



# COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA

## Combining media literacy and cutting-edge scholarship

The mission of the Department of Communication and Media is to study and teach about the mass media, new media, and our expanding digital environment. As some of the most powerful institutions in American society and the world, the media affects every aspect of our lives. Research, teaching, and public outreach in the department focus on the mass media and digital media in four particular areas: their centrality to everyday life, their enormous influence on culture, their role in shaping our identities, and their impact on democracy. We advance public understanding of the impact of the media by highlighting the research and writing of our faculty and graduate students and the many activities of our undergraduate students. Our national and international reputation is consistently in the top ten as we continue to hire outstanding faculty, recruit gifted graduate students, and engage deeply with our undergraduates. Our ongoing goal is to enhance the visibility and reputation of our department while also creating more opportunities for cutting-edge research, teaching, and public outreach.

Students in our undergraduate program develop strong media literacy while gaining a broad-based liberal arts education. They have the opportunity to explore how people gain knowledge from and are persuaded by the media, and how the media influence attitudes toward gender roles, race relations, aggressive behavior, and health behavior. Our courses emphasize critical thinking to enable students to develop a portfolio of analytical and practical skills that prepare them to be active and engaged citizens and professionals once they graduate.

Our undergraduates are well prepared for careers in journalism, publishing, market research, public relations, data analysis, digital production, advertising, and applications of social media. In addition, they successfully pursue graduate work in a number of fields, including law, business, and public policy. The department stands out from communications programs at many other institutions because it focuses on a theoretical, analytic, and historical understanding of the media that includes the deep integration of the social sciences and the humanities.

The department innovates our curriculum regularly, including the addition of a “Communication in Action” component that helps students recognize the many ways that communication and media are central to so many human endeavors. Gifts to support research and teaching provide resources to explore and address important developments in communications and media, especially the digital media, generative artificial intelligence, and the accelerated global flow of media content and creation. Gifts allow Michigan to pioneer in crucial new areas of study.

## ALUMNI CONNECTION CONSORTIUM

The department invites U-M communication alumni back to campus for various events. Our undergraduates benefit from these networking opportunities and from hearing from our alumni about their work, how they got their jobs, and how they transitioned from college to career. Returning alumni have worked at Comedy Central, Lifetime, Nickelodeon, ESPN, USA Today, Edelman PR, The Martin Agency, and elsewhere. We have created a program of invited alumni who offer mini-courses in their professional areas. These events and courses have a transformative effect on students and lead to internships and jobs. We are seeking gifts of \$10,000 yearly to our strategic fund to support these programs.

## FUND FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Gifts of \$10,000 annually will provide support for our graduate students in their research and progress through the program. Graduate Student Instructors play a crucial role in our curriculum, and many of them have become beloved teachers and mentors to our undergraduates. They are also scholars whose work creates the next generation of knowledge about the media and society, and their work is honored by this fund. The fund was established by the very generous bequest from the Charles M. Conlon Estate. Mr. Conlon graduated from the journalism program.

## RECRUITMENT INITIATIVE FOR SPORTS AND FASHION MEDIA

We seek to recruit faculty working on sports and/or fashion media, both of which are hugely profitable parts of local, national, and global media. We are creating new opportunities for our students and faculty to engage with communications as they occur in the sports industry and the fashion industry, industries where many of our alumni have impressive and successful careers. An expendable investment of \$20,000 - \$50,000 will facilitate workshops, shadowing opportunities, field trips to industry sites, and new ways of engaging with our alumni who work in this area.



**“Through the various essays I have had the opportunity to write and the readings which have forced me to think in a way I did not know was possible, I feel more ready than ever to enter the workforce. I am also grateful for all the group work which I have had to complete as it has helped me become a better leader and communicator, which is another key soft skill I can bring into the workforce post-grad. Moreover, working for the Communication Department as a peer advisor has been an immense pleasure, and it has been very fulfilling guiding students regarding the major.”**

**–Sreya Sista, A.B. '24**



## UNDERGRADUATE ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE

We seek to increase the sense of belonging among our undergraduate students while also recruiting more students to be a part of our community as majors and minors. Many students haven't been exposed to all the opportunities a degree in Communication and Media can offer while others are constrained in how much they can participate in the life of the department. Support of \$15,000 annually to our new Undergraduate Fund for Belonging will help us provide support for more students to participate in departmental activities, such as summer internships. It will also help us do more programming to enhance our students' sense of the department as a place where they can find an intellectual home.

## SUMMIT ON NEWS AND MISINFORMATION

This fund supports a large annual event focused on the role of the media in both spreading and also stopping misinformation. The event will include workshops, high level lectures, hands-on practicums, and poster sessions. Local, national, and global media figures will be invited to participate. An expendable investment of \$20,000 - \$40,000 will help make this summit a reality.

## GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Graduate funding of \$1M endowed or \$50,000 annually is an extremely pressing need in the department, especially because we compete with private universities with more resources to recruit the best and the brightest students. Solid fellowship funding enables our students to complete their work more expeditiously and gain more visibility for their research. Because of the prestige of the department and the university, our recent Ph.D.s have received job offers from other top schools in the country.



*"From classes that are constantly pushing me to think critically about the content I consume, how different rhetorics are employed in the digital world, and how I can become a more conscious consumer, this major has holistically shaped the way I engage with online platforms. Not to mention I was able to pursue an internship in social media marketing thanks to grant funding from the department!"*

—BROOKLYN BLEVINS, A.B. '24

## VISITING FACULTY PROGRAM

A visiting faculty program would bring domestic and international scholars to Michigan for a semester to teach our undergraduate and graduate students in the professor's area of expertise. These visitors would also have the opportunity to collaborate with our faculty on research. Support of \$1M endowed or \$50,000 annually is needed to make this program a reality.

## RESEARCH CENTER IN GLOBAL MEDIA

In our increasingly interconnected world, the global flows of news, entertainment and information have become a foundational part of everyday life. Our students need to understand their impact on culture, politics, and the economy. This center will be devoted to expanding our students' global horizons and to increasing, through the research it sponsors, public understanding of media and globalization. Given the breadth of expertise of our faculty and graduate students, Michigan has the opportunity to establish a highly prestigious research center that will shape scholarly agendas and teaching on these and other topics. There is no such center anywhere in the U.S., and its creation would make Michigan a pioneer, nationally and internationally, in this area at a cost of \$30,000 - \$100,000.

- Center Planning Workshop—\$40,000 expendable: To map out the aims, scope, activities, and funding sources of the center, we will invite global leaders from academia, public policy institutes, and private enterprises to campus for this two-day workshop. Funding will cover travel, lodging, food, facilities, and honoraria for participants.
- Visiting Scholar Program—\$25,000 annually: This program will bring distinguished international scholars to campus for lectures, classroom visits, and seminars.
- Biennial Conference on Global Media—\$40,000 biennially
- Graduate Research Assistant—\$15,000 annually
- Undergraduate Internship—\$5,000 annually

## RESEARCH PROGRAM SUPPORT

In order to support the ongoing research of faculty and graduate students in the areas of media and identity, and of communications and the public interest, the department seeks to establish named endowed, designated research funds. An endowed gift of \$1M or \$50,000 annually would support research on a variety of media, including generative artificial intelligence, television and film, video games, magazines, advertising, the internet and wireless communications, social media, software studies, and data mining. Supported research could include work on democracy and the media; media violence and aggression; health and the media; children and the media; media and identities; media policy and regulation; social media; media and the environment; the history, evolution, and impact of communications technologies; and media and community building. Gifts may support research in any of these specific areas or may designate a gift to be discretionary.

## MICHIGAN PUBLIC SPEAKING CENTER

Over the next several years, we plan to create the Michigan Public Speaking Center, which will offer resources, support, and practice space for students across the university to develop and refine speaking and presenting skills. The expectations of an effective presentation are often unstated or less developed than in other assignment types at the university. The Michigan Public Speaking Center will assist students in decoding the criteria of a presentational assignment to help them make strategic decisions to support their success. A dedicated center on campus will also be a resource to instructors looking to include or refine presentational assignments in their courses. Over time, the Resource Center will be well-positioned to be a resource for the whole university. An expendable gift of \$150,000 - \$300,000 will support:

- Center planning—\$40,000 expendable: As an initial step to map out the aims, scope, activities, and funding sources of the center, we will invite leaders from academia, public relations institutes, and private enterprises to campus for a two-day workshop. Funding will cover travel, lodging, food, facilities, and honoraria for participants.
- Staffing Support—\$30,000 expendable: Establishing the Center requires skilled staffing support. Funding will establish two staff positions to create and oversee the activities of the center.
- Counselors—\$80,000 expendable: Funding is needed to compensate the Center's counselors. We intend to hire two permanent counselors as well as counselors paid by the hour, which will include graduate students as well as undergraduate student peer mentors
- Graduate Research Assistant—\$20,000 expendable
- Undergraduate Internships—\$5,000 expendable

### WAYS TO FUND YOUR GIFT

Your partnership connects the college's rich past to a boundless and bright future. You can change lives with gifts of cash, pledges, or appreciated securities, and create a meaningful legacy through your bequest, trusts, gift annuities, and other planned gifts. Your generosity makes an impact on what's next, for a better tomorrow.

*for what's next* ▶

**Look to Michigan**

LSA Advancement // College of Literature, Science, and the Arts  
309 Maynard Street, Suite 200 // Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2273  
P. 734.615.6333 // F. 734.647.3061 // [lsa.umich.edu/comm](http://lsa.umich.edu/comm)