com/mediaatillinois).



A Day in the Life of an Advertising Student

Behind the Scenes of a Live Broadcast

The Set Up vs The Shot

Front row: Diana Zhang, journalism; Leya Buena, media and cinema studies; Laila Hinton, advertising; Sydney Young, media and cinema studies

Back row: Anthony Merlo, advertising; Elliot Casey, journalism; Isaiah Rohn, media and cinema studies

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

BRANT HOUSTON, Knight Chair Professor in Investigative and Enterprise Reporting in the Department of Journalism, was honored at the Investigative Reporters & Editors 50th Anniversary Gala in September. He was recognized for his impact on the industry during the 1980s for his contributions to “The Emergence of Data and Consumer Investigations.” The event raised \$1.5 million for journalism training. Co-chairs of the event were Paul Sagan, chair of ProPublica; AG Sulzberger, publisher of *The New York Times*; and Judy Woodruff, senior correspondent at *PBS NewsHour*.



Brant Houston, left, is honored with awardees Lea Thompson and James B. Steele (far right), with host Scott Pelley, correspondent for *60 Minutes*.

(Photo by Nathalie Schueller)

MARISA PEACOCK, senior lecturer of advertising, won both a Campus Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching and a Student Success Impact Award. Campus Awards for Excellence in Instruction, sponsored by the Office of the Provost, are given for sustained excellence and innovation in undergraduate and graduate teaching, undergraduate and graduate advising and mentoring, online teaching, and research guidance. The Student Success Impact Award recognizes faculty and staff who have made a lasting difference in the lives of Illinois students, given to those who were mentioned 10 or more times in the Chancellor’s Senior Survey.



Marisa Peacock is congratulated by Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost John Coleman.

LEONA YI-FAN SU, associate professor of advertising, was selected by the Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Institute for the 2025-26 Emerging Research Leaders Academy. The ERLA allows mid-career researchers to refine their goals, make connections, and develop skills to lead collaborative, multi-investigator research teams, and pursue center-level or large-scale, collaborative research funding.



Su was also selected to become the next Charles H. Sandage Scholar in Advertising Research for 2025-27. She was chosen based on her proposal, “Digital marketing in the agricultural sector, with emphasis on how farms can leverage emerging technologies such as social media and artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance advertising and marketing effectiveness.”

Students in Media Entrepreneurship course win *Graphic Design USA* magazine’s American Digital Design Award

Four students in the Spring 2025 ADV 409: Media Entrepreneurship course won 2025 American Digital Design Awards presented by *Graphic Design USA* magazine.

Alessandra Lopez, Macy Miller, Ben Riseman, and Emmanuel Tinajero, all 2025 graduates in advertising, were seniors at the time of the class. The students created a comprehensive pitch deck for a new mobile app they conceptualized called Bad St!tch, which lets users share the ways they upcycle their clothes.

Terry Kasdan, adjunct lecturer in advertising who teaches ADV 409, said the team won the award in the student work category for Bad St!tch’s brand identity and user interface, which they developed in class.

Journalism students win multiple industry awards

Students were recognized for their outstanding work in the 2024-25 Hearst Journalism Awards Program. Layli Nazarova won first place and a \$10,000 scholarship in Hearst’s National Audio Championship. Madison Holcomb was named a finalist and won a scholarship for Hearst’s National Writing Championship. A six-student team won first place in the Multimedia Digital News/Enterprise Team category. Journalism students Maggie Knutte, Nathan Gonzalez, Piper Pascarella, Nour Longi, and Faith Lee, and agricultural communications student Elena Cleary earned first place and a scholarship for a documentary on period poverty filmed in Sierra Leone.

En Vivo Contigo, the first all-Spanish news broadcast on the student-run UI7 Newsroom, won first place for the Ñ Award from the National Association of Hispanic Journalists in the category of Student Broadcast Journalism. The segment featured an interview conducted by Emilio Reyes.

