

APPROVED
June 26, 2024

Melissa Bealon
Board Secretary Melissa Bealon

Item #G-3
June 26, 2024

**NEW UNITS OF INSTRUCTION, PUBLIC SERVICE,
AND RESEARCH AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: This item requests approval of four degree programs and one center at five public universities.

Action Requested: That the Illinois Board of Higher Education approve the following:

Eastern Illinois University

- Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education in the Prairie Region

Illinois State University

- Bachelor of Science in Data Science in the Central Region
- Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science in Sports Communication in the Central region

University of Illinois Chicago

- Government Finance Research Center in the Chicago Region

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

- Master of Science in Game Development in the Prairie Region

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**NEW UNITS OF INSTRUCTION, PUBLIC SERVICE,
AND RESEARCH AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**

By statute, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) is responsible for approving new on-campus and off-campus units of instruction, organized research, and public service, and units of administration proposed by public university governing boards. The Board's approval criteria, defined in rules adopted for administering the statute, addresses university mission, academic control, faculty and staff, support services, financial resources, student demand, curriculum, statewide need, and congruence with Board policies and priorities. In addition to the approval criteria in rules, each new program was reviewed for its contributions to the goals of *A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Pathways to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth*, which sets forth new priorities to guide Illinois higher education. Staff recommendations are based on analyses of application materials and responses to staff questions.

Executive Summary – Public Institutions

Eastern Illinois University

- Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education

Eastern Illinois University (EIU or University) requests authorization to offer a Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education in the Prairie Region. The 36-credit-hour online program will provide an accessible, efficient route to teacher licensure for candidates who possess a qualifying undergraduate or graduate degree. The format is conducive to place-bound and nontraditional candidates who would not be able to complete a traditional, on-campus program. The full-year residency enables candidates to select unpaid, paid, or third-party funded placements in their local communities. Completion of the program leads to an Illinois Professional Educator License Learning and Behavior Specialist I.

The University has laid out an equity plan that involves closing gaps in who enrolls, persists, and completes degrees in the field. Embedded strategies exist within the proposed program's curricular and academic support framework to promote student success. Programs and offices across campus are designed to reduce barriers and intentionally connect students with resources and experiences necessary to thrive at EIU. These programs are designed to facilitate successful student engagement and retention through mentoring, community building, advising, supplemental instruction and academic support. Lastly, both EIU and the Department of Special Education, where this program will be housed, offer high-impact practices to support student retention and success including an intensive teaching residency and involvement in teaching-related student organizations.

There are policies in place to ensure faculty members possess the training, credentials, and qualifications to provide instruction in the proposed program. The University has sufficient library, technology, staff, and financial resources in place to support the program.

Approval request summary, including staff conclusion, follows in Attachment A.

Illinois State University

- Bachelor of Science in Data Science in the Central Region

Illinois State University (ISU or the University) is seeking authorization to offer a Bachelor of Science in Data Science in the Central Region. The program will be an interdisciplinary program as a concerted effort from ISU's College of Arts and Sciences, College of Applied Science and Technology, and College of Business. The three core curricular areas include mathematics and statistics, information technology and computer science, and an applied sequence tied to the student's future career path. Administratively, the program will be managed by the Department of Mathematics, however, the program will boast a unique curriculum committee. The committee will be comprised of faculty representatives from the Department of Mathematics, Information Technology, Marketing, Accounting, Health Sciences, Politics and Government, and Sociology. The curriculum-focused Associate Deans from CAS, CAST, and COB will also participate on the committee creating an interdisciplinary team for the program.

The proposed program will contribute to both the strategic plans of IBHE and ISU by providing accessible education which contributes to addressing the emerging and changing workforce needs of the state with competitive, above-average salaries, which will help reduce equity gaps. ISU has plans to recruit diverse students in the proposed program, by utilizing intentionally designed recruitment and retention strategies. ISU has structured guidance for achieving student, faculty, and programmatic equity, diversity, and inclusion goals, including support of recruitment activities which the BS in Data Science will adopt. ISU has several programs in place for students to achieve academic goals with financial support. The purpose of dedicated financial commitment is to support the recruitment, retention, and graduation of underrepresented and underserved populations and reduce barriers to completing a higher education degree.

The field of data science, as a stand-alone academic major, is still new in higher education. The National Center for Education Statistics established a Classification of Instructional Programs code in 2020 for data science focused academic programs. There are 11 bachelor's level data science programs throughout Illinois, with no programs being offered in ISU's home Central region. There is substantial demand for data scientists in Illinois and the nation even though this is a new field for higher education. Projected job openings are expected to grow by 28.9 percent in Illinois and 35.2 percent nationally by 2030 and 2032 respectively. The median wage for data scientists is more than double the national average. The national average is \$46,310 in comparison to data scientists who on average earn \$103,500. ISU's program has great potential to provide opportunities for graduates to find employment with substantial compensation which would allow them to contribute to the economy of Illinois.

There are policies in place to ensure faculty members possess the training, credentials, and qualifications to provide instruction in the proposed program. The University has sufficient libraries, technology, staff, and financial resources in place to support the program.

- Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science in Sports Communication in the Central region

Illinois State University is seeking authorization to offer a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science in Sports Communication in the Central region. The proposed program will be housed in the

College of Arts and Sciences within the School of Communication. Students will learn methods and techniques for sports communication in a variety of formats, media, and contexts to prepare for careers as sports reporters and writers, photojournalists, radio and television announcers, producers and directors, recreational sports promoters, and public relations specialists. The program will require 42 credit hours of major courses at the 200 and 300 level toward the 120-credit hour (minimum) graduation requirement for an undergraduate degree. ISU endeavors for the program to support the success of historically underserved and underrepresented students and produce a diverse cohort of sports communication graduates. Moreover, the proposed program seeks to address workforce needs in the sports industry while promoting cultural understanding, lifelong learning, civic engagement, and community outreach. There are policies in place to ensure faculty possess the training, credentials, and qualifications to provide instruction in the proposed program. The University has sufficient library, technology, and financial resources to support the program.

Approval request summary, including staff conclusion, follows in Attachment B.

University of Illinois Chicago

- Government Finance Research Center

The University of Illinois Chicago (UIC or the University) requests authorization to establish the Government Finance Research Center (GFRC) within the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs in the Chicago Region. Originally approved as a temporary unit of administration on February 15, 2018, the GFRC has supported the practice of public finance in state and local governments in the greater Chicago area, throughout Illinois, and across the United States by identifying, planning, and executing research, providing reports and informed analyses, offering educational opportunities and technical training, and offering inclusive venues to convene national and location discussions on fiscal and governance issues.

The GFRC has demonstrated success in its mission and secured nearly \$3.5 million in grant and contract funding since temporary approval. No state funds were used to support the creation of or are needed for continuing operations of the GFRC. The base endowment funding for the GFRC will continue indefinitely and is expected to grow slightly every year depending on the performance of the financial market. In the proposal, UIC has detailed goals for research, public service, and impact on national, state, regional, and local partnerships. The Center has, and will continue, a dedicated mission to help the government work better and improve the fiscal health of government bodies at all levels. Specific activities of the GFRC include: conducting and publishing unbiased, applied research; translating and disseminating important policy-relevant research findings into research briefs and policy bites for use by policymakers and legislative staff; maintaining data portals for public use; offering commentaries and op-eds for a variety of media outlets; maintaining a content-rich blog with posts written by well-known experts in the field, among other activities. This work is supported by the GFRC staff, graduate research assistants, affiliated faculty from UIC and other Illinois universities, and professionals working throughout the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. Each scholar and practitioner bring a broad range of experience, deep knowledge of government and public finance, and specialized skills to every activity undertaken. The design of the GFRC emphasizes local level connections to the state and federal levels. Focusing on state and local government finance allows a bottom-up understanding of the possibilities and constraints on government actions that most closely connect to the daily lives of citizens and residents. The Center's work is timely in the post-pandemic era as governments seek research-based solutions to ever-evolving challenges.

The University has proposed mission and goals, plans for academic control, support services, financial resources, and demonstrated need in alignment with statewide higher education priorities.

Approval request summary, including staff conclusion, follows in Attachment C.

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

- Master of Science in Game Development

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is seeking authorization to offer a Master of Science in Game Development in the Prairie Region to provide professional training for students interested in working in game studios, game-adjacent industries, or other workplaces where game-related skills are in demand. This interdisciplinary program will be organized around university-industry partnerships. Students will gain professional experience as they acquire the skills for career success. The program will emphasize the development of serious games, ethics, and inclusivity and will foster critical skills in collaboration, communication, integration, and professional business practices along with technical game design skills. Students will pursue one of five concentrations: Art, Design, Production, Programming, or Narrative. All courses will be offered online and will include synchronous, asynchronous, and flipped learning designs, with most courses including a live component with the instructor. The online format will allow non-traditional and place-bound students to enroll, including professionals already working in full-time jobs who wish to retrain for the game industry or who are already in game development and wish to further their skills in other design areas.

Approval request summary, including staff conclusion, follows in Attachment D.

The staff recommends adoption of the following resolutions:

The Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby grants to Eastern Illinois University authorization to grant the Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education in the Prairie Region, subject to the institution's implementation and maintenance of the conditions that were presented in its application and that form the basis upon which this authorization is granted.

The Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby grants to Illinois State University authorization to grant the Bachelor of Science in Data Science and the Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science in Sports Communication in the Central Region, subject to the institution's implementation and maintenance of the conditions that were presented in its application and that form the basis upon which this authorization is granted.

The Illinois Board of Higher education hereby grants to University of Illinois Chicago authorization to establish the Government Finance Research Center in the Chicago Region, subject to the institution's implementation and maintenance of the conditions that were presented in its application and that form the basis upon which this authorization is granted.

The Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby grants to University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign authorization to grant the Master of Science in Game Development in the Prairie Region, subject to the institution's implementation and maintenance of the conditions that were presented in its application and that form the basis upon which this authorization is granted.

Eastern Illinois University

Proposed Degree Title in the Region of Authorization: Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education in the Prairie Region

Projected Enrollments and Degrees:

First Year Enrollment	Fifth Year Enrollment	Degrees Awarded Fifth Year
20	40	40

Background

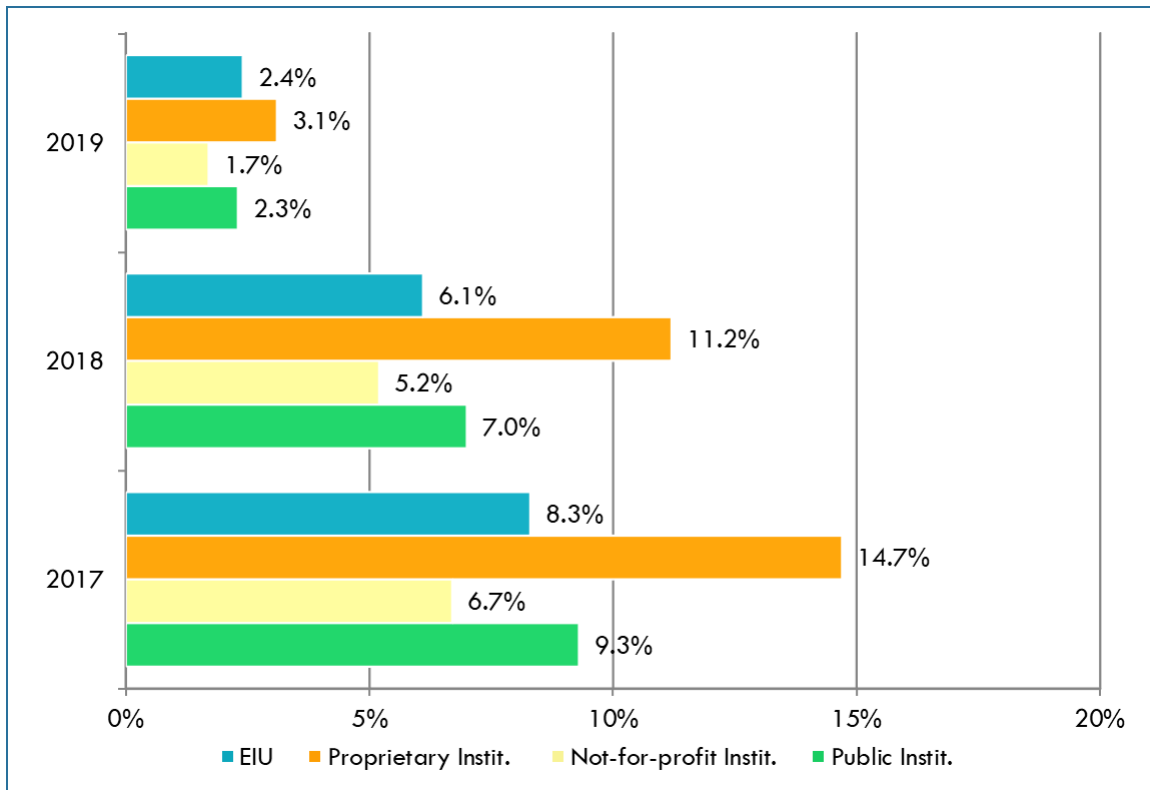
Eastern Illinois University (EIU or University) is seeking authorization to offer a Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education (*MAT in Special Education*) in the Prairie Region. EIU was involved for a number of years in the state's one-year-plus alternative certification program, however the program discontinued when the state required a two-year internship and interest declined from prospective students. In the interim, EIU has offered an on-campus path in which candidates may complete a full preparation program as non-degree post-baccalaureate candidates (this has typically taken three years to complete). This MAT program offers a 12-month online cohort program with a full-time, full-year residency requirement that will culminate in a graduate degree as well as a Professional Educators License. The program will be administered by the Department of Special Education (located in the College of Education) and will incorporate coursework from that department as well as the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Foundations.

Institutional Data

1050.30(b)(1)(H): Success in student progression and graduation rates across all existing approved programs, and success rates in programs preparing students for certification and licensure, shall be consistent with expectations in higher education and the appropriate related field of study. At a minimum, the Board shall consider these factors based on results for similar institutions. (i) Graduation rates, certificate and degree completion rates, retention rates, and pass rates for licensure and certification aligned with thresholds set by State nor national regulatory bodies. (ii) The success rate shall be, at a minimum, higher than those of the lowest quartile of these measures for similar Illinois institutions defined as open versus competitive enrollment institutions and primarily associate versus primarily baccalaureate granting institutions. Exceptions may be made to the lowest quartile if an institution is above the national average for these measures using the same comparison categories of institutions.

This section includes information about institutional and student success measures for each institution seeking program approval. The institution's rates will be compared to Illinois institutions from within a select comparison group and against the national standards or averages. For a proposed undergraduate program, this section will include undergraduate graduation rates, first to second year retention rates, student loan default rates, and any applicable licensure passage rates. For a proposed graduate program, this section will primarily focus on student loan default data since this measure also includes graduate students in the calculation.

Three-Year Cohort Student Loan Default Rate



Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), US Department of Education

Note: Due to the pause on federal student loan payment that began in March 2020, the cohort default rate for fiscal year 2020 is zero percent for the institution and all institution types. The national cohort default rate for fiscal year 2019 is 2.3 percent and zero percent for fiscal year 2020. A lower number is a positive indicator.

The three-year cohort student loan default rate is the percentage of a school's borrowers who enter repayment on certain Federal Family Education Loan Program or William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program loans during a particular federal fiscal year, October 1 to September 30, and default or meet other specified conditions prior to the end of the second following fiscal year.

Need

1050.30(a)(6): A) The unit of instruction, research or public service is educationally and economically consistent with the educational priorities and needs of the State of Illinois. B) The unit of instruction, research or public service meets a need that is not currently met by existing institutions and units of instruction, research or public service.

The rapidly growing shortage of public school teachers, particularly in rural areas and across all content areas, is well-documented. The declining number of high school graduates in Illinois, along with the perceived challenges of the teaching profession, have contributed to a long-term, statewide decline in the number of traditional undergraduates pursuing teacher education as a major. For several years, regional superintendents, district superintendents, and school principals have encouraged universities to develop creative approaches to teacher education that will leverage the willingness of nontraditional candidates (e.g., older students, career changers, place-

bound individuals) to enter the teacher workforce provided that an efficient, effective pathway could be provided. The teacher shortage in Illinois is projected to keep increasing for the next several years, and the proposed *MAT in Special Education* has the potential to provide an efficient and accessible pathway to licensure through the offerings of a well-established, long-term preparer of teachers in the state.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of special education teachers is projected to show little or no change from 2022 to 2032. In May 2023, the median annual wage for Special Education teachers was \$65,910, where the lowest ten percent earned less than \$43,530, and the highest ten percent earned more than \$114,360. Middle school special education teacher wages were \$66,600 per year with the lowest ten percent earning less than \$48,140, and the highest ten percent earning more than \$105,320.

Within the state of Illinois, the Special Education program falls within several occupational categories and subcategories under the Illinois Department of Employment Security. The projected growth in these occupations signals a potential for competent special education graduates. Thus, Eastern Illinois University's proposed program will meet workforce needs in preparing students to navigate the complexities of special education and ethics while contributing positively to public discourse and community development with empathy, leadership skills, and a sense of social responsibility.

Illinois Employment Projections, 2020-230 Special Education Occupations

Occupation Title	Employment 2020	Employment 2030	Employment Change (%)
Special Education Teachers, Preschool (25-2051)	413	429	16 (3.9%)
Special Education Teachers, Kindergarten/Elem. (25-2052)	10,991	11,353	362 (3.3%)
Special Education Teachers, Middle School (25-2057)	3,097	3,181	84 (2.7%)
Special Education Teachers, Secondary (25-2058)	7,464	7,668	204 (2.7%)
Special Education Teachers, All Other (25-2059)	986	1,047	61 (6.2%)
All occupations	6,044,269	6,542,650	498,381 (8.3%)

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security

A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth

The proposed Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education degree supports Goal 1, Equity of A Thriving Illinois to *close the equity gaps for students who have historically been left behind*. Eastern Illinois University's current racial and ethnic student profile is comprised of 11.9 percent African American, 14.2 percent Hispanic, 3.6 percent Asian, 1.9 percent from two or more races, and 0.1 percent Native American. Additionally, a broad and diverse set of students are represented across all socioeconomic groups including 46 percent Pell-Eligible students and 47 percent MAP recipients. EIU continues to focus efforts on recruiting and retaining a diverse student body including those who have been traditionally underrepresented and underserved.

