University of Vermont
Center for Community News

Center for Community News Announces 2026 Faculty Champions

The 150 honorees are helping to forge a sustainable future for local news through university-led reporting programs

BURLINGTON, Vt. — The Center for Community News at the University of Vermont is pleased to announce its largest class of Faculty Champions ever, with 150 journalism leaders from colleges across the country. These individuals are being recognized for their efforts to start or expand university-led reporting programs in their region, and their contribution to a national movement of student-powered community reporting.

"At the core of all of these university-led student reporting programs are innovative and entrepreneurial faculty committed to student success," said CCN Director Richard Watts. "These programs are a win-win for everyone: students receive high-impact experiences and communities benefit from more reliable news. This program is a chance to say thank you to the faculty who make it all possible."

The Faculty Champions awarded this year represent 41 states and two Canadian provinces. They come from 15 community colleges, 41 Minority-Serving Institutions, 4 Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 30 Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and seven public media outlets. There are 35 private institutions represented and 113 public ones.

"The extraordinary growth of university-led community reporting in recent years is a direct result of the tireless work of journalism educators, and this year's class is a reflection of the breadth of their experience," said CCN's Scott Finn. Finn directs the Faculty Champions program in coordination with Amanda Bright of the UGA Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Each Faculty Champion will receive a $1000 reward, peer support and coaching throughout the year. As part of CCN's expanded approach to the Champions program this year, participants will work in dedicated cohorts that are organized around beats, communities and geographic regions. The cohorts will be led by program alums with expertise in their focus area.

The program is in its third year at CCN. It began as an award that recognized journalism faculty for their ingenuity at a time when news-academic partnerships were emerging as one of the viable remedies for the spread of news deserts. Since then, it has grown exponentially in numbers and scope. Today the program is a year-long interactive fellowship and a peer-to-peer collaboration.

Learn more about why these faculty are so critical to engaging the next generation of journalists and civic leaders – and how universities are stepping up to forge a sustainable future for local news at https://www.uvm.edu/ccn.

2026 Faculty Champions

Andrew M. Abernathy - Assistant Professor, Oklahoma State University

Musa al-Gharbi - Assistant Professor of Journalism, Stony Brook University

Maria Alvarez - Lecturer, Borough of Manhattan Community College at City University of New York

Cliff Anthony - Journalism Instructor, John Carroll University

Mike Arnold - Executive Director of Integrated Public Media, Indiana University

Aaron Atkins - Assistant Professor of Digital Media and Journalism, Weber State University

Mary Auld - Instructor, The University of Montana School of Journalism

Rosemary Avance - Assistant Professor of Media and Strategic Communications, Oklahoma State University

Atish Baidya - Editor in Chief, WOUB Public Media

Gina Baleria - Associate Professor, Sonoma State University

Sonya Barnes - General Manager, University of West Georgia Campus Television Station and Campus Newspaper

Sezgi Basak Kavakli - Assistant Professor, Louisiana State University Shreveport

Taciane Batista - Assistant Teaching Professor, Sacred Heart University and the Easton Courier

Beth Baunoch - Associate Professor, Community College of Baltimore County

Allison Bennett Dyche - Teaching Professor of English — Journalism & New Media, University of Pittsburgh

Mariam Betlemidze - Associate Professor, California State University, San Bernardino

Kendal Blust - Assistant Professor of Practice, University of Arizona

Corinne Boudreaux - Assistant Professor of Instruction, University of Texas at El Paso

Aleaya Bradley - Student Media Lab Manager, Southern Methodist University

Marsha Branch - Student Media Adviser and Lecturer, University of Vermont

Nina Brook - Senior Instructor, School of Journalism and Mass Communications University of South Carolina

Andrea Bruce - Professor, Knight Chair in Visual Journalism, University of Georgia

Tim Bruno - General Manager, Radio Catskill

Phil Busse - Assistant Professor, Journalism, Pacific University

Maria Fernanda Camacho - Innovation News Center Assistant In--Noticias WUFT News Manager, University of Florida, WUFT News

Trisha Campbell - Professor of English, Arizona Western College

Brian Campion - Director of Public Policy Programs, Bennington College

Gino Canella - Associate Professor & Associate Chair, Emerson College

Jonathan Cavallero - Professor, Rhetoric, Film, and Screen Studies, Bates College

Steven Chappell - Director of Student Media, Northwest Missouri State University

Heather Claborn - News Director/General Manager, KACU/Abilene Christian University

Chandra Clark - Associate Professor, The University of Alabama

Allison Cleary - Senior Instructor, Saint Michael's College

Devin Colman - Director & Lecturer, University of Vermont Historic Preservation Graduate Program

Kathryn Cook - Assistant Professor of Management and Leadership, Rockford University

Erin Cox - Professional Practice Assistant Professor, Utah State University

Claudia Cruz - Managing Editor, Noticiero Móvil and Dtr., Internship Program, Reynolds School of Journalism at the University of Nevada, Reno

