College of Media

ADVANCING EXCELLENCE



Fall 2026

Message from the Dean



As the College of Media looks ahead to its centennial in 2027, momentum continues to build across the college. From academic innovation to facility improvements, we are making strategic investments that enrich the student experience today and position the College for its second century of excellence.

A key commitment is expanding access to a media education and creating new pathways for students to pursue their interests and ambitions. To that end, over the past two years, the College has launched two new bachelor's degree programs—an online BA in media that offers adult learners a flexible opportunity to complete their degrees and a new BA in sports media that aligns with student and industry demand. Both of these degrees reflect collaborations among all three academic departments in the College—Advertising, Journalism, and Media & Cinema Studies.

We are also investing in spaces for teaching, learning, and connection. At Gregory Hall, ongoing facility improvements have enhanced classrooms, conference rooms, and shared spaces, and additional upgrades to our lower level will be completed this academic year. These improvements help create more welcoming, functional spaces that support the daily experiences of our students, faculty, and staff.

As we prepare to celebrate 100 years of media research and education at Illinois, we are focused not only on how far we have come, but on what lies ahead. Our priorities remain clear: providing transformative learning experiences, advancing innovative scholarship, making a meaningful impact on society, directing resources toward high-impact initiatives, and strengthening the relationships that make our alumni and friends such an essential part of the College of Media community.

Thank you for being part of our journey and for helping shape the future of the College of Media. Together, we are building on a century of achievement and creating new opportunities for generations to come.

Tracy Sulkin
Dean

Message from Advancement



Philanthropy will play a central role in shaping the College of Media's second century of media research and education.

Every gift to the College helps advance our mission, but unrestricted support is especially powerful because it provides the flexibility for us to respond quickly and strategically in a rapidly changing media landscape. Unrestricted gifts ensure that our students and faculty have access to the tools, experiences, and partnerships that prepare them for success.

That flexibility allows us to enhance student experiences, support innovative programs, improve learning facilities, respond to new industry trends, and invest in priorities that may not yet qualify for dedicated funding. These contributions help bring industry leaders to campus, support student travel and research, fund technology upgrades, encourage curriculum innovation, and open doors for conference participation and study abroad opportunities.

Whether through unrestricted support, scholarships, or research initiatives, your generosity to the College of Media strengthens our ability to educate future media leaders and pursue new opportunities. Donors who give $100,000 or more by December 31, 2027, will be inducted into the new Centennial Circle. (See page 1 for more details.) We are grateful to our alumni and friends who invest in the future of Media at Illinois.

If you are inspired to work with us to create 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.

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: Students in "Newsroom Experience" work on a broadcast production of Illini Sports Night *in Richmond Studio. The show highlights Illinois Athletics through student-led coverage, analysis, and storytelling.*
(Photo by Nathan Gonzalez, photography intern.)

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES



Centennial Circle: Investing in the next century of media education

Join a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shape the future of the College of Media at Illinois

A centennial is more than a milestone—it's an invitation to define the future together.

As the College of Media approaches its 100th anniversary, we celebrate our proud legacy and commit to advancing the next era of media education and research. Illinois Media graduates have informed the public, shaped culture, advanced technology, and transformed the way the world connects. To ensure this momentum carries into the next century, the College of Media invites its most passionate supporters to help lead the way through the Centennial Circle.

The Centennial Circle has been launched to honor visionary donors who make transformational investments. Induction into the Centennial Circle recognizes gifts of $100,000 or more to any fund in the College of Media by December 31, 2027. Donors can make an outright gift, a pledge, or a deferred gift such as a bequest in their will or a beneficiary designation of their IRA.

College of Media Dean Tracy Sulkin emphasized the historic significance of the Centennial Circle as the college celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2027.

"A centennial invites us to honor our past while envisioning a bold future. In this unique moment, philanthropy will play a central role in shaping the next 100 years of media," said Dean Sulkin.