Over the past decade, EIU has expanded its approach for monitoring student retention and graduation data disaggregated by race and ethnicity, as well as other factors. The University has developed a set of key performance indicators including first-time full-time (FTFT) cohort and new transfer demographics, as well as demographics by student type, socioeconomic status, and standing/progression. Data are reviewed and assessed each year by the Committee on Retention Efforts (CORE) and shared with internal and external shareholders. In 2021, the University expanded its progress-monitoring capacities by investing in Tableau software to move beyond simple indicators towards a dashboard that permits data-brushing. The first project was analyzing drop, withdraw, and fail (DWF) rates of classes and sections by race, ethnicity, gender, and major to determine what barriers might exist relative to the recruitment and retention of minority pre-service K-12 educators and beyond. All members of CORE, Enrollment Management, and the Provost's Advisory Council have access to the dashboard and utilize it to inform offerings and orientation registration strategies. The University also assesses the impact of high-impact practices on student success and participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement every three years to assess EIU's student performance relative to peers. Based on the data and a presidential charge to focus on student success for all learners, the Division of Academic Affairs initiated a student success task force that made a range of policy, practice, and structural recommendations that have been addressed over the past few years, including creation of an improved early alert system and streamlined, one-stop, online student services website.

Eastern Illinois University promotes social integration and connectedness among students by investing in and supporting student organizations. Candidates enrolled in the Master of Arts in Teaching program will be expected to participate in the student chapters of their respective professional organizations. Opportunities for participation will be created by establishing communication mechanisms for candidates to participate virtually with their peers via Zoom or similar technologies. Advisors, course instructors, and the residency supervisor will serve as a mentor to guide candidates and assist them in navigating and meeting the program requirements. The Associate Dean will cooperatively work with the Department Chair, Residency Supervisor, and the candidates to assure that field placements are consistent with residency requirements and the age range of licensure. Information and opportunities to participate in relevant professional conferences will be offered. The Dean of the College of Education has funds that can be used to assist candidates with professional organization memberships and conference registration fees. Faculty teaching in the MAT in Special Education can promote the importance of research by encouraging candidates to participate in the existing Graduate Student Research Fair and by allowing candidates to virtually present their research. Further, with the number of graduate on-line programs at EIU, discussions of offering an alternative Graduate Student Research Fair to support the research efforts of candidates across campus have been taking place.

The proposed program will also address Goal 2, Sustainability, *to build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions by finding ways to reduce the financial burden of education on students and their families*. Eastern Illinois University's historical value proposition has been to provide Illinois residents with a high-quality education at an affordable price point. For that reason, EIU continues to be the lowest cost of attendance of all four-year public institutions and has specifically developed scholarship programs that simultaneously support academic excellence and access. EIU's MAT in Special Education aims one of the most affordable programs for candidates earning a master's degree and initial special education licensure at \$12,090.00 for tuition for a 36 semester hour program.

EIU has intentionally designed several need-based aid programs that enable students to leverage financial aid and merit-based programs effectively and efficiently. A variety of full and partial coverage scholarship programs exist for students and their families. In addition to the scholarship programs, EIU's admissions team has also created online resources to support students of color. The University has created a web resource for minority students that aggregates outside scholarship resources. Similar online resources have been developed for undocumented students, veterans, and children of veterans. The Financial Aid Office's streamlined procedures are beneficial to nontraditional students making career changes and needing to maximize financial resources during the accelerated program experience. Specific to the Master of Arts in Teaching program, EIU has entered its fourth year of a partnership with the Golden Apple Foundation's "Accelerators" program. Participants in this program receive a stipend that assist in covering the cost of attendance plus some living expenses, and they are placed in a school of need for their residency and receive assistance in placement for their first professional placement.

The proposed degree program will contribute to Goal 3, *Growth, to increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth*. EIU regularly fields inquiries from nontraditional students who have earned an undergraduate or graduate degree and are interested in becoming educators. The proposed Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education program is responsive to the teacher shortage needs by providing candidates a pathway to earn a state required credential and provides candidates with the ability to start at a higher salary because of the acquisition of the master's degree. The largest barriers to pursuing this career path are time to completion and the requirement to attend classes on campus. Only about 20 to 25 percent of those that inquire can enroll, as a result. Offering this one-year, online program will enable candidates to complete the program efficiently and without having to leave their current living situation. Additionally, the Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education is an accelerated program that can be completed in three semesters compared to some of the other Master of Arts in Teaching programs offered in the state that can require two full years to degree completion. Consequently, candidates who successfully complete EIU's Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education will be in the workforce earlier than candidates who graduate from other universities.

EIU consulted with high school principals, school district leaders, and Regional Offices of Education to both design the proposed program and to develop recruitment strategies. Additionally, EIU worked with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) during the planning process to ensure the proposed program will meet state teacher licensure requirements. Formal approval for the program will be sought from ISBE prior to recruitment and enrollment of students. The Golden Apple Foundation has partnered with EIU to recruit and support students in the program, including a generous stipend that assists with program costs and which includes a condition to teach in Illinois for four years after program completion, thus incentivizing candidates to remain in Illinois. Due to the significant teacher vacancies, Grow Your Own Illinois recruits candidates from both urban and rural areas. Candidates then return to their home communities as a fully licensed special education teacher. Grow Your Own will support candidates who need tutoring, technology, and licensure exam study preparation materials.

Academic coursework for this program will be offered in an online format and will enable candidates to remain in their local communities while completing the program, and thus be available for residencies and employment in high-need, hard-to-staff K-22 school settings. The program includes a full-time, full-year residency component in which candidates will work in a K-22 school setting under the guidance of cooperating teachers, mentors, school administrators, and EIU residency coordinators. The residency is twice the length of the traditional student teaching semester,

and will incorporate not only practice teaching, but required experiences that will allow candidates to develop a profound understanding of their placement site in addition to the many factors that impact the effectiveness of schooling, including involvement in all aspects of school life and connections with the local community. Enhancing the educational outcomes of Illinois school students with mild to severe exceptionalities is key to developing the future post-secondary and career prospects, which in turn is key to the increased health of the state as a whole.

Comparable Programs in Illinois

Currently, there are two Masters of Arts in Teaching in Special Education at two independent institutions (National Louis University and Rockford University). Specifically in the Prairie region, there is only one proprietary institution (National Louis University) that offers a similar program. All programs are concentrated in the Chicago area so this online special education master's program would be the first of its kind at a public university in downstate Illinois. The proposed Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education distinguishes itself as a one-year online program catering to place-bound and nontraditional candidates who would not be able to complete a traditional, on-campus program.

Comparable Programs
Degrees Granted, Masters of Arts in Teaching in Special Education

Institution	Degree	Region	Sector
National Louis University	M.A.T. in Special Education	Prairie	Independent
Rockford University	M.A.T. in Special Education	Fox Valley	Independent

Source: IBHE Program Inventory

Mission and Objectives

1050.30(a)(1): A) The objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are consistent with the mission of the college or university. B) The objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are consistent with what the unit title implies.

The program is consistent with the purpose, goals, objectives, and mission of the University. The requested degree title reflects the program's objectives and curriculum.

Curriculum and Assessment

1050.30(b)(1) [applicable only to units of instruction]: A) The caliber and content of the curriculum must assure that the objectives of the unit of instruction will be achieved. B) The breadth and depth of the curriculum must be consistent with what the title of the unit of instruction implies. C) The admission and graduation requirements for the unit of instruction must be consistent with the stated objectives of the unit of instruction. D) Institutions must show the capacity to develop, deliver and support academic programs. Procedures and policies that will assure the effective design, conduct and evaluation of the degree programs under the academic control of the institution must be developed. Assessment plans must demonstrate that the institution has identified clear and appropriate program and student learning goals and has defined appropriate outcomes. Appropriate data must be collected and may be requested by the Board to show the level of student learning that has occurred as a result of participation in the institution's programs of study.

1050.30(a)(2): The design, conduct and evaluation of the unit of instruction, research or public service are under the direct and continuous control of the sponsoring institution's established processes for academic planning and quality maintenance.

Admission Requirements

A candidate interested in the MAT program must first be admitted to the University via the Graduate School. Applicants interested in the Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education program must meet the following requirements: pass a criminal history background check through the university's background check vendor; have an undergraduate or graduate degree with a minimum 2.75 GPA; have a formal letter of application summarizing the candidate's background, motivation for entering the teaching profession, and experience in working in public schools (if any); adherence to EIU's teacher education policies inclusive of passage of a criminal history background check through the College of Education's designated vendor; and submission of program acceptance letter acknowledging all program requirements.

The Graduate School and the Master of Arts in Teaching program do not require a standardized graduate exam. During orientation, candidates learn about teacher education requirements (Admission to Teacher Education, criminal background requirements, and speech and hearing clearance) and complete pre-completion paperwork for licensure. Additionally, residency placement requirements will be discussed and the graduate coordinator will field candidates' program questions.

Recruitment efforts for EIU's Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education program will involve various departments/units across campus. Since the proposed program is a graduate degree earning program, the recruitment of candidates is conducted by the Graduate School, Marketing and Communication unit, and the Department of Special Education. The efforts used to recruit graduate students include the sharing of marketing differentials that promote the quality of EIU's graduate programs through a variety of mediums such as texts, emails, social media, phone conversations, and face-face meetings. Because there are districts who are using alternative means to fill special education positions, contact and informational materials will be provided to K-12 partner districts for which EIU has a clinical memorandum of understanding (MOU) as well as Regional Offices of Education (ROEs). Additionally, to attract candidates who are underrepresented, efforts will be made to disseminate program materials and contact information to geographical areas (Champaign/Urbana, Decatur, Springfield, Metro East Area and suburban areas surrounding Chicago) in Illinois where there is disparity in the racial/ethnic diversity between faculty and students.

Wrap-around services for candidates enrolled in the Master of Arts in Teaching Program are designed to address the individual candidate needs to improve retention and program completion. The graduate advisor will lead the orientation and provide academic advisement for the new students. Online students will have the opportunity to meet virtually with Writing Center Consultants and access online library services and databases. Student support and accommodation are readily available for online students and include Disability Services, Testing Services, Technology Services and Counseling Services.

Curriculum

The Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education is a 36-credit-hour program that includes 12 hours of teaching residency. Candidates must pass the Illinois Learning Behavior Specialist I content test prior to entering their year-long Residency. A thesis is not required; the functional equivalent will be satisfied through the completion of the two-semester residency. The curriculum within the Master of Arts in Teaching program focuses on delivering evidence-based and culturally responsive pedagogy. Curricular equity is demonstrated throughout the course sequence by being intentionally conscious of how candidates' differences and backgrounds influence approaches to learning. Candidates are called upon to bring their social, cultural, economic, and geographical experiences to provide context for how they access and process learning. Based on the varying cultural contexts, faculty select and deliver curricular content in a manner that is relevant and promotes their academic success. Additionally, the program content is aligned with the Culturally Responsive Leading Standards initiative requiring teacher preparation programs designed to promote increased sensitivity and a more inclusive approach to matters of race, gender, sexual orientation, and exceptionalities in the curriculum.

Assessment of Student Learning

Eastern Illinois University has established processes to measure and analyze student learning outcomes data. All educator preparation programs use three different rubrics including "Impact on P-12", "Student Teaching", and "Dispositions" to assess all candidates at program completion. Students will construct a summative program portfolio during the second semester of residency to document competency in the program's learning objectives. The following assessment data for each cohort will be collected during the last half of the second semester of residency and analyzed in relation to program learning objectives during each summer:

- Grades from course assignments and courses;
- Residency supervisor evaluations;
- Content test results; and
- Teacher performance assessment results.

Support services exist throughout the University and Department to support student learning. Student progress is monitored through the semester using an alert system, grade checks, and advising appointments. Student teaching residency is a key component of the program, and students are assessed at multiple points throughout the program.

Program Assessment

Program evaluation will be conducted in a continuous fashion by the Department of Special Education. The following metrics will be used to inform ongoing course revision and program improvement as needed:

- Student learning in coursework;
- Candidate performance during the full-year residency;
- Candidate performance on required state educator assessments;
- Job placement and employer satisfaction data; and
- Candidate feedback

Data generated from observations will be used to determine if adjustment in residency expectations and experiences is needed to improve application by candidates. Ongoing candidate

feedback will be collected at multiple points during enrollment and five years after career placement. Sub-tests and components of these assessments will be correlated to program learning objectives to determine if expectations are being met and adjustments are warranted. Results will be analyzed to determine if the institution is meeting state expectations of 80 percent or higher pass rate. The analysis will be distributed to all program faculty and coordinators early in each fall semester, and at least one meeting will be conducted to discuss outcomes and make decisions about any program adjustments or the need to provide supports to program candidates. Lastly, this program will be part of the annual and periodic reviews by the Higher Education Learning Commission (HLC) and the Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs) for the specific content area programs within the overall program.

Facilities (space, equipment, instructional materials)

1050.30(a)(4): A) Facilities, equipment and instructional resources (e.g., laboratory supplies and equipment, instructional materials, computational equipment) necessary to support the high quality academic work in the unit of instruction, research or public service are available and maintained. B) Clinical sites necessary to meet the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service. C) Library holdings and acquisitions, owned or contracted for by the institution, that are necessary to support high quality instruction and scholarship in the unit of instruction, research and public service, are conveniently available and accessible, and can be maintained.

Existing facilities are sufficient to implement the proposed program. As this program will be taught online, there is no need for additional physical facilities. The campus's online technology infrastructure is appropriate to support program delivery, faculty innovations, and enhance student learning. The University possesses appropriate library resources with access to online databases, books, journal holdings, and other electronic resources, to support teaching and scholarly work.

Faculty and Staff

1050.30(a)(3): A) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff ensure that the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are met. B) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff, as evidenced by level of degrees held, professional experience in the field of study and demonstrated knowledge of the field, ensure that they are able to fulfill their academic responsibilities. At a minimum, faculty shall have a degree from an institution accredited by a U.S. Department of Education and/or Council for Higher Education Accreditation recognized accrediting body or a degree from another country evaluated for U.S. equivalency in the discipline they will teach or for which they will develop curricula at least one level above that of the courses being taught or developed. C) The involvement of faculty in the unit of instruction, research or public service is sufficient to cover the various fields of knowledge encompassed by the unit, to sustain scholarship appropriate to the unit, and to assure curricular continuity and consistency in student evaluation. E) Support personnel, including but not limited to counselors, administrators, clinical supervisors, and technical staff, that are directly assigned to the unit of instruction, research or public service, have the educational background and experience necessary to carry out their assigned responsibilities.

The University has identified institutional policies that ensure faculty and staff hired possess the training, credentials, and other related qualifications to provide instruction at the institution. Faculty teaching in the proposed program will have the appropriate qualifications. A formal faculty evaluation process is in place.

Eastern Illinois University supports faculty development through research release opportunities, research grant opportunities and professional travel support to enhance faculty professional development. In 2019, the University initiated a Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative (QI) that resulted in the formulation of a campus-wide plan to diversify faculty and staff for student success. The plan is in active implementation, and the search for a Senior Diversity Officer is underway to support the actions and goals of the plan. All faculty at EIU will be encouraged to participate in the QI program, which is aimed at understanding the hiring practices utilized at the University to ensure that best practices are employed to promote a diverse workforce. EIU is in the process of updating critical internal governing policies by redefining role, structure, and make up of search committees for faculty, administrative, and professional searches. In addition to the QI, EIU's President's Council on Diversity serves as a coordinating and critical resource for campus programming, problem solving, and innovation. The Council is complemented by the faculty-led Making Excellence Inclusive (MEI) which coordinates First Generation Study Day to recognize and celebrate first-generation students, faculty, staff, and alumni and hosts an annual campus conference for faculty, advisors, and professional staff at EIU. Over the next few years, the University will be closely monitoring hiring and retention across all demographic groups with the articulated goal to increase diversity across all employee groups and create a campus community that reflects the demography of the student community.

Eastern Illinois University's Faculty Development and Innovation Center has created a workshop on creating syllabi that enhances inclusivity. Faculty delivering on-line instruction must complete Online Course Development Institute (OCDI), Illinois Online Network's Master Online Teacher certificate or another documented and equivalent training activity before teaching program courses for the first time. Approximately \$250,000 has been set aside from the Congressional Direct Spending Grant to enhance faculty effectiveness in delivering on-line instruction. The funds will be used to provide additional training in online pedagogy and instructional design which leads to earning an On-line Teaching Certification. Although faculty are required to have OCDI training to deliver online instruction, Online Teaching Certification is not currently required but is encouraged. Open interactive faculty lab sessions will be provided to faculty to acquire or hone skills in technology being used in Illinois public schools and serve in aiding and troubleshooting for candidates who need to enhance their own skills. Faculty are also being trained in the application of the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards mandated by the State. Monitoring of training needs will be the purview of the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Foundations and the Council on Teacher Education (COTE). Faculty will be evaluated annually by peers and the Department Chair on the use of technology and additional training will be implemented as needed.

Fiscal and Personnel Resources

1050.30(a)(5): A) The financial commitments to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are sufficient to ensure that the faculty and staff and support services necessary to offer the unit of instruction, research or public service can be acquired and maintained. B) Projections of revenues necessary to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are based on supportable estimates of state appropriations, local tax support, student tuition and fees, private gifts, and/or governmental grants and contracts.

The University has adequate faculty, staff, and other instructional resources to administer the proposed program. Faculty loads and other resources will be adjusted to meet the program's

needs where appropriate. This will be achieved through increased efficiency in personnel and other resource usage in the current offerings of the departments and colleges.

Accreditation and Licensure

1050.30(b)(3)[applicable only to units of instruction]: Appropriate steps shall be taken to assure that professional accreditation needed for licensure or entry into a profession as specified in the objectives of the unit of instruction is maintained or will be granted in a reasonable period of time.

The proposed program will operate in alignment with existing approved and accredited teacher educator programs at EIU. These approvals, accreditations, and recognitions have had long-standing status with the Illinois State Board of Education, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

Program Information

1050.30(b)(2)[applicable only to units of instruction]: A) The information which the institution provides for students and the public shall include the following: i) An accurate description of the unit of instruction, including its objectives, length, and residency requirements if any; ii) Schedule of tuition, fees, and all other charges and expenses necessary for completion of the unit of instruction, cancellation and refund policies; iii) Student rights and responsibilities; iv) A statement regarding the transferability of college credits, including the fact that the decision to accept transfer credits is determined by the receiving institutions; v) A statement as to how the institution will advise students on the nature of the transfer process, including the importance of consulting with institutions to which the student may seek to transfer; vi) Evidence of arrangements for the transfer of courses or credits or both to institutional counterparts, when these arrangements exist; these arrangements are also known as articulation agreements; vii) A statement of the institution's most recent graduation rates and the number of graduates and enrollments as provided by the institution to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and any submission of data to satisfy Board reporting requirements; and viii) Other material facts concerning the institution and the unit of instruction as are likely to affect the decision of the student to enroll. B) The information listed in subsection (b)(2)(A) shall be available to prospective students prior to enrollment and shall be included in the institution's catalog of programs.

Detailed information about the proposed program, including description of the admission policies, university policies, tuition, fees, and curriculum are provided in the proposal and will be published on the University's website.

Staff Conclusion

The staff concludes that the Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education proposed by Eastern Illinois University meets the criteria to implement the Board of Higher Education Act (110 ILCS 205/et.seq.) as set forth in 23 Illinois Administrative Code, Ch. II, Section 1050.30, and the Illinois Board of Higher Education policies pertaining to assessment and accreditation or licensure.

