

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Incoming Students

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### **Degree Programs**

The School of Communication offers four unique major programs: Communication Studies, Journalism, Mass Media and Public Relations. More detailed information regarding each major can be found here:

#### **Communication Studies:**



#### ***How would you describe this major?***

Versatile and extremely practical. A student learns key knowledge, elements, and skills at the heart of life-long learning and development – how to be an effective communicator, critical thinker, problem solver, and relationship builder. Communication Studies is the academic discipline which studies communication in various contexts. We offer courses in interpersonal communication, organizational and leadership communication, rhetoric and culture, and civic and

political communication. Students discover many strategies of how to effectively communicate with diverse groups of individuals, across cultures, and in various local and global situations. Students will gain an awareness and understanding of how communication processes can be used to manage communicative behaviors in various types of interpersonal relationships, organizational contexts, and communities while becoming competent and strategic communicators creating desired outcomes.

#### ***What are a few examples of jobs for graduates in this major?***

There is a wide range of career and job opportunities waiting for students in Communication Studies majors, including jobs in retail stores, travel, product & services, entertainment, restaurants, social services, insurance & finance, sales, human relations, human resources, mediation, hospitals & health care, training & development, manufacturing, nonprofit, professional associations, chambers of commerce, community centers, philanthropies, branches of local, state and federal government, community relations, convention planning, entry-level and executive management, corporate communication, political parties & action committees, fund raising, recruitment, law enforcement, and higher education. Organizations, businesses, and employers value students with degrees in communication and actively pursue our students as well as students with degrees in Communication Studies.



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### ***What transferable skills will I learn in this major?***

Some transferable skill sets you can learn through this major as well as internships and in related extra-curricular activities include:

- Effective oral and written communication skills
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Strong public presentation skills
- Conflict & mediation skills
- Civil discourse skills
- Team building skills
- Relationship building
- Group work
- Strategic & persuasive influencing skills
- Effective writing capability
- Creativity – using sounds, color, imagery and art
- Reporting and computer skills
- Ability to create influential and effective messages
- Strong research & assessment capabilities
- Critical thinking & problem-solving skills
- Attention to detail & well organized
- Leadership & management skills
- Understanding of different cultures & cross-cultural competence

### ***What are classes in this major like? Size? Types of content and homework?***

The classes are usually around 25 students or less. A few courses will involve larger lectures depending on program need. All our faculty are well trained and prepared. Most of our faculty have practical experience to bring to the classroom as well, so course content is relevant, timely, and appropriately rigorous. The amount of assignments and class projects vary depending upon the class as well as the instructor, but rest assured, that it will not be more than you can handle. Our faculty work to develop an understanding of various learning styles and work to develop a relational rapport with students to determine a suitable yet challenging amount of homework. They are always there to answer questions and provide guidance.

### ***What are some examples of classes I would take in this major?***

We offer a full range of classes with multiple sections including courses in the study of organizational communication, leadership communication, interpersonal communication, intercultural communication, small group communication, persuasion, African American Rhetoric, political communication, social issues, and research methods. We have some specific sequences and required courses, but you will be able to select the majority of your courses depending upon your developing interests.

### ***Is there anything I should be doing now to prepare to be a part of this major?***

Continue to read, write, and be curious. Take advantage of opportunities to grow, meet new people, and continue learning.

### ***What student involvement opportunities would you recommend to a student in this major?***

We offer multiple opportunities in the School of Communication that will help you grow and mature including internships, service learning, and activities such as Association for Women in Communication, the national honorary society-Lambda Pi Eta, and COM Week which provides our students with networking, educational, and growth opportunities. COM Week is a weeklong experience that provides professional perspectives and inspirational speakers within the field of communication. COM Week seeks to present students a chance to explore your interests and expand your knowledge on various areas of communication. We also suggest that you get involved with one of the many Registered Student

Organizations on campus. Along the way, we recommend that you find a cause or something in the community you're passionate about and volunteer, individually or through a school club. Service is invaluable.