"Joining the Centennial Circle is an opportunity to create a powerful, lasting legacy—one that uplifts generations of students and strengthens media education and research at Illinois for decades to come," Sulkin added.

Donors may choose to support any fund in the college, including the College of Media Centennial Fund, which helps meet emerging priorities, from technology advancements and innovative pedagogy to faculty and student research. Recent examples of donor-funded impact include the founding of the Richard and Leslie Frank Center for Leadership and Innovation in Media and the Roger Ebert Center for Film Studies, student support such as scholarships and the Media Technology Center, and faculty support such as research initiatives and named professorships.

Preparing students for academic and professional success means ensuring they can navigate, analyze, and communicate effectively in an ever-changing media landscape. Support for the College of Media Centennial Fund positions the college to address complex societal challenges, including AI, media literacy, civic and public engagement, and the accessibility of news and information.

"The Centennial Circle reflects the power of partnership between the College of Media and our alumni and friends," said Deanne Johnson, senior assistant dean for advancement. "By aligning philanthropic vision with emerging priorities, donors help ensure Illinois remains at the forefront of media education for generations."

The historic cohort of Centennial Circle donors will be recognized during a College of Media centennial celebration and featured across the college's communication channels. Recipients will also receive a commemorative Centennial Circle lapel pin and certificate.

Join us in shaping the College of Media's second century. Learn more about ways to give to the College of Media and our funding priorities at media.illinois.edu/give.

We welcome the opportunity to explore how your philanthropic vision can align with your passions and create lasting impact for the College of Media's second century. To learn more, please contact Deanne Johnson, Senior Assistant Dean for Advancement, at 217-244-5466 or jhns@illinois.edu.

College of Media launches new bachelor's degree in sports media

After years of planning, a new bachelor's in sports media is ready for prime time.

In response to a growing interest from students—and with a proven track record of successful alumni across the sports media industry—the College of Media is expanding its roster to offer a Bachelor of Arts in Sports Media.

The program will prepare students for a variety of careers in sports media, including as PR and strategic communication managers, content creators and digital storytellers, social media and data analysts, sportscasters and producers, and more.

The new undergraduate degree received official approval from the Illinois Board of Higher Education in Spring 2026.

Courses from all three departments in the College of Media—Advertising, Journalism, and Media & Cinema Studies—will make up the core curriculum for the sports media degree.

"We're excited to offer this interdisciplinary degree to prepare students for rewarding career paths within sports media. This is an area of high interest from students and employers alike, and, together with our campus partners, we are prepared to offer students a first-rate experience marked by the innovation, rigor, and personalized attention that defines all of our degree programs in the College of Media," said Dean Tracy Sulkin.



The Chicago Cubs broadcast visit inspired students who produce *Power Play,* an Illinois hockey show. Episodes are available to watch on UI7 Newsroom's Roku channel and Facebook page.

As streaming, podcasting, and multi-screen sports viewing continue to reshape how teams, fans, and brands interact, graduates who understand these evolving dynamics will have an advantage in the job market.

The College of Media already offers sports-focused courses, including "Sports Public Relations," "Sports Journalism," and "SportMedia, Technology & Culture." This spring, "Sports Advertising & Branding" debuted. Students can also gain firsthand production and reporting experience through *Illini Sports Night,* a program covering Illinois Athletics, through the course "Newsroom Experience."

Sports media majors will also be able to take elective courses within the Department of Recreation, Sport,



(Photos by Kenneth Erdey, technical coordinator for broadcast operations.)

Media students who produce a University of Illinois hockey show got a behind-the-scenes look at live television production during a September visit with the crew responsible for Chicago Cubs broadcasts.

and Tourism in the College of Applied Health Sciences, such as "Sport Analytics: Data-Driven Decision Making," "The Foundations of Sport Management," and "Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics: The Big Ten Conference."