Illinois State University

Proposed Degree Title in the Region of Authorization: Bachelor of Science in Data Science in the Central Region

Projected Enrollments and Degrees:

First Year Enrollment	Fifth Year Enrollment	Degrees Awarded Fifth Year
50	250	50

Background

Illinois State University (ISU or the University) is seeking authorization to offer a Bachelor of Science in Data Science (BS in Data Science) degree in the Central Region. The Data Science program is an interdisciplinary program built primarily from existing courses from across the University. The program will be shared among three colleges, including the College of Applied Arts and Sciences (CAS), the College of Applied Science and Technology (CAST), and the College of Business (COB), and administratively housed in the Department of Mathematics in CAS. Associate Deans responsible for curriculum from the participating colleges will serve on the Data Science curriculum committee along with representatives from the Departments of Mathematics, Information Technology, Marketing, Accounting, Health Sciences, Politics and Government, and Sociology.

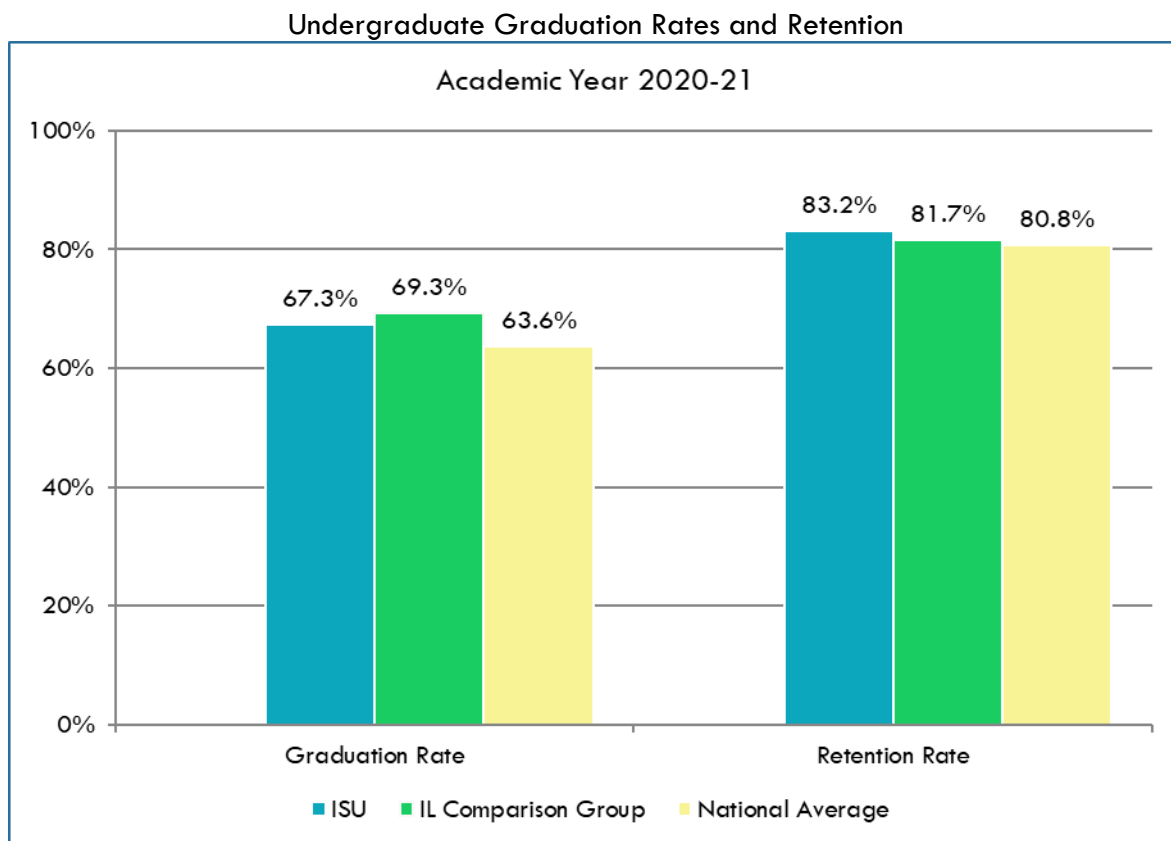
The 120-credit hour Data Science program will not only functionally prepare students for a high-growth career field, as noted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, but it will strive to instill positive and ethical use of data science and artificial intelligence for the benefit of people all over the world. The proposed program is designed to allow students to select one of four available sequences that align with their career goals, including Big Data and Computational Intelligence, Population Health, Social Demographic/Public Policy Analysis, and General Data Science. Electing a sequence allows students the opportunity to gain contextual expertise within an industry sector and prepares them for real-world experiences.

ISU anticipates enrolling approximately 50 students per year, with a 20-25 percent growth rate for first-time freshman until it reaches establishment. Therefore, at full capacity or steady state, utilizing an initial 81 percent retention rate for the program, Data Science will have approximately 250 students enrolled. Being that the proposed program is a configuration of established courses across ISU, the new program will utilize the current facilities of the current offerings. Over the past several years, Illinois State University has built a robust and comprehensive infrastructure to strengthen faculty, staff, and student diversity. The new interdisciplinary Data Science program has an opportunity to set an example of how to achieve diversity and equity in a discipline that has already seen significant underrepresentation of females and other underserved populations. The University will continue with its focused and intentional Comprehensive Plan to Promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism at Illinois State University (Comprehensive Plan) which the Data Science program will embrace. The Comprehensive Plan will systematically address the barriers that have historically undermined the success of traditionally underrepresented and underserved students.

Institutional Data

1050.30(b)(1)(H): Success in student progression and graduation rates across all existing approved programs, and success rates in programs preparing students for certification and licensure, shall be consistent with expectations in higher education and the appropriate related field of study. At a minimum, the Board shall consider these factors based on results for similar institutions. (i) Graduation rates, certificate and degree completion rates, retention rates, and pass rates for licensure and certification aligned with thresholds set by State nor national regulatory bodies. (ii) The success rate shall be, at a minimum, higher than those of the lowest quartile of these measures for similar Illinois institutions defined as open versus competitive enrollment institutions and primarily associate versus primarily baccalaureate granting institutions. Exceptions may be made to the lowest quartile if an institution is above the national average for these measures using the same comparison categories of institutions.

This section includes information about institutional and student success measures for Illinois State University. The institution's rates will be compared to Illinois institutions from within a select comparison group and against the national standards or averages. For a proposed undergraduate program, this section will include undergraduate graduation rates, first to second year retention rates, student loan default rates, and any applicable licensure passage rates. For a proposed graduate program, this section will primarily focus on student loan default data since this measure also includes graduate students in the calculation.



Source: National System for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education

Note: Illinois State University is in the four-year, selective Illinois comparison group.

Higher percentages are positive indicators.

Undergraduate Graduation Rate

The graduation rate measures the rate at which entering freshmen graduate within 150 percent of normal program length. Data is provided for six-year graduation rates for first-time, full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students and three-year graduation rates for full-time associate degree-seeking students. The national standard for graduation rates is reported annually by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Undergraduate Retention Rate

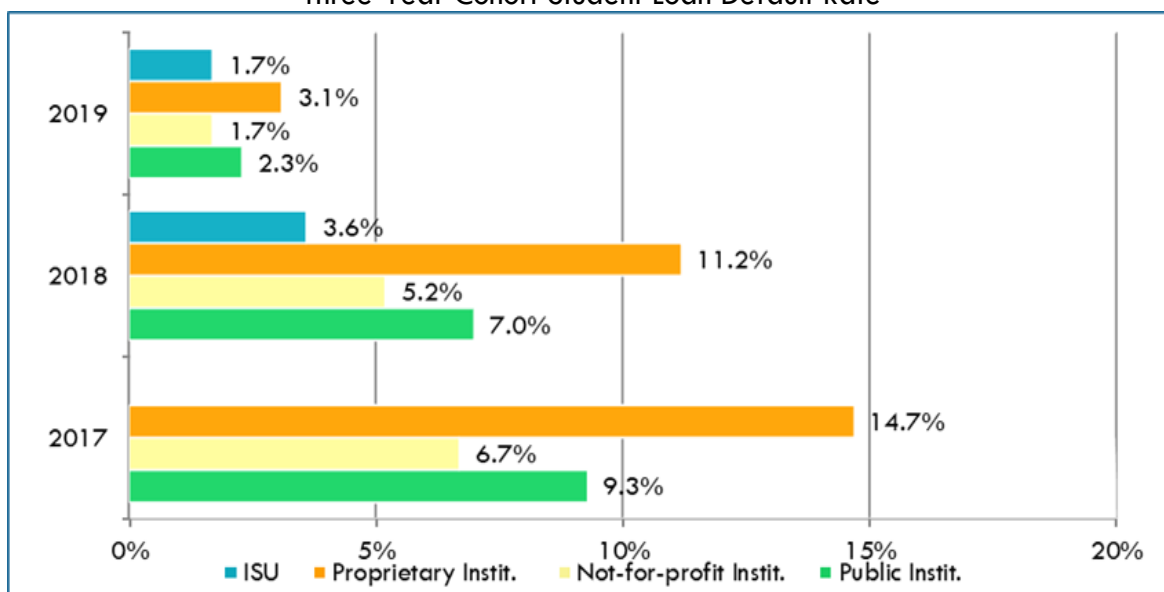
Retention rates examine the percentage of first-time degree seeking students enrolled in the fall of the prior year that are still enrolled in the fall of the current year. The national standard for retention rates is reported annually by NCES.

Undergraduate Completions per 100 Full-Time Equivalent

Academic Year 2020-21	Illinois State University	Comparable Illinois Institutions
	26	24.4

The full-time equivalent (FTE) data is a unit of measurement intended to represent one student enrolled full time for one academic year. The calculation is based upon credit/contact hours offered at an institution divided by a standard minimum (12 credit hours) full-time course load. The completions per 100 FTE data are included to provide a holistic view of completion across different student populations.

Three-Year Cohort Student Loan Default Rate



Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), US Department of Education

Note: Due to the pause on federal student loan payment that began in March 2020, the cohort default rate for fiscal year 2020 is zero percent for the institution and all institution types. The national cohort default rate for fiscal year 2019 was 2.3 percent and zero percent for fiscal year 2020. A lower number is a positive indicator.

The three-year cohort student loan default rate is the percentage of a school's borrowers who enter repayment on certain Federal Loan Programs during a particular federal fiscal year, October 1 to September 30, and default or meet other specified conditions prior to the end of the second following fiscal year.

Need

1050.30(a)(6): A) The unit of instruction, research or public service is educationally and economically consistent with the educational priorities and needs of the State of Illinois. B) The unit of instruction, research or public service meets a need that is not currently met by existing institutions and units of instruction, research or public service.

The academic discipline of data science as a stand-alone major is a newer field in higher education. In 2020, the National Center for Educational Statistics introduced two Classification of Instruction (CIP) codes for Data Science, 30.7001 and 30.7099, "General" and "Other." The classifications focus "on the analysis of large-scale data sources from the interdisciplinary perspective of applied statistics, computer science, data storage, data representation, data modeling, mathematics, and statistics. Including instruction in computer algorithms, computer programming, data management, data mining, information policy, information retrieval, mathematical modeling, quantitative analysis, statistics, trend spotting, and visual analytics." The market shows that a new degree program in data science has a high employer demand in Illinois and throughout the nation with minimal effects on existing programs within Illinois. The proposed program will be complementary to the few existing programs in Illinois. The current and projected need for data scientists in Illinois is expected to grow by 28.9 percent from 2020 to 2030, in comparison to the overall state occupational growth rate of 8.3 percent. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national growth rate for data scientists, from 2022 to 2032, will increase by 35.2 percent. This exceeds the national occupational growth rate of 2.8 percent. Even with the current established data science programs and ISU's proposed program, the Illinois higher education landscape is not producing enough graduates to fill the workforce demand in the state.

These positions will also provide an opportunity for a median annual wage more than double the national average. In 2022, data scientists earned an average of \$103,500 in comparison to all occupations at \$46,310. Adding this proposed program at ISU would provide opportunities for graduates to pursue careers with potential for a higher-than-average wage which would create economic stability for graduates of the program.

Illinois Employment Projections, 2020-2030
Data Science Occupations (SOC Codes 15-2098)

Occupation Title	Employment			Average Annual Job Openings due to...		
	2020	2030	Change (%)	Growth	Replacements (transfer & exit)	Total
Data Scientist (SOC 15-2098)	3,371	4,344	973 (28.9%)	97	271	368
All Occupations	6,044,269	6,542,650	498,381 (8.3%)	49,838	676,151	725,989

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security.
Long-Term Occupational Projections (2020-2023).

U.S. Employment Projections, 2022-2032
Data Science Occupations (SOC Codes 15-2051)

Occupation Title	2022 Median Annual Wage	Employment, 2022	Employment, 2032	Employment Change (%)
Data Scientists (SOC 15-2051)	\$103,500	168,900	228,200	59,400 (35.2%)
All Occupations	\$46,310	164,482,600	169,148,100	4,665,500 (2.8%)

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. Employment Projections.

A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth

The proposed undergraduate degree program in Data Science at Illinois State University will contribute to both IBHE's Equity goal in A Thriving Illinois, to close the equity gaps for students who have historically been left behind, and ISU's strategic plan. Based on extensive research and consultation, ISU has developed diversity strategies mapped to support recruitment and retention of students, faculty, staff, and administrators; students' timely graduation; and post-graduation outcomes. The University fosters an inclusive environment characterized by cultural understanding and engagement, ethical behavior, and a commitment to social justice. The "Comprehensive Plan to Promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism at Illinois State University" (Comprehensive Plan) is the guiding principle that articulate how the commitments are operationalized.

ISU partners with five to ten community-based organizations each year to recruit, retain, and graduate students from underrepresented groups. In addition to strategic partnerships, ISU intentionally hosts recruitment events on and off campus where underrepresented students and their families may attend. These events often provide a deeper understanding of what an ISU education can provide to students and how it can impact their futures. More importantly, the events provide an opportunity to connect prospective students with current students to provide an overview of their first-hand experiences at ISU and start building a community for prospective students. Through these targeted efforts, ISU has increased its racial diversity by 15.5 percent since fall 2022 and it has doubled in the past ten years.

The students in the proposed program will have the University's proactive support through its well-established early alert system. The program utilizes academic advisors across campus to engage with students who have triggered red flags for potential course failures such as: failing grades at mid-term, poor grades in week 12, or insufficient class engagement. Advisors will intensively pursue contact with students to identify root causes for performance and prescribe corrective actions or interventions. The University has additional retention efforts such as the Redbird Care Team, through the Division of Student Affairs to centralize a point for all student concerns – from mental health, academic performance, financial struggles, housing insecurities, or food instability, etc. The Redbird Care Team addresses issues and provides direct support for students, often cutting through bureaucratic barriers, to provide immediate resources for students.

ISU has created a student-centered culture offering targeted support resources to enhance retention for historically underserved students. The University has implemented mentoring programs for students while creating positive, meaningful, inclusive co-curricular learning experiences outside of the classroom. In addition to offering improved recruitment and retention efforts, ISU is monitoring

its efforts through climate surveys and student focus groups and data culled from the student information system.

ISU will utilize the Faculty Diversity Enhancement Program through the Office of the Provost to hire diverse and culturally competent faculty for the Data Science program capable of providing an academic and research learning environment for a diverse student body. The goal is to develop a diverse instructional faculty with gender and underrepresented minority representation. This program provides three years of funds to support new faculty members. Since 2018, the Provost's Office has committed over \$410,000 assisting with the recruitment of 41 faculty members. ISU retained 90 percent of this group. This program enhances the talented and diverse staff capable of supporting a diverse student and faculty population at ISU. The University also supports the growth of tenure-track faculty who are affiliated with Interdisciplinary Studies programs. Faculty members will hold a major appointment in a department with a minor appointment in an interdisciplinary studies program. This program is designed to support the retention of diverse faculty while facilitating the development of interdisciplinary programs, enhancing cross-disciplinary research, and infuse diverse perspectives into program curriculum and initiatives.

Supportive of A Thriving Illinois: Goal 2, Sustainability, to build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions by finding ways to reduce the financial burden of education on students and their families, ISU will continue its efforts to increase college affordability for all students, especially those from under-resourced families. The University has a centrally managed persistence fund as well as funds in colleges, departments, and schools that provide short-term financial assistance to students as a retention strategy. In fiscal year 2023, the university-level committee awarded more than \$238,000 to 105 students. Over the last five years, the fund has granted \$936,000 to students. Once the Data Science program is established, students will be able to access these funds, if needed. The funds are available for students for urgent needs, which, without funding, would have previously led to a student withdrawing from college.

In addition to microgrants, ISU continues to fund the laptop loaner program, which originated during the pandemic. The laptop loaner program provides critical technology support to students through this program which provides long term use of a laptop. This program helps reduce the cost of education for those who are in need of assistance by providing an expensive, but necessary piece of equipment for students. Access to a laptop can improve retention and persistence as well.

ISU's proposed BS in Data Science program will address A Thriving Illinois: Goal 3, Growth, to increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth, by contributing to regional and state workforce needs and increasing diversity in the emerging area of data science. There is a projected state and national demand for data scientists in the next eight years. The projected growth for Illinois, from 2020 to 2030, is 973 job openings, 28.9 percent. The national level projections show 59,400 openings by 2032 – a 35.2 percent growth. Both projections outpace the overall average growth rates. In Illinois, the projected occupational rate is 8.3 percent and nationally it is 2.8 percent. In addition to having a strong occupational outlook, data scientists have an average salary of \$103,500, which is more than double the national average of \$46,310. The Data Science program will support the economy of Illinois by producing well-trained and employment ready specialized graduates who can fill the workforce pipeline in Illinois for these high demand careers.

Comparable Programs in Illinois

A variety of CIP Codes are reflected in the IBHE Program Inventory for programs which utilize “data science” in their titles. There are no programs offered in the Central region for data science. Therefore, the proposed program at Illinois State University will fill a need for data scientists in the Central region and the state.