***What advice would you give an incoming student in this major?***

Do your research about this program or any program you're considering. Ask questions and don't hesitate to contact an advisor or a faculty member in our program if you have any questions or just want to talk. We would love to talk with you, listen to you, and see what your interests are as you get ready to attend college. This is certainly an exciting time for you, but it can also make you a bit anxious if you're not sure what you want to do after high school. Do your best to make informed decisions.

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**Journalism:**



***How would you describe this major?***

The Journalism major will provide you with the skills and knowledge you require to succeed in a rapidly evolving profession. You will take introductory courses in media writing, newswriting and reporting (for print and broadcast news), and news technology. You will learn to be a Jack or Jackie of all trades – to interview sources; find, write and report stories; shoot and edit video and audio; understand the ethical guidelines of fair and

balanced reporting, the laws that govern the media, and much more.

***What are a few examples of jobs for graduates in this major?***

The following represent only a sample of popular career options for students in this major: copy editor, videographer/editor, sports journalist, TV & movie critic, creative services producer, editorial and feature writer, multimedia journalist, page layout designer, print/tv/radio/online reporter, photojournalist, social media manager, TV news anchor/editor, TV segment producer, web and graphic designer.

***What transferable skills will I learn in this major?***

The Journalism major is perhaps one of the richest we have in terms of transferable skills. You will gain the essential ability to write effectively, as well as learn to listen, question and interact successfully with others, and to think critically. Other important skills you will acquire include: time management and meeting deadlines; organization; task prioritization; ethical reasoning; how to work creatively and effectively with digital technology; content evaluation; audience analysis; management in fast-paced environments, and more!

***What are classes in this major like? Size? Types of content and homework?***

Many courses in this major will be in class sizes of around 25 students or fewer. This is particularly true of our broadcasting and news technology courses that utilize our award-winning, student-run television station, TV-10. You will gain valuable hands-on experience as you explore the type of journalism you wish to pursue in the future. Some classes will help you hone your writing and/or design skills to work as a journalist at magazine, online or newspaper outlets. Others will focus on broadcasting, allowing you to work with TV-10 to produce, report, and direct live shows. Similarly, creative/visual arts courses will teach you to develop your own websites and create your own documentaries. Whichever route through the



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program you choose, you will build a strong portfolio of work for when the day comes to launch your career at a news, sports or entertainment outlet.

### ***What are some examples of classes I would take in this major?***

You will take core courses in communication theory, convergent media writing, newswriting & reporting for print and broadcast news, news technology, news literacy, mass media ethics, and communication research methods. Beyond the core courses, you can choose from a variety of elective options to gain professional skills—and to better understand professional theory (where you will use theory to explain, describe, and predict how content is packaged and evaluated for a mass audience). The flexibility of the Journalism program is designed to allow you to work towards the area of journalism you wish to pursue, whichever medium that may be (i.e. print, TV, radio, online), and whatever content most interests you (news, sports, features, entertainment, etc.).

### ***Is there anything I should be doing now to prepare to be a part of this major?***

While it is beneficial now to begin thinking about the type of journalism you might wish to pursue, the program is designed to provide you with a general introduction to all areas of journalism. This will not only help you focus on your role in the field, but will ultimately help you be more marketable to an employer. Previous experience with writing— whether through a school newspaper, website, or yearbook; part-time job; internship or job shadow – can help with the transition to college-level media writing courses. Consume news reports as much as possible; especially in the sort of journalism you wish to one day pursue professionally. Watch TV news. Go online and get the latest reports. Regularly read newspapers and magazines. Meanwhile, practice and hone your writing at every opportunity.

### ***What student involvement opportunities would you recommend to a student in this major?***

Getting involved in one or more of our award-winning media outlets is an important aspect of the Journalism program. Journalism majors participate at, and help to run, WZND, our radio station; TV-10, television station; and *The Vidette*, online newspaper. We offer student organizations through WZND and Student Television Workshop (where students create a show from the ground up). In addition, there are opportunities for internships with *The Vidette*, while students pursuing advanced broadcasting courses will work directly with TV-10, which produces the only live news and sportscasts in Bloomington-Normal. Moreover, as you grow in skill and confidence, we will help you to acquire internships off campus, where you will work with professional journalists covering news, sports and entertainment.

