University of Vermont

Center for Community News

2025 Statehouse Reporting Data

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for the Center for Community News at UVM

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Key Findings

As local newsrooms across the country have fewer resources to cover policy and politics, community reporting programs at U.S. colleges and universities have stepped up to provide dedicated reporting on this critical beat. Under the direction of professional journalism educators and editors, college students now provide a meaningful portion of statehouse, elections and democracy reporting in news outlets across dozens of states. These news-academic partnerships are a win for students, communities and the future of civic information.

In 2025, CCN measured accelerated growth in this field, and the potential for more in coming years.

- There are now 35 university- or college-led statehouse reporting initiatives in 30 states across the country.

- 11 of those programs are newly launched, or about to start, since the last time CCN documented these programs in 2023.

- New additions to the college-led statehouse reporting field are located in Texas, Vermont, Tennessee, New Jersey, New York, South Carolina, New Mexico, Iowa, Minnesota and Illinois. A program in Delaware will launch in 2026, while another in Colorado launched last year and is now on hold.

- The rapid growth of student statehouse reporting programs at U.S. colleges is a product of accelerating investment and coordination among higher education and legacy news, philanthropy and the nonprofit sector.
    - The Center for Community News played an integral role in seeding nine of the new programs, which were recipients of the CCN Faculty Champions program and participants in CCN mentoring offerings.
    - The New Jersey Statehouse News Service won a $100,000 grant from the New Jersey Civic Consortium and is a finalist in the most recent round of Press Forward infrastructure funding.
    - And many of the statehouse programs are now collaborating in national news stories via the Statehouse Reporting Project, a coordinated national effort led by the University of Missouri to produce collaborative policy and politics stories.

University of Vermont
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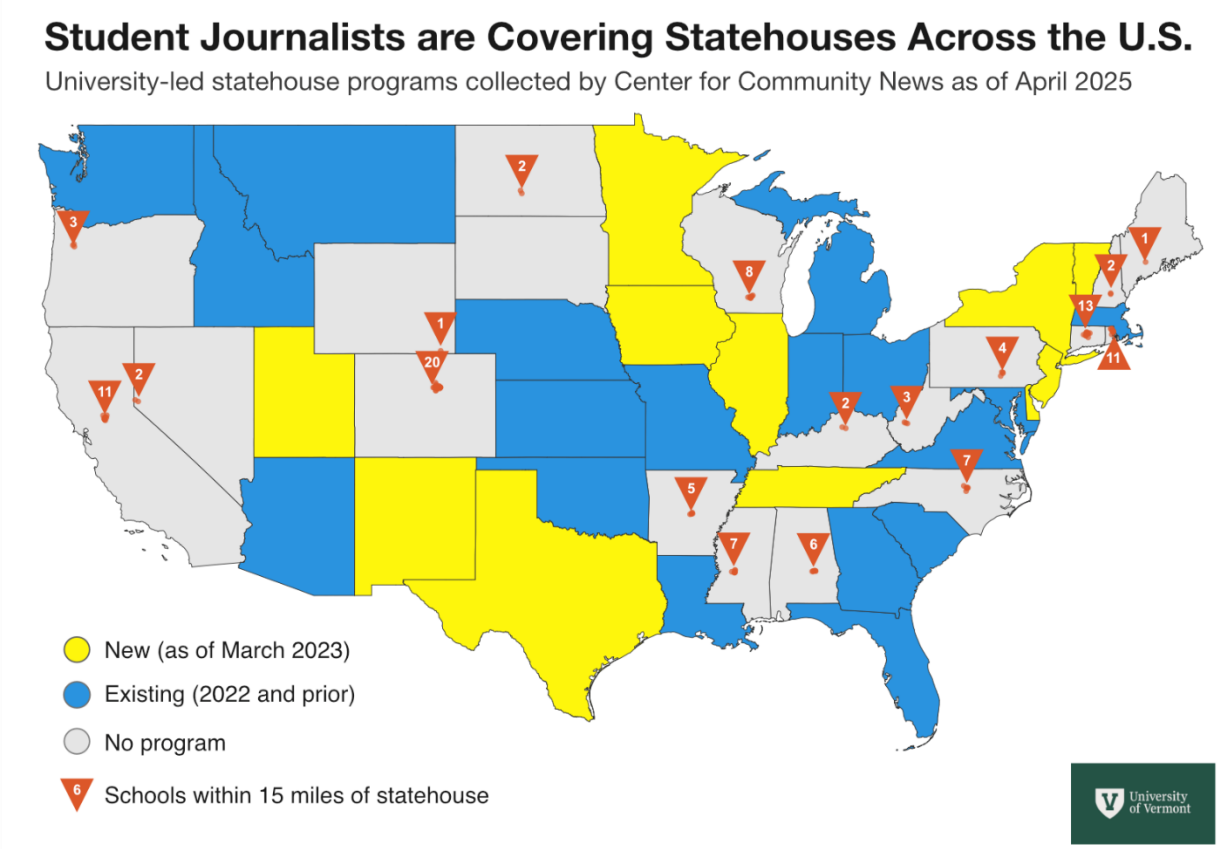
Impact of Student Statehouse Reporting



Overview

In March 2023, CCN documented 20 existing programs, not counting two upcoming programs at the time in Texas and Vermont and one on hold in Utah. During calendar year 2022, about 250 student statehouse reporters in university-led programs produced more than 1,000 stories that were made available to more than 1,200 media outlets in the 18 states.

As of 2025, CCN has identified 35 existing university or college-led statehouse reporting efforts in 30 states – 11 of them are newly launched (or about to start) since 2023.

New (and currently operating) since 2023 are programs in Texas, Vermont, Tennessee, New Jersey, New York, South Carolina, New Mexico, Iowa, Minnesota and Illinois. Additionally, a program in Delaware will launch in 2026, while another in Colorado launched last year and is now on hold.

The Center for Community News played a core role in seeding almost all of these new programs – nine of the new programs are CCN Faculty Champions and all but one received support and mentoring from CCN.

Also noteworthy is that one of the programs, New Jersey's, won a $100,000 grant from the New Jersey Civic Consortium and is a finalist in the most recent round of Press Forward infrastructure funding.

New also this year are additional programs in states where a program already existed, New York and Illinois.

Additionally, many of these statehouse programs are now collaborating in national news stories via the Statehouse Reporting Project, a national effort with 15 – and counting – partnering journalism schools across the U.S. led by Mark Horvit at the University of Missouri. In this collaboration, students and faculty identify trends across the country and work together to report from their respective communities to create a comprehensive national story.

The focus of this report is programs directed by colleges and universities where student content is made publicly available to news organizations and the state's citizens.

These programs are managed by professionals – all of whom have significant experience as reporters and editors. The leaders managing these university-led programs average 20 years of professional experience and have worked at more than 100 media outlets from local papers to regional and national outlets like the New York Times, Washington Post and Wall Street Journal. They review and edit student work before it is posted. There is broad interest from media partners across each state.

Content is generally made available at no cost and shared with media outlets, either through publicly accessible websites, email, listservs or state press associations.

In some cases, the programs are residential (Idaho, Montana) but in most cases, the colleges and universities are located within driving distance, and sometimes within a few blocks of the state legislature.

According to our findings, there are 20 states with no programs, but a great deal of potential for colleges/universities close to state capitals to start them. Given the importance of covering state-level legislation, the report recommends that more institutions create these programs for their students and to provide legislative content to media platforms.

States currently without programs: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Kentucky, Maine, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

In the next two years, all 50 states should have at least one program. CCN is committed to making that happen.

