



Master's Program in Communication

Incoming Master's Student Profiles

Fall 2025

[Updated August 2025]

Kuburat “Adeola” Ayinde



My Name is Ayinde K. Adeola. I am from Nigeria and hold a Bachelor's degree in Mass Communication and Media Technology. My undergraduate studies provided me with a strong foundation in both the theoretical and practical aspects of mass media, including radio and television production. Over time, I have developed a keen interest in understanding how mass media can be used as a tool for societal development particularly through media advocacy, media effects, campaign strategy, media management, and production. I look forward to exploring innovative ways in which both new media (social media) and traditional media platforms (TV, radio, and print) can promote active participation in economic development, environmental sustainability, and societal growth among citizens within their communities.

I also have a growing interest in public relations and am excited to be joining the Communication Department at ISU. I look forward to deepening my research and learning under the guidance of excellent faculty members.

I enjoy engaging in discussions, teamwork, creative work, and collaboration. Beyond academics, I also enjoy organizing events, listening to music, and watching movies.

Gwynneth Boynton



Hi everyone! My name is Gwynneth, but I do go by Gwynn or G as well. I graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in May of 2024 with my bachelor's in interdisciplinary psychology and communications, and I am incredibly excited to be starting here at ISU this Fall. I took a gap year in between my bachelor's and master's to work full-time and truly cannot wait to be a student again.

For some background on me, I spent the first half of my life in St. Peters, Missouri but moved to Dekalb, IL when I was 10 and have called it home ever since. My main interests in communications revolve around interdisciplinary and family communication, but I am eager to learn about more professional opportunities in the field throughout my Marketing Graduate Assistantship with ISU's Campus Recreation department. In my free time I love to read, spend time with my dog & cats, play pickleball with my fiancé and watch a good show.

Katie Fisher



I grew up in rural northwestern Illinois and chose to stay in Bloomington-Normal after I earned a degree in English—Publishing Studies from Illinois State University. I am eager to continue my studies as a part-time student in the School of Communication as I look forward to collaborating with peers and faculty to grow my knowledge and experiences. This program excites me due to its generalist approach, meaning I can explore interests such as interpersonal communication, organizational communication, mass media, and rhetoric. If I am not on campus, you will probably find me reading a book, walking Constitution Trail, or listening to an audiobook while walking Constitutional Trail.

Prem Ganesan



I am from Plymouth, Minnesota where I spent the first 18 years of my life and then moved to Fairfax, Virginia to Pursue a B.A. in Economics at George Mason University. While in undergrad I was heavily involved with the GMU Forensics team where I fostered my skills and knowledge in performance, rhetoric, research, and public speaking. Consequently, I was drawn to ISU for the incredible communications department and how willing they are to help me achieve my goals; as well as to work with the brilliant minds of ISU's speech team. I am eager to further my understanding of organizational comm and public relations while studying under amazing faculty. In my free time you would most likely catch me reading and/or writing poetry, playing Catan, and listening to Doechi.

Isabel "Izzy" Gimm



I am from a small town called Liberty near Quincy, IL. I graduated from Monmouth College in May with a B.A. in Communication Studies and Public Relations along with minors in Marketing and Journalism. My areas of interest include public relations and reputation management, the line between free speech and hate speech, and relationship building. I was a speech tutor at Monmouth, and I am excited to continue helping students find confidence and success in public speaking. I am currently a corporate intern at Caterpillar and will continue working part-time with them through the graduate school. Post-grad, I aspire to work corporate before pursuing a doctorate and becoming a professor. I love to meet new people, read, be outside, and travel. I am so excited to begin this journey!

Grace Gross



I am from Cottage Hills, IL, which is a small town near St. Louis. I graduated from McKendree University in May 2025 with my bachelor's in human communication studies. During my time at McKendree I wore many hats: Editor-in-Chief of the student newspaper, Spirit of McKendree Color Guard Captain, Vice President of the Young Feminists group and many more. I cannot wait to begin the next step to further my education at Illinois State University.

Breck Holtz



I'm Breck (she/her), and I'm from a small town in southern Missouri. I received my Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication (emphasis in Interpersonal & Family) from the University of Missouri this past spring as well as a minor in Sociology and a minor in Human Development/Family Sciences, and I'm excited to be joining the RedBird family! I'm very passionate about minority and disability communication, the intersectionality of identities in storytelling and sense-making, and creating and fostering positive mental health communication. I'm likely to talk your ear off about my passions and my ongoing research, as well as my countless

ideas for my thesis. If I'm not doing research, I'm likely spending time with my two dogs, crocheting, or playing video games. I'm hoping to pursue my PhD post-graduation to become a professor and continue to nurture my academic aspirations.

