

School of Information Science Annual Report

Academic Year 2024-2025

College of Communication and Information

The University of Kentucky

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Introduction

The members of our School have triumphantly navigated another academic year. This annual report serves as a testament to our steadfast commitment to achieving excellence in teaching, research, and meaningful community engagement. The report outlines the pivotal initiatives and activities we undertook over the past year. By emphasizing innovation, fostering collaboration, and adhering to a shared vision, our dedicated faculty and staff have made remarkable strides in advancing the core areas of the School's strategic priorities. We are not only actively exploring innovative solutions and efficiencies but also reinforcing the bonds within our community, revitalizing our curriculum, and propelling forward research initiatives.

Highlights and Achievements

The past year has been one of growth, innovation, and meaningful progress for the School. Our faculty have demonstrated outstanding research productivity, securing competitive grants, publishing in high-impact journals, and contributing thought leadership to the field of information science. Equally inspiring has been the success of our students, whose academic and professional achievements continue to raise the School's profile. We have also launched several new initiatives that align with our evolving strategic direction, including cross-disciplinary research collaborations and curriculum updates that respond to emerging trends in information science.

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Faculty Achievements and Recognitions

Our faculty possess a wide range of expertise. They are actively engaged and productive in their fields, as demonstrated by numerous publications and their participation in conferences and professional organizations. Their research activities have received various forms of recognition. Here are some highlights of our faculty accomplishments though the list is not exhaustive.

- Drs. Sarah Barriage and Beth Bloch received the Best Conference Paper Award, Canadian Association for Information Science, 2025
- Dr. Daniela Di Giacomo received the CI Research Award 2025. This is the second in a row of the SIS faculty member receiving the CI Research Award. Dr. Maria Cahill was

the recipient in 2024. Daniela was interviewed by WEKU's Eastern Standard radio show, led by Tom Martin, with a Louisville high school student Chase Colvin on their recent research study into the state of civic education in Kentucky in April 2025.

- Dr. America Edwards joined the School in August 2024 after completing her doctoral dissertation. She received the Dissertation of the Year Award from the Interpersonal Division of the International Communication Association. In the fall of 2024, she participated in the Central States Communication Association Convention, where her panel was recognized with the Top Panel Award. Additionally, a recent piece in *Psychology Today* (April 21, 2025) highlights research co-authored by Dr. Edwards.
- Drs. Brandi Frisby, Jessalyn Vallade, Joe Martin and Renee Kaufmann received the NCA Top Paper Award 2024
- Dr. Kody Frey received Blyton Professorship from the College of Communication and Information. Dr. Frey was promoted to the Associate Professor rank with tenure.
- Dr. Spencer Greenhalgh's research on social media was mentioned in *The Salt Lake Tribune* (February 16, 2025)
- Dr. Renee Kaufmann received the top paper award from the Central States Communication Association Convention
- Dr. Luke LeFebvre received the H. Lester Reynolds Professorship from the College of Engineering
- Dr. Shannon Oltmann received Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award from the University of Illinois iSchool
- Dr. Sherali Zeadally was recognized as a [Clarivate](#) Highly Cited Researcher in Computer Science in 2024. He was also noted among the top 2% of the most-cited researchers across 22 disciplines in a database compiled by Stanford University and Elsevier. The database includes citations for 2023.

Faculty Grants

Our faculty has secured multiple internal and external grants. This year alone, eleven faculty members have received funding from external agencies, the College, and the University for new projects.

- Dr. Shannon Crawford Barniskis - IMLS grant. Shannon C. B. – IMLS The Trustee Project: Understanding Public Library Trustee Selection, Training and Collaboration for Equity, Access, and Civic Engagement. (\$410,294)
- Dr. Brian Real with Dr. Alison Davis of CEDIK and Dr. Shannon Oltmann - a grant from KDLA, "The Value of Kentucky's Public Libraries: A Return-on-Investment Study"
- Dr. Jessica Barfield – College Research Activity Award grant

