

A Proposal to Rename the School of Journalism to The School of Communication and Journalism

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September 24, 2020

Introduction

In the midst of a global pandemic and a looming upheaval of higher education, it is incumbent upon all academic units to help Stony Brook University expand its reputation as the flagship university of the SUNY system. As one of the nation's leading research institutions, Stony Brook offers access and opportunity to its students through distinctive and competitive programs. The School of Journalism is ready and eager to expand its role in carrying out the University's educational and research mission.

Over the past 18 months, the School's leadership and faculty have developed a robust vision for the future and taken significant strides toward achieving that vision. We are creating a School that includes a stronger research enterprise, leads the nation in critical academic disciplines, and serves to draw competitive students and faculty to the institution.

The School's progress is spearheaded by its ambitious yet achievable plans to transform it from a School of Journalism to a School of Communication and Journalism (SoCJ). Our School already home to significant programs and assets that align with and underscore varied definitions and approaches to communication. It embraces academic programs in journalism, mass communication, and (science) communication – all vital branches of the broad field of communication. It serves as the academic home of the Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science and houses the Marie Colvin Center for International Reporting and the Center for News Literacy. Each of these centers also plays a critical role in education and research, in alignment with the national and international fields of communication. The School will soon offer a new B.S. program in mass communication and an M.S. program in science communication, both of which are distinctive and leverage SBU's strengths. All of these programs hold, or have been designed to meet, the standards for accreditation set by the [Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication](#), the leading national organization in its field.

In its partnership with the Alda Center, the School boasts a strong portfolio of communication research and academic capacity. The name "School of Journalism" no longer accurately describes our expanded program and mission. We seek a new name that will send a signal to the University, to prospective students and faculty, and to our peer institutions in the AAU. Faculty have expressed enthusiastic support for changing our name.

With a clear vision for the future, we seek approval from the appropriate University governing bodies to change the name of our academic unit from the School of Journalism to the School of Communication and Journalism. Based on the criteria set forth by the University for modification of an academic unit, we are confident that such a change is in the best interest of the School and of the University.

Rationale

We offer the following reasons, outlined in accordance with SBU's criteria for modifying a school or college, to support our request to change the name of the School of Journalism to the School of Communication and Journalism.

1. Centrality and Value

The status of Communication as a separate, distinct, and critically important discipline is a well-established fact in academe. Several premier national and international organizations have given shape to the interdisciplinary field of communication, including the [National Communication Association](#) (NCA), the [International Communication Association](#) (ICA), and the [Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication](#) (AEJMC) and a number of specialized topical organizations such as [the International Environmental Communication Association](#). According to the National Communication Association (NCA), the discipline's leading professional organization, communication is the "discipline that studies all forms, modes, media, and consequences of communication through humanistic, social scientific, and aesthetic inquiry. Communication constructs the world and is relational, collaborative, strategic, and adaptive." Communication serves as an umbrella term that encompasses the disciplines of mass communication and journalism.

Students at the undergraduate and graduate levels are increasingly earning degrees in communication and related fields, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. In 1999-2000, nearly 56,000 undergraduate communication degrees were awarded, compared to more than 96,000 degrees in 2018-2019, according to the IPEDS Data Center. The increase at the graduate level is similar, from approximately 5,000 degrees to more than 10,000 over the same time period.

Communication degrees, especially compared to those in other high-demand fields such as STEM and the health professions, are relatively inexpensive for universities to offer. Yet with a degree in communication, a student is prepared to enter any number of fields. In addition to traditional careers in media organizations, graduates are prepared for careers in public policy and government, outreach and community relations, public relations and marketing, and research, among dozens of others at private, nonprofit, and government organizations.

It is detrimental to its reputation that SBU, the flagship public institution in New York State currently lacks programs in communication fields, including science communication and mass communication. Now that approval of such programs is imminent, the University should boldly proclaim that it is a player in this vital field. The presence of the Alda Center heightens the strength of our standing in communication, and the Alda Center will enhance the reputation of a university that offers cutting-edge degrees in communication, mass communication, and journalism.