Students from the UI7 Newsroom were also recognized for their outstanding work by the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences Mid-America Chapter, winning two Crystal Pillar awards. Best Non-Fiction Longform for “A.I. Uncovered” was produced by Piper Pascarella. Best Sports Program for “Power Play” was produced by John Shay and Andrew Burkey.

2025 MEDIA ALUMNI AWARD WINNERS

Murray Kalis receives Distinguished Alumni Award

For his outstanding career accomplishments and generous monetary support of advertising students, Murray Kalis (BS '61) was recognized by the College of Media with the 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award.

Kalis, whose work has taken him across the world and back, heading his own agency, and serving as chair of the largest global network of independent agencies, has experienced some remarkable moments throughout his 50 years (and counting) in advertising.

He's helped numerous companies build their brands, including United Airlines, Nestle, KFC, Wetzel's Pretzels, Hormel Foods, and Starbucks Coffee. Most recently, a former client brought him in as a strategic investor for Dave's Hot Chicken, where he is creating TV and social media advertising that has helped it grow to over 300 restaurants, and just begun international expansion.

In 2020, he established the Murray Kalis Award for Creativity in Advertising to provide monetary gifts to advertising students judged for creative excellence. Students who demonstrate smart positioning, outstanding creative concepts, strong execution, and a "wow" factor receive awards for Best Single Ad, Best Campaign, and Best Portfolio.

"The response to the Award for Creativity in Advertising has been beyond what I anticipated," Kalis said. "The students are thrilled to express creative ideas. And the questions I get when I teach are insightful, mature, and often surprising."

"Murray Kalis has charted an exciting career in advertising and shares his wealth of experience, advice, and encouragement with our students," said Dean Tracy Sulkin. "The College of Media appreciates the time he devotes to our classes—as well as his advocacy of creativity through the award that he established—and we are proud to honor him with the 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award."



Stephanie Lulay receives Emerging Leader Award

Stephanie Lulay's (BS '08, journalism) start-up venture, Block Club Chicago—whose mission is to deliver reliable, nonpartisan, and essential coverage of Chicago's diverse neighborhoods—has become a news staple for readers throughout the city since its founding in 2018.

Lulay serves as executive editor and co-founder of the award-winning newsroom, which has 18,000 paid subscribers, more than 130,000 newsletter subscribers, and an average of 2.3 million pageviews a month. Over seven years, the newsroom has grown from a staff of eight reporters and editors to a staff of 39. Lulay credits her journalism education at Illinois as a key to her success.

"The [University of Illinois] gave me the problem-solving skills and the confidence I needed to succeed in this industry," she said.

In honor of her career accomplishments and her continued engagement as an alum, Lulay was chosen as the winner of the 2025 College of Media Emerging Leader Award.

"The College of Media is pleased to award Stephanie Lulay as our 2025 Emerging Leader for her innovative and entrepreneurial path in the journalism industry, along with her enthusiasm for sharing her experiences with our students and alumni," said Dean Tracy Sulkin. "Stephanie is an alum who exemplifies, in an ever-changing media landscape, how to enhance the lives of people in our state."

Lulay calls Block Club Chicago a "freemium site"—most stories are accessible for free. Their reporter model is different from traditional newspapers, too. Rather than having beats, reporters are assigned to neighborhoods, tasked with covering whatever news is most important that day. Lulay says their "big bet" is when they put reporters on the ground every day, it will lead to a more accurate portrayal of the neighborhoods in Chicago and build reader trust.

—Kelly Youngblood



Photo Highlights



The College of Media celebrated Grad Student Appreciation Week in April, culminating with a pizza party. The annual campuswide event honors graduate students' contributions and accomplishments.



Students met Gus Johnson (center), lead college football and basketball play-by-play announcer at FOX Sports, during a Frank Center event, which was followed by an interview on *Illini Sports Night*.



Deanne Johnson, senior assistant dean for advancement, with Sean Evans (BS '08, journalism), host of *Hot Ones*, during the Fighting Illini's game against Ohio State.



Media students on a Scandinavian study abroad trip, led by advertising faculty, visited corporate headquarters of companies like LEGO, IKEA, and H&M to understand their global marketing strategies.