Introduction

The newspaper publishing industry currently employs fewer than 100,000 people overall, and almost 55 million people in the U.S. have limited or no access to local news, according to 2024 data from the Northwestern Medill Local News Initiative.

The decimation of news reporting has also hammered coverage of the nation's statehouses. Reports show statehouse reporting declines and more recently a move to part-time over full-time reporters.

Yet as statehouse reporting declines, state-level policy and funding decisions are more important than ever. It is in the nation's state legislatures, where decisions over redistricting, health funding, gun rights and abortion rights will be decided. One bright spot in statehouse news coverage is the increasing role student reporters working in university and college statehouse reporting programs provide. Over time, these student reporters have become a trusted part of the statehouse reporting corps, and in some states are the largest news bureau in the capital. They often provide news to outlets across the state who cannot afford to send reporters to the statehouse full-time or subscribe to a professional wire service.

This report documents 35 existing university/college-led statehouse reporting efforts, based on interviews with leaders at those programs. Within that figure, we describe 11 new programs that have started (or about to start) since our last report in the spring of 2023. Additionally, we document two more on hold (Colorado and Utah), which if included totals 36 programs.

The focus of this report is programs directed by colleges and universities where student content is made publicly available to news organizations and the state's citizens, usually at no cost.

These are professional-level programs with skilled students, professional staff and faculty – usually former statehouse reporters with years of newsroom experience – and broad interest from media partners across the state.

Some schools operate the program as a full-fledged bureau whose students are at the Capitol so often it has been compared to a "teaching hospital," while others require students to be there only once a week to once a semester depending on the program expectations.

The number of students can range from dozens to as few as only one or two. Some operate only during the spring semester when the legislature is in session, while others operate year-round covering the widespread, real-world effects of state policies that began in local House and Senate committee hearings.

About the Center for Community News and This Report

The Center's mission is to document and grow college and university programs where student reporting is contributing local news. Local news is more than just a trusted source of critical information; it's an essential ingredient in a healthy democracy. Communities with dedicated local news organizations report higher levels of civic engagement, social cohesion, and effective problem-solving. The Center is focused on bringing together the skills of students and faculty and the resources of colleges and universities to address the local news crisis. The Center is funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the Lumina Foundation, the Lintilhac Foundation and donors to the UVM College of Arts & Sciences.

This report expands on a similar national statehouse program report that CCN published in 2023, which can be found here.

The principal author and researcher of this report is Sarah Gamard, a graduate of The Louisiana State University Manship School Statehouse Bureau and former professional statehouse reporter in Louisiana and Delaware. Any corrections or additions should be sent to Gamard at scbgamard@gmail.com. We welcome comments and suggestions.

College-Led Statehouse Reporting Programs

State	University/College	Name of Program
Arizona	Arizona State University	Cronkite News
Delaware	University of Delaware	Legislative reporting fellowship
Florida	University of Florida	Fresh Take Florida
Florida	Florida A&M University	The Famuan Online
Georgia	Kennesaw University	Fresh Take Georgia
Hawaii	University of Hawai'i at Manoa	Legislative Reporting Senior Capstone
Idaho	University of Idaho	Statehouse Program
Indiana	Franklin College	The Statehouse File
Illinois	University of Illinois Springfield	Public Affairs Reporting
Illinois	Northwestern University	Medill Illinois News Bureau
Iowa	Drake University	Statehouse and Public Affairs Reporting course
Kansas	University of Kansas	Statehouse reporting course
Louisiana	Louisiana State University	LSU Manship News Service Statehouse Bureau
Maryland	University of Maryland	Capital News Service Annapolis Bureau
Massachusetts	Boston University	Boston Statehouse Program
Michigan	Michigan State University	Capital News Service

Minnesota	University of Minnesota	Report for Minnesota Legislative Project
Missouri	University of Missouri	State Government Reporting Program
Montana	University of Montana	Legislative News Service
Nebraska	University of Nebraska	Nebraska News Service
New Jersey	Rutgers University; Rowan University; The College of New Jersey	New Jersey Statehouse News Service
New Mexico	University of New Mexico	Advanced Multimedia Reporting class
New York	SUNY New Paltz	Legislative Gazette
New York	SUNY Albany	Independent Study
Ohio	Ohio University	
Oklahoma	University of Oklahoma	Gaylord News
South Carolina	University of South Carolina	Senior Semester
Tennessee	Belmont University	Political Reporting
Texas	University of Texas at Austin	Statehouse Reporting class
Utah	Utah State University	Utah Public Radio class
Vermont	University of Vermont	Community News Service
Virginia	Virginia Commonwealth University	Capital News Service
Virginia	University of Richmond	Capital News Service
Washington	Washington State University	Olympia Legislative Reporting Fellowship

Washington	University of Washington	Government Communication Program

Brigham Young University and the University Colorado, Boulder (where programs are now paused) are not included in the above chart.

Program Details

Professional faculty and staff

Across all of these programs are professional staff and faculty who are highly trained, experienced and skilled in both the ethics of journalism and in statehouse reporting. Every one of the leaders has worked as a journalist or editor. And it is those program leaders, working as university employees, who review student work before it is published.

"I'm a stickler for accuracy, fairness. Anything I see that raises any questions at all in my mind, I'm sending back to the student reporter to talk to people again. And I just think that putting them on the high wire where they've got to come through is the best way to prepare them for jobs."

– Christopher Drew, Louisiana State University

Media partnerships

Almost all of these have media partnerships where content is made available and shared widely across the state. Programs do this differently with some having a website where partners can download content, or others notify partners and include links when new stories are posted. One other model is a public webpage where content is made available and pushed out to the general public (New Paltz).

Student learning

Students invariably cite the experience as rewarding. There is nothing like writing real news that is read widely. For those students who intend to continue in a career as a journalist, the experience can be a key stepping stone, not just the clips but also the networks.

"The experience has made me remember why I love journalism and got into doing this in the first place: to tell cool stories and provide people with information. I can really see how

much I've grown as a reporter and honestly as a person because my confidence has grown tremendously and I'm just a much better writer now."

– Sydney Byerly, Franklin College

But not all students will go on to be journalists and several of the programs recruit political science students and other majors with an interest in legislative policymaking. These students also tout how the program helped them understand policymaking and legislative processes.

Dedicated Faculty Member/Staff

While some of the programs have dedicated faculty/staff who work side by side with students during the legislative session (Franklin), some operate as a class where the faculty member is also teaching other classes (Hawaii, VCU). In some of those cases (Hawaii, LSU) the institution has added funds to pay a professional editor to assist with the program and sometimes operate as a liaison between the students and the news organizations (Vermont).

Some of the programs (Maryland) are much bigger with several professional staff/teachers and integrate in graduate students. In some cases, the students work full-time in the legislature; and in others, it is one of several classes they are taking. Some pay their students or provide bonuses (Kansas).

Legislative sessions

Many states have spring legislative sessions, which lends itself well to these programs. In some cases, students are paid to stay on into the summer to finish out the session. And some of the programs have a class in the fall that is preparing students for the spring (Illinois). But some legislatures are year-round (New York) which adds to the complexity. In some of those cases, there is a class both in the fall and spring.

Proximity

Proximity matters but is not essential. Several programs are just a few miles or less from their state capitals (LSU, Mizzou) while others are a 30–45-minute drive (New Paltz, Kansas), and others are many hours but have set up semester-long programs in the capital (Montana, Idaho) or a system where students stay overnight occasionally (Florida).

Recommendations

Counting the programs on hold, there are still 19 states with no programs, but a great deal of potential for colleges/universities close to state capitals to start them. Given the importance of covering state-level legislation and decision-making, we recommend that more institutions create these programs and will continue to provide seed funding, mentoring, site visits and one-on-one consulting.

