



2025 COLLEGIATE BETTER NEWSPAPER CONTEST

CONTEST OPENS DECEMBER 8, 2025

DEADLINE: MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 2026
ALL ENTRIES MUST BE UPLOADED BY 10:59 P.M. CST
All submissions must have been published between
Jan. 1, 2025 and Dec. 7, 2025.

RULES & CATEGORIES

CONTEST DIVISIONS * NEW *

Division A: Undergraduate enrollment of 13,000 or more

Division B: Undergraduate enrollment of 12,999 - 5,000

Division C: Undergraduate enrollment of 4,999 or less

Entries will be merged into the next highest division if a category receives three or fewer entries.

ELIGIBILITY & ENTRY LIMITS

All student newspapers covering Wisconsin public and private college campuses are eligible.

Unless otherwise specified, each entrant may submit as many entries in each contest as desired.

CONTEST WEBSITE

All entries must be submitted online through betternewspapercontest.com/WNAcollege.

Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s). Ensure the publication date appears on each page or screenshot.

If you need access to a PDF of your entry, please contact Denise Guttery at denise.guttery@wnanews.com for login credentials to your WNA-hosted electronic archive. For all other questions, contact Laura Niemi at laura@mna.org.

CONTEST MANAGERS

Each newspaper will be assigned a contest manager, who will receive a username and password. The contest manager can add authorized entrants, who may also submit entries. The contest manager can also opt to share his or her login information with staffers so that they may upload their entries. If you've forgotten your username or password, please contact Laura Niemi at laura@mna.org.

PAYMENT

There is a \$7.50 entry fee for each entry. Please complete credit card payment **on or before the contest deadline**. The PayPal link is on the contest site.

AWARDS

Experienced newspaper professionals from the Colorado Press Association will serve as judges. Winning newspapers will be notified after judging has been completed. Awards will be presented in Madison at the Branen Family Student Luncheon at the WNA Annual Convention on Thursday, March 5, 2026.

Students and advisors receive free admission, just make sure to register first.

[REGISTER FOR THE 2026 WNA CONVENTION](#)

2025 CONTEST CATEGORIES

1. General Excellence
2. Collegiate Journalist of the Year
3. Breaking News Reporting
4. Public Affairs Reporting
5. In-Depth Story
6. Lifestyle Story * **NEW** *
7. Arts and Entertainment Story
8. Sports Story
9. Club/Intramural Sports Story * **NEW** *
10. Editorial Writing
11. Column Writing
12. Freedom of Information Award
13. Business Coverage * **NEW** *
14. Technology Coverage * **NEW** *
15. Environmental Coverage * **NEW** *
16. Health Coverage
17. News Photography
18. Feature Photography
19. Sports Photography
20. Infographic
21. Page Design
22. Use of Multimedia
23. Website

CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

1. General Excellence

This is the top award in the WNAF Collegiate BNC. Entries will be judged on overall evaluation of the newspaper, with maximum point value assigned as follows:

- Depth, breadth and quality of news coverage: 25 points
- Quality of writing and editing: 15 points
- Design/layout: 15 points
- Photography/artwork: 15 points
- Editorial section quality: 10 points
- Sports coverage: 10 points
- Lifestyle coverage: 10 points

Instructions: Three (3) complete issues of the newspaper must be submitted as PDF(s) or e-editions. Entrants must select one issue from the month of February 2025, one from October 2025 and another from a month of their choosing. Entries are limited to one per newspaper.

2. Collegiate Journalist of the Year

This competition is open to any collegiate print or online journalist in Wisconsin. Criteria include the quality of the journalist's published work and their journalistic contributions to their campus, community and student newspaper. Nomination shall be made by the student's editor or adviser and shall consist of a letter outlining the nominee's contributions to journalism and samples of their work.

Instructions: Upload nomination letter as a PDF. Enter work samples as full-page PDF(s) and/or URL(s).

