

**SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS**

**Academic and Student Affairs**

**AGENDA ITEM: 4 – J (4)**

**DATE: March 30 – April 1, 2016**

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**SUBJECT: New Program: SDSU Minor in Social Media**

South Dakota State University (SDSU) requests authorization to offer a baccalaureate minor in Social Media. SDSU does not currently have a major in this field, but does have related majors in Advertising, Journalism, and a planned new major in Public Relations. The minor will benefit students interested in the growing industry of media relations conducted by social media as it has become an expected skillset among public relations specialists. A minor in this new and emerging field will prepare graduates with skills in communication, content design, and data analysis. The employment of market research analysts is projected to grow by 19% between 2014 and 2024. SDSU expects to graduate ten students per year with this minor after full implementation.

The proposed curriculum requires the addition of two new courses and consists of 18 credit hours. SDSU is not requesting new resources.

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

I move to approve SDSU’s proposal for a Minor in Social Media as described in Attachment I.

**South Dakota Board of Regents  
New Baccalaureate Degree Minor**

<b>University:</b>	South Dakota State University
<b>Title of Proposed Minor:</b>	Social Media
<b>Degree(s) in which minor may be earned:</b>	Any
<b>Existing related majors or minors:</b>	Advertising (B.A./B.S.), Graphic Design (B.F.A.), Journalism (B.A./B.S.), Public Relations (B.S.), Speech Communication (B.S.), Advertising Minor, Informatics Minor, Journalism Minor
<b>Proposed Implementation (term):</b>	Fall 2016
<b>Proposed CIP Code:</b>	09.0102

**University Approval**

To the Board and the Executive Director: I certify that I have read this proposal, that I believe it to be accurate, and that it has been evaluated and approved as provided by university policy

*David L. Chicoine*

February 10, 2016

\_\_\_\_\_  
President of the University

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

After approval by the President, a signed copy of the proposal should be transmitted to the Executive Director. Only after Executive Director review should the proposal be posted on the university web site and the Board staff and other universities notified of the URL.

**1. Do you have a major in this area?**      \_\_\_\_\_ Yes        X   No

**2. If you do not have a major in this area, explain how the proposed minor relates to your mission.**

South Dakota State University (SDSU) requests authorization to offer a baccalaureate minor in Social Media. This represents an increasingly prevalent set of communication channels for modern organizations, which seek to hire well-prepared graduates to manage their online interactions. Based on the interests and needs of students, this minor provides a focus to help students who are interested in gaining expertise in designing content, implementing communication practices and campaigns, and assessing outcomes for social media use.

The proposed minor in Social Media supports the statutory mission of South Dakota State University as provided in SDCL 13-58-1: *Designated as South Dakota's land grant university, South Dakota State University, formerly the state college of agriculture and mechanical arts, shall be under the control of the Board of Regents and shall provide undergraduate and graduate programs of instruction in the liberal arts and sciences and professional education in agriculture, education, engineering, home economics, nursing, pharmacy, and other courses or programs as the Board of Regents may determine.*

The minor will contribute to the economic development of the state and region by providing social media expertise to state and business interests. Modern organizations increasingly recognize that they must properly manage their social media presence in order to remain relevant in the eyes of

their publics. Currently, few graduates are equipped with the theoretical expertise necessary to devise social media communication strategies suited for this new communication context, the technical expertise necessary to develop, implement, and refine social media messaging and campaigns, and the technical and methodological expertise necessary to quantitatively and qualitatively assess current performance of social media efforts and recommend changes accordingly. The proposed minor would provide students with these skill sets and position them well to enter graduate study or the modern workforce.

Currently, there is no major program of study in social media. However, the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication has majors in Advertising, Journalism, and Public Relations (intended start date of fall 2016). Increasingly, modern public relations eschews one-way campaigns conducted via television and similar outlets in favor of social media efforts that allow consumers to directly engage with the organization in question as well as with one another. Much the same can be said of trends in communication channels for advertising, as well as those for journalists whose long-form articles are frequently accompanied by headlines and teasers published via Twitter and other social media sites.

Likewise, the Department of Communication Studies and Theatre aims to prepare graduates in its Speech Communication major for careers directing communication processes and managing organizations. By necessity, such preparation must include a keen understanding of the way in which our rapidly evolving communication practices can best be managed, starting with a fundamental understanding of communication as it applies to various channels and extending to the development of materials tailored to the most current and relevant social media outlets used by organizations today.

SDSU does not intend to request new state resources. The University is well positioned to offer a minor in Social Media given the existing expertise of current faculty members as well as the primary emphasis on courses that are already offered or under development.