Comparable Programs		
Public		
Institution and Program Name	CIP Code and Title	Region
University of Illinois Chicago BS in Data Science	11.0199 – Computer and Information Sciences, Other	Chicago
University of Illinois Urbana Champaign BS in Information Science in Data Science BS in Accountancy plus Data Science BS in Business plus Data Science	30.7001 – Data Science, General	Prairie
Independent		
Institution and Program Name	CIP Code and Title	Region
Benedictine University BS in Data Science	30.0801 – Mathematics and Computer Science	West Suburban
DePaul University BA and BS in Data Science	11.0802 – Data Modeling/Warehousing and Database Administration	Chicago
Dominican University BS in Data Science	30.7001 – Data Science, General	West Suburban
Knox College BA in Data Science	30.7001 – Data Science, General	Western
Illinois Institute of Technology BS in Data Science	30.7001 – Data Science, General	Chicago
Lake Forest College BA in Data Science	30.3001 – Computational Sciences	North Suburban
Lewis University BA and BS in Data Science	30.7001 – Data Science, General	South Metro
Loyola University of Chicago BS in Data Science	30.7001 – Data Science, General	Chicago
Millikin University BA/BS in Mathematics Data Science BA in Mathematics Data Science	30.3001 – Computational Sciences 30.7001 – Data Science, General	Prairie
Monmouth College BA in Data Science	27.9999 – Mathematics and Statistics, Other	Western
Northwestern University	30.7001 – Data Science, General	North Suburban
Olivet Nazarene University BS in Data Science	30.7001 – Data Science, General 30.0801 – Mathematics and Computer Science	South Metropolitan
Roosevelt University BS in Data Science	30.7001 – Data Science, General	Chicago
University of Chicago BA or BS in Data Science	30.0601 – Systems Science and Theory	Chicago

Source: IBHE Program Inventory System

Mission and Objectives

1050.30(a)(1): A) The objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are consistent with the mission of the college or university. B) The objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are consistent with what the unit title implies.

The program is in alignment with the overall mission of the University and is consistent with the purpose, goals, objectives, and mission of the University. The mission of the interdisciplinary BS in Data Science program is to cultivate a vibrant learning environment, empowering students with knowledge and skills essential for navigating the intricate and ever-changing landscape of data science. The program is also committed to instilling a sense of responsibility in graduates to ensure an ethical use of data to contribute meaningfully to society. The Data Science program will build upon ISU's engaged institutional culture. The program will blend academic excellence, hands-on experiences, and a steadfast commitment to ethical principles. This goal will help the program create leaders in the field.

Curriculum and Assessment

1050.30(b)(1) [applicable only to units of instruction]: A) The caliber and content of the curriculum must assure that the objectives of the unit of instruction will be achieved. B) The breadth and depth of the curriculum must be consistent with what the title of the unit of instruction implies. C) The admission and graduation requirements for the unit of instruction must be consistent with the stated objectives of the unit of instruction. D) Institutions must show the capacity to develop, deliver and support academic programs. Procedures and policies that will assure the effective design, conduct and evaluation of the degree programs under the academic control of the institution must be developed. Assessment plans must demonstrate that the institution has identified clear and appropriate program and student learning goals and has defined appropriate outcomes. Appropriate data must be collected and may be requested by the Board to show the level of student learning that has occurred as a result of participation in the institution's programs of study.

1050.30(a)(2): The design, conduct and evaluation of the unit of instruction, research or public service are under the direct and continuous control of the sponsoring institution's established processes for academic planning and quality maintenance.

Admission Requirements

Admission requirements for the proposed program will be the same as the University's admission requirements. For freshmen applicants, ISU considers the following items for admission decisions: completion of high school courses (including grade trends and rigor of coursework), grade point average (GPA), SAT/ACT scores (if submitted), and an academic personal statement, which is optional. High school coursework must show successful completion of the following: four years of English, three years of Mathematics (Algebra, Geometry, Algebra II), two years of Natural Science (including laboratories), two years of Social Science, two years of Foreign Language or Fine Arts (either group), and two years of Electives. Applicants utilizing the general equivalency diploma (GED) test results in lieu of a high school diploma are required to show GED test scores of at least 410 on each of the five test sections as well as an overall average battery score of at least 450. These applicants must submit ACT or SAT scores as part of the application process.

Transfer students must provide a transcript of courses taken prior to enrollment at ISU. Students with less than 24 semester hours at the time of application will need a cumulative high school transcript and may submit SAT/ACT scores for consideration. Transfer students must have completed the equivalent of ISU's Calculus I (MAT 145) and Calculus II (MAT 146) with a grade of "C" or better. For transfer students with more than 60 credits, it is recommended that they have Calculus III (MAT 147), Elementary Linear Algebra (MAT 175), and a programming course.

Curriculum

The proposed program requires a minimum of 120 credit hours for completion and consists of general education/core curriculum courses, a sequence series of courses electing an area of focus, and then a capstone experience. The core curriculum of the program includes 32 credit hours of Mathematics courses, 14 credit hours of Information Technology courses, one three-credit hour ethics course, one three-credit hour data visualization course, and one capstone/internship experience. Sequences will require five to seven courses and should be selected to coincide with a student's career interest. Four standard options are offered: Big Data and Computational Intelligence (17-19 credit hours), Business Analytics (30 credit hours), Population Health (21 credit hours), and Social Demographic/Public Policy Analytics (21 credit hours). Students may also elect for an Individualized Plan sequence (18 credit hours). Each sequence is designed to let students fulfill individual requirements and complete an optional minor between 18-27 credit hours.

Students must complete either a three-credit hour applied capstone course or an external internship. An instructor will lead the capstone course which requires completion of an applied data science project from an external partner and will be related to a sequence. Students may also elect to complete an approved external internship comprised of analysis of complex data as an alternative to the capstone course. These options were developed to support a targeted experiential learning opportunity for students that could enhance their experience to explore firsthand, real-world issues. These connections are designed to connect students with potential employers, enhancing a student's connection to the workforce and creating a direct pathway to a job.

Assessment of Student Learning

Student learning outcomes will be assessed using direct assessment of student learning outcomes, mapped out in the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment plan in targeted coursework focused on the core and capstone courses across all Data Science sequence options. The student learning assessment process centers on direct assessment of student work. The target of each specific assessment activity should meet or exceed the acceptable performance level of 60 percent. This attainment level may be adjusted by faculty and administrators. The evaluated work may be a quiz or exam question, project report, or presentation from the designated courses. Each spring, departmental faculty will evaluate relevant assessment of student work from each of the associated courses related to the outcome of interest, review student performance, and make recommendations for future action items or revisions to improve student learning and assessment within the focus of the outcome.

Program Assessment

The Program Coordinator collects all assessment data and will analyze it to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The findings will be presented for review and discussion to

the members of the interdisciplinary Data Science curriculum committee. The program assessment plan identifies courses in which assessment methods are to be applied and the committee will review and make suggestions for improvements based on the coordinator's findings, with the updates presented to the faculty in the spring for approval. The approved updated outcomes will go to the full faculty and other stakeholders in the fall for additional feedback.

Each fall, program faculty will receive a statistical report of program inputs, productivity, and outputs from the Office of Planning, Research, and Policy Analysis at the University for use by faculty in evaluation of the program and identifying areas for improvement. The report intends to provide a broader set of metrics than those compiled through implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan. Academic program profile metrics relate to admissions, enrollment, student and faculty demographics, and degrees conferred. Program faculty members will review academic program profiles annually and will report their findings in an annual assessment update submitted to University Assessment Services.

Facilities (space, equipment, instructional materials)

1050.30(a)(4): A) Facilities, equipment and instructional resources (e.g., laboratory supplies and equipment, instructional materials, computational equipment) necessary to support the high-quality academic work in the unit of instruction, research or public service are available and maintained. B) Clinical sites necessary to meet the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service. C) Library holdings and acquisitions, owned or contracted for by the institution, that are necessary to support high quality instruction and scholarship in the unit of instruction, research and public service, are conveniently available and accessible, and can be maintained.

The current facilities are adequate to support the program and no new facility renovation or new construction to house the program is required. This is primarily due to the reorganization of current courses offerings from various departments to create the BS in Data Science. Facilities supporting the core curriculum of the program include The School of Information Technology's facilities in the Old Union Building, Stevenson Hall, and Williams Hall. Old Union Building houses the main offices, computer facilities, and laboratories. Classrooms are primarily located in Stevenson Hall, including seven state-of-the-art microcomputer laboratories and several special-use laboratories for School of Information Technology students. The Mathematics Department uses standard classrooms and two collaborative computer laboratories. The College of Business courses will utilize the existing classrooms, equipment, and software for those in the Business Analytics sequence. The Department of Health Sciences will provide priority classroom scheduling to the courses required for the data science program. The Social Demographic/Public Policy Analysis is offered by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology which offers courses in Schroeder Hall.

Current Milner Library resources will be able to support high-quality instruction and scholarship and will be conveniently available and accessible through the physical holdings in the Milner Library and its extensive digital collection. The Milner Library collection includes over 1,610,000 cataloged items, over 400,000 U.S. Government publications, over 38,000 electronic periodical subscriptions, over 2,500 print periodical titles, and other titles in microform. There is also a map collection and a Media Resource Center, which provides videos for classroom and library use. The Milner Library subscribes to approximately 100,000 journal titles, the bulk of which are available electronically. The library also subscribes to approximately 250 databases with direct access to periodical literature. Some of the databases provide access to other types of information including news, monographs, statistics, and reference works. Students and faculty have

access to monographs available through the Milner Library and the 89-member library consortium known as I-Share. Milner Library is part of the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) which allows patrons to freely request monographs and other library materials from over 90 Illinois academic libraries. The library also offers Interlibrary Loan (ILL) services with worldwide access materials that are not available from CARLI libraries.

Faculty and Staff

1050.30(a)(3): A) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff ensure that the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are met. B) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff, as evidenced by level of degrees held, professional experience in the field of study and demonstrated knowledge of the field, ensure that they are able to fulfill their academic responsibilities. At a minimum, faculty shall have a degree from an institution accredited by a U.S. Department of Education and/or Council for Higher Education Accreditation recognized accrediting body or a degree from another country evaluated for U.S. equivalency in the discipline they will teach or for which they will develop curricula at least one level above that of the courses being taught or developed. C) The involvement of faculty in the unit of instruction, research or public service is sufficient to cover the various fields of knowledge encompassed by the unit, to sustain scholarship appropriate to the unit, and to assure curricular continuity and consistency in student evaluation. E) Support personnel, including but not limited to counselors, administrators, clinical supervisors, and technical staff, that are directly assigned to the unit of instruction, research or public service, have the educational background and experience necessary to carry out their assigned responsibilities.

Illinois State University has identified institutional policies that ensure faculty and staff hired possess the training, credentials, and other related qualifications to provide instruction at the institution. Faculty teaching in the proposed program will have the appropriate qualifications including earning a terminal degree in their discipline with a record of quality teaching, scholarship, and service. Tenured and tenure track faculty are evaluated annually by the School Faculty Status Committee and are subject to university-wide Faculty Appointment, Salary, Promotion, and Tenure Policies. The interdisciplinary BS in Data Science is a collaborative effort among colleges and departments at ISU and the relationship will be formalized by a Memorandum of Understanding among all involved. Administratively, the program will be housed within the Department of Mathematics in the College of Arts and Sciences. The program will have its own curriculum committee comprised of representatives from the collaborating colleges and departments – Department of Mathematics, Information Technology, Marketing, Accounting, Health Sciences, Politics and Government, and Sociology. The Associate Deans for curriculum from CAS, CAST, and COB. Besides addressing curricular quality assurance, they will address the value of service to the major.

The University has established several programs to support the recruitment and retention of diverse and talented faculty including the Faculty Diversity Enhancement Program, joint appointment hires, Search Advocate Program, University Faculty Support Network, and membership to the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity.

Fiscal and Personnel Resources

1050.30(a)(5): A) The financial commitments to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are sufficient to ensure that the faculty and staff and support services necessary to offer the unit of instruction, research or public service can be acquired and maintained. B) Projections of revenues necessary to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are based on supportable

estimates of state appropriations, local tax support, student tuition and fees, private gifts, and/or governmental grants and contracts.

The BS in Data Science program is not requesting any new state funds as current operational budgets are adequate to support the program. The Mathematics Department will need one additional tenure-track faculty line in the first year and three more by year five. In the School of Information Technology, they will need one tenure-track line in the first year and three additional lines by year five. In the projected growth model, additional faculty will be needed. Staff positions for advisement and coordination of internships will be necessary in year one. Total new investments are budgeted for \$255,000 in year one.

Accreditation and Licensure

1050.30(b)(3)[applicable only to units of instruction]: Appropriate steps shall be taken to assure that professional accreditation needed for licensure or entry into a profession as specified in the objectives of the unit of instruction is maintained or will be granted in a reasonable period of time.

There is no specialized accreditation or licensure for the proposed program.

Program Information

1050.30(b)(2)[applicable only to units of instruction]: A) The information which the institution provides for students and the public shall include the following: i) An accurate description of the unit of instruction, including its objectives, length, and residency requirements if any; ii) Schedule of tuition, fees, and all other charges and expenses necessary for completion of the unit of instruction, cancellation and refund policies; iii) Student rights and responsibilities; iv) A statement regarding the transferability of college credits, including the fact that the decision to accept transfer credits is determined by the receiving institutions; v) A statement as to how the institution will advise students on the nature of the transfer process, including the importance of consulting with institutions to which the student may seek to transfer; vi) Evidence of arrangements for the transfer of courses or credits or both to institutional counterparts, when these arrangements exist; these arrangements are also known as articulation agreements; vii) A statement of the institution's most recent graduation rates and the number of graduates and enrollments as provided by the institution to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and any submission of data to satisfy Board reporting requirements; and viii) Other material facts concerning the institution and the unit of instruction as are likely to affect the decision of the student to enroll. B) The information listed in subsection (b)(2)(A) shall be available to prospective students prior to enrollment and shall be included in the institution's catalog of programs.

Detailed information about the proposed program, including a description of the admission policies, university policies, tuition, fees, and curriculum will be published on the University's website.

Staff Conclusion

The staff concludes that the Bachelor of Science in Data Science proposed by Illinois State University meets the criteria to implement the Board of Higher Education Act (110 ILCS 205/et.seq.) as set forth in 23 Illinois Administrative Code, Ch. II, Section 1050.30, and the Illinois Board of Higher Education policies pertaining to assessment and accreditation or licensure.

Proposed Degree Title in the Region of Authorization: Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science in Sports Communication in the Central Region

Projected Enrollments and Degrees

First Year Enrollment	Fifth Year Enrollment	Degrees Awarded Fifth Year
113	251	169

Background

Illinois State University (ISU or the University) is seeking authorization to offer a Bachelor of Arts (BA)/Bachelor of Science (BS) in Sports Communication in the Central region. The proposed program will be housed in the College of Arts and Sciences within the School of Communication. The School of Communication's legacy is more than 150 years old. Over its history, the School of Communication has built a tradition of excellence in teaching, research, and service that are at the forefront of theory and translate into viable life applications. The School of Communication presently offers four undergraduate programs in communication studies, journalism, mass media, and public relations along with one graduate program in communication that allows students to select a curricular pathway based upon their academic and professional interests. The proposed program would expand the School of Communication's academic programming and equip students with fundamental skills in sports media, promotion, sales, reporting, and management. Based on numerous inquiries from prospective students and a positive job outlook, the new sports communication program at ISU is both timely and greatly needed.

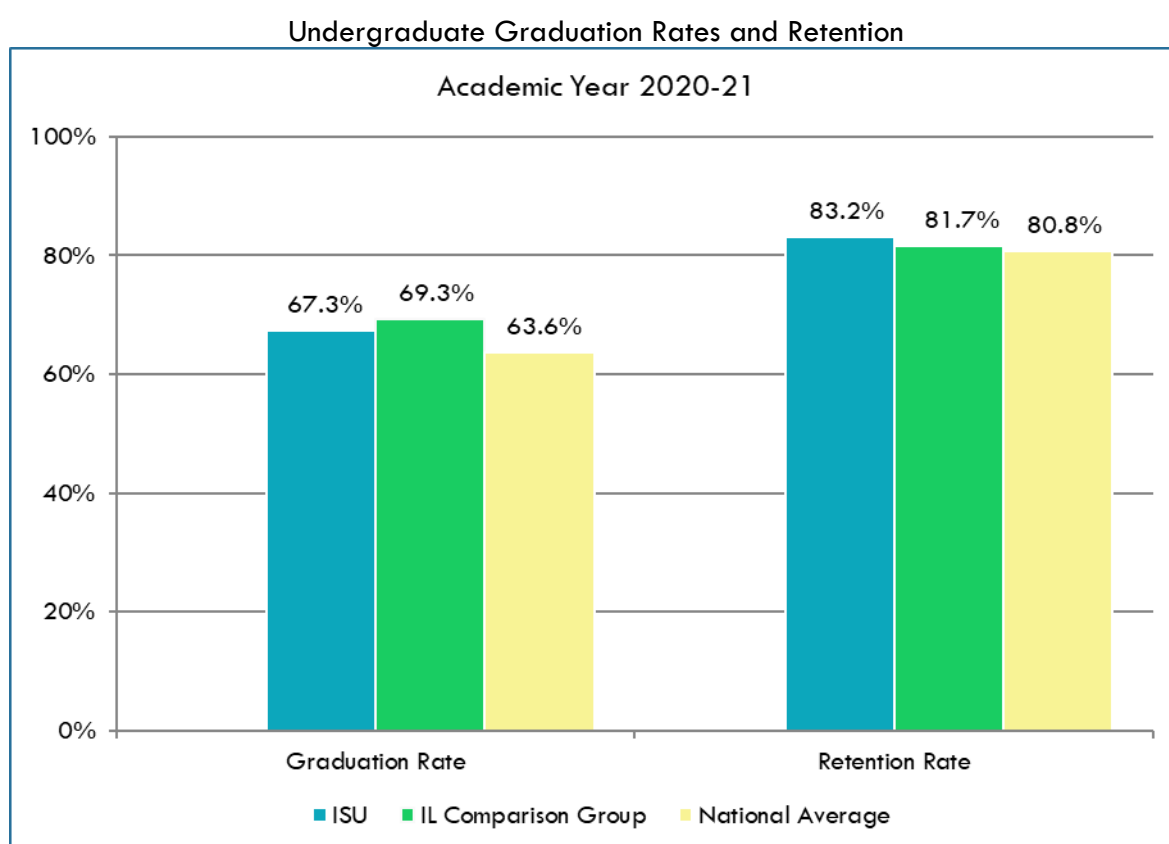
The proposed program will require 42 credit hours of major courses at the 200 and 300 level toward the 120-credit hour (minimum) graduation requirement for an undergraduate degree. The program will build students' knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes in the ideation, planning, implementation, and evaluation of ethical and effective communication specifically for sports and athletics organizations. The breadth and depth of sports includes all types from professional, intercollegiate, and e-sports teams to equipment manufacturers, community programs, and venues for digital and physical action. Students will gain a robust foundation of theory and practice to understand why and how effective communication in the context of sports/athletics has a significant impact on society including issues of identity and culture related to race, gender, sexuality, diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility (DEIA), nationalism, commercial inequity, civic engagement, critiques of capitalism, and hypermasculinity. An additional feature of the proposed program is an optional Professional Mentorship program that will pair interested students with a sports communication professional. This broad-based program will prepare students for a variety of careers in sports communication including brand management, promotion (public relations or advertising), broadcasting, sports/athletics event planning, and media relations among other areas in the field.