### ***What advice would you give an incoming student in this major?***

A passion for journalism is key, as are strong writing skills! Faculty are here to help you develop into a strong, passionate, and effective journalist. Get to know them; they will serve as valuable mentors during your undergraduate career and can help you make connections for future internships and job opportunities. In addition to their leadership in the classroom, they have all had years of experience in the field doing the jobs you wish to do in the future.

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## **Mass Media:**



### ***How would you describe this major?***

The mass media major in the School of Communication prepares students for either the business side or creative side of the media industries.

### ***What are a few examples of jobs for graduates in this major?***

Students interested in the business of media can work in broadcast or digital outlets in a sales or promotions

capacity which prepares them for media management. Students wanting to create media products will learn audio, video, and interactive skills which prepares them to be writers, directors, producers, editors, etc.

### ***What transferable skills will I learn in this major?***

Communication skills are valued in every industry. You will have ample opportunity to hone your writing, presentation, and media creation abilities through coursework and hands-on opportunities in our student media outlets.

### ***What are classes in this major like? Size? Types of content and homework?***

Classes are generally 30 students and below for lecture type courses which emphasize writing. Lab based courses are usually 20 students and below with work leaning toward projects. There are a couple of large lecture courses at the 100-level.

### ***What are some examples of classes I would take in this major?***

COM 160 and COM 161 are large lecture courses that all mass media majors take. In addition, all mass media majors take COM 101 in their first semester to help them become familiar with what the major has to offer and find their passion within the media industry. At the 300-level, all students will also take Ethics and Law. Management, Promotion, & Sales students will take media business courses while Media Arts students will choose courses that allow them to create media content (Radio, TV, Interactive).

### ***Is there anything I should be doing now to prepare to be a part of this major?***

Be prepared to do a lot of writing in any mass media course. If you have similar courses or studios at your high school, get involved.

### ***What student involvement opportunities would you recommend to a student in this major?***

- WZND Radio – open to all students. Over 100 people work here in any given semester.
- TV-10 – working here is typically tied to the curriculum. Eight live shows are produced every week.
- The Vidette – our online student newspaper which produces digital content through the web and an app. Internships are available.
- Student Television Workshop (STW) – a Registered Student Organization (RSO). Open to all students and, unlike TV10, is not tied to the curriculum.
- Redbird Productions – is housed in the Athletic Department. Students are routinely hired to work video positions during ISU games. Some of the games are carried on ESPN 3.

### ***What advice would you give an incoming student in this major?***

Get involved as soon as you get to campus. WZND and STW are great places to start since much of the work is not tied to coursework.

***Any other important information you'd like to share?***

The earlier you get involved in our media outlets, the more friends you'll make since they will be part of your professional network which will serve you well throughout your career.

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**Public Relations:**



***How would you describe this major?***

Public relations is the measured and ethical use of language and symbols to inspire cooperation between an organization and its publics. Public relations specialists help businesses, governments and their agencies, universities, hospitals, schools and other organizations build and maintain positive relationships with the public. The Public Relations major prepares students to research, plan, execute, and evaluate communication

between an organization and its publics, monitor the organization's environment, and counsel management on policies and programs. The major is designed to prepare students to help private industry and public organizations improve the quality of communication among themselves, their employees, the general public and government.

***What are a few examples of jobs for graduates in this major?***

Graduates from our PR program go on to hold engaging jobs in various organizations, including corporations, nonprofits, government, agencies, and others. Here is a quick list of jobs by title, and you could use these titles as search terms for actual jobs to learn what they entail: Advertising Copywriter, Communications Specialist, Community Relations, Government Relations Specialist, Marketing Coordinator, Media Relations, Press Secretary, Project Manager, Promotion Manager, Public Advocate, Public Affairs Coordinator, and Social Media Specialist.

***What transferable skills will I learn in this major?***

As you go through the PR program, your learning and experiences are expected to build upon and complement one another so you can (1) be the best professional communicator you can be at graduation and (2) become a better and better professional year after year. The following list shows skills you will learn about and develop as you go through the PR curriculum: reading, writing, discipline, time management, knowledge integration, problem-solving, decision-making, argumentation, math, research methods, message design, no tactics bias, social skills, and digital-media skills. These skill sets are the main ones we expect you to know, use, and improve upon as you progress through your studies in PR over the time you need to complete the degree. These skills are not covered and practiced in every class but, rather, are learned and strengthened through the variety of classes you take for your PR degree.