2. Conformity with the campus's overall Academic Strategic Plan

This change will enhance four of the six core goals of Stony Brook's Academic Plan.

The plan encourages all academic units to **implement innovative strategies to enhance graduate and undergraduate education to develop world-renowned academic programs that foster student productivity and success.**

Through a robust partnership between the School of Journalism's recruitment staff and the Admissions Office, we have observed that many prospective students choose to pursue their education elsewhere because of an interest in communication, mass communication, or related fields of study. While journalism has enjoyed a healthy and steady enrollment, we have reached a ceiling that mirrors national enrollment trends for journalism programs. At the same time, enrollments in communication and mass communication are increasing. Students who wish to pursue communication degrees other than journalism are unwilling to commit to the University's journalism program and choose other institutions for their degrees. Data from a survey the

School sends out regularly to prospective students after they have committed to a college – be it SBU or another institution – supports this trend. Nonmatriculated first-year students surveyed in 2016 and 2018 reported enrolling at regional peer competitor institutions such as Boston University, Hofstra University, New York University, Northeastern University, Penn State University, and Syracuse University. All of these institutions offer additional programs within the field of communication and/or have a School or College of Communication.

Additionally, more than 16 percent of students nationwide surveyed in 2016 indicated they had plans to major in communications or public relations. In 2018, about 20 percent of students surveyed indicated the same plans. Anecdotally, students and parents alike have expressed concern about enrolling in a program with limited opportunities should a student decide to change their major course of study. These questions and concerns – especially among the parents of first-year prospective students – increase each year.

The School reacted to these trends by creating two new degree programs: The Bachelor of Science in Mass Communication and the M.S. in Science Communication. Both are awaiting final approval from SUNY and the New York State Education Department. The Mass Communication program stands out among its competitors for its commitment to connecting mass communication research and theory to practical, career-building applied learning opportunities. The final documentation was submitted to SUNY in late April 2020, and the School anticipates launching the degree in time for Spring 2021 enrollment. In addition to current faculty, several of whom have extensive academic and professional experience in communication fields, the School recently hired another faculty member whose research encompasses health communication, media effects, and social influence.

The new Master of Science in Science Communication will create a professional trajectory and career path for scientists seeking to use their specific expertise to engage members of the public, including fellow scientists, funders, policymakers, and others, and to enhance awareness of the importance of science. This program is also awaiting final approval from SUNY and the State Education Department, and we anticipate that recruitment activities will begin in Spring 2021. This degree, as well as two advanced graduate certificates in Science Communication and Health Communication, leverage the unique and acclaimed Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science – the leading science communication training organization in the country, which has trained 15,000 scientists and researchers from around the world.

These programs emphasize communication instead of journalism and will constitute the majority of academic programs available through the School of Journalism. Because of this, we feel strongly that housing such programs in a renamed School of Communication and Journalism is a more appropriate and accurate reflection of our mission and will serve to attract more prospective students.

The plan's second aim is to improve educational **access** to underrepresented groups

The field of communication has a long history of supporting educational access to underrepresented groups. Our accrediting organization, AEJMC, highlights its commitment to a multicultural society in its mission statement and requires evidence of dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in faculty hiring and in curricular offerings. Programs cannot become accredited without evidence to support this commitment. The NCA supports a Social Justice Exchange and has Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racism Resource books for members. Both the study of DEI and the integration of best practices into teaching and communication practice have been front and center in the field. NCA has inclusivity explicitly detailed in its mission statement. ICA's

mission statement also highlights and has a thorough statement on the importance of DEI. Because our School is accredited by AEJMC and is connected to NCA and ICA, we advance their missions of dedication to DEI in all our practices.

Journalism as a career, like many other fields, has been traditionally dominated by white men. Though this has started to change, the profession still lacks significant representation from underrepresented groups. Communication, as a field, is far more attractive to such groups. According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), 82 percent of reporters and anchors identify as white, while fewer than 7 percent identify as Black, and 9 percent each as Asian or Latinx. By contrast, professionals in other media and communications fields are 67 percent white, 14 percent Black, 11 percent Asian and 35 percent Latinx.