Institutional Data

1050.30(b)(1)(H): Success in student progression and graduation rates across all existing approved programs, and success rates in programs preparing students for certification and licensure, shall be consistent with expectations in higher education and the appropriate related field of study. At a minimum, the Board shall consider these factors based on results for similar institutions. (i) Graduation rates, certificate and degree completion rates, retention rates, and pass rates for licensure and

certification aligned with thresholds set by State nor national regulatory bodies. (ii) The success rate shall be, at a minimum, higher than those of the lowest quartile of these measures for similar Illinois institutions defined as open versus competitive enrollment institutions and primarily associate versus primarily baccalaureate granting institutions. Exceptions may be made to the lowest quartile if an institution is above the national average for these measures using the same comparison categories of institutions.

This section includes information about institutional and student success measures for Illinois State University. The institution's rates will be compared to Illinois institutions from within a select comparison group and against the national standards or averages. For a proposed undergraduate program, this section will include undergraduate graduation rates, first to second year retention rates, student loan default rates, and any applicable licensure passage rates. For a proposed graduate program, this section will primarily focus on student loan default data since this measure also includes graduate students in the calculation.



Source: National System for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education

Note: Illinois State University is in the four-year, selective Illinois comparison group.

Higher percentages are positive indicators.

Undergraduate Graduation Rate

The graduation rate measures the rate at which entering freshmen graduate within 150 percent of normal program length. Data is provided for six-year graduation rates for first-time, full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students and three-year graduation rates for full-time associate

degree-seeking students. The national standard for graduation rates is reported annually by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Undergraduate Retention Rate

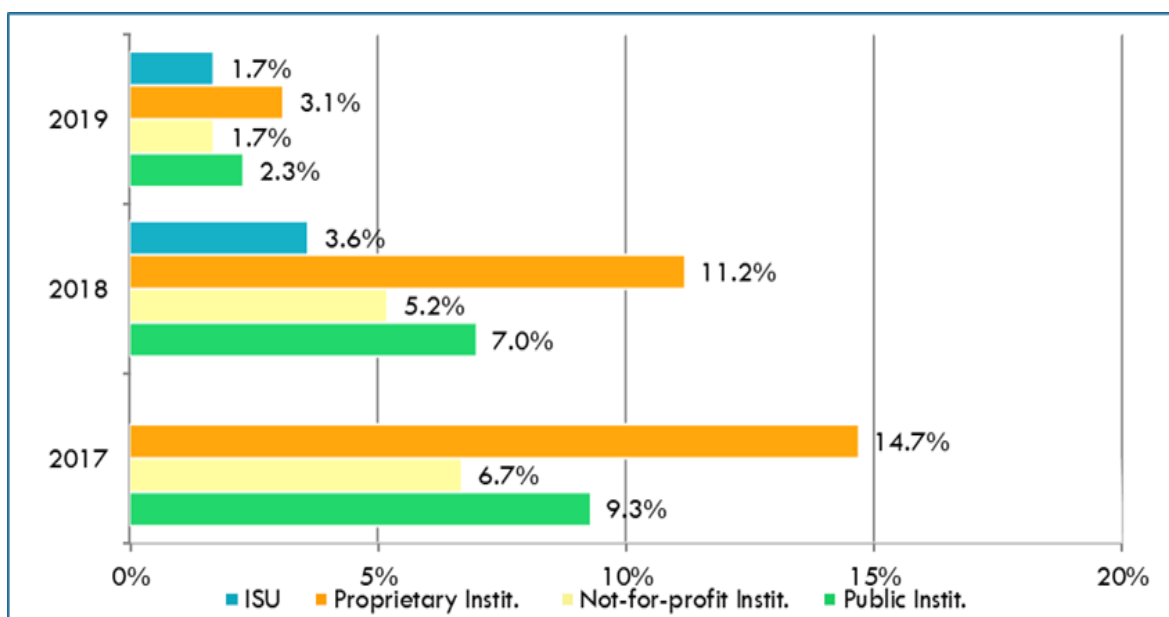
Retention rates examine the percentage of first-time degree seeking students enrolled in the fall of the prior year that are still enrolled in the fall of the current year. The national standard for retention rates is reported annually by NCES.

Undergraduate Completions per 100 Full-Time Equivalent

Academic Year 2020-21	Illinois State University	Comparable Illinois Institutions
	26	24.4

The full-time equivalent (FTE) data is a unit of measurement intended to represent one student enrolled full time for one academic year. The calculation is based upon credit/contact hours offered at an institution divided by a standard minimum (12 credit hours) full-time course load. The completions per 100 FTE data are included to provide a holistic view of completion across different student populations.

Three-Year Cohort Student Loan Default Rate



Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), US Department of Education

Note: Due to the pause on federal student loan payment that began in March 2020, the cohort default rate for fiscal year 2020 is zero percent for the institution and all institution types.

The national cohort default rate for fiscal year 2019 was 2.3 percent and zero percent for Fiscal Year 2020. A lower number is a positive indicator.

The three-year cohort student loan default rate is the percentage of a school's borrowers who enter repayment on certain Federal Loan Programs during a particular federal fiscal year,

October 1 to September 30, and default or meet other specified conditions prior to the end of the second following fiscal year.

Need

1050.30(a)(6): A) The unit of instruction, research or public service is educationally and economically consistent with the educational priorities and needs of the State of Illinois. B) The unit of instruction, research or public service meets a need that is not currently met by existing institutions and units of instruction, research or public service.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there is an increasing demand for sports communication and related occupations with an expected growth of 8.2 percent (Entertainment and Sports) and 4.3 percent (Media and Communication) from 2022 to 2032 driven by the growing multi-billion-dollar sports entertainment industry. Approximately 106,800 job openings are projected each year in sports occupations due to emerging career trends and the need to replace workers exiting the labor force.

U.S. Employment Projections, 2022-2032
Sports Communication Occupations

Occupation Title	2022 median annual wage	Employment, 2022	Employment, 2032	Employment change (%)
Entertainers and performers, sports and related workers, all other (27-2099)	N/A	26,500	28,700	2,200 (8.2%)
Media and communication workers, all other (27-3099)	\$65,000	25,800	26,900	1,100 (4.3%)
All occupations	\$46,310	164,483,600	169,148,100	4,665,500 (2.8%)

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor

Within the State of Illinois, the sports communication program falls under several occupational categories and subcategories with the Illinois Department of Employment Security:

- Arts/Design/Entertainment and Sports/Media Occupations with a projected employment growth of 7.99 percent by 2030.
- Entertainers, Performers, and Sports Workers with a projected employment growth of 14.83 percent by 2030. Specifically, the Misc. Entertain/Perform/Sport Workers subcategory has an expected growth of 34.62 percent by 2030.
- Media and Communication Workers with a projected employment growth of 5.74 percent and the Public Relations Specialists subcategory has an expected growth of 10.28 percent by 2030.

The projected growth in these occupations signals a growing and lasting demand for competent sports communication graduates. Thus, Illinois State University's proposed program will meet workforce needs in preparing students to navigate the complexities of sports, media relations, and ethics while contributing positively to public discourse and community development.

Illinois Employment Projections, 2020-2030
Sports Communication Occupations

Occupation Title	Employment 2020	Employment 2030	Employment Change (%)	Average Annual Job Openings due to...		
				Growth	Replacements	Total
Entertainers and performers, sport workers (27-2000)	25,628	29,428	14.8%	380	3,304	3,684
Media and communication workers (27-3000)	27,148	28,706	5.4%	156	2,610	2,766
All occupations	6,044,269	6,542,650	8.3%	49,838	676,151	725,989

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security

A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth

Illinois State University's proposal is informed by strategies in *A Thriving Illinois: Goal 1, Equity, to close equity gaps for students who have historically been left behind*. In recent years, the University has built a robust and comprehensive infrastructure to strengthen its faculty, staff, and student diversity. With the creation of the sports communication program, ISU endeavors to set an example of how to achieve diversity and equity in a discipline that has traditionally seen significant underrepresentation of women and other underserved populations. The School of Communication's recruitment strategy for all its majors, including the proposed program, is designed to diversify the pool of students applying to communication programs. For example, the School collaborates with the Office of Admissions to recruit students of color who have expressed interest in pursuing a degree in communication. As a result, the School of Communication has seen steady growth in its enrollment of underrepresented populations (from 28 percent in fall 2016 to 31.3 percent in fall 2023).

As part of the University's commitment to DEIA, the *Comprehensive Plan to Promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism* was developed. The plan identifies ISU's strategies and ongoing efforts to increase persistence and retention of underrepresented students; to increase and retain the number of faculty, staff, and administrators from underrepresented groups; and implement a campus-wide diversity and inclusion training plan. From its inception, the sports communication program will operationalize the University's plan by leveraging existing partnerships with community-based organizations and feeder schools that serve underrepresented and underserved students, offering financial support to students from low-income families, and infusing DEIA-inclusive content in the sports communication curriculum. Thus, the program will systematically address barriers that have historically undermined the success of traditionally underrepresented and underserved students.

ISU has also launched the Search Advocate Program designed to support the recruitment and selection of faculty and staff across campus. Key priorities are ensuring equitable and inclusive hiring practices, increasing the diversity of candidate pools, and enhancing compliance with search and selection policies and procedures. Search Advocates will assist with faculty searches for the sports communication program.

Supportive of *A Thriving Illinois: Goal 2, Sustainability, to build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions by finding ways to reduce the financial burden of education on students and their families*, ISU continues to enhance affordability for all students, especially those from under-resourced families. The University has a persistence fund that provides students with short-term financial assistance. In Fiscal Year 2023, the University persistence committee awarded over \$238,000 to 105 students for microgrants that met a variety of financial needs. Over the last five years, the fund has provided students with over \$936,000 in assistance. Additionally, ISU raised the financial block threshold to \$1,000 and implemented a laptop loaner program for students in need. These initiatives have contributed to an increase in persistence and retention rates university wide, including the School of Communication.

The proposed program will reinforce *A Thriving Illinois: Goal 3, Growth, to increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth*, by meeting workforce needs in the sports industry and curbing student demand for the program in Illinois. Given that a number of high school graduates leave the state to pursue postsecondary opportunities, offering the sports communication program at ISU will alleviate outmigration and lead to more students obtaining employment in Illinois after graduation which will stimulate the local economy. Additionally, the program will support state and regional economies by supplying sports communication professionals who are well-equipped to effectively communicate, demonstrate strong interpersonal skills, engage in critical thinking, create strategic and influential messages, work well both individually and in teams, and conduct and present research.

Comparable Programs in Illinois

Presently, there are two independent Illinois institutions with a bachelor's degree in sports communication. Thus, ISU would be the only public university offering the program in Illinois. The current and projected need for trained professionals in the sports industry will increase both the number of Illinois residents attaining a degree and the number of high-quality postsecondary credentials available to meet the demand. Providing additional educational opportunities in sports communication at ISU will assist with meeting growing labor needs in sports marketing, media, event planning, management, and public relations.

Comparable Programs
Degrees Granted, Bachelor's in Sports Communication

Institution	Degree	Region	Sector
Bradley University	B.A. & B.S. in Sports Communication	Central	Independent
DePaul University	B.A. in Sports Communication	Chicago	Independent

Source: IBHE Program Inventory

Mission and Objectives

1050.30(a)(1): A) The objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are consistent with the mission of the college or university. B) The objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are consistent with what the unit title implies.

The School of Communication's vision is "to obtain and maintain national recognition as one of the foremost centers of communication study in the discipline." Consistent with and complementary to Illinois State University's objectives stated in its strategic plan, *Educate Connect Elevate*, the School

pursues the following four objectives to support the vision: (1) enact academic excellence; (2) revitalize operational practices, physical infrastructure, and technology for continued academic excellence; (3) expand financial support for greater academic excellence; and (4) promote the School to constituents strategically.

To further these objectives, the proposed program at ISU will educate students in the foundational principles and practices of sports communication and feature courses in multiple areas (e.g., mass media, public relations, and digital channels) while also building students' knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes in the ideation, planning, implementation, and evaluation of ethical and effective communication for sports and athletics organizations. Particularly, the program will include the study of identity and culture in the sports industry as it relates to race, gender, sexuality, DEIA, nationalism, commercial inequity, civic engagement, critiques of capitalism, and hypermasculinity. The breadth and depth of the sports field includes all types such as professional and e-sports teams, community programs, semi-professional leagues, equipment manufacturers, and venues for digital and physical activity. Accordingly, the program is designed with a favorable number of required credit hours compared to other major programs and a considerable number of elective credit hours that allows students to learn theoretical and practical knowledge with the flexibility of exploring multiple dimensions of sports communication. The overarching goal of the program is to engender a great appreciation of sports in society and train students with the core competencies to be successful sports communication professionals.

Curriculum and Assessment

1050.30(b)(1) [applicable only to units of instruction]: A) The caliber and content of the curriculum must assure that the objectives of the unit of instruction will be achieved. B) The breadth and depth of the curriculum must be consistent with what the title of the unit of instruction implies. C) The admission and graduation requirements for the unit of instruction must be consistent with the stated objectives of the unit of instruction. D) Institutions must show the capacity to develop, deliver and support academic programs. Procedures and policies that will assure the effective design, conduct and evaluation of the degree programs under the academic control of the institution must be developed. Assessment plans must demonstrate that the institution has identified clear and appropriate program and student learning goals and has defined appropriate outcomes. Appropriate data must be collected and may be requested by the Board to show the level of student learning that has occurred as a result of participation in the institution's programs of study.

1050.30(a)(2): The design, conduct and evaluation of the unit of instruction, research or public service are under the direct and continuous control of the sponsoring institution's established processes for academic planning and quality maintenance.

Admission Requirements

The requirements to be admitted into any major in the School of Communication, including the proposed sports communication program, depends on the student's admission status: first time in college (FTIC), new transfer from another institution, or current Illinois State University student changing majors. The classifications are below:

- New FTIC students (incoming freshmen): No specific requirements. If students qualify for admission to ISU, they can be directly admitted to any major within the School of Communication.

- New transfer students (incoming from community colleges or four-year universities): Minimum of a 2.5 transfer GPA required to apply. If transfer students have at least a 2.5 GPA at their previous school, they can be directly admitted to any major within the School of Communication.
- Internal major transfers (current ISU students changing majors): Minimum of a 2.0 ISU GPA and good academic standing are required to apply. However, depending on the pool of applicants, a qualified student may or may not be admitted but can be considered for admission to any major within the School of Communication based on evaluation criteria.

The proposed program will intentionally focus on the recruitment and retention of a diverse student body thereby providing opportunities for historically underserved and underrepresented students to pursue a career in the sports communication field.

Curriculum

A minimum of 120 credit hours are required to earn an undergraduate degree from Illinois State University. Students can pursue either a BA or BS degree in the proposed program. A BA degree includes a foreign language requirement as demonstrated by successful completion of Language 115 (or equivalent). A BS degree includes one additional science, mathematics, statistics, or technology course (beyond the General Education requirements) that is three credit hours or greater. For the sports communication major, a student must earn 42 credit hours at the 200 and 300 level consisting of 27 credit hours of major courses and 15 credit hours of senior-level electives (9 hours must be at the 300 level). Students may complete at least one internship for credit (maximum of six hours may count toward graduation; only three hours will count toward the 300-level requirement).

The sports communication program aims to reshape traditional models of teaching, research, and public service by embracing an interdisciplinary approach, fostering innovation, engaging with real-world applications, and preparing students for the dynamic work environment of the future. As such, the program was developed using a set of shared structures and curricular features that support the success of students with practical and engaging learning experiences. The specialized curriculum will include instruction in sports writing, photography, production, promotion, broadcast journalism, game rules, media, and public relations. The BA/BS in Sports Communication will also feature an optional Professional Mentorship program that will pair interested students with ISU alumni and other professionals who work in the sports and entertainment industry. Students will gain valuable pre-professional experience, establish connections within the industry, and learn about possible career paths.

The School of Communication maintains a unified Advisement Center serving all undergraduate major and minor programs. The center is staffed with five professional advisors, including three full-time advisors and two non-tenure track faculty with advising duties. Sports communication students will be supported by academic advisors, all of whom hold master's degrees in communication. The Advisement Center philosophy views advising as a partnership between students and their advisor. Advisors have a shared responsibility with students in curricular, co-curricular, and career exploration. Advisors support and guide students throughout their academic career and empower them to take ownership of their education. All communication majors are strongly encouraged to meet with their advisor at least once per semester to remain on track to meet graduation requirements. During each appointment, advisors review graduation requirements,

address questions and concerns from the student, and make recommendations for curricular and co-curricular opportunities to develop marketable skill sets.

Several registered student organizations, specifically in the School of Communication, offer students opportunities to extend learning beyond their classes and engage with peers to grow in their knowledge, skills, and abilities. In addition, the University offers support services such as tutoring, workshops, and seminars at the Julia N. Visor Center to help students who are struggling academically, particularly in general education classes and foundational writing and mathematics subjects.

Assessment of Student Learning

Student learning will be assessed annually against learning goals and outcomes articulated in the student learning outcomes assessment plan using methods and tools described in the plan. These tools or artifacts include exams and assignments. The assessment plan will be administered annually for analysis of student learning and course/program effectiveness. Additionally, during the final semester, students will complete an exit survey about their experience in the program. The School of Communication will also contact alumni for feedback on program effectiveness and essential skills needed in their careers.

Program Assessment

Each fall, program faculty will receive a statistical report of program inputs, productivity, and outputs from the Office of Planning, Research, and Policy Analysis at the University for use by faculty in evaluating the program and identifying areas of improvement. The report is intended to provide a broader set of metrics than those compiled through the implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan. Academic program profile metrics relate to admissions, enrollment, student and faculty demographics, and degrees conferred. Program faculty members will review academic program profiles annually and will report their findings in an annual assessment update submitted to University Assessment Services.

A progress report will be submitted to the Office of the Provost after the third year of program operation. Upon review of the report, the program will be assigned an overall rating and the Office of the Provost will submit the progress report along with a brief rationale for the rating to IBHE staff for review. Aspects of the program in the progress report include enrollment, curriculum, demand for the program and its graduates, student learning outcomes assessment, program sustainability, faculty and staff support, and facilities.

Facilities (space, equipment, instructional materials)

1050.30(a)(4): A) Facilities, equipment and instructional resources (e.g., laboratory supplies and equipment, instructional materials, computational equipment) necessary to support the high-quality academic work in the unit of instruction, research or public service are available and maintained. B) Clinical sites necessary to meet the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service. C) Library holdings and acquisitions, owned or contracted for by the institution, that are necessary to support high quality instruction and scholarship in the unit of instruction, research and public service, are conveniently available and accessible, and can be maintained.