To expand experiential learning opportunities, the College of Media plans to collaborate with alumni working in the sports media industry to create additional immersion and internship opportunities. These efforts will build upon past programs that included tours of athletic companies like Nike and Adidas. Alumni currently hold top positions across sports media, producing, anchoring, and writing for national networks and publications; leading communications and videography for professional sports leagues; working with celebrity athletes, athletic brands, and sports teams; and some have even competed as Olympic athletes.

Students will also benefit from the extensive opportunities that come with the University of Illinois' premier athletics program and its membership in the Big Ten Conference. For example, students have produced live pregame shows for *Illini Sports Night* in collaboration with the B1G+ network, and many intern at Fighting Illini Productions, the video team for the University's Division of Intercollegiate Athletics. Additionally, DIA colleagues serve as adjunct instructors in the College of Media, and both local and national sports personalities frequently visit classes, including recent guests Brian Barnhart, the Illinois football and men's basketball play-by-play announcer, and Gus Johnson, the lead college football and basketball play-by-play announcer for FOX Sports.

The BA in sports media is the sixth undergraduate degree offered by the College of Media, along with bachelor's degrees in advertising, computer science + advertising, journalism, media and cinema studies, and an online degree in media.

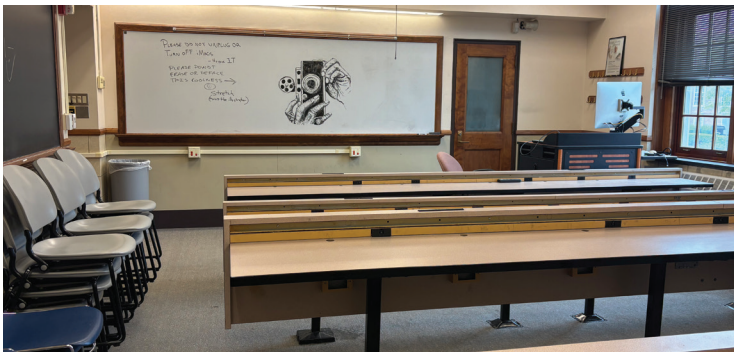
—Holly Rushakoff

FACILITIES UPDATES

Summer improvements at Gregory Hall enhance space for students, faculty, and staff

A series of facility improvements at Gregory Hall that began in May 2026 wrapped up just before classes resumed for the Fall 2026 semester. The College of Media funded renovation projects that significantly upgraded Rooms 123, 231, and 336. These improvements create more welcoming, functional, and accessible spaces to support instruction, meetings, events, and collaboration across the college. In addition, all building card access locks were upgraded with new proximity readers, improving security and building access, and two new digital signs were added in the lower-level hallway.

Room 123





This classroom received extensive updates designed to improve teaching, learning, and accessibility, including a new A/V system and projector, freshly painted walls, wainscoting added to walls, new carpet and blinds, improved lighting, accessibility enhancements, and cleanup and removal of years of outdated wiring and cabling from walls, ceilings, and floors.

Peterson Conference Room 231





This conference room was fully renovated with new carpet, blinds, and lighting; new conference table and chairs; removal of wallpaper and freshly painted walls; and installation of College of Media branding. In 2000, this room was named after Theodore B. “Ted” Peterson (PhD ’55, mass communications), who was appointed the first dean of the newly named College of Journalism and Communications in 1957, and was the longest-serving in this role, through 1979.

Sandage Seminar Room 336





Updates to this space include new carpet, chairs, lighting, and blinds; removal of wallpaper; freshly painted walls; and installation of College of Media branding. In 1996, this room was named after Charles H. Sandage, known as the “father of advertising education.” He established the Department of Advertising—the first such academic department in the country—in 1959 and was inducted into the Advertising Hall of Fame in 1984.

FACULTY UPDATES

Faculty promotions and leadership appointments announced

Craft appointed as the Karin and Folke Dovring Professor in Journalism and Democratic Society

Stephanie Craft, a professor in the Department of Journalism and associate dean for academic and faculty affairs, was named the Karin and Folke Dovring Professor in Journalism and Democratic Society. The professorship, established in 2001, supports a distinguished faculty member whose research advances our understanding of journalism and democratic society.