- Dr. Beth Bloch/Sarah Barriage -College Research Activity Award Grant
- Dr. Meghan Dowell – CURATE Grant
- Dr. America Edwards - CURATE grant and the UNITE Research Priority Area.
- Dr. Fatima Espinoza-Vasquez - UNITE Humanities Pilot Grant
- Dr. Daniela Di Giacomo – UNITE Research Grant
- Dr. Jessalyn Vallade – UK 2025 Land-grant Engagement Fund

Professional Development Activities of Faculty and Staff

Members of the School are committed to staying updated with emerging practices, technologies, and teaching methods to advance their careers and support the strategic goals of the School and College. Their dedication to professional development enhances the quality of their work, fosters innovation, and increases productivity within the School. Below is a list of faculty and staff members who completed professional development programs offered by the University this year.

- Dr. Hayley Hoffman – 2024-2025 TEK Faculty Fellows cohort
- Dr. Joe Martin - UK's Lewis Honors College inaugural class of Faculty Fellows
- Drs. Joe Martin and Kari Benguria - the CELT Innovation Institute cohort on AI and teaching
- Drs. Will Buntin, Hayley Hoffman, Amanda Lawrence, and Luke LeFebvre - the first Emerging Leaders Academy
- Dr. Shannon Oltmann - Chair's Academy I and II

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Student and Alumni Achievements

The School nurtures future leaders by providing a supportive learning environment that prioritizes strong relationships between faculty and students, as well as collaboration. This mentoring approach enables students to realize their potential through diverse educational experiences, equipping them for future success. Below are some examples showcasing the accomplishments and excellence of our students and alumni.

- Skilar Brooks (undergraduate ICT major) was one of two recipients of the 2023 Carl C. Williams Information Technology Senior Management Forum (ITSMF) Foundation Scholarship

- Nicholas Wadley and Fernanda Fuentes (undergraduate ICT major) - received the ICT 2024-2025 Outstanding ICT Junior and Senior awards
- Three SIS ICT undergraduate students, including Fernanda Fuentes, presented at the UK Office of Undergraduate Research's 19th Annual Showcase of Undergraduate Scholars
- Jay Stringer-Vaught (MSLS 2025) was featured in UKNow sharing Jay's impact and instrumental leadership on opening the library at the Office of LGBTQ* Resources
- Terry Birdwhistell (MSLS graduate) was inducted into [CI's 2025 class of Hall of Distinguished Alumni](#)
- Jennifer Eldridge (MSLS graduate) received the 2024 KASL Outstanding School Library Website Award
- Jack Swab (MSLS 2022) received the University of Kentucky's 2024-25 Outstanding Teaching Awards, given by the Office for Faculty Advancement with the Office of the Provost
- Matthew Goldberg (MSLS graduate) was announced as one of the ALA's 2025 Class of Emerging Leaders
- Ben Rawlins (MSLS graduate) received the 2025 Jesse H. Shera Award for Distinguished Published Research for the publication "Are transformative agreements worth it? An analysis of open access publication data at the University of Kentucky."

Curriculum Innovation

The faculty has implemented a range of innovative courses aimed at enriching both the program curricula and the University Core Curriculum. This commitment to curriculum enhancement not only strengthens our programs but also provides a wide array of learning opportunities for students.

- CIS Courses
 - CIS 110, 111, 112, and 300 have all adopted open education resources (free online textbooks)
 - CIS 112 students completed roughly 4,000 hours of service with dozens of partners
 - Incorporated Presentation U! Peer Tutors in several sections
 - Integrations with Lewis Honors College (e.g. Gatton Honors Pathway cohort 300 sections)
- Four new ICT courses were developed and proposed. The review and approval of those was completed in the Spring 2025. These courses enable the School to further our contribution to UK Core Curriculum. Those are:
 - ICT 120 Technology and the Human Experience
 - ICT 121 Ethics of ICTs