Illinois State University's School of Communication occupies the fourth floor of Fell Hall with offices for full-time faculty, non-tenure track instructors, and doctoral students. The School also has

primary access to all classrooms, seminar rooms, and labs on the first and second floors and the basement. Each classroom is outfitted with similar equipment and capabilities to other ISU classrooms with whiteboards for lecture and discussion notes and ceiling-mounted projectors for display of digital material from the faculty workstation. Mobile instructor workstations are equipped with Dell desktop computers loaded with Office 365 suite, Adobe Creative Cloud, web browsers, and other University-supplied software. The workstations also have AMX touchscreens to control classroom presentation stations. All classroom technology is maintained by the University's Learning Spaces and Audio/Visual Technologies Office.

The student computer labs in Fell Hall include digital design software, Microsoft Office, and SPSS. iMac labs have additional software for video editing such as Final Cut Pro, Motion, and Compressor. There is also a Social Media Analytics Command Center (SMACC) for news streaming, video conferencing, and social listening; a Communication Innovation Center (CIC) with Window-based laptops, iMac workstations, a 25-seat hybrid classroom/computer lab, Panasonic AG-UX180 camcorders and Canon Rebel T6i DSLR cameras; and a Research Studio for experimental studies and focus groups. A future lab space will be utilized as a Podcasting Studio with a digital mixer, audio recording and editing software, and microphones. Additionally, the School of Communication has dedicated facilities for student-run video/television news programming (TV-10); an award-winning online news organization (The Vidette), a student-run radio station (WZND), and an NPR affiliate radio station (WGTL). The School's close relationship with ISU Athletics also offers facilities for students interested in sports communication and broadcasting.

Furthermore, ISU's Milner library has considerable resources for the sports communication program (e.g., databases, journals, and texts) to support student learning and faculty research and instruction. The library houses over 1.6 million volumes and is part of the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) which grants the University community access to additional materials from 129 libraries across Illinois. The library also provides printing, individual and collaborative workstations, loanable technology such as digital cameras and microphones, a Ready Record Studio, and general reference services for all members of the Illinois State University community. The communication librarian will provide research assistance to students, faculty, and staff, instructional services, and collection development supporting curricular and research needs for the proposed program.

Faculty and Staff

1050.30(a)(3): A) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff ensure that the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are met. B) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff, as evidenced by level of degrees held, professional experience in the field of study and demonstrated knowledge of the field, ensure that they are able to fulfill their academic responsibilities. At a minimum, faculty shall have a degree from an institution accredited by a U.S. Department of Education and/or Council for Higher Education Accreditation recognized accrediting body or a degree from another country evaluated for U.S. equivalency in the discipline they will teach or for which they will develop curricula at least one level above that of the courses being taught or developed. C) The involvement of faculty in the unit of instruction, research or public service is sufficient to cover the various fields of knowledge encompassed by the unit, to sustain scholarship appropriate to the unit, and to assure curricular continuity and consistency in student evaluation. E) Support personnel, including but not limited to counselors, administrators, clinical supervisors, and

technical staff, that are directly assigned to the unit of instruction, research or public service, have the educational background and experience necessary to carry out their assigned responsibilities.

Existing personnel in the School of Communication will support the proposed program. During the first year, courses will be taught by nine core faculty, including four tenured and tenure-track faculty and five non-tenure track faculty. All tenured and tenure-track faculty have teaching and research experience in sports communication. With the anticipated growth of the program in future years, the School anticipates hiring at least two full-time, tenure-track faculty who are sports communication specialists. In general, tenured and tenure-track faculty hold a doctorate in communication or a related field with a record of excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service. Non-tenure track faculty hold at least a master's degree in communication or a related field with relevant professional experience and additional industry credentials to complement their teaching.

As a Carnegie-classified R2 doctoral university, Illinois State is a center of research, discovery, and innovation. Thus, the proposed sports communication program was designed with research and innovation integrated into the programmatic structure. Consistent with standard practice in all colleges, faculty members within the program will teach, conduct research, and participate in community service.

Similar to other programs in the School of Communication, the proposed program's administrative structure will include a program coordinator who will work collaboratively with faculty and manage class offerings, teaching assignments, recruitment, enrollment, retention, curriculum design, program assessment and effectiveness, student learning, technology, and facility needs. The program coordinator will be a new position that also works closely with the School's existing personnel comprised of the director, associate director, business manager, and office clerk.

Fiscal and Personnel Resources

1050.30(a)(5): A) The financial commitments to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are sufficient to ensure that the faculty and staff and support services necessary to offer the unit of instruction, research or public service can be acquired and maintained. B) Projections of revenues necessary to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are based on supportable estimates of state appropriations, local tax support, student tuition and fees, private gifts, and/or governmental grants and contracts.

The proposed program is not requesting new state funds. The University's current operating budget and resources are adequate to support the program. To launch the program, the School of Communication will create a new program coordinator position. Among other duties, the coordinator will manage program-specific operations including recruitment, retention, course scheduling, teaching assignments, curriculum review, and outcome assessment. Initially, nine existing tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure track faculty will teach sports communication courses. In subsequent years when enrollment increases to approximately 100 to 125 students, the program will request up to two new full-time, tenure-track faculty.

Accreditation and Licensure

1050.30(b)(3)[applicable only to units of instruction]: Appropriate steps shall be taken to assure that professional accreditation needed for licensure or entry into a profession as specified in the objectives of the unit of instruction is maintained or will be granted in a reasonable period of time.

There is no specialized accreditation or licensure for the proposed program.

Program Information

1050.30(b)(2)[applicable only to units of instruction]: A) The information which the institution provides for students and the public shall include the following: i) An accurate description of the unit of instruction, including its objectives, length, and residency requirements if any; ii) Schedule of tuition, fees, and all other charges and expenses necessary for completion of the unit of instruction, cancellation and refund policies; iii) Student rights and responsibilities; iv) A statement regarding the transferability of college credits, including the fact that the decision to accept transfer credits is determined by the receiving institutions; v) A statement as to how the institution will advise students on the nature of the transfer process, including the importance of consulting with institutions to which the student may seek to transfer; vi) Evidence of arrangements for the transfer of courses or credits or both to institutional counterparts, when these arrangements exist; these arrangements are also known as articulation agreements; vii) A statement of the institution's most recent graduation rates and the number of graduates and enrollments as provided by the institution to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and any submission of data to satisfy Board reporting requirements; and viii) Other material facts concerning the institution and the unit of instruction as are likely to affect the decision of the student to enroll. B) The information listed in subsection (b)(2)(A) shall be available to prospective students prior to enrollment and shall be included in the institution's catalog of programs.

Detailed information about the proposed program including a description of the admission policies, university policies, tuition, fees, and curriculum will be published on the University's website.

Staff Conclusion

The staff concludes that the Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science in Sports Communication proposed by Illinois State University meets the criteria to implement the Board of Higher Education Act (110 ILCS 205/et.seq.) as set forth in 23 Illinois Administrative Code, Ch. II, Section 1050.30, and the Illinois Board of Higher Education policies pertaining to assessment and accreditation or licensure.

University of Illinois Chicago

Proposed Center Title in the Region of Administration: Government Finance Research Center

New Administrative Unit: The proposal is for the authorization of the Government Finance Research Center. The Government Finance Research Center will serve as a research institute for scholarly discourse and publication concerning the public finance of state and local governments.

Background

The University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) is seeking authorization for the Government Finance Research Center. The Government Finance Research Center (GFRC) will serve as an administrative and research center within the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs (CUPPA). Created to shape and inform public policy and scholarly discourse on government and public finance, the GFRC was granted initial approval as a temporary institute by the Illinois Board of Higher Education on February 15, 2018. On March 7, 2023, the GFRC received a one-year extension of its temporary status, extending to February 15, 2024, and on December 6, 2023, an additional extension was granted to August 2024 to complete its application for permanent status.

The Government Finance Research Center supports the practice of public finance for both state and local governments throughout Illinois and the United States. As a Temporary Unit of Administration, the GFRC has raised the visibility and impact of research in the broad area of government finance by bringing scholars together to collaborate on some of the most challenging fiscal issues prevalent in the Chicago region and beyond. The work of the GFRC is anchored in conducting applied research, offering expert commentary, and providing data and other relevant information to various stakeholders in support of their efforts to make government work better and improve the fiscal health of communities. The GFRC's work is community-driven and policy focused, with research requests coming from community organizations, grantmaking foundations, government entities, and other stakeholders. The GFRC provides work and research to public officials to make informed policy decisions.

The following is a sample of the projects and activities completed by the GFRC to address state and local needs and priorities. To support the priorities of State and local government the GFRC has researched and reported on; Property Tax Analysis (2023-25), Water Rate Setting Study (2022-24), Income Tax Progressivity (2022), Solvency of Illinois Public Safety Pension Funds (2021), and Illinois Pension Intercept Law (2019). Additionally, GFRC staff have contributed to numerous advisory activities including the 2023-2025 Employment Security Advisory board, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's Plan of Action for Regional Transit (2023), and The Mobility Recovery Steering Committee (2021-22). Various other activities and contracts completed by the GFRC have demonstrated contribution to the priorities of the State of Illinois including; Contracts to assist with Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity with reviewing and scoring competitive grant applications for the purposes of economic development planning, community development, infrastructure, workforce development, entrepreneurship, business support services, and others (2021), Contracts by the Single Room Housing Assistance Corporation to determine the feasibility and authority of using a Joint Powers Authority or Public Finance Authority to finance single room occupancy units for housing low-income residents of the Chicagoland region to combat the housing affordability crisis (2022), and Contracts by the Metropolitan Planning Council to provide no-cost financial condition assessments to a handful of

municipal governments to assist them with building capacity in all manners of governance, and to encourage standardized and sound financial planning, in pursuit of more effective government practices in the region (2020).

The permanent status will enable the GFRC to continue to serve as a resource for public policy and scholarship through community-engaged interdisciplinary research and technical training focused on today's most important public finance and governance questions.

Need

1050.30(a)(6): A) The unit of instruction, research or public service is educationally and economically consistent with the educational priorities and needs of the State of Illinois. B) The unit of instruction, research or public service meets a need that is not currently met by existing institutions and units of instruction, research or public service.

The economic recoveries of the Great Recession and COVID-19 global health pandemic emphasized the necessity and importance of examining and monitoring the fiscal health of subnational governments. State and local governments across the nation struggled to recover financially from the fiscal crises posed by both events. In the current fiscal climate, there is concern about the impending 'fiscal cliff' that is set to occur in 2026 when federal COVID-19 fiscal recovery dollars will no longer be available. These economic crises highlight critical linkages between and among levels of governments that influence and are influenced by the fiscal well-being of other governmental units. The intergovernmental system of public finance has become increasingly politicized, structurally deficient, and fiscally limited, such that the current condition of the public fiscal state threatens both the efficiency and efficacy of subnational governance. There is a growing disconnect between the conditions of modern life and the fiscal resources that states, cities, and other local governments can leverage to meet the needs of their residents. Effectively restructuring governments and governance systems to fulfill these unmet needs requires a clear understanding of current fiscal conditions to proactively plan for the conditions and future requirements of governance. Such understanding requires focused data and information to conduct research on the fiscal issues pertaining to subnational governments. The continued impact of government devolution and fiscal restructuring at all levels of government heightens the need for the GFRC and its mission-driven activities. Government agencies and community organizations who seek to better understand these dynamics in a particular geographic area rely on data and other information provided by the GFRC regarding community assets, deficits, needs, and gaps. The long track record of CUPPA and contributions of the GFRC in public finance, as well as its association with a prominent public university, has made the GFRC a valuable resource to state and local governments for such information, particularly for leaders of communities with limited or no access to such expertise and resources.

Illinois and its local governments are among the most fiscally challenged in America. The outputs and products of the GFRC address the public policy challenges of Illinois, its local governments, and state and local governments in the region. Both the State of Illinois and local government agencies seek the services of the GFRC to assist with a wide range of data, analysis, and evaluation for a variety of topics and projects.

Comparable Units in Illinois

The GFRC differs from and complements other research units in Illinois. Three research units in Illinois are engaged in activities that are related to the UIC Government Finance Research Center. The University of Illinois Systems' Institute of Government and Public Affairs (IGPA) operates in Springfield and Chicago. The mission of the IGPA is to improve public policy discussion through nonpartisan, evidence-based research and public engagement in Illinois. This mission is much broader than that of the GFRC, which focuses on informing and shaping public policy in the specific area of government and public finance through its research and community engagement. The IGPA operates based on working groups. The working group most closely aligned with the GFRC's mission is Fiscal and Economic Policy, with its members researching ways to make Illinois' economic and fiscal structure equitable, dynamic, and sustainable. The GFRC Director holds an appointment as an IGPA Collaborating Scholar and serves as a member of the IGPA's Fiscal and Economic Policy working group. The GFRC and IGPA have an established scholarly relationship and envision continued cooperation in the future.

The University of Illinois Springfield (UIS) is home to the Institute for Illinois Public Finance (IIPF), which was created in 2018 (the same year as the GFRC) to advance research and improve practice in the area of public finance in Illinois. While this mission is more narrowly focused (than IGPA) on public finance, the scope of research undertaken by the IIPF is narrowly focused on Illinois. By contrast, the GFRC conducts research and other activities focusing on public finance issues within Illinois but also across the nation. The GFRC and IIPF also have a history of collaboration and research.

The Center for Municipal Finance (CMF) within the Harris School of Public Policy at University of Chicago engages its faculty, staff, and students in the major financial issues of the day that face state and local governments in the United States and around the globe. While the CMF is focused on issues of public finance similar to the GFRC, the global scope of activity undertaken by the CMF is broader than the domestic, nationwide scope of the GFRC. In addition, while the GFRC works to influence public policy through mixed methods research (including both quantitative and qualitative methodologies), the CMF produces and utilizes comprehensive data to support and guide its research. As with the other comparable units, the CMF and GFRC have a history of collaboration with staff members serving together on the Government Finance Officers Association and Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's Plan of Action for Regional Transit.

The three identified units within Illinois with similar missions engage in similar work to that of the GFRC. However, none of their missions nor the activities undertaken by these units completely overlap with or create competition for the GFRC. Rather, the individuals representing each of these research units are well-known to each other and have a history of evident, tangible collaboration.

Institution	Academic Unit	Sector
University of Illinois System	Institute of Government and Public Affairs	Public
University of Illinois Springfield	Institute for Illinois Public Finance	Public
University of Chicago	Center for Municipal Finance	Private

A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth

The proposed Unit of Administration will support Goal 1, Equity of *A Thriving Illinois*, to close the equity gaps for students who have been left behind. Since temporary approval in 2018, GFRC staff have worked to create, develop, and expand professional networks, particularly partnerships with national associations that represent state and local governments and with state and local government agencies that promote sound fiscal policy. Through these partnerships, the GFRC has produced research products to provide public service that positively impacted organizations and communities, throughout the Chicagoland area, State of Illinois, Midwestern region, and the nation. The populations served by the GFRC's work include the clientele of these various community foundations, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies who are impacted by government policies informed by GFRC research. Many of the members of these various populations are from low-income and/or underrepresented groups who would not otherwise have access to the expertise and resources to undertake these activities without the assistance of the GFRC. Because of its strong track record, the GFRC is highly regarded and trusted by many communities. The GFRC will continue to serve, collaborate, and provide technical assistance that benefits underserved communities, including nonprofits and other community organizations representing low-income individuals and families, as well as government agencies at all levels working to promote equity and accessibility. Progress toward this goal will be measured by research funding for projects with an equity component, such as the Cook County Property Tax Analysis and Water Rate Setting Study.

The proposed Unit of Administration will support Goal 2, Sustainability of *A Thriving Illinois*, to build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions by finding ways to reduce the financial burden of education on students and their families. The GFRC has been fully integrated into the administration and operations of the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs since temporary approval in 2018. These activities are supported by administrative staff in CUPPA's Office of the Dean and overseen by the CUPPA Dean to ensure maximum efficiency. Since engaging with clients external to the University is essential to maintaining the most significant source of revenue for the GFRC, effective responsiveness is critical for GFRC operations, especially regarding the execution of contracts and hiring of employees. As such, the GFRC's administrative structure has evolved its operations to minimize redundancy and maximize flexibility in staffing to accommodate the needs of each project.

The GFRC will continue to contribute to Goal 3, Growth, to increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth by continuing to promote the public good through all its efforts to ensure implemented policies and financial management practices translate into improved fiscal health in Illinois and beyond, especially among communities with underserved and/or underrepresented populations. The GFRC will continue to convene key stakeholders from relevant agencies and communities to align priorities and coordinate research efforts to inform policy makers of sound financial management practices that promote greater fiscal health within the public sector. The GFRC works with and throughout the State of Illinois to address public finance issues intended to improve the fiscal health of communities across the state. Improving the fiscal health of Illinois' communities serving the most vulnerable populations is critical for long-term economic development, as doing so helps fuel the state's economy. The GFRC anticipates collaborating with the Illinois Innovation Network on proposing and conducting research projects of mutual interest and benefit when such opportunities arise.

Mission and Objectives

1050.30(a)(1): A) The objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are consistent with the mission of the college or university. B) The objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are consistent with what the unit title implies.

The mission of the Government Finance Research Center is to shape and inform public policy and scholarly discourse on government and public finance by identifying, planning, and executing research, providing reports and informed analyses, offering educational opportunities and technical training, and offering inclusive venues to convene national and local discussions on fiscal and governance issues. In alignment with the mission of the University of Illinois Chicago, the GFRC works toward creating new knowledge and solutions to the major public finance problems facing governments in the Chicagoland area and among cities throughout the nation. The GFRC has been committed to the creation of new knowledge and problem-solving within a context that is inclusive and embraces diversity, and in partnership with public service professionals from community groups, nonprofits, government entities, and other stakeholders. In doing so, the GFRC provides a place for CUPPA students to receive practical experience in research and policy analysis as they study in the college's degree programs and offers CUPPA faculty and students opportunities to interact and engage with communities, thereby acting as an important bridge between the university and the broader community.

Assessment of Outcomes

Assessment 1050.30(b)(1) [applicable only to units of instruction]: A) The caliber and content of the curriculum must assure that the objectives of the unit of instruction will be achieved. B) The breadth and depth of the curriculum must be consistent with what the title of the unit of instruction implies. C) The admission and graduation requirements for the unit of instruction must be consistent with the stated objectives of 23 the unit of instruction. D) Institutions must show the capacity to develop, deliver and support academic programs. Procedures and policies that will assure the effective design, conduct and evaluation of the degree programs under the academic control of the institution must be developed. Assessment plans must demonstrate that the institution has identified clear and appropriate program and student learning goals and has defined appropriate outcomes. Appropriate data must be collected and may be requested by the Board to show the level of student learning that has occurred as a result of participation in the institution's programs of study.

1050.30(a)(2): The design, conduct and evaluation of the unit of instruction, research or public service are under the direct and continuous control of the sponsoring institution's established processes for academic planning and quality maintenance.