***What are classes in this major like? Size? Types of content and homework?***

Our courses in the PR major bridge theory and practice—the why and the how of public relations. Our classes, then, cover why public relations professionals do what they do, how they decide what will work or not, and demonstrate what PR pros did to achieve success (or failure). Classes, which often have up to 30 students, require mastery of concepts plus competence in developing ethical and effective PR products. Assignments ask students to show they mastered concepts and are competent in applying knowledge, skills,



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and abilities to real-world situations. Many of our classes have actual organizations as “clients” for whom students work in their assignments.

### ***What are some examples of classes I would take in this major?***

Of the 39 hours of courses you are required to pass satisfactorily, 24 hours are from required courses. What is important to recognize is that the first series of courses (COM 161, 178, 268, and 297) cover technical matters about what PR pros do, and the second series (COM 229 or 329, 377, and 378) address managerial matters of how PR pros get results for their work. Electives for the PR major can be from anywhere, and your academic advisor can guide you in which ones mesh best with your personal goals.

### ***Is there anything I should be doing now to prepare to be a part of this major?***

The best thing to prepare for being a PR major is to read about PR. Look online for PR-focused organizations (e.g., Public Relations Society of America [PRSA], Institute for Public Relations, and others) and read what they say about PR. Also read online news about PR (e.g., *PR Week* and *PR News*) for what is going on in the industry. And perhaps get a copy of the textbook for COM 178 and read it. Additionally, contact local PR professionals to learn about the profession and get tips on making the most of your studies. One last thing is to look up jobs online for entry-level PR positions to see what they require.

### ***What student involvement opportunities would you recommend to a student in this major?***

We have an excellent and award-winning chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), which is the student-oriented arm of the PRSA that serves members by enhancing their knowledge of public relations and providing access to professional-development opportunities. Our PRSSA chapter dates back to 1979, has around 40 members a year, offers tours of PR businesses, operates a PR agency, and hosts guest speakers and workshops at most of its weekly business meetings. Another great organization is the student chapter for the Association for Women in Communication (AWC), which started in 2017. The chapter helps members prepare for their careers through mentoring with local communication pros, job shadowing, and workshops on professional communication.

### ***What advice would you give an incoming student in this major?***

The best advice is to investigate public relations. Read printed and electronic sources that explain what it is, does, and contributes to society. Watch informative videos about particular aspects of public relations, which may be produced by professionals and professors who want to help students like you to get to know PR well. Examine advertisements for jobs in PR to see what they require and think about how your PR degree will be instrumental in preparing for your PR career. Also, with all this investigation, find examples of public relations in the media and examine them for what was done and why.

### ***Any other important information you'd like to share?***

Our public relations program secured in 2013 and has maintained the prestigious credential of [Certification in Education for Public Relations \(CEPR\)](#) from the PRSA. This important accreditation is all the more important considering:

- We are the first PR program in the state to be CEPR.
- We are the only PR program in the state to be CEPR.
- We were the first university in the state to have a PR program back in the early 1980s.

A program that is accredited as CEPR reflects a rigorous and strong program. So our public relations program is among the best in the nation (and the world), and your degree in public relations has a lot more value than those from other, nonaccredited programs. Having this accreditation definitely helps our students during their job search.

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## **Internships and Careers**

### ***Is an internship required?***

No. In the School of Communication, internships are not required ... but our students are inspired, so between 75 and 80 percent of our graduating seniors have had at least one internship for credit. And more than 40 percent do at least two. You can do an internship (COM 398) to substitute for a 200-level elective in your major and another to substitute for a 300-level elective. Not more classes—more opportunities. We call it “the Classroom of One”—learning from a professional by doing real things in real time.