Ben Howell



I am from Coal City, Illinois and graduated in May 2025 from ISU with a bachelor's in mass media and minor in sociology. During undergrad, I spent time at both radio stations on campus, WZND and WGLT, where I found a passion for communication and journalism. My assistantship will be with WGLT, where I practice reporting and newscasting on all events Bloomington-Normal. My research interests are in news and journalism, especially with media literacy and the ways the public interacts with and digests news and current events. In my free time, I am a total nerd for video games, tv and movies, and I also enjoy cooking and spending time with my friends. Feel free to ask about my cat, Bug.

Gina Lavazza



I Long, long ago (way back in 1993), I graduated from Elgin High School and made my way to California for college. After a couple of years at the University of California, Santa Barbara, I felt I missed city life and transferred to San Francisco State University (what was I thinking, Santa Barbara is sooo amazing!). Needless to say, I did love San Francisco too, and I graduated from SFSU with a major in Cinema and a minor in journalism (with a focus on photojournalism- which is still one of my great loves).

After college, I planned on going to grad school for International Relations. I was accepted to Seton Hall, but I delayed my start due to my mother being diagnosed with cancer. I stayed home with my mom for 9 months until she passed, after which, I took off to Italy, where I planned on working for the summer before going back and finally starting grad school. Well, a summer turned into 9 years. I met my now husband, got married, and my firstborn was born in Milan. While in Italy, I taught English at a language school, at a day care, and then at an elementary and junior high school. A parent of one of my students owned a Press Office (which in Italy is basically a Media Relations company), and ended up hiring me to work with their English-speaking international clients. I absolutely loved that job, and was sad to leave it when my husband and I made the decision to move back here, to the good ole' US of A.

Fast forward to now... I am currently the Director of Communications for District 87. When I moved back, I started substitute teaching (I was pregnant with my second) and eventually took a job in the office at Sheridan School. I worked at Sheridan, then at Oakland and eventually found my way to my current position. I am so excited to start this grad program- I am consistently learning and can't wait to see what I can bring from the classroom into my role at District 87!

Ilaria Noonan



My name is Ilaria Noonan, and I am from Wake Forest, North Carolina. I graduated from East Carolina University with degrees in both English and Public Relations and a minor in philosophy this past spring! My research focus has been primarily on organizational and crisis communication. My undergraduate thesis is an analysis of the 2021 Southwest flight crisis utilizing rhetorical arena theory. Toward the end of the school year and over the summer, however, my focus has shifted slightly as I have worked on projects focusing on Generative AI in social change organizations as well as media analysis and semantics.

I am very passionate about non-profit and university-centered work. Working with admissions and student engagement has always been a big part of my academic career. This has fostered a great interest in understanding the student experience and bettering it for all populations. My hope is that through the Graduate Teaching Assistantship, I will be able to engage with students and understand how to enhance the college experience.

In my free time, I am an avid reader, lover of fun coffees and sodas, and beach day enthusiast!

Elvis Kofi Otoo



My name is Elvis Kofi Otoo, and I am honored to be joining the School of Communication as a graduate student and teaching assistant. I come from Ghana, where I earned my Bachelor's degree in Communication Studies from the University of Cape Coast. I graduated in December 2024 as the Best Graduating Student in Journalism, and I also had the opportunity to serve as a Teaching Assistant in the Department of Communication Studies. That experience sparked a deep interest in academic mentorship and helped shape my desire to further my education and research in communication.

My current academic focus lies in exploring how intercultural communication and technology can work together to strengthen environmental awareness campaigns. I believe that when we merge cultural understanding with innovative communication tools, we can create campaigns that go beyond information-sharing to truly influence behaviors and empower communities. At Illinois State University, I look forward to developing research that centers diverse voices, promotes sustainability, and builds bridges between policy, culture, and public engagement. Beyond academics, I have led international communication projects through AIESEC, where I have worked with 8 different countries from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, and co-founded Impact 360, a youth-led environmental advocacy under AIESEC in UCC in Ghana. These experiences have reinforced my belief in the power of communication to drive social and environmental impact across borders.

I am excited to contribute to the School of Communication and to learn from the faculty, staff, and fellow students who make this community so dynamic. Thank you for the warm welcome.