Scott Bukatman, professor of film and media studies at Stanford University, presented the keynote at the Ebert Symposium. The theme was "Artificial Intelligence Imagined and Realized."



Media and cinema studies senior Francisco Albarran shows the plank of wood signed by actor Bryan Cranston, whom he met during an internship with Rantoul-based Flyover Film Studios. He helped build scenes for the film *Chili Finger*.



Annie Crawley (BS '90, journalism), at right, premiered her film *The Island of the Shark: Guardians of Malpelo* during Homecoming, where she won an Alumni Association Illini Comeback Award. Following the screening, she joined Alison Davis, senior lecturer of journalism, for a Q&A.



Freshmen in advertising and computer science + advertising took a group photo with their branded T-shirts during Meet Media, a welcome event for new students on the South Quad.

Year-End Charitable Giving Considerations

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act legislation (H.R.1) signed in 2025 enacts a number of modifications including some highlighted below on how charitable contributions are treated for federal income tax purposes. Many of these changes start in the tax year beginning January 1, 2026.

Now is a great time to consult with your tax, estate, or financial advisor to determine tax-smart strategies for your 2025 College of Media giving.

1. Giving from your IRA remains a tax-smart way to give to the College of Media

IRA owners age 70½ and older can still make qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) from their IRA directly to a qualified charity (\$108,000 max per individual IRA owner). These gifts may count toward your required minimum distribution (RMD), if one applies, and are excluded from taxable income.

2. New limit for top earners

Currently, top earners get a 37-cent tax benefit for every \$1 deducted. Starting in 2026, that drops to 35 cents. If you are in the top tax bracket, consider giving more this year to avoid losing tax benefits next year.

3. New floor for itemizers

You will need to give at least 0.5% of your adjusted gross income (AGI) to claim a charitable deduction. Consider maximizing your giving in 2025 before the new rule takes effect.

4. Tax benefit for non-itemizers

Even if you don't itemize, beginning in tax year 2026 you can deduct up to **\$1,000** (single filers) or **\$2,000** (married couples). Note: Gifts to donor-advised funds are excluded.

Visit uif.uillinois.myplannedgift.org/new-tax-law to learn more or contact Deanne Johnson, senior assistant dean for advancement, at 217-333-0752 or jhns@uillinois.edu; or Judy Schneider, UIF director of gift planning, at 217-244-3351 or judiths@uif.uillinois.edu.

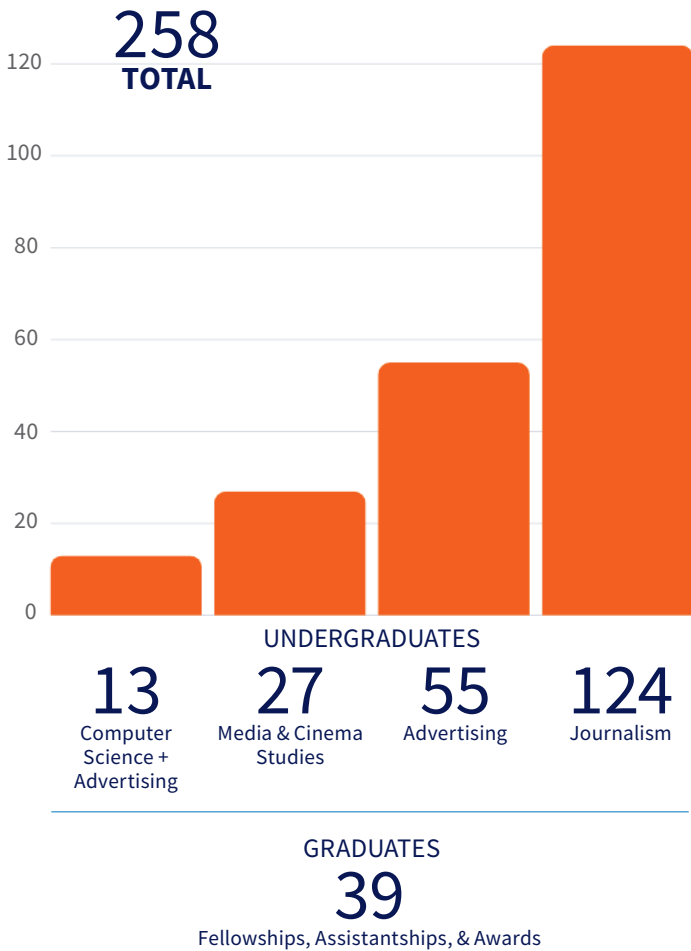
The University of Illinois Foundation is the official gift-receiving arm of the University of Illinois and is a 501 (c) 3 charitable organization with EIN 37-6006007. UIF does not provide tax, legal, or accounting advice. You should consult your own tax, legal, and accounting advisors before engaging in any transaction.