### ***When should I start thinking about internships?***

Search for internships when you are committed to taking your interests and skills to the professional level. Although most Communication interns are juniors or seniors, there is no “designated time” in your educational plan for internships. Every year, the School has more than 100 students earning credit for internships in each term—Summer, Fall and Spring. The School of Communication believes that young people become professionals when they start to think, act and work like professionals. When you are ready for that, you are ready for an internship ... and we are ready to help you.

### ***What kinds of internships can I do?***

If you can dream it, find it, and get it, you can do it ... and the School of Communication Field Experiences office is here to help you with that process. No matter what your passion—media, sports, entertainment, non-profit, corporate, small business, education, politics and more—we have had students do internships in your field. During the 5-year period ending with Fall 2019 semester, more than 1,100 Communication students completed at least one internship for credit at more than 600 different locations. Yet, with all those numbers, the most important internship is the one we help you find.

### ***Do majors typically get jobs quickly after graduation?***

Students in the School have the opportunity to complete capstone courses, often linked to operations in Illinois State’s Career Services, that prepare them for the workplace. Our data indicate that 88% of our graduates are employed within six months of graduation. In addition, 83% of graduates report being satisfied with their career choice. Further, a number of School of Communication graduates go on to pursue advanced master’s degrees.

### ***What networking opportunities are available to students in this major?***

Students in the School of Communication have numerous networking opportunities. For example, the School sponsors several Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) that provide opportunities for networking and professional development. Importantly, RSOs are open to students from their very first day on campus. The School’s Alumni Advisory Board also offers networking opportunities through informal mentoring and the Chicago Alumni Pipeline (an event hosted once every year featuring notable COM alumni in the Chicago area who work with current students to prepare them for entrance into the workforce). Also, students can complete a variety of internships related to their career interests.

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### **Communication Classes and Academic Requirements**

#### ***Where can I find the requirements for each Communication major?***

There are two resources we would encourage students to use to find the specific requirements for each Communication major:

- [University Catalog](#): The University Catalog includes details for all major and minor programs at ISU, as well as details regarding General Education and University requirements for graduation. You can find a direct link to the School of Communication section of the University Catalog [here](#).
- [ISU Academics website](#): The ISU Academics website allow students to review information regarding specific majors and minors. When you click on the name of a major/minor, you can find more information regarding course requirements and sample plans of study.

#### ***Where can I find information about Communication classes?***

Students can find information about ISU classes from the [Course Finder](#) website. Course Finder includes course descriptions and prerequisite information. Students can find a list of all Communication classes from the [Course Directory](#) section of Course Finder.

#### ***I am not sure about my major/sequence. What do I do if I want to switch to another?***

Switching between majors/sequences within the School of Communication is very easy. If you want to pursue a different Communication major/sequence, contact your assigned Communication advisor and we can help you through the process. For incoming students who are interested in Communication, we encourage you to declare a major in the School of Communication when you apply to Illinois State so you can be directly admitted to the School. Then, your advisor can help you solidify your major choice when you start at ISU.

#### ***What if I am interested in more than one COM major? Can I double major in COM?***

Students cannot double major in COM or major/minor in COM. If students wish to declare a double major or minor, they will need to explore options outside the School of Communication. For students with varying interests in Communication, we would encourage those students to leverage their major electives to explore other interest areas within the Communication field. We also encourage students to get involved in Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) that can help them expand their skills and explore other passions and interest areas.

#### ***When do I need to decide which COM major is right for me?***

We would encourage students to settle on their COM major by the end of their sophomore year. That will give students plenty of time to progress through their program and take advantage of the many opportunities available to them.

#### ***Is a minor required? What are common minors?***

No, a minor is not required. If students do wish to pursue a minor, here are some of the common minors we see paired with Communication majors: Business Administration, Civic Engagement & Responsibility, English, Film Studies, History, International Studies, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, Writing, and various foreign languages. Information regarding these minors and more can be found [here](#).

#### ***Can I double major easily?***



Yes. Most Communication majors are relatively small and allow students to accommodate a double major in their plan of study. For students wishing to declare a double major, we would encourage them to declare their majors as early as possible in their time at ISU. This will allow students to maximize their plan of study to accommodate a double major.

