University of Vermont

Center for Community News

National Impact Study

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Key Findings

The Center for Community News at UVM launched this project to understand the breadth of news-academic partnerships at colleges and universities across the U.S. For this study, CCN collected data from 124 news-academic partnerships in 39 states and Washington D.C. in 2024. CCN defines News-Academic Partnerships as "college- or university-led student reporting programs where faculty/staff review and edit student content before it is shared with media partners or directly distributed to the public."

These are the key findings:

- **5,190 students** actively participated in news/academic partnerships in the 124 programs.
- Those students produced **26,807 works of journalism** that were published.
- Student work was published in **3,258 professional news outlets.**
- At least **16,289 items** were published in multiple outlets.

Terms and Methodology

News-Academic Partnerships: CCN defines News-Academic Partnerships as "college- or university-led student reporting programs where faculty/staff review and edit student content before it is shared with media partners or directly distributed to the public." In cases where content is shared with media partners, there is active collaboration and coordination between the academic institution and the media outlet. In May 2025, CCN documented 227 such partnerships operating in 2024 across 172 institutions in 45 states, as well as Washington, D.C.

Previous Impact Study (August 2024 for calendar year 2023[1]): An earlier survey conducted by CCN in August 2024 collected data from 73 news-academic partnership programs. That report found that between June 1, 2023, and May 31, 2024, approximately 2,874 students participated in these programs. During this period, these students collectively produced 17,228 pieces of journalism which were published in more than 1,311 professional news outlets.

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected for the time period between Jan. 1, 2024 and Dec. 31, 2024. Information was requested from the 227 news-academic partnerships in the CCN database.

The four-question CCN impact survey was distributed to 227 news-academic partnership programs. Those programs were documented in a previous research effort and are listed in the 2025 CCN database as of May 2025[2]. It is possible there are new programs that have been identified since, but in this report, we use May 2025 as the baseline. Once identified, programs received multiple information requests via email and phone call. The four questions asked were:

1. What was the number of students who participated in the programs (calendar year 2024)
2. How many stories did your students produce (calendar year 2024):
3. How many outlets published your students' works (formal or informal partnerships):
4. The number of times student work was picked up over the last year by community-facing outlets? (For example, one piece of journalism could be run by 3 separate outlets, this would count as 3 pickups.)

During the three-month period of data collection (May 2025 to July 2025), CCN received 124 responses from faculty leaders. However, many programs also reported that they could not fully track enrollment, production or pickup data. Data was aggregated but the individual examples listed above were approved for this report from the responsible faculty member.

Limitations of the Data

[1] Student-Reported Stories Were Published Nearly 12,000 Times Last Year, Reaching Potentially 25 Million Readers | Center for Community News | The University of Vermont
[2] 2025-Impact-Report-APPENDIX.pdf

CCN has identified 227 news/academic partnerships at 172 universities. This study includes responses from 124 programs, a marked increase over the 73 programs who responded in 2024. However, as CCN continues to encourage more programs to collect this data we expect to see continued growth in response rates to more fully capture the impact of these programs.

When compared to the 2024 Annual Impact study, we record growth across all of the measured metrics, but part of that is probably due to the higher response rate (124 in this study, as compared to 73 responses in 2024). Comparing the two studies shows:

- 80% growth in student participation
- 55% growth in story production
- 148% growth in local news outlet partnerships

Further Research

To expand upon existing documentation of student enrollment, community-focused reporting, and collaborations with local news outlets, future research should adopt qualitative approaches—such as ethnography or in-depth interviews—across a purposive sample of small, medium, and large universities and their respective partnerships. Such an inquiry would offer deeper insights into the factors contributing to the relative success of these programs compared to peer institutions. Additionally, examining the structural, institutional, and contextual barriers that hinder the development or sustainability of such initiatives could provide actionable guidance for practitioners and policymakers. Documenting successful case studies and their operational strategies may also serve as a valuable resource for other institutions seeking to establish similar partnerships.

Program Examples

Small Institutions

Franklin College
Type: Private| **Population:** <5,000 |
In 2024, 28 students collectively produced more than 2,100 pieces of journalism, including stories, photos, videos, and graphics. The program's impact extended far beyond the campus, with over 35 outlets republishing their work—its most prominent story of the year alone drew more than 200,000 video views.