- ICT 122 Computational Communication
 - ICT 123 ICT Through the Ages
- Dr. Kari Benguria will offer ICT 390 Special Topics Courses, AI in Society, in Fall 2025. While topics in AI have already been incorporated into many courses, this special topics course represents our first effort to provide a semester-long course focused on AI and its impact on society.
- ICT Implementation Committee proposed new program tracks
- Several ICT courses, including ICT 205 Issues in Information and Communication Technology Policy, are now shared with other colleges for newly proposed majors, minors, and certificates. These create opportunities for the ICT curriculum to expand our program and enrich our scholarly discourse in information science with other disciplines.
- Four graduate courses were approved for the curriculum:
 - ICT/LIS 615 (cross-listed) Organizational ICT Policy Issues, proposed by Meghan Dowell
 - ICT/LIS 609 (cross-listed) Advanced Multimodal Communication skills, proposed by Renee Kaufmann
 - LIS 623 Makerspaces in Information Organizations, proposed by Shannon Crawford Barniskis
 - LIS 624 Systems Librarianship, proposed by Sean Burns
- The LIS program offered three new special topics courses during AY 2024-2025:
 - Beyond books: Library programs and services for children (Sara Barriage)
 - Moving Images, Audio, and Photographs in Cultural Heritage Institutions (Brian Real)
 - Library IT Fundamentals (Soohyung Joo)
- The LIS program also added two new clusters (Archives & Cultural Heritage, and Systems Librarianship)

New Initiatives

- LIS Research Seminar VIII - The Library Research Seminar VIII was hosted by LIS faculty members as part of the ALA Library Research Round Table's program. Held on September 16-18, 2024 at the Gatton Student Center, the seminar, themed "Telling Library Stories," was sponsored by the ALA, the School of Information Science, College of Communication and Information, and UK William T. Young Libraries. Approximately 140 attendees participated over three days, making the event a success.

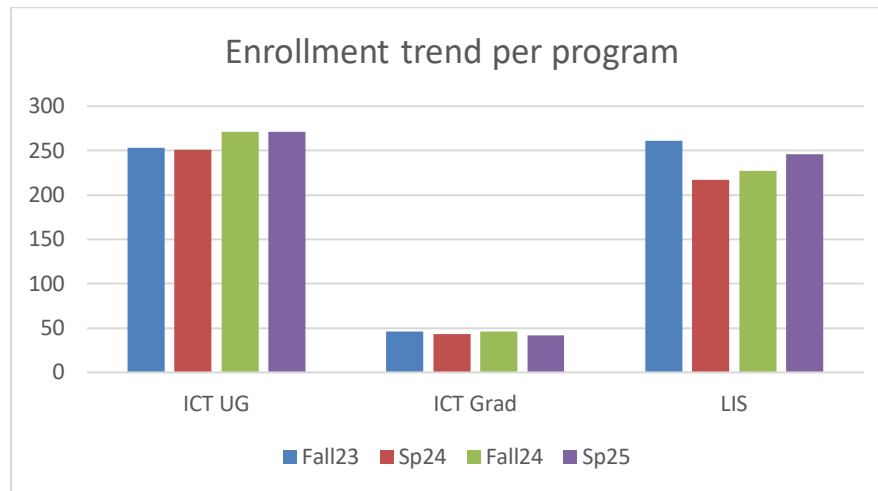
- SIS Showcase - The faculty and staff of the School created and implemented a strategic plan, leading to the inaugural SIS Showcase on April 16, 2025. This event aims to recognize, learn from, and inspire the community through presentations on teaching and research by fourteen faculty members. Some posters from the Showcase are displayed in the SIS office cubicle areas, and the School plans to continue this event annually in the spring semester.