The Alda Center has partnered with the University Office of Diversity to offer an online workshop, "Collaborating across Perspectives," to individual teams this year. This workshop was developed thanks to a grant from the University's Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Initiative. The workshop helps teams embrace honest and effective communication; learn to recognize personal communication habits and abilities; and build trust through empathy. More than 20 groups across campus have expressed interest in bringing this workshop to their team.

The School of Journalism is already relatively diverse when compared to the rest of the University. We are deeply committed to making the School an even more diverse and inclusive organization. We are confident that offering additional degree options will attract a broader spectrum of faculty, staff, and students to the School and the University.

We are proud that our recent faculty hires have all been members of underrepresented minority groups.

The fourth aim outlined in the plan is to expand Stony Brook's **international impact**.

The Alda Center stands out as the pre-eminent leader in science communication training and research. The Center conducts trainings internationally. The School's collective efforts in science communication are a draw to international students. As a recognized leader in the field of science communication research and training, faculty from the School and Center regularly engage with other thought leaders in the field at conferences, meetings, and other events held domestically and internationally. Panels and events that showcase our strengths in science communication draw significant crowds, and participants and attendees seek additional ways to engage with our faculty, expanding the School's reputation and footprint.

The new degree programs and the revised journalism curriculum we are launching are designed to attract international students. Journalism and mass communication both include a required course, JRN 303: Global Issues in Journalism, that highlights international issues. Other required courses (JRN 106, Introduction to Mass Media; JRN 301, The Changing News Business) and numerous electives (e.g., JRN 334, Science & Health Reporting; JRN 339, Foreign Reporting) provide topical focus on international issues.

Our faculty already have portfolios of research and scholarship that have international impact and feature international collaboration. We'd like to call attention to a few highlights. Dean Laura Lindenfeld, who earned her M.A. at the University of Bonn, has served as an international leader in the sub-field of Environmental Communication, helping found the International Environmental Communication Association and spearheading multiple international collaborations. Dr. Pablo Calvi, an associate professor of journalism, has written a book and

several book chapters about Latin American journalism. The recipient of several awards and fellowships, his reporting has appeared in publications across the U.S. and Latin America. Dr. Ruobing Li, the School's new assistant professor of mass communication, has authored or co-authored about a dozen papers that have appeared in leading academic journals, including *Health Communication*, *Journal of Advertising*, and *Communication Research*. The Alda Center's newest team member, Dr. Alix Dehayem Massop, has published numerous articles and received several prestigious grants related to her spectroscopy research, as well as for her work encouraging women to pursue careers in math, science, technology, and engineering fields. Dr. Massop has also served as the deputy chair of the Eastern Africa Network for Women in Basic Sciences, and she is a recognized leader and advocate for women in science. Dr. Jonathan Sanders served as Moscow correspondent for CBS News and has published two books on Russia. Professor Zachary Dowdy served as *Newsday's* United Nations correspondent for many years.

The plan's final aim is to secure Stony Brook's reputation as one of the **Top 20 Research Institutions in North America**.

At its founding in 2006, the School focused on undergraduate education and did not fully participate in SBU's research enterprise. Since Dr. Lindenfeld became Dean in 2019, the School has moved to become a full partner in our campus's research enterprise. New tenure-stream faculty hires must demonstrate a commitment to research and grant writing that can help elevate the school's research productivity and enhance Stony Brook's status as one of the top research institutions in the U.S.

Over the past year, our efforts to secure research funding in partnership with other campus departments and other universities have proved successful. Faculty have been awarded grants from the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The Dean is a collaborator on two NSF grants, in conjunction with the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences and other entities. The first of these grants, the Coastal Alliance Network for Visualization, Assessment, Science and Stakeholders (CANVASS) Project, was funded for \$500,000; Dean Lindenfeld is a co-PI on CANVASS. The second, the Greater New York Oxidant, Trace gas, Halogen and Aerosol Airborne Mission (GOTHAAM) Project, was funded for \$3.5 million. Dean Lindenfeld is also a co-PI on the project.