Existing programs should consider adding other college and university partners. They already have the systems in place, which often includes the experienced leader, space in the statehouse (or near), media partners and institutional history. There are now four states with two programs (FL, VA, ILL and NY). In New Jersey the new initiative started with four schools and is adding a fifth.

The Center for Community News coordinates a monthly conversation with statehouse reporting program leaders to share information and best practices. There is now a national effort to share content across programs led by Mark Horvit at the University of Missouri. There is much more opportunity to coordinate shared reporting and investigating around issues common across state legislatures. A national conference that brought program leaders and new programs together could spur more programs and strengthen existing ones.

Collaboration with student media is also beneficial. In some cases, student media organizations, independent of the university are also providing statehouse coverage, particularly as it relates to their university. Is there a partnership or collaboration to make more of this content also available to media platforms in the state?

Summary by State

Based on the interviews with program leaders in each state, here we present summary information on each program. Note, we made an extensive effort to identify all programs (University/College led) in the country. Please contact Sarah Gamard at scbgamard@gmail.com or Richard Watts at rwatts@uvm.edu if your program should be added or if you would like help in starting one or if the summary needs to be updated.

ARIZONA

Arizona State University (2024)

Arizona State's Cronkite News class, a capstone class for upperclassmen majoring in journalism as well as master's students, acts as a teaching hospital for student journalists. Students produce a Monday-through-Thursday newscast that airs on Arizona PBS, its main partner, and about 180 additional publication partners regularly publish their content.

The statehouse program is just one part of ASU's Cronkite News class. Students take the class for credit. Students either pitch the story ideas or they are assigned a story. Faculty members edit the work.

Cronkite News also operates two websites that carry digital versions of its stories. One site is designated for the public to access those stories in readable format. The other is available only to partner news organizations across Arizona, which can pull content from that online menu to offer to their own readers, listeners and viewers. Partners subscribe to the daily Cronkite News digest and have unrestricted access to use Cronkite work however they choose, as long as they give the students credit. Cronkite News uses Slack with a pick-up channel that shows where its stories go. Any news organization can ask Cronkite News to join its listserv for access to the digest for free.

ASU's journalism program also runs bureaus in Washington D.C. and Los Angeles as well as a sports bureau and a Spanish language program. Note while coverage of the capitol did exist pre-2024, the added focus on a statehouse news started in 2024.

Contact: Allysa Adams Allysa.Adams@asu.edu

Website: Cronkite News

CCN Case Study: Cronkite News Students Are Arizona's Political Source From Phoenix to Washington, by Alexa Lewis

DELAWARE

University of Delaware legislative reporting fellowship (2026)

The University of Delaware in the spring of 2026 will launch a six-credit fellowship from January to June. Students will get one credit in January, three credits during the school semester, and two more credits for continuing into June.

The fellowship will be offered two to four students and is open to students majoring or minoring in public policy, political science, political communications, journalism, or other communications.

UD's campus in Newark is about 50 minutes away by car from the state capitol in Dover. It's unclear whether transportation can be arranged or if students will have to drive themselves. Nancy Karibjanian, Director of the Journalism Program at the University of Delaware who will be running the program, said students may have to start by listening to the live stream of floor debates as a backup, in case they can't transport themselves to the statehouse in person. With startup funds provided by the Department of Communication, Karibjanian expects to purchase voice recorders and other needed equipment to enhance the students' coverage of the legislature.

The fellowship will fulfill a capstone degree requirement for any arts and sciences student participating at the 400 level. It also fulfills electives for the journalism minor. Karibjanian hopes to limit the fellowship to juniors to avoid making a senior commit to the June portion of the program.

Students can take assignments from local radio or news outlets at any point during the semester. Karibjanian will review any assignments from the outlets to approve the story concept for its legitimacy and relevance for a student journalist. Every student will also be asked to follow one bill, with Karibjanian's approval for newsworthiness. The program will mix broadcast and digital print reporting. The outlet's editor will edit the students' work, and Karibjanian plans to use a Listserv to distribute stories to partnering organizations.

Karibjanian wants the students to cover stories other outlets are not covering; she is still working out partnerships with local outlets however is working closely with UD's partner news organization Delaware Public Media.

Contact: Nancy Karibjanian nancyk@udel.edu

FLORIDA

University of Florida: Fresh Take Florida

The University of Florida's Fresh Take Florida runs two semesters per year and employs up to 18 students per semester to cover the Florida Legislature, which is 2.5 hours from their campus in Gainesville. The program provides coverage for 80 outlets across the state including radio, TV and newspapers ranging from small dailies and weeklies to the Miami Herald, AP and CNN. The three-credit class started in 2019 and operates during both the spring and fall semesters. While students are not usually paid, the program covers travel, dorm stays at Florida State University's campus in Tallahassee and access to public records thanks in part to donations via the University of Florida Foundation. While many students will choose to take the class for two semesters, single-semester students will typically opt to take the class in the spring because it coincides with the legislative session. Most students come from within the journalism program. Students must write and publish five stories for the semester, and some have gone beyond that number. One of the five stories has to focus on an underrepresented community.

Contact: Ted Bridis - tbridis@ufl.edu

Website: Fresh Take Florida, WUFT

Florida A&M University SJGC Capital Bureau (2022)

Florida A&M University coordinates a statehouse capital bureau through an advanced reporting class. About 20 students per semester cover the Florida Legislature and state government; the Capitol is less than a mile from their campus in Tallahassee. The three-credit class evolved out of a long-standing public affairs reporting course. It was first offered in 2022. It operates during both the spring and fall semesters. The class Is a required course for the journalism majors at FAMU and is taught by Doug Blackburn, who spent more than 30 years as a reporter at multiple papers, including covering higher education and the Florida Legislature for the Tallahassee Democrat. In spring 2023, the class is adding broadcast-quality video news reports to their written stories. The work is published on the student newspaper's website and available to other outlets to republish.

Contact: Doug Blackburn - douglas.blackburn@famu.edu
Website: The Famuan Online
CCN Case Study: FAMU's Capital Bureau Class, by Carolyn Shapiro

GEORGIA

Kennesaw University: Fresh Take Georgia (2021)

Kennesaw State University: Fresh Take Georgia is a comprehensive learning experience and real-world digital reporting initiative run by the Center for Sustainable Journalism, School of Communication and Media at Kennesaw University.

Students are taught by faculty, with mentorship from multiple professional journalists with experience at Atlanta-based news organizations. Students work each semester in a variety of roles including reporting, editing, photography, audience engagement, digital production and podcast production. Students cover the Georgia General Assembly during the spring legislative session as well as enterprise topics of interest for a statewide audience. Story ideas are developed by the students and editors together in regular pitch meetings. Stories are then edited and published on freshtakegeorgia.org and shared with publishing partners, including the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and others.

Students benefit from bylined digital, printed and podcasting credits. When the Legislature is not in session, Fresh Take Georgia collaborates with its publishing partners on various projects including providing election coverage and an Everyday Heroes series. This real-world experience is resulting in exciting job placements for students.

Contacts: Josh Azriel, jazriel@kennesaw.edu and Barbara Gainey, bgainey@kennesaw.edu

Website: Fresh Take Georgia

HAWAI'I

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Capstone Reporting Class (2022)

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's journalism program began collaborating specifically on state legislative coverage in Spring 2022 and chose as its partner an innovative online-only news organization called Civil Beat. The idea was born from the long-standing relationship between the two organizations and was spearheaded by the Journalism program's Director, Brett Oppegaard, and a Civil Beat political reporter, Blaze Lovell. The program is funded through the University and is a three-credit course coordinated through a senior-level "Innovation and Entrepreneurship" class co-taught by Lovell and Oppegaard, which is the final required class in the program's curriculum.

