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For Immediate Release

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## **Center for Community News Announces 33 Faculty Champions**

**New program seeks to address the crisis facing local news by recognizing faculty leaders building innovative programs across the U.S.**

BURLINGTON, Vt. — The Center for Community News (CCN) at the University of Vermont today announced a new program to fund faculty champions at 33 universities and colleges who are starting and growing local news partnerships.

Local news is in a crisis with two community papers disappearing a week, according to research by the [Local News Initiative](#). University-led student reporting programs are stepping in, providing a new source of news to millions of Americans.

The 33 faculty champions come from 21 different states. Fifteen of them work at minority serving institutions where student populations are majority non-white, including historically Black colleges and universities and Hispanic-serving institutions. Total funding of \$54,000 is provided. Champions receive \$1,000 each and four institutions are receiving \$6,000 each; Claflin University, Lane College, Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University and North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University.

“At the core of these local news partnerships are innovative and creative faculty,” said Richard Watts, director of UVM’s center. “This program seeks to recognize them and support their work in connecting and creating more such partnerships.”

Proposed faculty-led projects include the only collegiate-level, student-led Native news and information program in the nation, a program to build and report on a statewide education funding data base, police accountability coverage in south Chicago, Spanish language reporting in California and meeting the local news needs of rural communities in Athens, Rock Hill, Orangeburg, Milledgeville, North Texas and many more.

See list of champions and programs [on this website](#).

## Why It Matters

The crisis in local news has profound implications for the function of our democracy. Since 2004, the United States has lost more than 2,100 newspapers, according to a [report from the UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media](#). Today, two thirds of U.S. counties have just one daily newspaper and more than 200 have no local newspaper at all.

Local news is more than just a trusted source of critical information; it's an essential ingredient in a healthy democracy. Research suggests that communities with dedicated news organizations report [higher levels of civic ties and community engagement](#); [lower levels of political polarization](#); [more transparent and competitive elections](#); and [better economic outcomes for residents](#).

"This is a time to engage our students and colleges in doing local reporting," said Watts, also a senior lecturer in UVM's College of Arts and Sciences and the founder of the Community News Service at UVM. "Universities have a responsibility to lead and students want to do real things."

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## About CCN

The Center for Community News at UVM is helping to connect student journalists at every stage of life with local news organizations to help build a world in which every community has access to reliable information by and for the people who live there. The Center is supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and UVM College of Arts & Sciences (CAS) donors.

## 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).