In addition, Center faculty recently collaborated on an NSF grant that resulted in the delivery of several Alda Center workshops and \$30,000 in revenue to the Center. The Center also has collaborated with the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences on a NOAA grant that resulted in Alda Center workshops and approximately \$10,000 in revenue to the Center. In a partnership with the University's Medical Science Training program, led by the Department of Pharmacology, Alda Center faculty collaborated on an \$80,000 NIH grant. Also, the Alda Center is regularly listed as a service provider to offer science communication training programs on grants from the NSF, NIH, and other leading funding agencies submitted by institutions around the country.

Communication as a research field is well established, with dozens of peer-reviewed journals focused on the field as a whole or in distinct sub-fields. These journals include the *Journal of Communication*, *Communication Research*, *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Science Communication*, *Journal of Health Communication*, and *Public Understanding of Science*, to name a few. Communication researchers also often partner with other faculty to co-produce research. They therefore publish in many major scientific journals as well. The [National](#)

[Academies of Science](#) has initiated an effort to highlight the Science of Science Communication. Alda Center and School faculty have been involved in advancing this effort.

The School's faculty, particularly those who hold joint appointments with the Alda Center, are committed to research. Several faculty have authored books and regularly publish articles in peer-reviewed journals. Faculty actively present their research at professional conferences. The School has a growing commitment to expanding its ranks of active researchers, as evidenced by recent hires along with those who have joined the faculty in the past six years. The School is also developing a program, unique among institutions of higher education and among the science communication community, to actively bridge recent research findings in this growing field with practice as developed by the science communication training community. This program will further expand the reputation and status of the Alda Center and will help recruit scholars and students to the Master and Advanced Graduate Certificate programs. These individuals will be conducting research at Stony Brook, delving into a field that is growing rapidly as society recognizes the vital importance of scientific engagement with the public at large.

3. Curricular Coherence

Strong curricular coherence exists between and among the fields of journalism, mass communication, and science communication. Each of these fields fundamentally explores ways to more effectively share information and perspectives and seeks to bring together people of diverse backgrounds. Communication is the underlying and essential theme of all of the programs offered by the current School of Journalism (BA in Journalism and our AGC), as well as those awaiting final approval (1 BS, 1 MS). The undergraduate degree programs share a core curriculum that enables students to move readily from journalism to mass communication or vice versa in their first two years. The core curriculum will enable the school to build a B.A. in Communication that shares overlap as well. Renaming the school to more accurately reflect its focus and the thrust of all its programs will better serve the University, its students, and other key stakeholders.

Renaming the School will also create the opportunity to bring the Alda Center, the nation's best science communication training organization, back into the fold of the School. The Center's strong commitment to, and reputation for, linking research in science communication and related fields to practice, further distinguishes the School from its competitors and will facilitate the integration of research and practice in the School. Re-establishing the Center as part of the School expands opportunities for research collaborations among the Center and School faculty, enhances the student experience at the graduate and undergraduate levels, and builds opportunities for collaboration across the University. It will strengthen the School's plans to become the most respected and highly competitive science communication research and education center in the nation.

4. Interdisciplinary Impact

Programs in communication are among the most popular in higher education, but according to the National Communication Association, strong communication programs integrate information from other disciplines through translational applications and research. The best programs, particularly at the graduate level, integrate other disciplines to strengthen students' abilities to conduct meaningful research and to apply their knowledge to different situations and challenges. All of the School's new communication programs - one bachelor's degree, two advanced graduate certificates, and the master's program - do this effectively and deliberately.

The Bachelor of Science in Mass Communication thoughtfully aims to integrate the study of the theories of mass communication with opportunities to use and test the theories through applied

research projects, capstones, and professional experience. Through a collaboration with Stony Brook's Program in Public Health, students may earn an advanced graduate certificate in Health Communication, a field that is increasingly important as advances in medicine and public health can create confusion among the public, a confusion that may risk the health of an entire population. These challenges, of course, have been heightened and exacerbated by the ongoing global pandemic. A strong collaboration with the Alda Center has informed the development of the Advanced Graduate Certificate in Science Communication and the Master of Science in Science Communication.