Students focus on reporting on the spring session of the Hawaii State Legislature, at the Honolulu capital. Each student selects a beat at the beginning of the semester and is responsible for coming up with story ideas connecting that beat with current legislative action. Two course instructors edit the stories before forwarding them to editors at Civil Beat for publication on their website. In the first year, the program had 12 students participate; in 2023, they had 15 students; in 2024 another 22 students were involved.

Contact: Dr. Brett Oppegaard - brett.oppegaard@hawaii.edu

Website: Civil Beat

CCN Case Study: Capstone Class Covers the Hawaii Statehouse, by Emily Sheftman

IDAHO

The University of Idaho's Journalism and Mass Media (JAMM) McClure Journalism Internship Program (2015)

The University of Idaho's Journalism and Mass Media McClure Journalism Internship Program hosts about two students per spring semester to cover the Idaho Legislature in Boise, which is 300 miles away from the university campus in Moscow. Students live in the Boise area that semester, oftentimes with their families, fulfilling a near-full course load by writing a weekly story for six or seven weekly rural newspapers around the state who are part of the program, which started circa 2015. Students write one story per week and editors regularly reach out to students with story ideas. During the week students also get additional media training through the School's news service, Idaho Public Radio. Students spend about every weekday and sometimes weekends, depending on whether there's a news event, during January, February and March working at the statehouse during the session. Students tend to be juniors and 11 seniors. The program is open to any student; international studies majors participated in 2022 and 2023.

The course is recognized as a 400-level internship and includes an average of 9 credits, though some students do less. Sometimes political science faculty have offered students additional credit for additional work, e.g. research papers on their experience, to fill other degree requirements outside the journalism program, too. Fundraising through the McClure Center has allowed a $4,000 student stipend while the office and staff support through the center is paid for by the university.

Contact: Glenn Mosley - gmosley@uidaho.edu

Website: State Capital News Bureau, McClure Center

CCN Case Study: University of Idaho students cover the Capital, by Jack Rooney

ILLINOIS

University of Illinois - Springfield, Public Affairs Reporting (1972)

Since 1972 the University of Illinois Springfield has offered a master's degree in public affairs reporting. The 10-month program allows students to have hands-on experience with political reporting. Students begin the program in August with a semester of classroom instruction and move on in the spring semester with a full-time reporting internship covering the Illinois Capital for a professional news organization that partners with the university.

The program is funded through the university along with the help of private donors and alumni. With the funding structure of the program in addition to stipends and scholarships offered to students, Illinois residents are able to complete the program for around $6,000. The program is run by Jason Piscia, a longtime newspaper editor and reporter, and graduate of the program. In a typical year, Piscia teaches and oversees around 10 students. The program has a 100% hire rate.

Contact: Jason Piscia - jpisc2@uis.edu

Website: Public Affairs Reporting

CCN Case Study: Training graduate students in public affairs reporting, by Emily Sheftman

Northwestern University, Medill Illinois News Bureau (2024)

In the fall of 2024, Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications launched a statehouse and local news reporting fellowship program called the Medill Illinois News Bureau.

The program sends a team of graduate and undergraduate students to report from Springfield during the legislative session, producing stories in partnership with the nonprofit Capitol News Illinois (CNI), which disseminates content to some 700 print, digital and broadcast outlets around Illinois and bordering states. Medill Senior Lecturer Storer H. (Bob) Rowley, former editor for the Chicago Tribune, directs the student bureau, edits their stories and works with editors at Capitol News Illinois to get the stories published. Students commit to three months of statehouse reporting during the fellowship for one academic quarter after they are chosen; they get stipends, lodging and transportation aid funded by a grant from the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

Faculty choose the students based on applications, and students take a related class on politics or advanced reporting while serving as fellows in this program. When they travel to the statehouse to cover the Illinois General Assembly and other state government stories, they work two to three full days for the program each week on top of their class and writing stories when they are back in Chicago or on campus, averaging 20 to 25 hours a week of statehouse reporting work. Rowley wants students to aid the full-time professional reporters at the capitol by finding stories that CNI professionals on staff may not have the time or bandwidth to cover on their own.

The students are directly contributing to Medill's Local News Initiative by substantively helping cover local news and fill gaps in state news coverage. The first 10 stories written for CNI by the graduate student fall Statehouse Fellows were picked up in dozens of newspapers, broadcast and digital outlets around the state, leading to tens of thousands of pageviews in CNI partner outlets. In addition, the fellows are also helping advise researchers at Medill's Knight Lab who are working on using artificial intelligence and other tech automation to help make sense of legislative votes, bills and laws to assist journalists covering the Illinois General Assembly.

Websites: Medill Illinois News Bureau, Capitol News Illinois

Contact: Storer H. Rowley storer.rowley@northwestern.edu

INDIANA

Franklin College's TheStatehouseFile.com (2005)

The Statehouse File is the flagship immersive program of the Pulliam School of Journalism at Franklin College, located in Franklin, Indiana, 20 miles south of the capital city of Indianapolis. Covering its 20th legislative session in 2025, it offers daily Indiana politics and culture coverage from a full-time office in the Indiana Statehouse.

Every Franklin multimedia journalism major completes a 12-credit internship semester at the Statehouse, but students can also earn one activity credit, take a three-credit class, or work as a freelancer for a stipend under the guidance of experienced journalist and editor Colleen Steffen. As of the spring of 2025, all sports communications and public relations majors are also required to spend at least one three-week period in January reporting on the statehouse.

TheStatehouseFile.com operates year-round with between three and 12 student journalists, whose work is published by professional media around the state.

In 2025, the program's 20th year, students will be blogging about their individual experiences on the beat, which can be found on the same website where they post the news content.

Contact: Colleen Steffen - csteffen@franklincollege.edu

Website: The Statehouse File

CCN Case Study: Small school delivers big results, by Emily Sheftman

IOWA

Drake University Statehouse and Public Affairs Reporting course (2025)

Drake University plans to enhance its statehouse reporting coverage in 2025 in its Statehouse and Public Affairs Reporting course. The department has routinely integrated legislative coverage into advanced writing classes, but this is the first year where students will be asked to contribute statehouse reporting to a network, potentially through the Iowa Newspaper Association. The initiative is overseen by faculty member Amy McCoy, who also teaches public relations and political communications classes.

For five weeks during the semester-long, three-credit public affairs reporting class, about 15 upper-level students from majors such as digital, multimedia, public relations, and strategic political communication will operate as a statehouse newsroom. Exercises will include full interviews and stories, as well as analyses of how they would approach stories and get contact information. They'll also cover open records and public meetings and have guest speakers and lectures.

The program seeks to balance classroom learning with real-world experience, with potential for future expansion and capstone opportunities, McCoy said. She plans to work with other professors in advanced reporting classes in case they touch on legislative work and want student reporting published.

Drake University is about three and a half miles from the Iowa State Capitol, and students can take the bus there for free. They won't be required to go to the statehouse in person, since legislative debates in Iowa are live-streamed, but opportunities will be offered to report from there.

McCoy wrote for The Associated Press for 13 years before becoming a public information officer for Iowa's human services agency followed by serving as legislative liaison for the state's public health department during the pandemic. She will be editing student stories and working to place them.