As the GFRC supports the mission of the CUPPA and University as a research and public service unit, it utilizes specific processes to ensure progress toward stated objectives. The quality of the work product delivered by the GFRC is evaluated at various levels. The GFRC's internal advisory panel, comprised of UIC faculty, is tasked with the responsibility of periodically reviewing the GFRC's work considering both the university's mission and statewide goals. In addition, the GFRC staff provide regular reports to colleagues at various regularly scheduled meetings (e.g., CUPPA Cabinet meetings for unit heads), to the Dean at bi-monthly one-on-one meetings, and to university officials as needed. These venues offer opportunities to assess and measure how the work of the GFRC supports the University's mission and statewide goals.

The Director's annual report also requires the GFRC to identify how the unit links directly to all the University's strategic goals, especially the goals of raising the visibility and impact of UIC research and focusing its research on the Chicago region. The Director is required to explain how the GFRC's research and other products achieve its stated objectives and prepares students for professional opportunities in the broad area of government finance and budgeting. The way in which the GFRC's work products achieve stated objectives is also measured by their partners and beneficiaries, as well as by the general public.

The GFRC regularly monitors its effectiveness, assesses the qualifications and adequacy of its staff, facilities, and resources, and makes adjustments when necessary. The Director reports to the CUPPA Dean, the Director's performance in meeting UIC's strategic goals and of effectively operating a research center is assessed annually, as are all other Directors of research centers in CUPPA. This annual review process addresses issues of adequacy of staff support, equipment, and other resources. In addition, this review process highlights measures of effectiveness and impact, as well as the GFRC's vision for future projects and programming. Finally, the GFRC ensures that staff are properly evaluated annually under UIC policy to continually improve performance.

Facilities

1050.30(a)(4): A) Facilities, equipment and instructional resources (e.g., laboratory supplies and equipment, instructional materials, computational equipment) necessary to support the high quality academic work in the unit of instruction, research or public service are available and maintained. B) Clinical sites necessary to meet the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service. C) Library holdings and acquisitions, owned or contracted for by the institution, that are necessary to support high quality instruction and scholarship in the unit of instruction, research and public service, are conveniently available and accessible, and can be maintained.

The GFRC is located in CUPPA Hall utilizing pre-existing space in the building. No new space or funding was needed or provided by the University to support the physical needs of the Center when it was temporarily approved in 2018, nor has any funding from the University been needed or provided since that time. The GFRC occupies the office suite located in CUPPA Hall, which includes a reception area and two private offices. All of the conference room equipment was purchased in 2023 with external grant funding. The GFRC staff review its facilities and equipment needs annually to ensure its adequacy for continuing the high-quality research and public service activities of the unit. At this time, the GFRC is fully equipped to maintain its current activity level. No additional facilities, equipment, or other resources are needed for the foreseeable future.

Faculty and Staff

1050.30(a)(3): A) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff ensure that the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are met. B) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff, as evidenced by level of degrees held, professional experience in the field of study and demonstrated knowledge of the field, ensure that they are able to fulfill their academic responsibilities. At a minimum, faculty shall have a degree from an institution accredited by a U.S. Department of Education and/or Council for Higher Education Accreditation recognized accrediting body or a degree from another country evaluated for U.S. equivalency in the discipline they will teach or for which they will develop curricula at least one level above that of the courses being taught or developed. C) The involvement of faculty in the unit of instruction, research or public service is sufficient to cover the various fields of knowledge encompassed by the unit, to sustain scholarship

appropriate to the unit, and to assure curricular continuity and consistency in student evaluation. E) Support personnel, including but not limited to counselors, administrators, clinical supervisors, and technical staff, that are directly assigned to the unit of instruction, research or public service, have the educational background and experience necessary to carry out their assigned responsibilities.

The GFRC is organized as a research center within the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs and mirrors the organizational structure of other centers within the College. The GFRC Director reports to the Dean of CUPPA, meeting on a bi-monthly basis (and at additional times as needed) to discuss ongoing and planned research projects, collaborative activities, and other issues. The Director submits an annual self-assessment that is reviewed by and discussed with the CUPPA Dean. The GFRC Director attends a monthly college unit head meeting where ideas and projects are shared and discussed. The GFRC Director is responsible for hiring and supervising the GFRC Associate Director, student research assistants, and other staff as needed and given funding availability. In addition to the Director and Associate Director, the GFRC currently employs one full-time postdoctoral research associate and four graduate research assistants. There are also currently four other CUPPA faculty working on GFRC research projects, and additional faculty with grant proposals under review by external funding agencies that have included GFRC administration of the projects if funded. The GFRC Director and Associate Director work directly with CUPPA staff who provide administrative support for pre- and post-awards for sponsored research and other activities.

As a unit of administration at UIC, the GFRC follows institutional level strategies to increase and retain staff and administrators of color. UIC is diverse in terms of its faculty, administrators, and staff with nearly half of academic professional administrative and staff members being minority or international employees. UIC is actively seeking to increase diversity in the faculty and administrative leadership positions through the unit level Advancing Racial Equity plans. In this process, department heads and deans are accountable for the creation and implementation of unit-specific strategic plans, which are also sent to the Office of Diversity, Equity and Engagement for review (as well as being forwarded to the Provost and Chancellor). In turn, the Office of Diversity, Equity and Engagement annually reviews the plans, with a commitment to report, make data available, establish and monitor institutional metrics, and drive change based on these reviews. UIC also has a Bridge to Faculty program designed to attract underrepresented postdoctoral scholars with the goal of direct transition to a tenure-track faculty position.

The GFRC is committed to increasing diversity among the students who apply for GFRC assistantships and hourly positions. As a strategy to do this, the GFRC builds relationships with UIC's affinity student groups and organizations. While this is a long-term goal, in the short term, the GFRC is reaching out to leadership of these groups to introduce the center and the types of opportunities available for students when such opportunities arise. By forging these relationships, the GFRC plans to diversify the field of public finance by introducing students to the field and job opportunities available. Progress toward these goals will be measured by the numbers of student workers and advisory board members that come from underrepresented groups. In addition, at the conclusion of each fiscal year, the GFRC will conduct an objective assessment of the diversity of its entire staff at all levels of the unit. An equity criterion will be used to evaluate and assess proportional representation at each level and inform strategies for meeting diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. Diversity will be measured through a lens of upward mobility to ensure equity in access to senior leadership opportunities. At the same time, a review of compensation practices and annual benchmarks will be carried out to ensure compensation is fair and equitable. Results of the

assessment will be shared with all GFRC's employees to solicit input and feedback in support of a culture of inclusive practices.

Fiscal and Personnel Resources

1050.30(a)(5): A) The financial commitments to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are sufficient to ensure that the faculty and staff and support services necessary to offer the unit of instruction, research or public service can be acquired and maintained. B) Projections of revenues necessary to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are based on supportable estimates of state appropriations, local tax support, student tuition and fees, private gifts, and/or governmental grants and contracts.

No state funds were used to support the creation or continuing operations of the GFRC. No staff are paid out-of-state funds. An anonymous gift of \$1 million was received (and equally divided between current-use expenditures and an endowment), used to create the GFRC in 2018, and continues to help support its operations. The same anonymous donor followed up the initial \$1 million gift with additional gifts of \$100,000 in 2019 and \$350,000 in 2020. Since its creation, the GFRC has also successfully leveraged nearly \$3.5 million in grant and contract funding to supplement these donations and foundational resource base. Identifying sources and applying for external research grants is a perpetual activity undertaken by GFRC staff. As a result, the proportion of total resources available to the GFRC that come from external grants and contracts has grown from 3.09 percent in 2018 to 38.79 percent in fiscal year 2024. The GFRC also actively searches for additional donors in partnership with the CUPPA Dean and UIC Office of Advancement.

The GFRC's current levels of resources and expenditure are adequately balanced to maintain its current level of activities. The base endowment funding for the GFRC will continue indefinitely and is expected to grow slightly every year depending on the performance of the financial market. No additional staff or administrative support is required to carry out the current level of activities or to its mandate under the endowment agreement. The same is true for the GFRC's facilities, as the GFRC is fully equipped to maintain its current activity level.

Accreditation and Licensure

1050.30(b)(3) [applicable only to units of instruction]: Appropriate steps shall be taken to assure that professional accreditation needed for licensure or entry into a profession as specified in the objectives of the unit of instruction is maintained or will be granted in a reasonable period of time.

No specialized accreditation or licensure is required.

Program Information

1050.30(b)(2)[applicable only to units of instruction]: A) The information which the institution provides for students and the public shall include the following: i) An accurate description of the unit of instruction, including its objectives, length, and residency requirements if any; ii) Schedule of tuition, fees, and all other charges and expenses necessary for completion of the unit of instruction, cancellation and refund policies; iii) Student rights and responsibilities; iv) A statement regarding the transferability of college credits, including the fact that the decision to accept transfer credits is determined by the receiving institutions; v) A statement as to how the institution will advise students on the nature of the

transfer process, including the importance of consulting with institutions to which the student may seek to transfer; vi) Evidence of arrangements for the transfer of courses or credits or both to institutional counterparts, when these arrangements exist; these arrangements are also known as articulation agreements; vii) A statement of the institution's most recent graduation rates and the number of graduates and enrollments as provided by the institution to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and any submission of data to satisfy Board reporting requirements; and viii) Other material facts concerning the institution and the unit of instruction as are likely to affect the decision of the student to enroll. B) The information listed in subsection (b)(2)(A) shall be available to prospective students prior to enrollment and shall be included in the institution's catalog of programs.

Detailed information about the proposed center will be published on the University's website.

Staff Conclusion

The staff concludes that the Government Finance Research Center proposed by the University of Illinois Chicago meets the criteria to implement the Board of Higher Education Act (110 ILCS 205/et.seq.) as set forth in 23 Illinois Administrative Code, Ch. II, Section 1050.30, and the Illinois Board of Higher Education policies pertaining to assessment and accreditation or licensure.

University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana

Proposed Degree Title in the Region of Authorization: Master of Science in Game Development in the Prairie Region.

Projected Enrollments and Degrees:

First Year Enrollment	Fifth Year Enrollment	Degree Awarded Fifth Year
50	240	120

Background

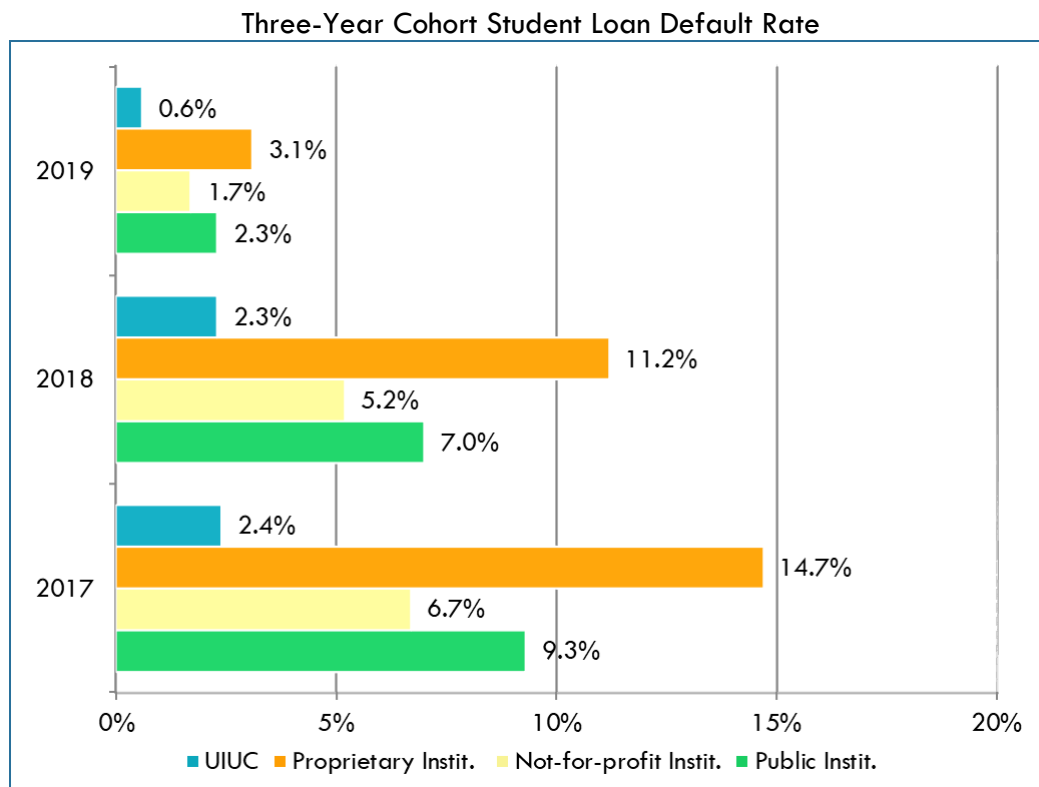
The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (the University or UIUC) is seeking authorization to offer a Master of Science in Game Development (MS in Game Development) in the Prairie Region. The MS in Game Development is housed in the School of Information Sciences. The University's Game Studies and Design (GSD) is an interdisciplinary informatics program currently offering minors at both the undergraduate and graduate level. GSD offers core courses, and students enrolled in these minors also take elective courses in more than a dozen units across campus. The success of the GSD interdisciplinary minors and initiatives can be attributed largely to the years spent developing a community of practice, so that the academic programs emerged from the interest of faculty and demand from students. With the support of an Investment for Growth grant from the Office of the Provost in 2019, the Informatics unit assembled interdisciplinary curriculum committees to work on the proposals to create the minors and lay the groundwork for a professional master's degree. Originally conceptualized as a residential program, the educational shifts of the pandemic provided an opportunity to reevaluate.

On the other side of the pandemic, the landscape has significantly changed. The MS in Game Development will be an online, professional master's program in which internships in game studies can also be accomplished online. The shift to online education mirrors a move to remote work in many game studios. This proposed program will have as electives online versions of many of the courses that are already being used to meet the requirements of the minors. There are existing courses in computer science, creative writing, music, and theatre. Each of these departments has participated in the decision to include their courses with a commitment to develop additional elective courses as the program grows.

Institutional Data

1050.30(b)(1)(H): Success in student progression and graduation rates across all existing approved programs, and success rates in programs preparing students for certification and licensure, shall be consistent with expectations in higher education and the appropriate related field of study. At a minimum, the Board shall consider these factors based on results for similar institutions. (i) Graduation rates, certificate and degree completion rates, retention rates, and pass rates for licensure and certification aligned with thresholds set by State nor national regulatory bodies. (ii) The success rate shall be, at a minimum, higher than those of the lowest quartile of these measures for similar Illinois institutions defined as open versus competitive enrollment institutions and primarily associate versus primarily baccalaureate granting institutions. Exceptions may be made to the lowest quartile if an institution is above the national average for these measures using the same comparison categories of institutions.

This section includes information about institutional and student success measures for each institution seeking program approval. The institution's rates will be compared to Illinois institutions from within a select comparison group and against the national standards or averages. This section will include undergraduate graduation rates, first to second-year retention rates, student loan default rates, and any applicable licensure passage rates. Additionally, for a proposed graduate program, this section will focus on student loan default data since this measure also includes graduate students in the calculation.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), US Department of Education.

Note: Due to the pause on federal student loan payment that began in March 2020, the cohort default rate for fiscal year 2020 is zero percent for the institution and all institution types. The national cohort default rate for fiscal year 2019 was 2.3 percent and zero percent for fiscal year 2020. A lower number is a positive indicator.

The three-year cohort student loan default rate is the percentage of a school's borrowers who enter repayment on certain Federal Loan Programs during a particular federal fiscal year, October 1 to September 30, and default or meet other specified conditions prior to the end of the second following fiscal year.

Need

1050.30(a)(6): A) The unit of instruction, research or public service is educationally and economically consistent with the educational priorities and needs of the State of Illinois. B) The unit of instruction, research or public service meets a need that is not currently met by existing institutions and units of instruction, research or public service.

The University has reviewed market research, state and federal job outlook data, and data and employment trends in related fields in preparation for establishing the MS in Game Development. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) groups video game designers under the larger umbrella of multimedia artists and animators. The BLS reports that the job outlook for multimedia artists and animators from 2018 to 2028 is growth by four percent. This job outlook is as fast as the national average and may be attributed to the balancing factors of an increase in demand for entertainment, but also an increase of these professionals working overseas. The job market for Game Designers in the United States has grown 19 percent over the past five years.

The BLS further breaks down the job outlook for multimedia artists and animators by industry. For the period from 2018 to 2028, the BLS projected that the job outlook for professionals in the motion picture and video industries was growth by 18 percent while those in the broad field of arts, entertainment, and recreation had a job outlook of close to six percent. Another resource, O*Net Online, which pulls information from the BLS, reported growth of seven to ten percent from 2018 to 2028 specifically for video game designers. A review of industry position postings for the state of Illinois has found strong demand with 83 openings for a game artist, 78 for a game developer, and 23 for a game designer, all with salaries ranging from \$60,000 to \$130,000, at the time of search.

This proposed program also has the potential to advance students' educational aspirations. UIUC search committees across many disciplines regularly see job applications from faculty candidates for jobs listings not directly game-related, whose research turns out to be game-related, game-relevant, or game-adjacent. Every year UIUC discovers more PhD students across campus interested in game studies research. These students are in need of mentorship and an intellectual community. The graduate students currently enrolled in GSD 504: Graduate Seminar in Game Studies (the GSD Graduate Minor core course) are pursuing advanced degrees in ten different programs, in four different colleges.

A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth

The proposed graduate degree program in Game Development supports Goal 1, Equity of A Thriving Illinois to *close the equity gaps for students who have historically been left behind* at the system, institution, and program level. At the system level, the University of Illinois prioritizes closing equity gaps among the citizens across Illinois, within urban and rural communities, and beyond. While the fundamental needs that will drive greater economic vitality vary across zip codes in the state, closing equity gaps among citizens remains crucial to achieving the mission of the University of Illinois System. Supportive of IBHE's A Thriving Illinois plan and aligning with its Equity Strategy #2, *establish and implement institution-level equity plans, practices to close access, progression, completion and attainment gaps*, the UI System's Access 2030 Strategic Plan is a comprehensive initiative designed to increase the number of graduates from underrepresented groups by 50 percent by the end of the decade. This will include students from disadvantaged backgrounds – ethnic and racial, rural, and urban. It will build on ongoing efforts to create more opportunities for Illinoisans of all backgrounds.

At the institution level, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's diversity, equity, and inclusion work is led by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (OVCDEI). In the 2022-2023 academic year, the institution launched a campus-wide climate assessment instrument to understand the degree to which students feel safe, accepted, and valued. The goal is to provide a quantitative sense of how individuals feel about their campus experiences.

This assessment includes students' perceptions of the quality of their interactions with peers, faculty members, and administrators, including their sense of the campus as a place where they belong and are treated with respect. The University is partnering with the Association of American Universities (AAU), external organizations, and peer institutions to ensure the survey instrument is state of the art, has questions that shed light on multiple axes of diversity, and generates data that can be shared and benchmarked against peer institutions to tease out challenges that are unique to the UIUC campus as well as those that are common to peer universities.