Governors State University, Illinois
Type: Public | **Population:** <5,000 |
Governors State University is a public university and a minority-serving institution that hosts a news-academic partnership program which operates under the supervision of the Director of the Center for Community Media. It is part of the College of Arts and Science. The university has a population size of less than 5,000 students and also has a journalism program. In 2024, 35 students participated in the program and generated 241 stories in collaboration with 12 local partners.

Castleton University (Vermont State University), Vermont
Type: Public | **Population:** <5,000 |
In 2024, Castleton University, now part of Vermont State University, operated a news-academic partnership initiative that engaged 10 students in producing 50 news articles in collaboration with 9 local news partners. This program provided students with hands-on reporting experience while contributing meaningful local coverage to the surrounding community.

St. Bonaventure University, New York
Type: Private, Faith-Based | **Population:** <5,000 |
St. Bonaventure University hosted the TAPinto Greater Olean program in 2024, led by two professors. Through this initiative, 13 students produced about 150 published stories in collaboration with one local media partner, integrating real-world reporting into their academic experience and providing coverage for the surrounding community.

Medium Institutions

Buffalo State University, New York
Type: Public | **Population:** 5,000–10,000 |
Buffalo State University ran three partnership programs in 2024 under the guidance of two faculty advisors. Through these initiatives, approximately 30 students produced nearly 65 stories in collaboration with one local news outlet.

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), Florida
Type: Public, Minority-Serving Institution | **Population:** 5,000–10,000 In 2024, FAMU's journalism program involved 39 students who produced 234 stories in partnership with one local media outlet, with two stories picked up by external organizations. This initiative supports practical reporting experience.

Hofstra University, New York
Type: Private | **Population:** 10,000–20,000
In 2024, Hofstra University operated two news-academic partnership programs that engaged 465 students in producing 1,745 stories across collaborations with approximately 24 media partners.

Large Institutions

University of Georgia, Georgia
Type: Public | **Population:** >20,000
The University of Georgia operated three distinct news-academic partnership programs in 2024. Two—The Oglethorpe Echo and Grady Newsource—were led by Amanda Bright, while the Woodall Weekend Workshop was directed by Mark Johnson. Together, these programs engaged 266 students, produced 666 stories in collaboration with 6 local news outlets, including one they directly manage, the Oglethorpe Echo. The Echo was named the second best paper in Georgia by the Georgia Press Association.

University of Missouri, Missouri
Type: Public | **Population:** >20,000
The University of Missouri, home to one of the nation's leading journalism schools, ran five news-academic partnership programs in 2024, including the flagship Columbia Missourian. These programs engaged 125 students in producing more than 3,700 stories in partnership with about 200 media organizations, reinforcing Missouri's reputation for large-scale, high-impact journalism training.

Florida International University (FIU), Florida
Type: Public, Minority-Serving Institution | **Population:** >20,000 | **Journalism Program:** Yes
In 2024, Florida International University operated Caplin News en Español, a program emphasizing bilingual and multicultural reporting. This initiative involved 56 students who produced 230 stories in collaboration with one local media partner.

University of California, Berkeley, California
Type: Public, Minority-Serving Institution | **Population:** >20,000 | **Journalism Program:** Yes
Berkeley's 2024 program engaged 64 students to produce 250 stories with 4 local media partners.

Arizona State University (Cronkite News Phoenix), Arizona
Type: Public, Minority-Serving Institution | **Population:** >20,000 | **Journalism Program:** Yes
ASU's Cronkite News Phoenix involved 292 students producing 1,700 stories in partnership with nearly 200 media organizations in 2024, illustrating one of the largest and most extensive student news programs nationally.

About the Authors

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Sima Bhowmik, PhD, is a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Center for Community News at the University of Vermont (UVM). She earned her doctorate in journalism from the University of Colorado Boulder. Her research primarily explores the sociological dimensions of journalism, including the influence of social identity, work routines, technology, organizational structures, and governmental forces on journalists and news production. In addition to documenting and mapping news-academic partnerships and university-led student reporting programs, she actively mentors UVM student interns, guiding them in conducting academic research.

This report was produced with research assistance from Sarah Gamard, Elizabeth Hewitt, Elizabeth Gibkoff, Colleen Steffen, Anna Van Dine, Richard Watts, Molly Bloom, Holly Sulivan and Sam Nylen. More CCN research, mapping and raw data can be found at https://www.uvm.edu/ccn/research-reports-and-case-studies.