### **3. How will the proposed minor benefit students?**

The purpose of the proposed minor is to better serve the needs of students who are interested in social media communication and campaigns for professional or scholarly career paths in this area by providing a clear trajectory for their course choices. Currently, SDSU does not offer a minor in social media for students who wish to explore this rapidly developing discipline, which is especially important for those entering communication-centric fields such as advertising, public relations, and organizational management. Companies and non-profit organizations increasingly must engage with social media in order to remain relevant in the eyes of consumers, so graduates need to be prepared to effectively manage, monitor, and analyze their employers' social media interactions with end users.

This minor will prepare students to build user-generated content through graphic design training, informed by theoretical communication principles, content design strategies, and data analysis skills. With these three pillars of expertise, graduates will be equipped to effectively design communication strategies tailored to social media, to implement those strategies within unique and ever-developing online interfaces, to assess outcomes relating to their communication strategies, and to continue to refine those strategies in accordance with their findings. The theoretical, practical, and methodological skills offered by this minor will prepare students for the demands of

potential employers, or for graduate-level research and coursework.

A Google search of careers in social media reveals three relevant findings. First, social media expertise typically surfaces in the context of public relations and marketing. The Bureau of Labor Statistics<sup>1</sup> projects public relations specialists' employment growth of 6 percent between 2014 and 2024, as fast as the average. Employment of market research analysts is projected to grow 19 percent from 2014 to 2024, much faster than the average for all occupations<sup>2</sup>. Second, and related, articles such as one in Global News Wire indicate that the "online marketer/social media specialist job outlook shows no sign of dimming."<sup>3</sup> Third, despite the widespread demand for employees with social media savvy in a variety of fields, many experts argue that social media is not a career and that university students should not major in it. A minor, however, that complements a broader major is deemed quite useful. These three findings reveal an encouraging employment outlook for students with a T-shaped profile that includes a Social Media minor.

#### **4. Provide estimated enrollments and completions in the table below and explain how the estimates were developed.**

Students in this minor will need a foundational course in social media design. To that end, the most foundational course in the proposed minor is MCOM 225: Introduction to Digital Production (to be renamed Social Media Design). The course is currently offered once per academic year and averages an enrollment of 15 students, roughly half of whom are Advertising and Journalism majors. Many of these students have already indicated additional interest in social media, even though no program of study currently exists for them to pursue. At present, the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication only offers two minors: Advertising and Journalism. As such, a reasonable estimate is that 40% of these students would pursue a minor in Social Media.

For students not in a major associated with the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, MCOM 225 is a necessary class for the minor. The class already attracts students from multiple majors and backgrounds each semester, and the nature of this minor as an especially current topic may ultimately draw some students who are already interested in social media away from existing minors. A reasonable estimate is that 20% of the students from other majors who complete MCOM 225 will ultimately pursue the minor in Social Media.

	Fiscal Years*			
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Estimates	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
Students in the minor (fall)	5	5-10	10-15	15-20
Completions by graduates	0	0	5	10

\*Do not include current year.

#### **5. What is the rationale for the curriculum?**

The growing prevalence of social media has been well documented by media outlets and is evidenced by the continued growth of the largest platforms. One needs to look no further than the

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/public-relations-specialists.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/business-and-financial/market-research-analysts.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://globenewswire.com/news-release/2013/09/03/570883/10046604/en/Social-Marketing-Career-Wave-of-the-Future.html>

1.49 billion active users of Facebook alone to recognize the importance of social media as a channel for communication, both among individuals as well as between organizations and their publics. Companies around the world, and in South Dakota in particular, are increasingly recognizing the need to hire graduates who are skilled in managing their day-to-day communication practices via social media as well as intensive social media campaigns designed to achieve specific outcomes.

This unique, burgeoning area of expertise combines several skill sets that are central for modern communication professionals and scholars: (1) designing appropriate communication messages for large-scale dissemination and discourse, (2) effectively managing multi-way interactions with and among social media users as those interactions develop, (3) implementing communication strategies that are feasible within specific social media interfaces and are well-suited for the audiences using those channels, (4) properly assessing the impact of past and current communication efforts in order to recommend further improvements to existing strategies, and (5) making those recommended improvements to existing communication strategies in order to better improve an organization's standing with its publics.

The curriculum outlined provides an introduction to the fundamental principles of designing messages and visual materials (MCOM 225) that are tailored to the unique affordances of social media. Students will further learn how to apply the communication skills and principles that they have learned in developing mobile media applications (MCOM 359), which represent a rapidly growing means through which individuals engage with social media. They will also gain expertise in collecting and assessing data relating to Internet and social media usage (ADV 411/411L), thereby preparing them to examine the outcomes related to their social media efforts and to make recommendations for further refinements based on the data at hand.

