December 13, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Steering Committee of Academic Governance

FROM: Acting Provost June Pierce Youatt

RE: Name Change, Department of Telecommunication, Information Studies, and Media

I am requesting the advice of Academic Governance on the proposed name change of the Department of Telecommunication, Information Studies, and Media to the "Department of Media and Information."

The proposed name change has been carefully considered by the Department and College, and is endorsed by Dean Pamela Whitten. Background and rationale are provided on the attached memorandum from the Telecommunication Chairperson, Johannes Bauer.

Your advice is appreciated as I make my recommendation to President Simon, who in turn will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

Attachment
October 8, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: Pamela Whitten, Dean, Communication Arts and Sciences
FR: Johannes M.-Bauer, Chairperson, Telecommunication, Information Studies, and Media
RE: Request for a Unit Name Change

Request
The Department of Telecommunication, Information Studies, and Media in the College of Communication Arts and Sciences requests a name change to “Department of Media and Information”.

Background
Teaching, research and outreach of the Department of Telecommunication, Information Studies, and Media deal with a fascinating, vibrant, but rapidly and continuously changing environment of digital media and information industries. Since its founding in 1958 as the Department of Radio, Television, and Film, the name was twice adapted to reflect the significant changes in this environment. In 1975, the name was modified to Department of Telecommunication and in 2003 to the present name (Telecommunication, Information Studies, and Media). As media and information technology and services have evolved further to an Internet-centric architecture, the word “telecommunication” in our name has become misleading and an encumbrance, as it is frequently associated with traditional telephone and telegraph services. While traditional telecommunications remains a component of our teaching and research, it occupies only a small portion compared to our activities related to new media and advanced information and communication technology and services. In response to these two challenges, we would like to adopt a name for our unit that promises longer-term relevance and sustainability. After careful reflection and deliberation, we believe that Department of Media and Information is sufficiently generic and forward-looking to provide the desired organizational identity.

Rationales
Three reasons make Department of Media and Information a timely and appropriate name that would position MSU and the College of Communication Arts and Sciences in a leadership role among its peers.

First, driven by digitization, advances in computing power, and broadband networking, media and information industries have become increasingly integrated.
Consequently, the terms “media” and “information” have become designations of choice in the communities of researchers and practitioners dealing with these important sectors of economic and cultural activity. They are embraced and increasingly used by the most prestigious programs in the field. A selective list of comparable programs and units at peer institutions includes:

- MIT, Media Lab
- University of California, Berkeley, School of Information
- University of Texas Austin, School of Information
- University of Washington, Information School
- Carnegie Mellon University, School of Information Systems and Management

MSU would stand out among its peers by having a Department of Media and Information, a name reflecting particular strengths of ours but also the direction in which the field is evolving. The proposed name signals, better than those of our competitors, the fusion of media and information technology in advanced communications systems. It expresses in a succinct and inclusive way our strengths in media arts and technology (e.g., as part of the Media Sandbox) and in interdisciplinary research related to information and communication technology and services. Furthermore, it reflects our desire to integrate creative and research scholarship, which is one of the preconditions for successful innovation in media and information industries.

Second, the name “Department of Media and Information” better captures the interdisciplinary nature of our scientific research and its complementary relationship with applied scholarship and design. In contrast to other departments that are unified by a shared disciplinary fabric, our work is integrated by a passion for and fascination with media and information. We approach media and information from different disciplinary vantage points and our prowess is to a considerable degree rooted in the multi-faceted interaction among groups of scholars cooperating in clusters of expertise. Currently, strong research groups exist in the areas of social and computational media, human-computer interaction (HCI), serious games and meaningful play, media arts (Media Sandbox), information and communication for development (ICT4D), Health IT and applications, socio technical systems, media effects, and media and information policy. Faculty members have backgrounds in communications, computer science, economics, sociology, engineering, design, science and technology studies, and creative media production. Together, these groups cover micro and macro aspects of the ICT ecosystem from scientific and creative angles. Their dynamic interaction gives us identity and vigor, and we believe the proposed new name expresses it better than our current name.

Third, “Media and Information” would be closer aligned with our existing degrees, e.g. a BA and BS in Media and Information, an MA in Media and Information Management, and a PhD in Media and Information Studies. It would allow us to build momentum and consistency in our messages to peers in the research community, students, and other stakeholders in the private and public sectors.