### ***Can I graduate in 4 years?***

Yes. All Communication majors are designed to be completed in two academic years (or four semesters). For this reason, we would encourage students to declare their Communication major by the end of their sophomore so they can begin taking major courses in the first semester of their junior year.

### ***What are elective courses? What are some examples of elective courses?***

Elective courses are opportunities to customize your major and to gain transferrable skills such as strategic communication, small group communication, social media analytics, print and broadcast reporting, television production, media sales, visual or creative arts, and more! Elective courses also include opportunities for additional hands-on experiences through internships, undergraduate teaching assistantships, and independent research. All major programs in the School of Communication include elective options in their plan of study to allow students the opportunities to gain career-specific skill sets.

### ***When can I start taking COM classes? Is there a strict order I will take my classes in?***

During your first year, you will be focusing primarily on completing General Education and university-wide requirements. Most students begin introductory courses for their major during their sophomore year. These fundamental courses build a strong foundation for your progression throughout the major program and provide a basic understanding of the communication discipline and the role of theory and research in explaining communication phenomena.

### ***Will I need to take foreign language classes for my major?***

Yes, students in the School of Communication must complete a foreign language requirement. This course requirement is equivalent to the 112-level of a foreign language (year one, part two). If you completed three or more years of the same foreign language in high school, you are exempt from this requirement. Many students prefer to start at the 111-level of a foreign language, but if you have taken one to two years of the same foreign language in high school, beginning at the 112-level may be appropriate for academic success.

### ***What math is required for Communication majors?***

The only Math class that is required for students in the School of Communication is a course that fulfills the General Education Math requirement. The most popular General Education Math course for our majors is MAT 113: Elements of Mathematical Reasoning. ISU utilizes the ALEKS Math Placement Exam for all Math courses at ISU.

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## **Technology Requirements and Resources**

### ***What type of labs are there in Fell Hall?***

The School of Communication operates three general-purpose computer labs and two special-purpose labs. The general purpose labs include a 30-seat Windows lab in Fell 108, a 22-seat Mac lab in Fell 102, and a 20-seat Mac lab in Fell 052. The special-purpose labs include the Communication Innovation Center (CIC) and the Social Media Analytics Command Center (SMACC). The CIC offers 11 Mac computer stations



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and 30 Windows laptops for classes to use, and the SMACC provides four large-screen Windows workstations and two mobile touchscreen Windows displays for instructional use. We understand that not all students can afford their own computers and try to make these labs as accessible as possible through designated open lab hours.

### ***Is printing available?***

Black-and-white printing is available in Fell 102 and 108, and color printing is available in Fell 102. Printing is also available at 50 uPrint locations around campus, including the Milner Library. Here is more information about uLabs and printing costs is available [here](#).

### ***What kind of computer will I need?***

While we do not require students to purchase their own computers, we recognize that many students may prefer to have the convenience of bringing their own laptop computers to campus. For students who wish to bring their own equipment, we recommend the following guidelines:

- Laptop computers should be no more than 3-4 years old and should have at least several hours of battery life.
- Avoid Chromebooks. While these low-cost laptops are sometimes used in secondary education, they often do not have enough hard drive storage, memory, and processing power to adequately run much of the required software for coursework.
- Laptops should be running either Windows 10 (Home or Professional) or Mac OS 10.13 (High Sierra) or later.
- We recommend the minimum standards for laptop hardware:
  - Processor: i5 or higher
  - RAM: 8GB minimum
  - Hard Drive: 256GB minimum
- Mac or a PC? For students who plan to go into video production or graphic design, we recommend MacBook Pros. For all other students, choose the computer operating system that best suits your level of familiarity.
- If you plan to purchase new equipment, we recommend shopping through Illinois State University's Tech Zone, which provides educational discounts and service plans. More information about the TechZone is available [here](#).

### ***Will I need any software already on my computer?***

Illinois State University provides all students access to Microsoft Office 365, which includes familiar applications such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint and more. These can be downloaded and installed onto personal computers through students' Office 365 web portals. More information about this process is available [here](#).

Illinois State also provides all students access to Adobe Creative Cloud, which includes creative design applications such as Photoshop, Illustrator, Premier and Dreamweaver. These can also be downloaded and installed onto personal computers. More information about Adobe accounts and applications for students is available [here](#).