Craft

Craft, whose research focuses on news literacy, misinformation, and journalism ethics—particularly how people evaluate and understand news—joined the University of Illinois in 2013. She is best known for building news literacy theory by uniting scholars around shared definitions and measures of important concepts. She is also known for her research on the ethical obligations of journalism that arise from its democratic functions and the resulting tension between independence and accountability.

King and Maslowska appointed as Dean's Fellows focusing on AI


King

Colleen King, clinical associate professor in the Department of Journalism and director of the Richard and Leslie Frank Center for Leadership and Innovation in Media, and Ewa Maslowska, associate professor in the Charles H. Sandage Department of Advertising, will serve as Dean's Fellows for the 2026–27 academic year, with a focus on artificial intelligence.

King will concentrate primarily on AI in curriculum and instruction, while Maslowska will focus on AI in media research and innovation. Both will work to convene discussions across departments and units as the College of Media collectively navigates the perils and possibilities of the AI era.


Maslowska

The Dean's Fellows Program provides faculty in the College of Media with academic leadership experience through mentoring opportunities, collaboration with colleagues within and beyond the College, and leadership roles on key strategic initiatives and projects.

Faculty Promotions

In the Department of Journalism, Christopher Ball has been promoted to associate professor with indefinite tenure and Colleen King has been promoted to clinical associate professor.

Leadership Appointments

Jenny Oyallon-Koloski, associate professor in the Department of Media & Cinema Studies, will serve as the new director of the Roger Ebert Center for Film Studies.

Leona Yi-Fan Su, associate professor in the Charles H. Sandage Department of Advertising, will serve as the new director of the Institute of Communications Research.

Kevin Wise, professor in the Charles H. Sandage Department of Advertising, will serve as Advertising's associate head of graduate studies.


Oyallon-Koloski


Su


Wise

Faculty receive awards, honors for their research

Julie Turnock, professor of media and cinema studies, was awarded a 2026 Guggenheim Fellowship. Her project, "Beyond King Kong," is a technical, industrial, and aesthetic history of the special-effects industry in the Hollywood studio era, circa 1915-1960, well before the digital era.

At the 2026 International Communication Association Conference, **Mike Yao,** professor of advertising, and ICR doctoral student Jiyeon Chang, along with Weizi Liu from Texas Christian University, received the Top Paper in Human-Machine Communication.

At the 2026 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference, ICR Director **Leona Yi-Fan Su,** associate professor of advertising, and iSchool doctoral student Mobius Ziyang Gong (MS '22, advertising) received the 2025 Article of the Year Award from AEJMC's Communicating Science, Health, Environment and Risk Division. **Alexandre Gonçalves,** assistant professor of journalism, and **Margaret Yee Man Ng,** associate professor of journalism, received the Second Place Open Competition Award for their paper in the Newspaper and Online News Division.

At the 2025 National Communication Association convention, **Sang-Hwa Oh,** associate professor of advertising, received the inaugural Teri Thompson Outstanding Article Award from Health Communication, co-authored with former ICR doctoral student Seoyoon Lee (PhD '23). The conference also celebrated the contributions of **Angharad Valdivia,** ICR professor emerita, who was honored with NCA's Distinguished Scholar Award.

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

From September 2026

What is the "race for the face" and who's winning right now?



Christopher Ball, associate professor, journalism

The "race for the face" is how some of us in the emerging technology space describe the heated competition in the wearable market, particularly around glasses. Currently, Meta has the clearest lead, largely because of the success of products such as its Ray-Ban Meta AI glasses. These glasses typically combine cameras, microphones, and speakers for capturing photos and video, listening to audio, taking calls, and increasingly communicating with AI. Importantly, through partnerships with recognizable brands such as Ray-Ban, they also look like something people might actually want to wear. Keep an eye on this space. Apple is reportedly developing its own smart glasses for release in late 2027. The bigger "race for the face" is ultimately about which company can make wearable computing useful enough (and normal enough) that people are willing to wear it.