Alda Center courses are increasingly required by other degree programs across the University, including the M.S. in Biomedical Engineering, the Biomedical Entrepreneurship Concentration, the Advanced Graduate Certificate in Data and Computational Science offered through the Institute for Advanced Computational Science, the Master of Science and Ph.D. programs in Marine Conservation and Policy, the Ph.D. in Nursing, and the Master of Science in Neuroscience, among others. Already, students in these programs and others from around the University have expressed an interest, and some have enrolled, in the Advanced Graduate Certificate in Science Communication. We see a similar opportunity with the forthcoming Master of Science in Science Communication to partner with other Colleges, Schools, and Departments so they can offer their students an additional career option within STEM fields.

5. Enrollment Trends

As previously mentioned, a number of nonmatriculated students have reported enrolling at competitor institutions that offer students a general communication program or similar options. The importance of offering a diverse portfolio of communication-related programs is supported by anecdotal evidence gleaned from unscientific surveys of and conversations with prospective student, as well as by data from National Student Clearinghouse data, which is reported to Stony Brook's Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Effectiveness and shows where admitted students ended up enrolling. For example, in fall 2019, 13 first-year students admitted to the School of Journalism enrolled at Syracuse University; nine at Penn State; and seven at SUNY Albany. These institutions represent the top three SoJ competitors on the clearinghouse list. In addition to journalism, these institutions offer general communication programs.

The School has surveyed prospective students, and the data show that our enrollment is hampered by the limited program offerings. The School's new degrees, coupled with a new name, will help grow its enrollment.

With the anticipated launch of two degrees in communication - one at the undergraduate level and the other at the graduate level - enrollment in the School is expected to grow significantly. In the proposal for the new Mass Communication degree, we conservatively forecast an enrollment of 80 students within the first five years. We anticipate an additional 45 students in the MS in Science Communication within the same period. Our unique position as the only ACEJMC accredited school in the SUNY system will enhance recruitment opportunities. Both new degrees will be submitted for programmatic accreditation once they have been approved by the SED.

Fields across communication are growing, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Anticipated growth in [traditional media and communication jobs](#) is expected to keep pace with other industries, and result in approximately 30,000 new jobs over the course of the next decade.

We anticipate significant demand for the MS in Science Communication. Though the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has not yet identified science communication as a workforce, increasingly, job descriptions call for communication professionals with advanced degrees who also have strong scientific backgrounds. In developing the program, our faculty conducted a job market analysis, which revealed a growing need for such professional programs that require skills in writing, editing, multimedia storytelling, and web design. There are no academic programs that combine these two disparate educational experiences of STEM training and communication expertise. With no clear educational pathways into STEM communication careers, employers seeking these high-level hires must often compromise either scientific background or communication training.

6. *Future Vision*

Led by a dynamic and strategic Dean, the School has developed through collaboration with faculty and staff strong plans to leverage historical strengths in hands-on journalism, and expand research efforts. Coupled with the return of the Alda Center to the School, the unit will be well positioned to grow its reputation as a leader in the fields of journalism and communication, with a particular emphasis on science communication. This vision will serve the University, its students and faculty well, in addition to providing a diverse slate of opportunities for future investment from private donors and industry partners.

Even as the School planned for the two new degree programs, it positioned itself to look ahead for future academic development and expansion. All top-tier doctoral-granting communication programs, as identified by the NCA, offer translational applications to communication degrees. In creating degree programs that are designed to be transdisciplinary, through partnerships with the Alda Center and the Program in Public Health, Stony Brook's communication programs are ahead of the curve and will be highly competitive and distinctive. The two new degree programs and the two graduate certificates have been designed to align with this expectation to attract top-tier students and faculty and to encourage additional program development either at the terminal master's or doctoral levels.

7. *Cost/Benefit Analysis*

There are no additional costs associated with the proposed name change.