Contact: Amy McCoy amy.mccoy@drake.edu

Website: Drake Bulldog Dispatch

KANSAS

University of Kansas Statehouse Reporting class

The University of Kansas's statehouse reporting class is run by former Washington Post editor Patricia Weems Gaston and focuses largely on day-to-day coverage with stories available to about 190 news outlets in Kansas. Students commute 30 minutes by car to Topeka and can either be a reporter or an editor depending on their career ambitions.

The three-credit capstone class started in 2012 and hosts between 10 and 18 journalism students, mostly seniors, every spring semester. Students typically go to the statehouse once a week during the session, which runs from January through May. They end their coverage when the semester ends, not when the session ends.

Each student has to do 18 features or dailies, and two enterprise pieces. Gaston, who is the bureau chief, edits and posts all stories on a private site that requires a sign-in and allows Kansas Press Association members to log in and download stories. In return, the KPA provides $5,000 per year for student's gas/tolls as well as student awards. Gaston typically doesn't tell students what to cover because she wants them to learn about pitching and developing stories. Students receive a bonus depending on the quality of their work, ranging from $300 to $500. During the pandemic, like many programs, students continued to cover the legislature but through Zoom.

The program has also been collaborating on some coverage with the University of Missouri, its neighbor to the east, since 2024. For example, students from both schools worked together on a story about maternity deserts, which ran both on the Kansas program's statehouse website and in the Columbia Missourian.

Contact: Patricia Gaston - patricia.gaston@ku.edu

LOUISIANA

The Louisiana State University Manship School Statehouse Bureau (2016)

The Louisiana State University Manship School Statehouse Bureau has been covering the statehouse in Baton Rouge since 2016. The program includes a prerequisite class in the fall, a spring class based at the Capitol, which is just a short drive from campus during the legislative session, and a paid summer program for a handful of students to cover the end of the session once the semester ends. The program is managed by faculty member Christopher Drew, who had a 40-year career as a journalist prior to starting in 2017. There are typically 10 to 12 students a semester. Funding comes from the university and Drew's endowed chair program. Students receive 3 credits and can take the class twice. Students are required to spend at least one day in the legislature. More than 95 publications, digital publications, newspapers, and radio/TV have run at least one of their stories and many take content on a regular basis.

Contact: Christopher Drew - cdrew2@lsu.edu or LSU Manship School of Mass Communication manshipxgr@gmail.com

Website: LSU Manship School Statehouse Bureau

CCN Case Study: LSU Statehouse Reporting & Enterprise Stories, by Richard Watts

MARYLAND

University of Maryland Capital News Service Annapolis Bureau (1990)

The University of Maryland's Capital News Service Annapolis Bureau is one of five news bureaus managed by The Philip Merrill College of Journalism. All journalism (M.J. not M.A.) graduate students are required to work in one of the news bureaus, whereas undergraduates have to apply for it as a capstone. (Graduate students apply for their preferred bureau, but do not always receive their top choice).

The bureau has around 30 news organization clients and charges $100 or $200 per semester, depending on their size -- and also provides content to AP. The revenue goes toward student stipends for travel. The bureau produces from 25 to 75 stories per semester depending on the number of students in the Annapolis Bureau.

Started in 1990, the bureau and the companion courses operate in the spring and fall. Graduate students get six credits for working four days per week. Undergraduate students get six credits for working two days a week or nine credits for working for days a week. The class size varies per semester, sometimes reaching as many as ten graduate and undergraduate students. Funding comes from the University budget and pays for the faculty bureau chiefs and rent for the Annapolis office, which is a block away from the statehouse. The program is managed by long-time journalist and editor Martin Kaiser and Annapolis Bureau Chief Christia Parsons. The statehouse is a 40 to 45-minute drive from campus.

Contact: Martin Kaiser - wmkaiser@umd.edu; Christi Parsons - cparson1@umd.edu

Website: Capital News Service Annapolis Bureau

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston University Statehouse Program (2004)

The Boston University Statehouse Program hosts up to 15 students per semester who are each assigned to work with an individual local digital news outlet in the state to cover state government and the Legislature, which is a 20-minute T-ride from campus. The 12-credit class, taught by former Massachusetts Statehouse reporter Jerry Berger, runs in the spring and fall and includes a 3- hour-per-week classroom session. The number of partner papers varies from 10-15 outlets.

Most stories are localized for a particular area, so stories are specific to the partner paper and a particular coverage area. Students are supposed to do weekly stories, as well as a group and final project at the end of the year, which go out to every outlet.

The class began in 2004 and is an optional capstone class for journalism students that runs in the spring and fall, but not the summer. Students use the statehouse as the base for the beat to report on public affairs-related issues. Students tend to be seniors and grad students, though some are juniors. Students are encouraged, but not required, to go to the statehouse in person.

Contact: Jerry Berger - jerrymb@bu.edu

Website: Boston University Statehouse Program

MICHIGAN

Michigan State University Capital News Service (1980)

The Michigan State University Capital News Service is in its 44th year of covering statehouse news, with an average of five to six students – graduate and undergraduate – per semester in the spring and fall to provide news coverage to more than 35 news outlets. The four-credit class is capped at 15 students. While students are not required to be at the Capitol every week, the class includes off-campus interviews most Monday mornings with influential players such as the governor, a state agency head, an advocacy group leader or a legislator to kickstart stories that are due at the end of each week.

The legislature meets year-round with some breaks and is three miles from campus. The participating outlets collectively pay around $8,000 per year for content, and most of that revenue goes to monetary awards and scholarships to participating students. The university pays for faculty salaries, the newsroom in the building, a student tech manager and a retired editor who works with students on Fridays. Former Michigan Capital reporter Eric Freedman instructs the course.

Contact: Eric Freedman - freedma5@msu.edu

Website: Capital News Service

MINNESOTA

The University of Minnesota's Report for Minnesota Legislative Project (2025)

For the first time, the University of Minnesota in 2025 is launching its Report for Minnesota Legislative Project, an internship program that will begin in February, managed by long-time reporter and faculty member Gayle Golden. Two of the five students will work with the prominent local news outlet owner Forum Communications, providing news content for its 15 newsrooms in Minnesota.

The other three interns will work directly out of the Capitol with Mike Mulcahy, a longtime political editor at Minnesota Public Radio with years of experience in the Minnesota Legislature, who is receiving a stipend to help tailor their work for publication in other news organizations. So far, six news organizations with distribution in 17 communities in the state have agreed to partner. Mulcahy will communicate with editors on what kind of coverage they are looking for, and that will guide what his interns cover.

Mulcahy's students will produce stories weekly, and each student will aim to produce at least one story per week. The program aims to fill news coverage gaps for smaller outlets. Students won't have a travel stipend, but UMN students have free use of public transportation from campus to the statehouse. All statehouse interns, including those at Forum, are getting a $2,700 stipend for 12 weeks, which adds up to roughly $15 per hour, paid by the university's Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Minnesota's legislative project is one of several Report for Minnesota initiatives. Select students also spend summer internships in rural news organizations, and Golden is considering a project to partner with news organizations based on reporting projects that grow from the legislative work this spring.

Golden was previously a reporter at the Dallas Morning News and was a regular reporting contributor to the New York Times. She's been teaching at the University of Minnesota for over 20 years.

Contact: Gayle Golden GGolden@umn.edu

Website: Report for Minnesota

MISSOURI

The University of Missouri's State Government Reporting Program

The University of Missouri's State Government Reporting Program has had students working at the statehouse in Jefferson City for more than 40 years. About 20 to 30 students work in shifts to cover the legislative session from January to May under the direction of long-time government reporter and editor Fred Anklam.