From February 2026

With the United States co-hosting the 2026 FIFA World Cup, how significant is this moment for American brands looking to reach a global audience?



Steve Hall, senior lecturer, advertising

As the most popular sport on the planet, [soccer/football] fandom is massive and culturally diverse. That opens a very big door for advertisers to tell their stories, create experiences, and connect with people everywhere on the world stage. To be successful, culture should be at the epicenter of advertising, fan engagement activities, and marketing programs. Branding is about what people think, feel, and believe. It's reputation. This global event will allow brands to align fans, teams, and athletes with relevant, authentic storytelling, sponsorships, partnerships, and innovative experiences that will not only reach global audiences, but connect with them in entirely new ways.

From December 2025

What can Ken Burns's *The American Revolution* teach us about telling historical stories in ways that connect with today's audiences?



Melita Garza, associate professor and Tom and June Netzel Sleeman Scholar in Business Journalism

Letters and journals from young men, women, and officials and pundits on both sides are the stars [of this series]. These primary sources allow individuals to speak as though they are reporting to us from the homefront and the battlefront, and that brings the Revolution right into our living rooms centuries after it ended. One scene shows colonists on the street reading newspapers together. Thinking critically about media and information, the colonists were practicing true social media. Word of mouth was a prime source of news. While it is true that stories and ideas didn't have a World Wide Web to buzz through, these mechanisms still allowed journalism, starting with Thomas Paine's *Common Sense,* to go viral through the colonies.

College of Media faculty, staff lead workshops for high schoolers at Illini Summer Academies

Illini Summer Academies, which is presented by Illinois 4-H, the youth development program of University of Illinois Extension, partners with various departments and colleges across campus every summer to give high school students an opportunity to experience college life and explore a career of their choice.

Twelve students from across Illinois registered for the College of Media program, which marked the college's first year of participation in the 4-H Summer Academies.



"As the coordinator for the program as well as one of its instructors, I think it was a great success," said Jason P. Chambers, professor in the Charles H. Sandage Department of Advertising and associate dean for access and engagement.



(Photos by Lark Runkle and Disha Rai, youth photographers.)

"The program helped build student awareness about the majors available in the college and the types of jobs they can get with an education in the College of Media," he added.

Chambers led the workshop "Exploring Public Service Advertising," which gave students an overview of the ad industry, including discussions about the different types of advertising, tools, and approaches used to attract an audience. Students developed a public service advertising campaign on a topic of their choice, such as excess phone usage among teens, distracted driving, and voting.

—Kelly Youngblood

TAKE 5 WITH MEDIA ALUMNI

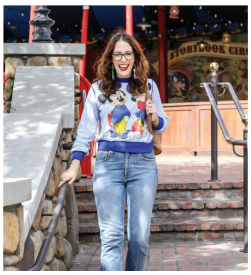
In a new College of Media series, we ask five questions of mid-career alumni. Below are excerpts from their Q&As.

ALEX STUDER (BS '17, ADVERTISING)
Director of web strategy at Peacock



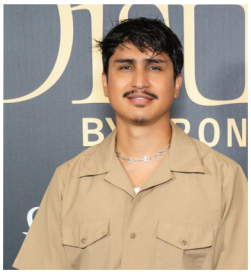
"Receiving an Emmy was without a doubt a career highlight so far! It doesn't feel like an 'all-at-once' type of recognition, and instead feels more like a culmination of all my past wins, failures, lessons learned, etc. I feel fortunate to have this under my belt, and every day feel reminded of the accomplishment when I walk past the statue at home."

CARLYE WISEL (BS '09, JOURNALISM)
Theme park freelance journalist
***Podcast host of* Very Amusing**



"Because I have a journalism background, because I chose to study a trade and not just a subject, I really do feel like I can pivot to whatever comes next, because at the end of the day, it's all storytelling. And if you can get information out in a clear, concise way, that's really all that matters, not the formula from which that comes."