8. *Academic Program Reviews*

All programs, including those that are currently offered by the School have been designed to meet the standards set forth by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC), the leading national accreditation body of its kind.

When the School's founding Dean stepped down and a new Dean was appointed to the interim position, an extensive, intensive, and highly collaborative review of the existing journalism bachelor's degree was undertaken. As a result of that assessment, the entire journalism program was overhauled and streamlined to reduce time-to-degree and offer students a more realistic program that accounts for and responds to the changing needs of an industry that has been undergoing extensive transformations over the past decade or more. The new program, which was recently approved by SUNY and the State Education Department, educates and trains students to be multimedia journalists, equally able to write and produce stories for print, radio, television, and online outlets. A key goal has been and will continue to be a strong commitment to supporting journalism alongside other communication programs.

Though the new degree programs in Mass Communication (B.S.) and Science Communication (M.S.) have yet to be launched, leading communication scholars from the University of Texas,

Austin, and Bryant University served as external reviewers and were enthusiastic in their praise for both.

About the Mass Communication degree, one reviewer stated: “[T]his program is a powerful representation of what every mass communication, media, and journalism program should be. At a time of deep national political, social, economic, and racial division, when trust in the nation’s major institutions is at record lows, meaningful education in mass communication is essential for all citizens ... The strengths of the proposed program reside in its well-conceived curriculum, a strong and dedicated faculty, and its connection to an already successful undergraduate major housed in a successful School ... [T]he BS in Mass Communication, as proposed, suffers no weakness.”

About the Science Communication degree, the reviewers stated: “The proposed program represents something that is unique and desperately needed: a graduate degree designed to prepare STEM experts for successful careers as professional communicators ... The program boasts only strengths. It will be the first program to serve a crucial workforce need and will maximize the School and Alda Center’s unique capabilities.”

9. Reputation and Visibility

Schools of Communication are highly visible and respected across institutions of higher education. Some of the best journalism programs in the country are housed in communication schools or colleges, as demonstrated by NYU, Penn State, Syracuse University, USC Annenberg, Arizona State University, and UNC Chapel Hill.

Stony Brook’s School of Journalism has successfully attracted significant research grants from leading organizations, including \$3 million from the Simons Foundation. The Alda Center, as mentioned above, has been incredibly successful in securing funding for research, including another \$3 million from Simons, as well as grants from leading science communication organizations such as Rita Allen Foundation, The Kavli Foundation, the American Chemical Society, and others. With this funding, the Alda Center has expanded research and training opportunities, solidifying its reputation.

Stony Brook’s journalism faculty are well-respected journalists, who have won national and international awards, including the Pulitzer Prize. They have written books, started and led companies, and served their professional societies. Faculty in the School of Journalism and the Alda Center have been published in a variety of peer-reviewed and well-respected journals, including Health Communication, PLoS One, Journalism and Mass Communication Educator, Journal of Communication in Healthcare, and Thinking Skills and Creativity, among others.

10. Quality of Programs

The journalism program, now streamlined to reduce time-to-degree and to expand students’ knowledge and skills, emphasizes the hands-on learning that is irreplaceable and distinctive among peer journalism schools. Students have won national journalism awards and, upon graduation, pursue dynamic careers in journalism, media, and other industries. Our status as an ACEJMC accredited School signals high quality.

As mentioned above, the Alda Center is the leading organization of its kind in the country, responsible for training 15,000 scientists from around the world in the past decade. Science communication is a relatively rare field and no institutions in the state - public or private - have such a program.

11. Strengths of Programs

The Stony Brook Graduate School and a wide variety of graduate programs in STEM disciplines regularly encourage students and postdoctoral associates to take science communication courses with the School. Indeed, eight programs require their graduate students to take at least one science communication course. Additionally, we offer training and coaching opportunities to several University research competitions, including the Discovery Prize and the Postdoc Spotlight.

Conclusion

Given the current environment and the expansive and unique vision that has been developed by the Dean and faculty over the past 18 months, the School of Journalism proposes changing its name and embracing the future as the School of Communication and Journalism.