3. Breaking News Reporting

This award recognizes excellence in breaking news coverage, both in print and online. Entrants may submit online coverage from a 48-hour period surrounding the news event, as well as the edition of the newspaper printed in

closest proximity to the event. Criteria include enterprise, thoroughness, objectivity, local importance, clarity and style. A newspaper may submit an unlimited number of entries, but a staff member's name may not appear on more than two entries.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF(s) and/or submit URL(s) for the coverage from a 48-hour period surrounding the event and/or coverage that appeared in the subsequent print edition.

4. Public Affairs Reporting

This award recognizes excellence in public affairs reporting, including coverage of student, local, state or federal government and how it affects the newspaper's community. Criteria include enterprise, clarity and relevancy. Editorials or columns may be submitted as supporting materials, but cannot be the main focus of the entry. A newspaper may submit an unlimited number of entries, but a staff member's name may not appear on more than two entries.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s) for story or story and sidebar(s).

5. In-Depth Story

This award recognizes the best single story or series on a single topic that goes beyond the surface and requires more time, work and professional skill than general news reporting. Criteria include enterprise, relevancy, resourcefulness, originality, organization, clarity, use of sources and impact. Each entry shall consist of either a single story or a series on a particular topic. A newspaper may submit an unlimited number of entries, but a staff member's name may not appear on more than two entries.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s) for story or stories.

6. Lifestyle Story * NEW *

Each entry shall consist of a single lifestyle article or lifestyle article and sidebar(s). Criteria include effectiveness of writing style, originality of approach and human interest. A newspaper may submit an unlimited number of entries, but a staff member's name may not appear on more than two entries.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s) for story or story and sidebar(s).

7. Arts and Entertainment Story

Each entry shall consist of a single arts and entertainment article or article and sidebar(s). Criteria include effectiveness of writing style, originality of approach and human interest. Entries may include, but are not limited to, profiles on artists or entertainers or coverage of an entertainment event. *Entries shall not include reviews (these should be entered in Category 11 - Column Writing)*. A newspaper may submit an unlimited number of entries, but a staff member's name may not appear on more than two entries.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s) for story or story and sidebar(s).

8. Sports Story

Each entry shall consist of a single sports story, series or story and sidebar(s) on the same topic. Criteria include significance of subject, writing quality and thoroughness. A newspaper may submit an unlimited number of entries, but a staff member's name may not appear on more than two entries.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s) for each story.

9. Club or Intramural Sports Story * NEW *

Each entry must consist of a single sports story, series or story and sidebar(s) on the same topic. Criteria include significance of subject, writing quality and thoroughness. A newspaper may submit an unlimited number of entries, but a staff member's name may not appear on more than two entries.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s) for each story.

10. Editorial Writing

Each entry shall consist of a single editorial. Criteria include quality of writing, significance to the school, importance of the issue, success of the argument on the reader and general impact. A newspaper may submit an unlimited number of entries, but a staff member's name may not appear on more than two entries.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF or submit URL for the editorial.

11. Column Writing

Each entry shall consist of a single column, and may be a news, feature or humor column. Criteria include reader appeal, depth of material or research and clarity of writing. Newspapers may submit an unlimited number of entries, but no more than two for the same columnist.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF or submit URL for the column.

12. Freedom of Information Award

This award recognizes the efforts of student journalists to further the cause of freedom of information by best conveying an appreciation and commitment to the First Amendment, freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Entries may include editorials, news coverage, or community education based on information gathered through open meetings and/or public records—or a combination of these examples. Entrants may also submit a written description of how the reporter(s) and/or newspaper has exemplified or defended freedom of information principals. A newspaper may submit an unlimited number of entries, but a staff member's name may not appear on more than two entries.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s) for story or stories. If including a letter of explanation, upload as a PDF.

13. Business Coverage * NEW *

This award recognizes exceptional business reporting. Entries may include a breaking business story, an emerging trend, or a broader issue. Criteria include accuracy and depth, clarity and insight, enterprise and creativity, and journalistic impact.

Instructions: Submit **up to** five (5) stories on a single topic by uploading full-page PDF(s) or providing URLs. Relevant sidebars and/or an explanatory letter may also be included.