EMMANUEL CAMACHO (BS '11, MEDIA AND CINEMA STUDIES)
Los Angeles-based film director and producer
Founder of Manny Reel Films



"One of my biggest career accomplishments is sustaining my business as an independent filmmaker through major shifts in the media landscape, including the economic impact of COVID-19. Longevity in this industry isn't guaranteed, and I credit it to staying grounded in my creative convictions while also building strong, lasting relationships with producers, clients, collaborators, and the friends and family who have supported me along the way."

JASON KIM (BS '13, MEDIA AND CINEMA STUDIES)
Director of photography and editor at Omnicom Studios
Founder of House Productions LLC



"Every project I've directed has included a learning curve, creative risk-taking, and a financial commitment. Not every project will feel true or significant. Moving past doubt, problem-solving limitations, and exercising curiosity are the first steps to directing."

KAVITHA CARDOZA (MS '02, JOURNALISM)
University of Richmond assistant professor of journalism
Award-winning reporter and recent recipient of the American Mosaic Journalism Prize



"I've already seen so many changes, and with AI, there are going to be many more. But I always tell my students: You can write with your finger in the sand or you can write on the latest Mac computer. It doesn't matter what you're writing on if you don't have something to say. And that is my job—to help students figure out what they have to say."

ALEX HEDLUND (BS '05, MEDIA STUDIES; MS '06, JOURNALISM)
***Los Angeles-based film and television producer, whose recent projects include psychological thrillers* Cape Fear *on Apple TV and the film* Verity**



"Identifying uncompromising stories and reaching out to connect with world-class storytellers [is a big part of my career]. As a career producer, I'm constantly looking to empower writers and directors who have a story to tell. If I'm not first in line for a film on its opening night, I know that I'm not the right producer to advocate for it. I need to lose sleep thinking about a project."

2026 MEDIA ALUMNI AWARD WINNERS

Stephen Feder receives Distinguished Alumni Award



Veteran producer and executive Stephen Feder's (BS '02, media studies) career ranges from working alongside both independent and major studios spanning television, film, and global franchises, with a recent move up to senior vice president of production at Disney Live Action.

Feder's impressive career achievements, along with his continued engagement with the college, have earned him the 2026 College of Media Distinguished Alumni Award.

"Stephen Feder has had an illustrious career and has been closely connected to the College of Media, from sharing advice with students at Media Career Night panels to inspiring graduates at our 2022 Media Convocation ceremony to participating as a film guest at Roger Ebert's Film Festival," said Dean Tracy Sulkin. "He is most deserving of this year's Distinguished Alumni Award."

In his new role, Feder will bring his breadth of experience to Disney's live action film slate.

"I really feel very lucky and very happy to be here. The mentality of Disney is to create experiences for audiences and ultimately to make them feel good when they go into a theater. Just knowing that I get to be a part of that culture is such a blessing, especially at this time in my life," said Feder, who has a young son.

Feder has always appreciated film, theater, and the arts, even participating in the Illini Union Board musicals when he attended Illinois. But he realized early on his greatest contribution to the field was in supporting and understanding how the creative process works.

"I really have dedicated much of my life, whether it's being a producer on a particular project or an executive who oversees a slate of projects, to really championing and creating an environment for the artist to succeed in," he said.

Karina Anglada receives Emerging Leader Award



Karina Anglada (BS '10, journalism; MS '12, iSchool) has leveraged her broadcast journalism degree to tell compelling stories about iconic professional sports teams, earning nine Regional EMMY® Awards over a five-year period as a media producer and editor for the Golden State Warriors.

After transitioning from sports to the tech industry, Anglada now helps others shape their narratives as a senior strategic development manager for video at Adobe.

"I made the jump to the tech world and that's been an incredible career opportunity for me," she said. "Now I get to meet with customers across the globe who are using Adobe software to help tell their company's and their brand's stories." Her portfolio includes customers across media and entertainment brands, news and sports broadcasting, and marketing, advertising, and content teams for corporate and enterprise organizations.