Lourdes M. Cueva Chacón - Assistant Professor, Journalism Area Head, San Diego State University

Andy Curran - Professor & Coordinator, Digital Media, University of Cincinnati-Clermont College

Ivana Cvetkovic - Associate Professor, Cal Poly Pomona

Farideh Dada - Publication Adviser and Journalism Department Chair, La Voz News, student publication at De Anza College

Laurena Davis - Assistant Professor of Mass Communication, Colorado Mesa University

Ana X. de la Serna - Associate Professor, California State University Dominguez Hills

Priyanka Deo - Director, Student Media & Instructor, University of illinois Springfield

Alan Deutschman - Professor, University of Nevada, Reno

Amy DeVault - Senior Educator, Journalism & Media Production, Wichita State University

Kelley Di Dio - Executive Director, School of the Arts, Rush C Hawkins Professor of Art History, School of the Arts at the University of Vermont

Bailey Dick - Assistant Professor, Bowling Green State University

David Dockery - Assistant Professor of Mass Communication, William Carey University

Laura Edling - Lecturer, University of Vermont

Adam Elrashidi - Assistant Professor, Journalism, California State University Dominguez Hills

Hoda Emam - Professional Faculty, University of North Texas Mayborn School of Journalism

Shane Epping - Assistant Professor, Bobby Model Photojournalism Professorship, University of Wyoming

Deepa Fadnis - Associate Professor of Digital Media and Journalism, University of Hartford

Muhammad Fahad Humayun - Assistant Professor, University of Evansville

Josh Foreman - Instructor and Advisor to the Reflector Newspaper, Mississippi State University

Gillian Galford - Research Professor, RSENR, Gund Institute for Environment, Climate Measurements Center of Excellence (CMeC) at the University of Vermont

Christopher Gallant - Professor of Digital Media and Communication, Hilbert College

Fernando Gallo - Faculty Adviser, CSU Sacramento

Jesse Garnier - Associate Professor of Journalism, San Francisco State University, Department of Journalism

Ted Geltner - Professor and Student Media Adviser, Valdosta State University

Michael Gouge - Faculty Adviser and Senior Lecturer, UNC Asheville

Anna M. Groff - Associate Professor of Communication, Goshen College

Emily Guajardo - Journalism Professor, Oklahoma City Community College

Antoine Haywood - Journalism Assistant Professor, University of Florida

Marina Hendricks - Associate Professor, South Dakota State University

Noel Holton Brathwaite - Associate Professor of English and Acting Chair of the Department of Professional Communications, State University of New York (SUNY) Farmingdale College

Ying Hu - Senior Lecturer, University of Vermont

Kyle Hufford - Professor of Communication, Goshen College

Joshua Jackson - Professor and Digital Media Lab Director, University of Missouri-Kansas City

Darren Johnson - Editor, Legislative Gazette

Melissa Jones - Instructor and Adviser, Clackamas Community College

Erin Jordan - Associate Professor of Practice, University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Twange Kasoma - Associate Professor, Appalachian State University

Carl Kenney - Assistant Professor, Hussman School of Journalism & Media at University of North Carolina

Yeon Erin Kim-Cho - Assistant Professor and Viewfinder Media Advisor, Grand View University

Kevin Kinder - Instructor, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Shaun Kirby - Communications & Outreach Coordinator, University of Rhode Island

Georgia Kral - Instructor and Director of Student Media, Saint Peter's University

Patrick LaBelle - Special Programs Coordinator/Advisor to 103.5FM WCCH, 103.5FM WCCH/Holyoke Community College

Adriana Lacy - Lecturer, Brandeis University

Kim Lauffer - Associate Professor, Keene State College

Matthew Leimkuehler - Assistant Professor, Middle Tennessee State University

Michael Levitin - Journalism Department Chair and Advisor to The Inquirer, Diablo Valley College

Lance Liguez - Assistant Professor of Practice, University of Texas at Arlington

Amanda Little - Writer-in-Residence and Professor in the English Department and Communication of Science and Technology (CSET) Program, Vanderbilt University

Ana Lourdes Cardenas - Associate Professor, San Francisco State University

Chris Mansfield - Mass Comm Program Coordinator, Western Iowa Tech Community College

Terry Marsh - Assistant Professor and Advisor, Norfolk State University

Lilliam Martinez-Bustos - Associate Professor, Florida International University, Lee Caplin School of Journalism & Media

Fred Martino - Assistant Director, Student Activities and Student Media Advisor, New Mexico State University

Mark Maynard - Professor, Truckee Meadows Community College

Julie McCann - Professor and Co-coordinator, Journalism Program, Algonquin College

Brian McDermott - Senior Lecturer, University of Massachusetts Amherst Journalism Department

Sarah McMahon - Journalism Chair, Pikes Peak State College

Meaghan Meachem - Professor and Program Coordinator, Vermont State University - Lyndon

Josh Meltzer - Associate Professor, Rochester Institute of Technology

Paul Miller - Assistant Professor of Media Studies & Knightly News Co-Adviser, Central Penn College