Media by the Numbers

Thanks to the generous support of our College of Media donors, we awarded \$12,550 more in scholarships in FY25 than FY24 and increased our number of awards by 12%. Our donors championed faculty support; student access and opportunities such as experiential learning trips, industry immersions, and internships; support for our Centers; and innovation in Media research and collaborations. See our FY25 donors at media.illinois.edu/donors.



SCHOLARSHIPS, INTERNSHIP SUPPORT, FELLOWSHIPS, AND AWARDS FY25



NEW BUSINESS FY25

Including new gifts, pledges, grants, and bequests

\$2,991,741	46
Amount of gifts	First-time donors
346	534
Number of donors	Number of gifts



SCHOLARSHIP STATS FY25

\$580,100	
Amount of scholarships awarded by the College of Media	
\$2,977	\$2,566
Average College of Media award package for first-years	Average College of Media award package for sophomores, juniors, and seniors



SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS

689	159
First-year and transfer student applicants	Continuing student applicants
27.6%	21%
First-year students who received scholarships	Eligible undergraduate applicants (first-years through seniors) supported through available funding



STUDENT STATS

1,185	10.1%
Undergraduate and graduate students	International undergraduate students
26.7%	\$36,642
First-generation undergraduate students	Yearly cost of attendance for a student taking 16 credit hours as an Illinois resident



MAKE A GIFT

To learn more about giving to the College of Media, please contact the Office of Advancement at 217-244-5466 or media-giving@illinois.edu. You can make a gift online by visiting go.media.illinois.edu/give or for instructions to mail a check, visit uif.illinois.edu/giving and click Mail.

COLLEGE OF MEDIA

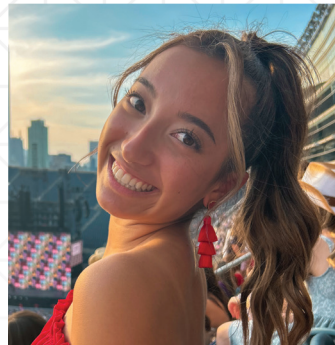
119 GREGORY HALL
810 S. WRIGHT ST.
URBANA, IL 61801

Thank you from our students



"From participating in the Scandinavian Brand Immersion Program this summer to being a student leader in the American Advertising Federation at Illinois, being a student in the College of Media has provided me with a wealth of enriching experiences. Thank you for your support and commitment to helping College of Media students achieve their goals."

—Odi,
Advertising



"My positive college experience would not have been possible without this scholarship. This award has allowed me to make the most of my time at the University of Illinois by alleviating some of the financial stress that comes with being a college student. The career I want to pursue after graduation lies in the data subsector of computer science."

—Megan,
Computer Science + Advertising



"I appreciate your generosity in taking the financial aspect of my college journey off my plate. I was able to dive right into the field that I am studying. I spoke to some of the Illinois football players during my first semester and then enjoyed writing a story on the Illinois basketball team's season for class. I am excited to see what comes next for me in my academic career."

—David,
Journalism



"This scholarship means a great deal to me and my family, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity it gives me to pursue my goals in media and film. I am incredibly proud to be part of the University of Illinois and the College of Media, and I look forward to representing the values and spirit of this community throughout my college career."

—Nevin,
Media & Cinema Studies