14. Technology Coverage * NEW *

This award recognizes excellence in technology reporting. Entries may include a breaking technology story, a developing trend, or a broader issue. Criteria include accuracy and depth, clarity and insight, enterprise and creativity, and journalistic impact.

Instructions: Submit **up to** five (5) stories on a single topic by uploading full-page PDF(s) or providing URLs. Relevant sidebars and/or an explanatory letter may also be included.

15. Environmental Coverage * NEW *

This award recognizes excellence in environmental reporting. Entries may include a breaking environmental story, an emerging trend or a broader environmental issue. Criteria include accuracy and depth, clarity and insight, enterprise and creativity, and journalistic impact.

Instructions: Submit **up to** five (5) stories on a single topic by uploading full-page PDF(s) or providing URLs. Relevant sidebars and/or an explanatory letter may also be included.

16. Health Coverage

This award recognizes excellence in health care journalism. Entries may include coverage of a health news event, topic or issue. Criteria include accuracy and depth, clarity and insight, enterprise and creativity, and journalistic impact.

Instructions: Submit **up to** five (5) stories on a single topic by uploading full-page PDF(s) or providing URLs. Relevant sidebars and/or an explanatory letter may also be included.

17. News Photography

Each entry shall consist of a single photo (or up to three photos on the same subject) that is the direct result of a news event. Criteria include news value, enterprise, impact, composition, technical ability and originality. Photographers may submit unlimited entries.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s) and the individual JPG(s) for each photo.

18. Feature Photography

Each entry shall consist of a single photo (or up to three photos on the same subject) with human interest qualities. Criteria include creativity, impact, interest, composition, technical ability and originality. Photographers may submit unlimited entries.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s) and the individual JPG(s) for each photo.

19. Sports Photography

Each entry shall consist of a single photo (or up to three photos on the same subject) focusing on any aspect of athletics. Criteria include creativity, impact, interest, composition, technical ability and originality. Photographers may submit unlimited entries.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s) and the individual JPG(s) for each photo.

20. Infographic

Each entry shall consist of a single graphic or graphic package that helps to deepen the reader's understanding of a topic via visual elements. Entries may include graphs, charts, maps or other graphics used to convey information in a succinct manner. Criteria include creativity, effectiveness, clarity, accuracy and originality. Designers may submit unlimited entries.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s) for the graphic and accompanying story.

21. Page Design

This award recognizes excellence in newspaper page design. Each entry shall consist of a single page of the entrant's choosing. Criteria include creativity, originality, headline treatment, use of visual elements and white space, clarity and reader appeal. Designers may submit unlimited entries.

Instructions: Upload full-page PDF(s) of the newspaper page .

22. Use of Multimedia

This award recognizes excellence in storytelling using multimedia elements. Entries may include, but are not limited to videos, podcasts, photo slideshows and interactive graphics. Entries may be part of a project that also includes a print or online story or standalone pieces. Criteria include innovation, technical quality, impact and effectiveness of storytelling. Newspapers may submit unlimited entries.

Instructions: Submit URL(s) for multimedia elements. If part of a larger project, submit PDF or URL for accompanying story. Third party platforms, such as Storify, may be used to showcase digital projects.

23. Website

This award recognizes the best news website created by a college newspaper in Wisconsin. Entries are evaluated for quality of news and editorial content, ease of navigation, layout, use of visual elements, innovative advertising and revenue-producing strategies and the demonstration that the website fulfills a community role. Entrants are encouraged to include a letter of explanation regarding how staff utilizes the site to share news and engage with readers. Entries are limited to one per newspaper.

Instructions: Submit website's URL. If including a letter of explanation, upload as a PDF.

Questions?

Contact WNA Contest Coordinator Laura Niemi at laura@mna.org or 612-278-0226.

STUDENTS & ADVISORS ATTEND FREE

Join Us at the WNA Annual Convention!

March 5 & 6, 2026

The Madison Concourse Hotel

REGISTER

to receive complimentary admission!
Your registration includes breakfast and lunch on Thursday, March 5, 2026!

WNA