Debbie Miller - Instructor, NorthWest Arkansas Community College

Alanna Miller - Associate Professor, Fayetteville State University

Elaine Monaghan - Professor of Practice in Journalism, The Media School at Indiana

University-Bloomington

Jennifer Moore - Associate Professor, University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD)

Matthew Moore - Senior Producer, KUAF Public Radio

Erica Moura - Associate Professor of Practice, Simmons University

Huyen Nguyen - Teaching Assistant Professor, Kansas State University/AQ Miller School of Media and Communication

Sarah Nilsen - Professor of Film and Television Studies, University of Vermont, English Department

Natalie Pattillo - Assistant Teaching Professor and Faculty Advisor for The Torch and the Student Media Collaborative, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Camilo Perez - Assistant Professor of Media Studies, Regis University

Hugo Pérez - College Associate Professor and Assistant News Director for News22 and Noticias22, New Mexico State University

Ted Petersen - Associate Professor, Florida Institute of Technology

Tony Podlaski - Department Chair, Hudson Valley Community College

Jermaione Proshee - Director, Student Media, Southerm University and A&M College

Teresa Puente - Assistant Professor of Journalism, California State University, Long Beach

Jodi Radosh - Professor of Communication and Digital Media and Director of the Community News Lab, Alvernia University

Wendy Raney - Associate Professor, Washington State University

Phillip Reese - Associate Professor, Sacramento State University

Julia Rendleman - Assistant Professor of Photojournalism, Southern Illinois University

Julian Rodriguez - Assistant Professor of Practice, University of Texas at Arlington

Michelle Rossi - Assistant Professor of Journalism, Loyola University New Orleans

Geoffrey Roth - Professor of Practice in Journalism, University of Houston

Theodora Ruhs - Associate Professor, Central Connecticut State University

Erin Ryan - Head of Department of Communication, The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Alfredo Sanchez - Associate Professor, Metropolitan State University of Denver

Adriana Sanchez-Gutierrez - Spanish Lecturer, University of Vermont

Diane Sanders - Manager of Strategic Initiatives, Wayne State University/WDET

Jacqueline Scott - Professor of English, Community College of Baltimore County

Jake Sherlock - Instructor, Colorado State University

Jeremy Shermak - Journalism Instructor, Cuesta College

Alex Siwiecki - Assistant Professor of English, Santa Fe College

Chelsea Slack - Assistant Professor of Communication and Media Studies, Southeastern Louisiana University

Lynne Snifka - Associate Professor, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Anne Sosin - Lecturer in Anthropology and Geography, Dartmouth College

Jessica Sparks - Assistant Professor of Journalism, Auburn University

Charles St. Amand - Associate Professor of Practice, Suffolk University

Jeremy St.Louis - INC Associate Instructor/Sports Director, University of Florida

Elizabeth Stoycheff - Associate Professor, Wayne State University

Terra Tailleur - Assistant Professor, University of King's College

Brian Thompson - Director of Publications and Gargoyle Advisor, Flagler College

Amanda Tilghman - WHCP Station Manager, Mid-Shore Community Radio

Sky Tilley - Visiting Professor, Winston-Salem State University

Elizabeth Toohey - Associate Professor of English, Queensborough Community College, City University of New York (CUNY)

Christine Uthoff - Student Media Advisor and Journalism Lecturer, Eastern Michigan University and The Eastern Echo

Victoria Valenzuela - Reporting Coach/Mentor, Chaffey College Journalism Department

Amy Walters - Lecturer, Colgate University

Hillary Warren - Professor, Otterbein University

Peg Watts - Journalism Instructor and Faculty Advisor to The Gannon Knight, Gannon University

Kamille D. Whittaker - Assistant Professor of Journalism and Digital Media, Clark Atlanta

University

Christine Woodside - Lecturer, University of Connecticut

Doualy Xaykaothao - Professional in Residence, WRHU-FM Hofstra University Radio

Molly Yanity - Professor, University of Rhode

Island

Xu "James" Zhang - Assistant Professor of Communication, Austin Peay State University

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About CCN
The [Center for Community News](#) at UVM is a nonpartisan nonprofit working to grow and strengthen university-led reporting programs around the country to create a more sustainable future for local news outlets and the communities they serve.

About the University of Vermont
Since 1791, the [University of Vermont](#) has worked to move humankind forward. UVM's strengths align with the most pressing needs of our time: the health of our societies and the health of our environment. Our size—large enough to offer a breadth of ideas, resources, and opportunities, yet intimate enough to enable close faculty-student mentorship across all levels of study—allows us to pursue these interconnected issues through cross-disciplinary research and collaboration. Providing an unparalleled educational experience for our students, and ensuring their success, are at the core of what we do. As one of the nation's first land grant universities, UVM advances Vermont and the broader society through the discovery and application of new knowledge. UVM is derived from the Latin Universitas Viridis Montis (in English, University of the Green Mountains).