Additionally, the University hosts a series of outreach, recruitment, and transition programs on their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion website to improve access and successful outcomes in graduate education for students from historically underrepresented groups. The Summer Research Opportunities Program at Illinois brings highly competitive undergraduate students for a nine-week introduction to graduate study. Participants conduct research under the mentorship of a faculty member in their chosen field of study, explore careers in research, attend workshops, and take part in team activities that prepare them for graduate study. ASPIRE Illinois recruits talented students from backgrounds typically underrepresented at elite institutions to consider attending graduate school at UIUC. Toward this aim, the campus fosters a webinar series to guide students through the process of selecting a graduate program and submitting competitive applications. In addition, ASPIRE applicants are supported through direct contacts with Directors of Graduate Studies and faculty as well as through campus visits. The University hosts a Community of Scholars visit weekend to unite newly admitted students with their admitting graduate programs and with prospective peers. Through networking and orientation to the campus, students are able to better understand how graduate study at the University can support their short and long-term goals.

To support the graduate school application process, application fee waivers are provided for Illinois Promise students, Summer Research Opportunities Program participants, McNair Scholars, ASPIRE scholars, individuals with US military service, and FreeApp applicants through a Big Ten Academic Alliance program to increase access to graduate education for diverse applicants. It is a priority of the campus' game studies community, both through teaching, hiring, and research, to address issues related to ethics, diversity, justice, and equity within the game and game-adjacent industries, which have been marred by the same biases and tolerance for toxicity that have proliferated across social media and in the video game industry during the digital transformations of the 21st century. One of the key motivations in the design of the proposed program is to address bias in games and the toxicity that can be found in the game industry by transforming it from the inside, training students in diverse and inclusive environments, and sending them into the industry carrying those values with them.

The proposed MS in Game Development will further be guided by the institutional practices of the School of Information Sciences (iSchool) and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign as a whole. In the iSchool's 2022-2027 strategic plan, diversity and inclusion are directly addressed in a section titled Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility. The goal is to nurture and grow a culture of inclusion both locally and globally, ensuring diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in all aspects. The iSchool contributes to the University's goal to make a significant and visible social impact.

The proposed program will also address Goal 2, Sustainability, *to build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions by finding ways to reduce the financial burden of education on students and their families*. The Graduate College Fellowship program provides financial support through fellowships and tuition and partial fee waivers to students from historically

underrepresented groups. These awards include \$20,000 annual stipends for one year for master's students and a \$25,000 annual stipend for three years for doctoral students along with additional funding commitments from their academic program for the remaining years of their studies. Annually, \$3.5 million of campus funds are allocated to these fellowships. To acknowledge financial constraints that may impact retention, in 2020 the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign raised the threshold that previously prevented course registration due to holds placed on student accounts resulting in past-due balances of over \$200. Since March 2020, only students whose past-due balance is over \$1,500 have registration holds placed. This proactive institutional response is an example of alignment with the Sustainability Goal, Strategy 3 of *A Thriving Illinois*. The MS in Game Development will offer scholarships. The iSchool has already begun to reach out to corporate partners to sponsor scholarships to allow admission and retention of students from underrepresented and underserved communities. Because the School is developing its own in-house game development studio, the Stu/dio, which hires students on an hourly basis, this is another avenue that can be offered to students who need financial support in order to be successful in the program. In the second year of the program, student internships are likely to be paid positions.

The proposed degree program will contribute to Goal 3, *Growth, to increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth*. The University has partnerships with business and industry through statewide initiatives like the Discovery Partners Institute (DPI) and the Illinois Innovation Network (IIN), which closely align with *A Thriving Illinois' Growth Strategies*. As a key gubernatorial initiative, DPI's Tech Talent Lab and immersion programs engage with Chicago's technology workforce, allowing students to interact with Chicagoland technology and innovation culture. Students make meaningful connections to regional employers and industries, university research teams, civic and nonprofit organizations, and startups that will lead to employment and talent retention in the region. IIN works to enrich the student experience through short-term boot camps around topics such as artificial intelligence, data science, entrepreneurship, and more. These intensive programs will encourage students' interest in topics that are key to the 21st century economy and give them a foundation for continued study. The iSchool is in early discussions with DPI staff regarding potential connections to game studios in the Chicago area. Additionally, the program contributes to *A Thriving Illinois Growth Strategy number 6, to expand higher education models of teaching and learning that provide opportunity for students to succeed in the work of the future*. The MS in Game Development is designed around opportunities for students to have practical experience on game development teams. A major requirement is 16 hours of practicum experience at a game development, design, or art studio. The iSchool will also coordinate potential, optional third-year internship opportunities at those same studios. The program is designed around how game development is done in the industry. The online program mirrors many of the game development companies. Supporting studios have shifted to virtual teams, a transition that was already happening but was hastened by the COVID pandemic. The GSD 540 course, Tools and Techniques of Game Production, will be delivered as a simulation of a studio developing a game. Students will experience actual issues and obstacles that real studios have faced.

Comparable Programs in Illinois

The proposed program will not directly compete with or have an adverse impact upon other game studies programs in Illinois. Most game design programs in Illinois are offered at the undergraduate level. There are two private universities that offer similar programming at the graduate level. DePaul University offers a suite of game-relevant master's degrees: with master's degrees in Animation, Digital Communication, and Media Arts, and Game Programming, as well as an MFA in Game Design. This proposed program is significantly different in that the MS in Game

Development will admit students with interests across the game-related professions (Art, Design, Production, Programming, and Narrative). This structure is by design, so that students can work together on collaborative teams within the program, pursuing their specializations while gaining direct experience of studio practices that will more closely resemble the work they will do in their professional careers. The chief innovation of the proposed program is its industry partnerships; in their second year, students will receive credit for studio internships, which will help to launch them to the workforce. Bradley University also offers a Master of Science in Game Design and Development. The proposed UIUC MS in Game Development differs in that the proposed program is designed to be interdisciplinary, allowing for students to focus on multiple faces of game development while the Master of Science in Game Design and Development is more traditional in curriculum focusing on prototyping, production, and post-production while offering a Game Programming concentration similar to traditional offerings.

Mission and Objectives

1050.30(a)(1): A) The objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are consistent with the mission of the college or university. B) The objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are consistent with what the unit title implies.

The Master of Science in Game Development is in alignment with the overall mission of the University and is consistent with the purpose, goals, and objectives of the University. The vision for the MS in Game Development was incorporated into the Arts Task Force Report of The Next 150, the 2018-2023 University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Strategic Plan which included this among its suggested tasks: “Establish a game studies program that would not take the form of a centralized degree granting department, but instead would be an interdisciplinary consortium resting upon many degrees, courses and research initiatives in multiple programs across campus.” This goal began to be fulfilled with the support of an Investment for Growth grant in 2019, and in the 2022 launch of undergraduate and graduate minors in Game Studies and Design, programs which are governed by an interdisciplinary committee of GSD faculty from across six colleges.

One of the signature goals of the campus’ strategic plan is to establish the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign as a global leader in socially conscious, digital transformation. The plan calls for the University to make an authentic commitment to the arts, humanities, and the social sciences by investing in scholarship, while facilitating new roles for artistic practitioners. The interdisciplinary and team-based nature of game development, and the needs of the game industry which employs artists, writers, musicians, and designers on creative teams along with programmers and engineers explains why GSD faculty are appointed to Arts, Humanities, Social Science and STEM units. The MS in Game Development, which emphasizes work within interdisciplinary teams of designers, writers, artists, programmers, and producers, directly serves the goal of an authentically interdisciplinary digital transformation.

Curriculum and Assessment

1050.30(b)(1) [applicable only to units of instruction]: A) The caliber and content of the curriculum must assure that the objectives of the unit of instruction will be achieved. B) The breadth and depth of the curriculum must be consistent with what the title of the unit of instruction implies. C) The admission and graduation requirements for the unit of instruction must be consistent with the stated objectives of the unit of instruction. D) Institutions must show the capacity to develop, deliver and support academic programs. Procedures and policies that will assure the effective design, conduct and evaluation of the

degree programs under the academic control of the institution must be developed. Assessment plans must demonstrate that the institution has identified clear and appropriate program and student learning goals and has defined appropriate outcomes. Appropriate data must be collected and may be requested by the Board to show the level of student learning that has occurred as a result of participation in the institution's programs of study.

1050.30(a)(2): The design, conduct and evaluation of the unit of instruction, research or public service are under the direct and continuous control of the sponsoring institution's established processes for academic planning and quality maintenance.

Admission Requirements

Admission requirements will be the same as the University's Graduate College admission requirements. This includes a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college in the United States or a comparable degree from a recognized institution of higher learning abroad as well as a 3.0 or comparable GPA for the last two years of undergraduate study. Applicants will be expected to have an undergraduate degree in their area of specialization or a professional portfolio indicating a level of skill equivalent to an undergraduate degree in that area.

Curriculum

The Master of Science in Game Development provides technical training and practical experience for students interested in working in professional game studios, game-adjacent industries, or other businesses where game-related skills are increasingly in demand. The curriculum fosters critical skills in collaboration, communication, integration, and professional business practices, along with technical skills in game design within one of the following five concentrations: Game Art, Game Design, Game Production, Game Programming, and Game Narrative. After the first year of coursework, students will shift the balance of their course work towards in-studio experiences within a professional game-development environment. The MS in Game Development will serve traditional graduate students as well as industry professionals who are interested in attaining a post-graduate degree while diversifying their professional skills. All courses are online.

Students admitted to the program must complete 48 graduate credit hours to earn the MS in Game Development degree. The first year of studies will require two core courses of eight credit hours each in Game Development I and II as well as 12 credits from the chosen concentration and four credits of elective from the concentration courses. The second year requires 16 total credits of Practicum in Game Development (from two eight-credit courses), and an additional eight credits of electives from the concentration list. The concentration electives offer students a range of options within the concentrations of Game Art, Game Design, Game Production, Game Programming, and Game Narrative. Specific electives are listed in the program catalog and additional offerings will be developed in response to industry demand.

Assessment of Student Learning

At the course level, various measures of student performance and attainment of learning objectives will be used, including a self-assessment form filled out by students upon entering the program, and another upon completion of the degree requirements, regarding their experience with and mastery of concepts and skills. Grades, homework assignments, and class projects as well as exhibitions and presentations of student work will take place regularly and will provide an

additional source of data. An assessment of students' attainment of learning objectives will occur annually.

Program Assessment

The MS in Game Development Program Coordinator will collect data that reflects on the success of the program as a whole and the fulfillment of student learning objectives. Each core course, as well as the elective courses developed for the degree, has individual learning outcomes, which will describe the concepts and skills to be gained as they relate to one or more of the program-level learning objectives. At the programmatic level, the Program Coordinator will track the number of students enrolled in the program, students' demographic information, courses taken, as well as post-graduate employment information, which will be used to update advising materials provided to students in the program.

A representative campus-wide committee of faculty governs the program for all Informatics programs. As part of that governance, assessment results are reviewed on an annual basis and recommendations are provided to Informatics staff to implement recommendations as appropriate. Evaluation of the MS in Game Development will take place in a two-year rotation between (year one) macro-level analysis of curriculum, and (year two) a more focused scrutiny of course content/syllabi. In both years, an agile "Assessment and Action," process will occur during which assessment data related to students will be analyzed and used to make programmatic or course changes as quickly as possible, to improve student learning in relationship to the stated outcomes. An Assessment and Action report will be prepared each spring by the MS in Game Development Program Coordinator to be shared with the MS in Game Development Program Committee, the Director of Game Studies and Design (GSD), and the Director of Informatics.

Facilities (space, equipment, instructional materials)

1050.30(a)(4): A) Facilities, equipment and instructional resources (e.g., laboratory supplies and equipment, instructional materials, computational equipment) necessary to support the high quality academic work in the unit of instruction, research or public service are available and maintained. B) Clinical sites necessary to meet the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service. C) Library holdings and acquisitions, owned or contracted for by the institution, that are necessary to support high quality instruction and scholarship in the unit of instruction, research and public service, are conveniently available and accessible, and can be maintained.

No classrooms will be required for the success of the program. Office space is available in the iSchool building, but additional office space will be required either in the department in which the faculty supports (e.g., Computer Science or Art and Design) or within School of Information Sciences space. Additional laboratory space may be needed for the Stu/dio. Computer and VR/XR equipment is required for the Stu/dio and that is accounted for in the materials/supplies budget line item. Equipment maintenance and upgrades are also factored into the ongoing self-supporting budget.

In addition to housing an extensive collection of games in the Main Library, the Library provides access to the most widely recognized, top journals in game studies. These include ACM Transactions on Modeling and Computer Simulation, Computers in Entertainment: CIE; EAI endorsed transactions on serious games; Eludamos journal for computer game culture; Entertainment Computing; GAME: The Italian Journal of Game Studies; Games and Culture; Games for Health

Journal; JMIR Serious Games; International Journal of Serious Games, Loading...[sic]; New Media and Society; Science, Technology, and Human Values; and Simulation and Gaming.

Faculty and Staff

1050.30(a)(3): A) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff ensure that the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are met. B) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff, as evidenced by level of degrees held, professional experience in the field of study and demonstrated knowledge of the field, ensure that they are able to fulfill their academic responsibilities. At a minimum, faculty shall have a degree from an institution accredited by a U.S. Department of Education and/or Council for Higher Education Accreditation recognized accrediting body or a degree from another country evaluated for U.S. equivalency in the discipline they will teach or for which they will develop curricula at least one level above that of the courses being taught or developed. C) The involvement of faculty in the unit of instruction, research or public service is sufficient to cover the various fields of knowledge encompassed by the unit, to sustain scholarship appropriate to the unit, and to assure curricular continuity and consistency in student evaluation. E) Support personnel, including but not limited to counselors, administrators, clinical supervisors, and technical staff, that are directly assigned to the unit of instruction, research or public service, have the educational background and experience necessary to carry out their assigned responsibilities.

The MS in Game Development will be managed by Informatics Programs, hosted by the School of Information Sciences, and governed by a cross-campus committee of faculty representing at least the following Schools and Departments: Information Sciences, Fine and Applied Arts (Art and Design, Music, Theatre), Engineering (Computer Science) and Liberal Arts and Sciences (English/Creative Writing). Some of the faculty and staff required to offer this master's program will need to be hired. Existing full-time faculty and staff who are developing the program will be responsible for hiring new faculty and staff. In addition to the core GSD faculty and staff, affiliated faculty across campus will open their courses for MS in Game Development students to enroll in as electives for the MS in Game Development degree.

With funding from program tuition the program will seek to hire additional staff: two positions in Art and Design would include a digital or computational arts faculty member and an illustration; one position in Theatre experienced in audio/music production relevant to the commercial games industry; one position in Educational Psychology to support psychologically and pedagogically sound game design in formal and informational learning environments; two positions in the School of Information Sciences; one with a focus in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and another with a focus on user interface (UI), user experience (UX), or human-centered design of games with an emphasis on accessibility or universal design.

Preferred candidates for these positions would be versed in theoretical and practical knowledge of how culture, competition, and agency is aesthetically expressed in popular media and genre, and art/design/performance that draws from or bears on traditions and contexts specific to Black, Latino, or Indigenous communities.

The University is committed to increase and retain faculty, staff, and administrators of color. UIUC supports efforts in this area through a number of initiatives including a Distinguished Faculty Recruitment Program, Public Voices Fellowship, Leadership Initiative for Women Faculty and Presidents' Executive Leadership Program. Across the University, the Office of the Provost coordinates several leadership development programs to increase the pool of potential academic

leaders on campus with intentional focus on supporting faculty members from underrepresented groups to explore campus leadership and administrative roles. UIUC continues to be a strong partner in the Big Ten Academic Alliance's Academic Leadership Development Programs, with numerous faculty and staff from the University participating as fellows.

Fiscal and Personnel Resources

1050.30(a)(5): A) The financial commitments to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are sufficient to ensure that the faculty and staff and support services necessary to offer the unit of instruction, research or public service can be acquired and maintained. B) Projections of revenues necessary to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are based on supportable estimates of state appropriations, local tax support, student tuition and fees, private gifts, and/or governmental grants and contracts.

Once the program is established, it will be self-supporting through tuition and fees. An Investment for Growth grant from the Office of the Provost will provide the startup funds needed for the launch. Existing faculty and staff will be responsible for hiring new faculty and staff including the previously mentioned positions. Five specialized faculty will be hired into the Informatics Program to teach the foundational and core courses of Design, Programming, Art, Production, and Narrative. Faculty will be recruited from the Game Industry and will be capable of teaching, using and communicating industry processes, expectations and standards in their respective fields. New faculty with no prior teaching experience will be required to participate in a teaching academy, led by current GSD faculty, the summer before they begin teaching.

Student support, advising, admission, recruitment, and job placement will require the hire of additional administrative staff including a full-time Program Manager, Student Advisor, Studio Liaison, and 0.5 FTE staff including a Studio Director Research Director, and Marketing/communications staff. Additional support will be provided by a full-time IT Support role and 0.5 FTE Office support role.

Accreditation and Licensure

1050.30(b)(3) [applicable only to units of instruction]: Appropriate steps shall be taken to assure that professional accreditation needed for licensure or entry into a profession as specified in the objectives of the unit of instruction is maintained or will be granted in a reasonable period of time.

No specialized accreditation or licensure is required for the MS in Game Development.

Program Information

1050.30(b)(2)[applicable only to units of instruction]: A) The information which the institution provides for students and the public shall include the following: i) An accurate description of the unit of instruction, including its objectives, length, and residency requirements if any; ii) Schedule of tuition, fees, and all other charges and expenses necessary for completion of the unit of instruction, cancellation and refund policies; iii) Student rights and responsibilities; iv) A statement regarding the transferability of college credits, including the fact that the decision to accept transfer credits is determined by the receiving institutions; v) A statement as to how the institution will advise students on the nature of the transfer process, including the importance of consulting with institutions to which the student may seek to transfer; vi) Evidence of arrangements for the transfer of courses or credits or both to institutional

counterparts, when these arrangements exist; these arrangements are also known as articulation agreements; vii) A statement of the institution's most recent graduation rates and the number of graduates and enrollments as provided by the institution to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and any submission of data to satisfy Board reporting requirements; and viii) Other material facts concerning the institution and the unit of instruction as are likely to affect the decision of the student to enroll. B) The information listed in subsection (b)(2)(A) shall be available to prospective students prior to enrollment and shall be included in the institution's catalog of programs.

Detailed information about the proposed program, including description of the admission policies, university policies, tuition, fees, and curriculum are provided in the proposal and will be published on the University's website.

Staff Conclusion

The staff concludes that the proposed Master of Science in Game Development proposed by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign meets the criteria to implement the Board of Higher Education Act (110 ILCS 205/et.seq.) as set forth in 23 Illinois Administrative Code, Ch. II, Section 1050.30, and the Illinois Board of Higher Education policies pertaining to assessment and accreditation or licensure.