Anglada's career trajectory, along with her dedication to the College of Media, led to her being named the 2026 College of Media Emerging Leader Award recipient.

"The College of Media is pleased to honor Karina Anglada as this year's Emerging Leader Alumni Award winner," said Dean Tracy Sulkin. "Her eagerness to share her technical and creative knowledge, her award-winning career in sports media and digital media, and her engagement with Illinois overall make her an exemplary recipient."

Working on a global team with colleagues across Australia, Europe, and Latin America, Anglada supports customers using Adobe Video, while also gathering feedback that helps shape new implementations and inform product strategy. She frequently presents at large events, showcasing the software's capabilities.

—Kelly Youngblood

Photo Highlights



This fall, Media Career Services teamed up with students in the American Advertising Federation to hold a workshop on revamping resumes, from learning the fundamentals to using AI strategies.



(Photo by Thea Abang, photography intern.)

Stephanie Craft, center, was named the Karin and Folke Dovring Professor in Journalism and Democratic Society. Dean Tracy Sulkin and Senior Associate Provost Amy Santos participated in the investiture ceremony.



The 2026 Sandage Symposium brought together advertising industry experts, researchers, and students for a keynote, professional panels, a creative hackathon, and more.



Pat Burke (BS '95, advertising), the creative mind behind top-rated Super Bowl commercials, was the alumni speaker at the 2026 College of Media Convocation ceremony.



Jordan Triplett, a senior in journalism, shared a brief pre-game commentary with Illini sportscaster Steve Kelly at the Illinois football game against SIU.



The 2026 Skornia Symposium addressed "Understanding Public Media Audiences in an Era of Disruption." Panelists included Seth Lewis, professor and Shirley Papé Chair in Emerging Media, University of Oregon; Joni Deutsch, SVP of podcast marketing and audience development at The Podglomerate; and Amy Mitchell, founding executive director of the Center for News, Technology & Innovation. Stephanie Craft, professor and associate dean for academic and faculty affairs, moderated.



Professor Alfred L. Martin, Jr., chair of the Department of Cinematic Arts at University of Miami, gave the 2026 Ebert Symposium keynote: "What *The Wiz* Was (and Is): Distribution, Fandom, and *The Wiz*."



(Photo by Nathan Gonzalez, photography intern.)

The Frank Center presented a spring Q&A with Amie Parnes and Jonathan Allen, *NYT*-bestselling authors of presidential campaign books. Colleen King, clinical associate professor and Frank Center director, moderated.

Want a Strategy for Making a Bigger Gift?

Fewer people are itemizing their charitable gifts due to the larger federal income standard deduction. In 2026, the standard deduction is $16,100 for single filers and $32,200 for married couples filing jointly. But that doesn't mean you can't be strategic about your charitable giving. Here's an approach that may help you make a bigger impact while making the most of your giving opportunities.

Instead of giving the same amount every year to support the University of Illinois College of Media, you can **bunch several years** of giving into one year. That way, you may be able to itemize your deductions on that year's tax return.

Then, in the next few years, you can go back to using the standard deduction. You can choose when you bunch and itemize and which years you take the standard deduction based on your income, tax situation and giving goals.

It may be smart to bunch in a certain year if you:

- Earn more income than usual, such as through an inheritance or a big bonus;
- Sell property or stock;
- Have very high qualifying expenses, like large medical bills that—along with your charitable gifts—could exceed the standard deduction.