Spring 2025 SIS Showcase

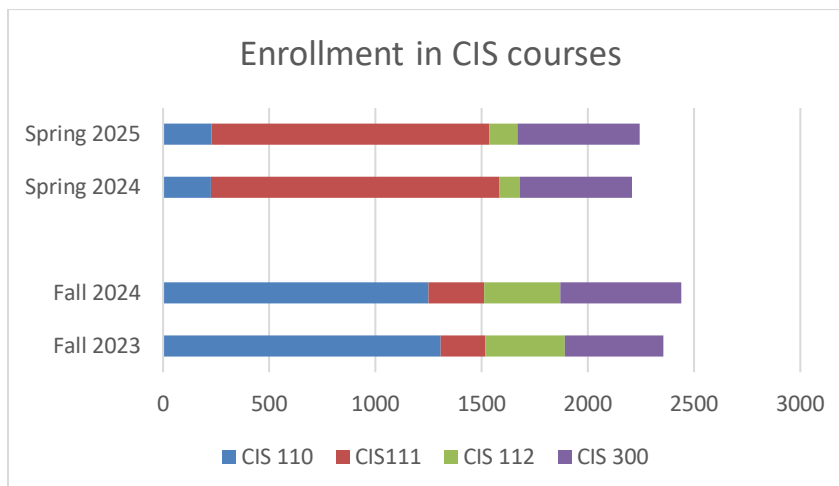


Enrollment and Graduation

During the spring semester of 2025, we had 559 students enrolled in the three programs, which was higher than the 544 students enrolled in the fall semester of 2024, marking a 2.76% increase. However, the overall enrollment from AY2023-2024 to AY2024-2025 remained steady as a whole.



The school offers four CS courses as part of the UK Core curriculum, and enrollment in these courses remains strong. Notably, enrollment in CIS 112 and CIS 300 has increased over the past two academic years. Overall, there has been a 2.65% increase in enrollment in the four CIS courses for the 2024-2025 academic year compared to the 2023-2024 academic year.



We are immensely proud of our outstanding graduates who have completed their bachelor's and master's degrees in Information Communication Technology and Library Science! This year, a total of 145 students celebrated their accomplishments in Summer 2024, Fall 2024, and Spring 2025, showcasing remarkable dedication and hard work. A special shoutout to Jonathan Andrew from the Class of 2025, MSICT, who becomes a two-time graduate from CI and is beginning a new career as an associate consultant at Coastal—what an achievement! Each of our graduates inspires us and contributes to the pride we feel as a community. Congratulations to all!

Table 1: Graduates in three semesters

	Summer 24	Fall 24	Spring 25	Total
ICT undergraduates	13	21	32	66
ICT graduates	3	8	7	18
LIS graduates	5	21	35	61
Total	21	50	74	145

Spring 2025 Commencement



Looking Ahead

- ALA COA Accreditation – The MSLS program is scheduled to have an external review panel visit for ALA COA accreditation on Feb. 23-25, 2026. For the accreditation review, the LIS faculty made tremendous efforts in preparing the self-study report over the last couple of years. The self-study report will be finalized this summer and shared with our constituents for feedback in the early fall, prior to its submission.
- Faculty hiring – We are excited to welcome Dr. Heng Zheng as an assistant professor in August 2025. But three faculty members (Drs. Shannon Oltmann, Yvonne Eadon, and Derek Daskalakes) have taken positions at other institutions. The School has a hiring plan to replace their expertise.
- 94th Kentucky Communication Association (KCA) Annual Conference – Dr. Amanda Lawrence (Vice-President of KCA) takes the lead in hosting the KCA annual conference on September 26-27, 2025, on the UK campus. The event presents a valuable opportunity for the School to enhance community relations, bolster its reputation, and further its academic objectives within the region.
- Student recruitment –The school is prioritizing the recruitment of students for its graduate programs in order to enhance enrollment through targeted strategies. In the coming year, the school will evaluate the demographics of prospective students and implement data-driven marketing campaigns. These initiatives will include outreach activities such as information

sessions and partnerships with relevant organizations to engage potential candidates effectively. Currently, marketing and recruitment for graduate programs are conducted on an ad hoc basis. To ensure the sustainability of these efforts, the school needs to develop a solid marketing plan and hire dedicated recruitment staff.

Conclusion

This report provides an overview of the significant work we've accomplished over the past year, laying a strong foundation for our plans from 2025 to 2028. Our achievements showcase the hard work and determination of our amazing team, reflecting the teamwork that drives us toward our shared goals. Looking ahead, I am optimistic that our school will not only continue to excel but also introduce new ideas and implement improvements in the coming academic year. Together, we are building a brighter future for our School and the communities we serve.