Students planning to study advanced media production may optionally wish to purchase the Apple Pro Apps Bundle for Education, which includes the video and audio editing tools used in our Mac labs.



***Do I need to know how to use any computer programs prior to taking my classes?***

Ideally, you should have basic working knowledge of word processing, slide presentation and spreadsheet software. You will learn to use other software as needed for your classes. For students who wish to work on their own professional development and training, we recommend using the Adobe Education Exchange, available [here](#).

***What is the SMACC?***

The Social Media Analytics Command Center (SMACC) is a 600 square foot facility dedicated to studying social media analytics and strategy. It serves as a classroom, a research laboratory, a media war room, and a consultation studio. Students, faculty, and researchers use the SMACC to identify public conversations from major social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, popular discussion forums, major blogs, and online news sources. Using specialized software they can then analyze these conversations for key data such as top influencers, trending keywords and concepts, audience metrics, geographic location of posts, user sentiment, and share of voice in the social web. The SMACC is currently powered by NUVI and Meltwater social media analytics platforms. Advanced classes and researchers also use the R statistical programming platform and Python to collect data from Twitter's Public API and visualize social networks with Gephi. Only a handful of similar facilities exist on university campuses, and through the SMACC the School of Communication and Illinois State University bring cutting-edge social media education and research to the State of Illinois. Students can use SMACC resources through course projects, independent studies, and internships.

***What is the CIC?***

The Communication Innovation Center (CIC) is a specialized lab and teaching studio that provides space for collaboration and media production. It features 26 mobile desks, a collaboration station, 30 Windows laptops, nine iMac workstations, two iMacPro editing studios, a mobile greenscreen studio, and a 50 terabyte media server for storing collaborative video projects. Students can borrow DSLR cameras, video camcorders, tripods, and other recording equipment from the CIC for their own independent projects.

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## **Involvement Outside the Classroom**

***How do I get involved my freshman year and meet other COM majors?***

The best thing you can do your freshman year is get involved in a Registered Student Organization (RSO). ISU has over 400 student organizations, all supported by the [Dean of Students Office](#). Students can search for organizations and events through the [Redbird Life portal](#). The School of Communication has organizations specific to the COM major. Be sure to check out the WZND radio station, the Public Relations Student Society of America, the Association for Women in Communication, Student Television Workshop, Lambda Pi Eta, Forensics, *The Vidette*, and more! More information on these organizations can be found [here](#).

***How do I know when these RSOs meet?***

The School of Communication will send information to students regarding RSOs during the first week of the semester. You can also locate this information on the [Dean of Students Office](#) website and the [Redbird Life portal](#).



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***What study abroad options are available for me to take COM classes? Do I need to speak a foreign language?***

The School of Communication offers [four faculty-led summer study abroad programs](#) in Brazil, Panama, Paris, and the Netherlands. The [Office of International Studies](#) is also a great resource to help students identify study abroad options with over 100 programs to choose from. You do not have to speak a foreign language to participate in most programs.

***When do students typically study abroad?***

Students completing their general education coursework typically study abroad their sophomore year. Students who are completing major or minor coursework tend to study abroad their junior or senior year.

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### **Academic Support**

***What kinds of academic support does ISU offer? Does the School of COM offer anything specifically for COM classes?***

ISU offers academic tutoring in almost 50 different courses, including math courses, foreign language courses, and science course. Additionally, students can receive writing assistance from the [Julia N. Visor Center](#). The Visor Center also offers academic coaching and workshops for students to improve their academic skills. Workshops in areas like effective time management and effective studying techniques help freshmen adjust to life at college. For communication courses, instructors serve as the primary mode of academic support for their classes. Instructors have dedicated office hours, devoting one-on-one time to answering student questions and helping with coursework.

***When can I meet with my School of COM advisor?***

During your freshman year, you will be advised by a [University College](#) advisor. After freshman year, you will transition to your [major advisor](#). While your University College advisor should be your primary contact for your questions and concerns during your first year, you can always reach out to your future major advisor via email if you have specific questions about your major.

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