Always discuss with your tax or financial advisor what might work best for your situation. And don't forget a new provision in 2026 that allows non-itemizers to deduct up to $1,000 (single filers) or $2,000 (married couples filing jointly) for a cash gift. *Note: Gifts to donor-advised funds are excluded.*

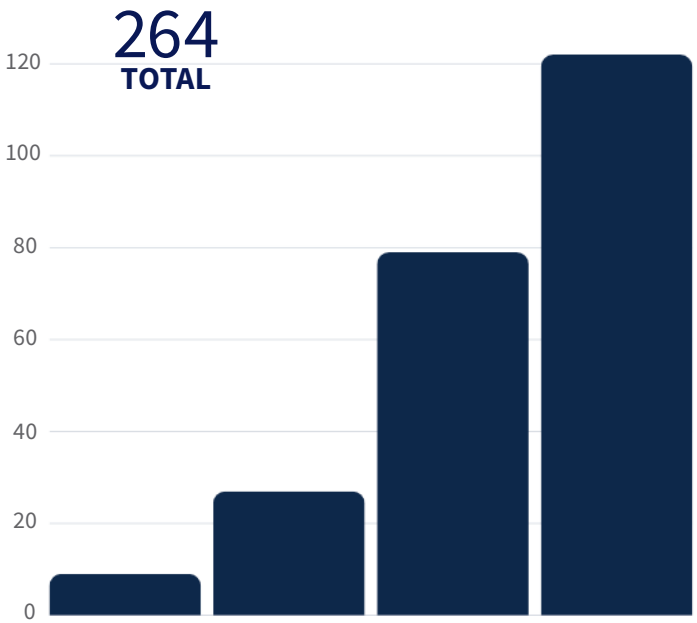
To learn more, contact Deanne Johnson, senior assistant dean for advancement, at 217-333-0752 or jhns@illinois.edu; or Judy Schneider, UIF director of gift planning, at 217-244-3351 or judiths@uif.uillinois.edu.

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. See uif.uillinois.edu for more info.

Media by the Numbers

Thanks to the generous support of our College of Media donors, we awarded $145,245 more in scholarships in FY26 than FY25 and we awarded three new graduate scholarships. 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 FY26 donors at **media.illinois.edu/donors.**

SCHOLARSHIPS, INTERNSHIP SUPPORT, FELLOWSHIPS, AND AWARDS FY26



UNDERGRADUATES

9	27	79	122
Computer Science + Advertising	Media & Cinema Studies	Advertising	Journalism

GRADUATES

27

Fellowships, Assistantships, & Awards

STUDENT STATS

1,288
Undergraduate and graduate students

10%
International undergraduate students

27%
First-generation undergraduate students

$37,710
Yearly cost of attendance for a student taking 16 credit hours as an Illinois resident

NEW BUSINESS FY26

Including new gifts, pledges, grants, and bequests

$3,821,617
Amount of gifts

36
First-time donors

306
Number of donors

520
Number of gifts

SCHOLARSHIP STATS FY26

$725,345
Amount of scholarships awarded by the College of Media

$3,807
Average College of Media award package for first-year students

$2,224
Average College of Media award package for sophomores, juniors, and seniors

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS

727
Admitted students

182
Continuing students

22%
First-year students who received scholarships

21%
Eligible undergraduate students supported through available funding

MAKE A GIFT

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Thank you from our students



"Growing up in Chicago, I became the first person in my family to go to a four-year university. When the College of Media provided me with a scholarship, it became just what I needed to not only go to my dream school, but to accomplish my future goals. I wish to become an entrepreneur and own my own business that benefits teenagers."

—Desmariah, Advertising



"The University of Illinois was always known as prestigious, but knowing that there are generous donors who support the institution, including its mission and its students, really shows how impactful the school is to its alumni community. I appreciate your support in giving me a chance to change the world one day."

—Zoe, Computer Science + Advertising



"I am so honored to be a recipient of a scholarship. This means a lot to me as someone who has fallen in love with journalism because of the incredible program here at the University of Illinois. The passion and care every professor and student here has shown has helped me grow immensely. I hope to truly give a voice to the voiceless."

—Tristan, Journalism



"I chose Illinois because I wanted to study film not only as an art form, but also as a way of understanding society, history, and people from different backgrounds. By easing financial pressure, this scholarship will give me more time and resources to invest in my coursework, research, and creative work, especially my next film."

—Jingxiang (Keem), Media & Cinema Studies