Dominic Pantano



I am from Naperville, IL, I earned my bachelor's degree in Organizational Leadership from Illinois State University in May 2025. Throughout my undergraduate experience, I developed a strong interest in how effective communication can cultivate effective leadership. I am excited to continue my education in the masters program to work alongside faculty and peers. In my free time, I enjoy watching movies especially horror and comedy's, spending time with friends and family.

Kayla Piper



Hi my name is Kayla Piper! I am from the Peoria area, specifically from the small town of Dunlap, IL. I went to undergraduate at Illinois College and I double majored in psychology and communication. I'm still figuring out my interest and how to incorporate communication, psychology, and photography all together. In my free time I love to travel and take photos. I have studied abroad in Northern Ireland and my favorite national park is Glacier National Park in Montana. I can't wait to meet everyone and I can't wait to teach and learn more while at ISU!

Noah Simon



My name is Noah Simon, and I am a recent graduate of Illinois State University, where I earned a Bachelor of Science in Organizational Leadership in May 2025. During my time at ISU, I interned with the athletics department and the news and sports department at WZND radio.

I am currently a graduate assistant for Human Resources, focusing on learning and development. I am deeply passionate about sports communication and believe in its power to foster growth and development in others. My career goal is to work in the sports communication field, particularly in journalism and

broadcasting.

Having been born and raised in Germany, my perspective was significantly shaped by an exchange year in the U.S. in 2019. This experience inspired me to pursue my graduate studies here to continue broadening my horizons and connecting with diverse people. I am particularly interested in how sports, politics, and international relations intersect, and how effective communication can build better understanding between different people and cultures.

Nick Stulga



I am Nick Stulga. I received my Bachelor's in Mass Media from Illinois State University and an Associate in Arts from Moraine Valley Community College. During my time at Moraine, I wrote as both News Editor and Editor-in-Chief at my school newspaper. I switched from print to radio as an on-air host at ISU's award-winning 103.3 WZND Fuzed Radio.

My main academic interests are artificial intelligence, political groupthink, and music culture. In my spare time, you can find me writing poetry, jamming on my keyboard, and lifting weights at the gym. I aspire

to one day freelance for an esteemed music publication.

Leticia Vicente Horst



My name is Letícia Horst, and I am originally from Curitiba, Brazil. I earned my bachelor's degree in Publicity and Advertising at the Universidade Federal do Paraná, where I had the opportunity to engage deeply with research. Throughout my academic journey, I have explored themes such as media representation in violent contexts, political education in early schooling, and contributed to co-authored published work analyzing female archetypes in political campaigns. My primary interests include interpersonal communication in violent or traumatic contexts, media literacy, and gender studies. Above all, I am excited to join Illinois State University and pursue research that holds meaningful relevance to the community alongside fellow students and professors. In my free time, you can find me in the murder mystery section at the local library.

Jac Vonachen



I'm John Arthur Charles Vonachen, also known as J.A.C Vonachen. I am from Peoria, Illinois and have obtained my education from Illinois Central College, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, and received my bachelor's degree (in Communication) here at Illinois State University in Spring of 2025. I have a passion for multimedia, more specifically video production, and learning. I was the President of Student Television Workshop here at Illinois State University. I have won awards for my work in the TV-10 Program, including an 1st place award for Outstanding Television Photography. I have also taught the basics of video production as an undergraduate teaching assistant twice. Now, I dream to continue to educate the next generation about the wonders of media and communications. When I am not teaching or working on video projects, I enjoy traveling, being in nature, and watching movies.

Aaron Wolf



I grew up in Lombard IL, a suburb just outside of Chicago. I moved to Bloomington/Normal in 2021 to pursue a bachelor's degree in communications with a focus on mass media arts at ISU. I fell in love with the sense of community in this town and plan to stay in the area long after my academic studies.

During my undergraduate studies I was deeply involved in the TV10 program and spent the majority of my time in the basement of Fell Hall producing media for the student television station. I have a passion for storytelling, sharing diverse perspectives and stories that have the ability to impact how people think about the world around them. I have a background in media production particularly focusing on documentary filmmaking, discovering the stories, motivations, struggles, and values of different people and communities. I am also interested in the effects that media has on our culture and the ways that it shapes our collective understanding of individuals and

society as a whole.

I find fulfillment in the ability to collaborate with others and combine ideas, skills, and perceptions into a final product that is greater than the sum of its parts alone. I value creativity and believe that the ability to create, learn, and work together as one is a powerful tool for connection, understanding, and tangible change. I am excited to learn and grow alongside a team of passionate, intelligent, and driven peers, mentors, and friends.