



CCN Election Assignment Templates

Assignment 5: Pitch an election feature story to your “editor”

The Center for Community News’ Election & Democracy Program has created a series of sample templates for faculty to give to students. Faculty are welcome to use any and all of these and amend them as they see fit for their classes.

For any questions, comments or suggestions, email CCN Program Coordinator Sarah Gamard sarah.gamard@uvm.edu.

When to assign this project: October to December

Why: Firstly, it’s a great opportunity for students to go in-depth on important elections in their community. Secondly, in some cases, they might be the only reporter in the whole state covering these races. What a great opportunity for the students and a gift to local readers!

How: After fact-finding for the voter guide, students can and should use this time to write more in-depth stories informed by their initial reporting on the candidates or races in their voter guide profiles. They can start with a “pitch,” which can be its own assignment, followed by a feature story that needs to meet certain criteria, e.g. at least three different sources interviewed and a minimum of 800 words, based on findings from previous reporting this semester on the election. These stories would start before the election and continue after the election. (Note: We plan to share any election-related news produced by cohort-participating programs on a dedicated CCN webpage.)

Alternative idea: Instead of your students pitching stories, you can communicate with participating newsrooms because they may have other ideas on how students can supplement their coverage.

Assignment: Pitch an election feature story to your “editor”

Requirements:

- After interviewing voters or candidates ahead of the election, you must make **at least two story pitches** to your professor, i.e. your news “editor,” for follow-up feature stories based on your initial findings.
- The pitch must be short and newsworthy. Once their pitch is green-lighted, write a feature story – minimum 800 words – based on that pitch containing the following:
 - Interviews with at least three new sources
 - A relevant data point from an official source related to their topic
 - At least one multimedia element, e.g. photos, video or data visualization
- Once the story is submitted and edited, it will then be submitted to a real, partnering news publication.
- Deadline: XXX