The university partners with the Missouri Press Association and the Missouri Broadcasters Association to distribute the students' stories to small newspapers and radio and TV stations across the state. Mizzou's statehouse audio coverage has even greater reach than print stories. Because of the demand for radio stories, students can get credit or payment for their audio work, and most opt for credit.

The stories for print or online publications also go through the copy desk of the Columbia Missourian, the daily newspaper that serves as the hands-on "lab" for journalism majors in their junior and senior years.

Contact: Mark Horvit – Fred Anklam anklamf@missouri.edu

Website: Missouri Statehouse Reporting Program

CCN Case Study: Mizzou Statehouse Reporting Bureau, by Carolyn Shapiro

MONTANA

University of Montana Legislative News Service (1993)

The University of Montana Legislative News Service was started in 1993 in an attempt to fill the gaps in legislative coverage for the residents of Montana. The program is housed at the University of Montana and run by former legislative reporter Courtney Cowgill. The program is funded through a partnership between the University of Montana, the Montana Newspaper Association, the Greater Montana Foundation, and the Montana Broadcasters Association.

Each legislative session, which happens every other year, two to three University of Montana journalism students move to the capital city of Helena to cover the session. While in the statehouse, the students are considered to be full members of the professional press corps covering the Legislature. The students produce written and broadcast reports of the daily events in the statehouse for more than 150 outlets across the state.

Contact: Courtney Cowgill - courtney.cowgill@mso.umt.edu

Website: Community & Legislative News Service, UM Legislative News Service

CCN Case Study: Montana Statehouse News Service, by Emily Sheftman

Illustrative Student Story: Shaylee Ragar covered the 2019 Montana Legislature for the UM

NEBRASKA

University of Nebraska's Nebraska News Service (2011)

University of Nebraska's Nebraska News Service has operated a statehouse bureau since 2011 and has since been merged with a newer program called the "Experience Lab" for different communications majors. The class meets for 1 hour and 45 minutes every Tuesday. Professionals, many of whom are either retired or working in the industry hoping to hire students post-grad, offer mentoring and guidance such as line editing.

Students cover the statehouse, and the content is provided to about 100 outlets, some radio and TV but mostly newspapers. The campus is only a few blocks away from the statehouse. The class is one credit per semester, and students have to take it three times for their degree. Students have to be involved for up to six hours per week as part of the Experience Lab, but it's up to the student how much they want to devote to statehouse coverage. The senior capstone class averages 25 to 35 students.

The university foundation has a Nebraska News Service fund that anyone can donate to, and Nebraska alums do donate. That fund helps pay for travel expenses when needed. Typically, only student leads, who work 10 hours a week, are paid $11.25 per hour to manage, support and edit fellow students.

Contact: Jill Martin - jmartin42@unl.edu

Website: Nebraska News Service

NEW JERSEY

Rutgers University, Rowan University and The College of New Jersey: The New Jersey Statehouse News Service (2024)

Launched in the summer of 2023, the New Jersey Statehouse News Service is a collaborative nonprofit involving Rowan University, The College of New Jersey, and Rutgers University, with potential future involvement from other universities. The program in the next five years aims to increase intern numbers from the current five to 10-12 per semester, with additional recent graduate fellows working 10 months at a time and a professional staff of three: a managing editor, a director, and a multimedia editor. Currently, they have two part-time professional editors and five interns. There's no age or major requirement, but typically the students are juniors and seniors (usually, they prefer seniors) with a journalism background.

The service currently partners with 22 organizations comprising more than 100 news outlets. Howlett is exploring new sustainable funding sources, such as through Report for America, and wider media partnerships to cover more of the 400-plus media outlets in New Jersey. The program offers interns class credit and mileage reimbursements, and are otherwise unpaid; in the future, Howlett also wants to give students stipends of around $2,500. The program is entirely a wire service and, as of now, doesn't publish anything themselves. They are starting with $100,000 in funding from the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium; this money has been used to hire additional part-time staff.

For the first time in the summer of 2025, Princeton University will participate by paying for and coordinating students to work for the news service at the statehouse during the summer months while the legislature is still in session; this will help fill gaps when students working during the school year finish their internship with the end of the spring semester.

The number of hours students work for the program varies by school. They're all asked to write one to two weekly stories: a straight news story and a more ambitious enterprise story. The program is not strict about meeting a quota. The College of New Jersey is about five miles from the capital and is the closest of the three schools participating. The other two schools are about 40 miles – a one-hour drive – away. No faculty members besides Howlett are working on this program.

Contact: Deb Howlett debhowlett@gmail.com
Website: New Jersey State House News Service

NEW MEXICO

University of New Mexico Advanced Multimedia Reporting class (2024)

Gwyneth Doland, who has reported on the New Mexico statehouse since 2008, has been running the UNM statehouse reporting program since 2024, thanks to some local news funding. She works with around 15 students at a time. The class is required for all UNM journalism students as a capstone course. Doland takes all students to the statehouse one day a week for a five-hour-long class. The length of New Mexico's legislative session varies by year, ranging from 30 to 60 days.

Doland solely teaches this one class during the legislative session semester to accommodate for its high demand for editing and guidance. She also runs UNM's local news internship and fellowship program, and she covers the legislature for the local PBS station.

The department's webpage where student reporting is published is called News Port maintained by a part-time manager. Transportation is a challenge for this program: UNM's campus is about an hour's drive away from the New Mexico statehouse totaling about 120 miles round trip, and the class doesn't have a set-up fund to aid student travel. Additionally, not all students have cars and don't necessarily live near each other; and the train times aren't conducive to the class schedule. The program is exploring funding and carpooling options.

Doland is now exploring additional news partnerships through the statehouse class by working with news outlets some of her students are already interning for. This helps Doland outsource some editing, and in return, the news outlet gets free reporting. In the future, as enrollment grows and the program strengthens, Doland wants to shift to a model that offers more content to local partners.

Last year, at its nascence, Doland assigned students to work in teams but this year students work mostly independently. This semester, students will produce one fun story (a "brite"), one Q&A, two spot news stories, two beat reports, one in-depth story all in eight weeks. They can submit the stories in any order.

Contact: Gwyneth Doland gwynethd@unm.edu

Website: New Mexico News Port

NEW YORK

SUNY New Paltz: The Legislative Gazette (1980)

For more than 45 years SUNY New Paltz has been running the Legislative Gazette, an online media outlet that reports on the New York Legislature. The program is funded through the University as well as grants from a number of organizations, including the Knight Foundation and the Ottaway Foundation. Each semester 10 to 15 students make the 70-mile-one-way commute to Albany from New Paltz. Editor and New Paltz professor James Gormley leads the class and students have the option to take between one and twelve credits during the semester. The Gazette currently has between 5,000 and 6,000 readers during their publication from September to May. The students produce a variety of media including news videos, social media content, and written articles.

Contact: James Gormley - legislativegazette@newpaltz.edu

Website: Legislative Gazette

CCN Case Study: 45 Years of Covering the Statehouse – SUNY New Paltz, by Emily Sheftman

SUNY Albany: Institute for Local News at SUNY Albany Newsroom (2025)

In 2024, CCN helped found the Institute for Local News across the State University of New York system – the largest university system in the country. While that program is focused on fostering local reporting programs at the 64 campuses, the University of Albany also stepped up to create a statehouse reporting program, under the direction of former reporter and editor Laney Salisbury, a professor of journalism at SUNY Albany.

The program started in the spring of 2025 with one student in an independent study supervised by Laney producing radio pieces on the budget and other issues for The Capitol Pressroom, a local digital news organization. Salisbury leads a four-person class in partnership with Spotlight News to cover municipal governments in the capital region. Salisbury is exploring ways to enhance legislative reporting on the state and local level to give SUNY Albany students practical experience in statehouse and government reporting in future years.

