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New Mapping Illustrates Potential for Colleges to Help Solve Local News Crisis

BURLINGTON, Vt. — The [Center for Community News at UVM](#) released on Tuesday a series of [original maps](#) that reveal the overlap between U.S. news deserts and college/university resources. Together, these maps illustrate the potential for university-led reporting partnerships with local outlets to help stem the loss of local newsrooms – and the places where those partnerships are already working. Mapping data is all drawn from Northwestern Medill’s State of Local News 2023 report and the National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.

[Check out the full list of maps and links to source data](#) and [read more analysis and context](#).

“This visual data tells a clear story about the parts of the country that are most vulnerable to losing their last source of trusted local information – and their proximity to a lifeline,” said CCN Director Richard Watts. “News-academic partnerships have proven to work for students, news outlets, and communities, so we hope universities see these maps as a call to action.”

CCN’s new mapping shows:

- 1316 colleges/universities are located in or adjacent to news desert counties
- There are 136 colleges/universities currently running or planning to start a news/academic partnership and 149 more have reached out to CCN for a total of 285.
- 406 colleges/universities are located within 15 miles of their statehouse
- 20 university-led statehouse reporting programs and 20 more starting

In their [2023 State of Local News Report](#), the Northwestern Medill Local News Initiative named 1,766 counties as news deserts (ie. one or zero local newspapers) and found many more at risk, with the impacts felt predominantly in high poverty areas in the south and Midwest. [Since 2005, the country has lost almost 3,000 newspapers and 43,000 journalists.](#)

One bright spot cited in the Medill report is the potential role that universities can play. CCN research found that [2,000 student reporters in university-led programs published more than 10,000 stories](#) in local news outlets last year.

Research from the Center for Community News consistently demonstrates that university-led [news-academic partnerships are wins for students, universities, and communities](#): students get hands-on learning experiences; colleges meet their public service mission; and communities benefit from the critical role that local news plays in a healthy democracy.

CCN is dedicated to growing and strengthening these partnerships around the country in close coordination with its Vermont-based laboratory for local news, the [Community News Service](#). Both are part of the UVM College of Arts and Sciences, under the direction and support of Dean William Falls.

About CCN

The [Center for Community News](#) at the [University of Vermont](#) is a nonpartisan nonprofit that is 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. It is housed in the UVM College of Arts and Sciences, which is led by Dean William Falls.

About the UVM College of Arts and Sciences

The [College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Vermont](#) is dedicated to the rigorous pursuit, understanding, and dissemination of knowledge through the process of discovery, the creation of art, and the practice of teaching.