## 6. Complete the tables below. Explain any exceptions to BOR policy being requested.

### A. Distribution of Credit Hours

Minor in Social Media	Credit Hours	Percent
Requirements in the Minor	12	67%
Electives in the Minor	6	33%
Total	18	100%

### B. Required Courses in the Minor

Prefix	Number	Course Title	New*	Hours
ADV	411-411L	Media Analytics & Studio	No	3
MCOM	212	Writing for Social Media	Yes	3
MCOM	225-225L	Introduction to Digital Production & Lab <sup>4</sup>	No	3
MCOM	359-359L	Advanced Digital Production & Lab <sup>5</sup>	No	3

\*New course proposed for major/minor.

<sup>4</sup> Minor course modification has been submitted to rename the course Social Media Design & Lab

<sup>5</sup> Minor course modification has been submitted to rename the course Mobile Media Design and Applications & Lab

**C. Elective Courses in the Minor: List courses that may be taken as electives in the minor. Indicate any new courses to be added specifically for the minor.**

Prefix	Number	Course Title	New*	Hours
ADV	372-372L	Advertising Media Strategies	No	3
CSC	150	Computer Science I	No	3
MCOM	270	Data Analysis in Communication <sup>6</sup>	Yes	3
MCOM	339	Publication Design	No	3
MCOM	492	Topics (Advanced Digital Production)	No	3
SPCM	410	Organizational Communication	No	3
SPCM	470	Intercultural Communication	No	3

**7. What outcomes will be expected for all students who complete the minor? How will these outcomes be achieved?**

Graduates with a Social Media minor will be highly competitive job candidates who are able to effectively leverage new and emerging communication technologies in order to serve the goals of their employers. They will also be strong candidates for Master's degree programs focused on communication. Below are student learning outcomes, followed by courses from above that address each outcome.

Students completing a Social Media minor will be equipped to:

1. Understand the basic communication theories that guide human engagement with one another via social media, especially those interactions that cross national and cultural boundaries as well as those communities that resemble massive-scale organizations with their own formalized or emergent management and leadership systems.
  - ADV 411-411L
  - SPCM 410
  - SPCM 470
2. Develop communication messaging and campaigns that are specifically designed for social media users and the unique characteristics of social media interfaces, including both Web sites and mobile applications.
  - ADV 372-372L
  - CSC 150
  - MCOM 212
  - MCOM 225-225L
  - MCOM 339-339L
  - MCOM 359-359L
  - MCOM 492
3. Measure and assess outcomes relating to social media usage ranging from communicative reach and message acceptance to sales conversions and behavioral change, which includes both the collection of social media data and the effective analysis therein to develop statistically significant and conceptually meaningful findings.

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<sup>6</sup> New course requested for the Public Relations major

South Dakota State University  
New Minor: Social Media

- MCOM 270
- ADV 411-411L

**8. What instructional technologies will be used to teach courses in the minor?** *This refers to the instructional technologies used to teach the new courses in the minor and NOT the technology applications students are expected to learn.*

Standard instructional technologies will be used.

**9. Is the University requesting authorization to provide the minor to students at an off-campus location or by distance delivery? If yes, explain.** *If off-campus or distance delivery authorization is not requested, enter "None."*

None.

**10. Costs, Budget, and Resources: Explain the amount and source(s) of any one-time and continuing investments in personnel, professional development, release time, instructional technology and software, other O&M, facilities, etc. needed to implement the minor.**

No additional resources are needed. The new courses will be taught by current faculty and all required software applications are already in use at the University.

Appendix A  
 Social Media Minor – Student Learning Outcomes

	<i>Required Coursework</i>				<i>Elective Coursework</i>						
	ADV 411-411L	MCOM 212	MCOM 225-225L	MCOM 359-359L	ADV 372-372L	CSC 150	MCOM 270	MCOM 339	MCOM 492	SPCM 410	SPCM 470
Individual Student Outcomes											
Students will understand the basic communication theories that guide human engagement with one another via social media, especially those interactions that cross national and cultural boundaries as well as those communities that resemble massive-scale organizations with their own formalized or emergent management and leadership systems.	X									X	X
Students will develop communication messaging and campaigns that are specifically designed for social media users and the unique characteristics of social media interfaces, including both Web sites and mobile applications.		X	X	X	X	X		X	X		
Students will measure and assess outcomes relating to social media usage ranging from communicative reach and message acceptance to sales conversions and behavioral change, which includes both the collection of social media data and the effective analysis therein to develop statistically significant and conceptually meaningful findings.	X						X				