Contact: Laney Salisbury esalisbury@albany.edu

Websites: The Capitol Pressroom and Spotlight News

OHIO

Ohio University Statehouse News Bureau Fellowship (2011)

Since 2011, Ohio University's Scripps College of Communication has placed one to three interns in a local news bureau to cover the Columbus statehouse for an entire semester. Students can work in print, broadcast or other media when on this beat, depending on what newsroom they intern with. Students mainly take assignments from the bureau they are interning with, but the bureau is required to share their coverage with any competing news outlet in the state that also wishes to use it.

OU's campus in Athens is about an hour's drive away from the state capitol in Columbus. Students typically live in the capitol city during their internship, often staying with their family.

Students are paid about $6,900 as a stipend for the semester and required to work as an intern covering the statehouse for 200 hours that semester. All journalism students at OU are required to take some sort of semester-long internship, though not all opt to cover their legislature. The student salaries are funded by the Scripps Howard Fund and fellows' host news organizations. Students can opt to get 1 to 3 credits during the semester, but unlike a full internship, that requires them to pay tuition.

Professionals at the newsroom housing the interns assign and edit their stories while faculty member Dr. Thomas Suddes provides simultaneous mentoring. Suddes, who has 30 years of statehouse reporting experience, also has professional connections with the local journalism market that helps students secure internships.

Mostly journalism students have this internship, but some political science students have also participated.

Contact: Dr. Thomas Suddes suddes@ohio.edu

Website: Statehouse News Bureau Fellowship

OKLAHOMA

The University of Oklahoma Gaylord News

The University of Oklahoma's Gaylord News covers the Congress year-round and the legislative session during the spring semester. There are two parts to this, a Washington, D.C. component in which students are paid $10 per hour, plus housing and transportation, and a 1-credit in-state practicum in the spring that covers the legislative session. All stories are edited by Gaylord College faculty and made available to 160 plus news outlets, including seven television stations and 10 Native American newspapers, across the state.

Students based in Washington typically will write 20 to 30 stories each during the semester. Students working in the state capitol are expected to be at the statehouse at least one day per week when the legislature is in session, either for the entire morning or afternoon and produce at least 10 stories during the February to May session. Students commute from campus, which is 20 miles from the state capital in a suburb of Oklahoma City – about a 40-minute drive. As of February 2025, Washington and legislative content is provided free via listserv emails and Google Drive.

Faculty are exploring ways to grow via a more intensive, higher-credit legislative class in the fall and spring semesters.

Contact: John Schmeltzer - j.schmeltzer@ou.edu

Website: Gaylord News

SOUTH CAROLINA

University of South Carolina

According to journalism instructor Brandon Schulleeta, the University of South Carolina's journalism Capstone program, known as senior semester, is divided into digital and broadcast sides. The digital side, comprising around a dozen students or more, contributes content to the school's online publication, the Carolina News & Reporter. Digital students produce news articles, videos and visuals. The broadcast side partners with about 30 students. The program allows students to pitch stories, with up to half of multimedia students covering at least one story on politics, including the South Carolina statehouse.

Website: Carolina News & Reporter

Contact: Brandon Shulleeta shulleeb@email.sc.edu

TENNESSEE

Belmont University Political Reporting program (2025)

This program launched in January 2025, aims to fill local news gaps, tackling community-focused, hyper-localized stories such as immigration, education and other key issues, according to Jennifer Duck, a tenured Associate Professor who has been teaching at Belmont since 2016. The multimedia class, which fulfills a degree requirement, includes five students and will collaborate with The Nashville Banner and the newly launched national Statehouse Network headed by Mark Horvit at the University of Missouri.

Guest lecturers from the Associated Press, The New York Times, and The Tennessee Journal will also join the class. The editor of The Nashville Banner, a Belmont alum, will mentor students. The class will be offered every spring semester while the legislature is in session.

The students – all juniors and seniors majoring in journalism – will have opportunities to meet at the statehouse during class time and are encouraged to go up to Capitol Hill outside of class hours. The campus is about 10 minutes from the statehouse, and the students will have to navigate downtown parking. They will also attend the Tennessee Press Association Winter Conference, which features lessons in leadership around rural journalism and community issues, as well as investigative reporting.

After an initial introduction to the statehouse, each student has been asked to come up with 10 pitches to inform future projects throughout the semester. They will focus on evergreen stories over daily news; students will produce a feature story and several other pieces.

Duck has 20 years of local and national journalism experience, including working for ABC News as a White House reporter and producer during the George W. Bush administration, as well as the 2007 presidential campaigns of President Barrack Obama and U.S. Sen. John McCain. Additionally, she was a producer with Anderson Cooper covering politics from 2013 to 2018.

Funding includes $500 for parking at the statehouse, Tennessee Press Association winter conference fees, and potentially phone-pairing microphones for broadcast reporting. The program seeks to expand by engaging more students and would be open to collaborating with other institutions like Vanderbilt University.

Contact: Jennifer Duck jennifer.duck@belmont.edu / Website: The Nashville Banner

UTAH

Utah State University (2025)

Sheri Quinn, news director at Utah Public Radio, is exploring student-produced statehouse coverage at Utah State University. The UPR news department, amply staffed by student interns, produces professional statewide news and occasionally multistate and national content. A seven-week course at USU led by Quinn aims to produce a series of stories distributed through regional collaboratives and, ideally, the Salt Lake Tribune.

Part of their coverage will include statehouse reporting, and Quinn wants that to be a focus. Students can either be paid $11 per hour or get course credit for the work. (Typically, they opt for the former.)

Quinn willl have anywhere from six to 12 interns producing news throughout the semester.

Contact: Sheri Quinn sheri.quinn@usu.edu

VERMONT

University of Vermont Capital News Service (2023)

Community News Service, University of Vermont

The Community News Service was founded in 2029 and in 2023 the program launched the Capital News Service.

The three students in the application-only group are each paid $1,000 across the semester and take a six-credit course called the “Community News Service.” They work with CNS editor Justin Trombly to monitor committees, pursue stories and workshop high-quality articles together — with a focus on subjects not already covered in the media ecosystem.

Stories are sent to a long list of media around Vermont and free to republish from the website. Across its first two semesters, the legislative team produced about 85 stories that were picked up about 300 times by professional news outlets across the state.

Funding for students and the editor comes from local donors in the state via UVM's Center for Community News.

Contact: Justin Trombly, jtrombly@uvm.edu

Website: https://vtcommunitynews.org/category/legislature/

VIRGINIA

Virginia Commonwealth University - Capital News Service (1994)

Virginia Commonwealth University launched their Capital News Service in 1994. The program has between eight to 15 students per semester registered in a six-credit reporting course. Many students will opt to take the course two times, using the fall semester as an introduction into political reporting and the legislative process, before jumping in during the spring semester once the Virginia Assembly convenes in January. The program is funded through the university.

The students are taught by professor Alix Bryan-Campos, who took over in 2019 and launched the fall course. Bryan-Campos also serves as one of the editors for the student work. The articles produced by the program are distributed to more than 100 news outlets, with almost every article being reposted by an outside news outlet. The students are encouraged to reach out to local papers and communicate with news editors to get story ideas.

The program has launched an additional course called the CNS Copy Desk to teach students fact-checking, editing and AP Style by editing real stories in order to help support the editing work before it is ultimately handed over to Bryan-Campos, who meets one-on-one with the student.

The program also has a newsroom director position to help ensure relevancy and accuracy of the student-reported articles, develop partnerships with new media clients, maintain the CNS listserv and website, organize a portfolio review, lead special collaborative projects, edit and be a liaison between journalism courses, Bryan-Campos said.

Contact: Alix Bryan Campos - bryaneg@vcu.edu

Website: VCU Capital News Service

CCN Case Study: Covering the Statehouse in Virginia, by Emily Sheftman

University of Richmond - Capital News Service

Students in the Public Affairs Reporting and Advanced News Writing and Reporting classes at the University of Richmond cover the Virginia General Assembly and local issues as part of the Richmond Capital News Service, a bureau of Virginia Commonwealth University's Capital New Service.

Each Spring semester, 12 to 15 Public Affairs students provide daily coverage of the General Assembly for small news outlets in Virginia and distribute stories on the news service website and by direct request from publications. Advanced News Writing and Reporting students take this course during the spring or fall and typically start getting assignments to cover local government issues midway through the semester. In the spring, some also join Public Affairs students and take on legislative assignments.

The journalism department launched a YouTube channel (urjournalism) in the fall for live Election Night coverage and will keep the channel active during the 2025 General Assembly.

Contact: Tom Mullen - tmullen@richmond.edu

Website: Capital News Service University of Richmond Bureau

TEXAS

The University of Texas, Austin - Statehouse Reporting (2023)

The University of Texas at Austin launched its undergraduate statehouse reporting class in the spring of 2023 and it continues this spring, as the Legislature begins its session in January. Students are matched with a news outlet, preferably from their hometown, but in reality, the value added is being in Austin because of the shrinking capitol bureaus. The students worked with their newsroom editor under the guidance of former New York Times editor Kathleen McElroy and former Dallas Morning News Capitol bureau chief Christy Hoppe.

The three-hour undergraduate class is capped at 18 students for accreditation purposes and to ensure the students are matched with a professional news media outlet in the state. Most of the outlets are traditional print or online publications, ranging from large metro dailies to weeklies. Students, who get a modest stipend from their newsrooms and a Journalism endowment, are scheduled to produce at least five stories over the semester.

The Capitol building is a 30-minute walk or an 8-minute drive from campus (with free parking!). The Texas Legislature only meets during odd-numbered years for 140 days, but special sessions have become the norm. Students cover plenty of state legislative news during off years, such as diving into a public policy issue.

Contact: Kathleen McElroy - kathleen.mcelroy@austin.utexas.edu

WASHINGTON

Washington State University Olympia Legislative Reporting Fellowship

The university's Murrow News Service began this program in 2011. One or two upper-level journalism students are matched with a local news partner, and they spend the 16-week semester covering the state legislature and publishing regularly in the partner news outlet. The program pays a professional journalist to act as a mentor in Olympia, the state capital, to work part-time during the legislative session with the students on story ideas and content before it is sent to publications for final edits.

Students relocate to Olympia, a four-hour drive from campus, while taking other classes during this semester. The news outlets pay the students for their work, and students can also receive academic credit. Example partners include the newspaper in Spokane, the newspaper in Moses Lake, and the Washington Newspaper Publishers Association, a group of roughly 70 smaller, weekly newspapers around the state.

Contact: Benjamin Shors mailto:bshors@wsu.edu

University of Washington State Government Communications Program

The Department of Communication's Journalism and Public Interest Communication program every winter quarter pairs students with local and state outlets to cover news from the Capitol in Olympia during the legislative session.

Starting in 2025, the department awards subsidies through a short application process to select small-budget independent and nonprofit news outlets seeking to participate in the program. Faculty member John Tomasic runs the program. Between three and five students produce at least 100 stories on the legislature per year – sometimes more – in the program.

The University of Washington is housed in Seattle, about an hour and 15 minutes away from the capitol by car. Students in this program are housed together via a short-term rental near the capitol instead of commuting.

The housing plan is paid for by a donation from alums, totaling about $5,000 a year, that the program gives as stipends to the students who use it to pay rent in Olympia during the ten-week winter quarter when the legislature every year is in session. Additionally, the students get paid by the outlets for which they're interning – about $3,000 per outlet for ten weeks. The department now occasionally provides grants to hard-pressed non-profit and independent outlets to pay for an intern.

Contact: John Tomasic - tomasic@uw.edu

Website: State Government Communications Program

Illustrative student story: Washington's Legislature moves to address equity in the cannabis business, by Maya Leshikar

NATIONAL COLLABORATIONS

The Statehouse Reporting Project

The Statehouse Reporting Project is a new effort to create a collaborative network among university-based programs that cover state legislatures. Funded with a two-year grant from Arnold Ventures and based at the University of Missouri, the network currently includes about 15 schools and is looking to add more.

The goal is to provide regional and national context to statehouse coverage, to break out of the silos in which most state government coverage exists, whether student-based or professional. The project looks for trends, model legislation and other patterns that emerge when looking at the bigger picture of how state or national policies affect local communities. All partners have access to sophisticated bill tracking thanks to BillTrack50, a cross-state legislative research tool.

So far this semester, the collaboration has reported about immigration legislation, veterans' healthcare, regulating cellphones in schools, medical aid in dying, abortion, ballot initiatives and more. The stories have been published in both university-based media and professional outlets throughout the country.

If you are interested in joining the project, please contact: Mark Horvit - horvitm@missouri.edu

Website: National Community Newswire: Statehouse Reporting Project

ON HOLD

COLORADO

University of Colorado, Boulder

During the spring 2024 semester, about 10 to 15 students covered the Colorado Statehouse for the Colorado Student News Service serving 10 rural news outlets, providing them with print and multimedia content. Beth Potter, who has about 30 years of journalism experience including 10 years overseas, taught the three-credit elective course as an adjunct professor. The class met twice a week, and students traveled to the statehouse twice over the entire semester.

Students traveled from campus to the statehouse via a 30-minute bus ride, which is free for students. They shared space on the press row with professionals.

Colorado's legislature only meets in the spring. During the following fall semester, Potter aimed to continue political and legislative coverage by holding the class and having students work together to report a ballot initiative for the 2024 election concerning hunting mountain lions.

Not all students' work produced during the two semesters in which the class operated was published by partners. During the spring semester, a few stories were published among the dozen or so students in the class. During the fall semester, one major story jointly reported by the class was distributed across the state.

This year, she is pausing it indefinitely because she was promoted in her newsroom role outside of UC Boulder, along with other competing duties. Despite her pausing it, she said journalism students are still going to the Capitol voluntarily to pursue stories for student media, partly due to word of mouth on the success of the last two semesters.

Contact: Beth Potter Elizabeth.Potter@colorado.edu

UTAH

Brigham Young University Capital West News Service

Between 2014 and 2020, Brigham Young University coordinated the Capital West News Service out of the University's Salt Lake Center. The program included students from

Weber State University, Utah State University, Salt Lake Community College, and the University of Utah as part of our reporting corps from 2014 to 2020. About 10 different small newspapers would pick up their material frequently.

The program was highly successful but was discontinued during the pandemic due to some obstacles, among them revenue shortages in student media and the legislature operating remotely, according to Joel Campbell, a veteran Salt Lake reporter who edited the students as a faculty member.

The 12-credit course had between 10 and 20 students who were required to be at the statehouse one day per week at least. The program hosted student journalists at the BYU - Salt Lake Center. Some students moved to Salt Lake entirely for the semester and took all their classes in Salt Lake City. The class only met for the spring semester to cover the 45-day legislative session from January to mid-March. Students commuted from BYU's campus in Provo, which is 40 miles from the statehouse, via bus or train expensed by BYU.

Contact: Ed Carter, ed_carter@byu.edu