

**University of Arizona School of Journalism Strategic Plan:
“A Diamond in the Desert: Crystallizing Our Vision for the UA School of Journalism”
2026-2030**

Unanimously adopted: November 12, 2025

Mission statement

The University of Arizona School of Journalism is committed to digital-first storytelling using innovative technologies, underscored by bedrock principles. The School trains our students to create content that accurately reflects the culture and commerce of the Sonoran Desert and the world, as well as develop research that better informs the leaders and the public.

Theme:

The theme for our 2026-2030 strategic plan is “**A Diamond in the Desert.**” We chose this theme because the School will celebrate its 75th “diamond anniversary” in 2026. We also believe that this theme connects to the School’s status as an “undiscovered gem” or “jewel” of a journalism school. SoJ staff worked with the University’s marketing and communications unit to design a logo to help brand the plan, both externally and internally.

Aligning with the diamond shape, we identified four verticals for the School’s future growth, alongside an overarching need to focus on the student experience:

- **Service** to the state (particularly coverage of Borderlands);
- **Science** journalism;
- **Sports** journalism;
- **Shape** of the industry (particularly technological change/disruption).

In crafting the plan, our team placed intentional focus on making sure that the plan is responsive to enrollment trends within journalism and mass communication education, as well as the dynamic conditions within the news industry itself, when it comes to the role of technology in news production and consumption.



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OBJECTIVE #1: The School will engage in service to the state of Arizona, Borderlands and the world beyond.

Strategy 1: Invest in Borderlands outreach

- Tactic #1: Grow our School’s news service, Arizona Sonoran News, which covers Arizona-Sonora border and make it a required capstone course for all Journalism majors
- Tactic #2: Revive Center for Border and Global Journalism as research catalyst to study Borderlands
- Tactic #3: Partner with UA’s Office on Native American Advancement & Tribal Engagement to increase engagement with the state’s Indigenous media and peoples
- Tactic #4: Restart Borderlands reporting undergraduate course offering, with a renewed focus on covering Indigenous communities

Strategy 2: Revitalize SoJ curriculum to prepare students for global engagement

- Tactic #1: Reinvent the School’s Studies of Global Media program to align with evolving professional and research landscape
- Tactic #2: Reclassify existing graduate Bilingual Journalism courses as co-convened offerings so that undergraduates can enroll and explore potential for undergraduate certificate in bilingual journalism

OBJECTIVE #2: The School will elevate its capacity for science journalism

Strategy 1: Strengthen on-campus partnerships with Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)

- Tactic #1: Enhance collaborations with campus STEM faculty, including research grant proposals and guest speakers
- Tactic #2: Expand mentored, undergraduate research opportunities

Strategy 2: Forge new connections to local science journalism community

- Tactic #1: Host community workshop on science journalism writing
- Tactic #2: Connect with local science communication employers to grow enrollment in master’s programs

OBJECTIVE #3: The School will expand its sports media programming

Strategy #1: Develop new academic programming in sports media

- Tactic #1: Create general education courses in sports media as recruitment pipeline for Journalism major
- Tactic #2: Explore other sports media academic content delivery options (certificate, minor, major and interdisciplinary collaborations)
- Tactic #3: Establish and fund new domestic travel opportunities for students to cover athletic events

Strategy #2: Cultivate new connections for sports media program growth

- Tactic #1: Participate in Big 12 Conference sports collaborative activities, such as student exchanges, research collaborations and student sports media awards
- Tactic #2: Expand sports-related internships and job placement opportunities

OBJECTIVE #4: The School will engage with the future shape of the evolving media industry

Strategy #1: Reinvigorate the School's curriculum

- Tactic #1: Establish technology learning objectives for each SoJ course
- Tactic #2: Recruit rotating media practitioner-in-residence role to bring visiting scholar-practitioner in journalism technology/research to campus each semester
- Tactic #3: Update SoJ's equipment for student check-out use, as well as computer lab facilities in the Marshall Building
- Tactic #4: Launch externship fund for faculty summer upskilling experiences in new technologies and/or leadership in journalism education administration

Strategy #2: Offer thought leadership around media literacy and First Amendment issues

- Tactic #1: Engage in Arizona Board of Regents/University efforts around new civics engagement requirements for undergraduate degrees
- Tactic #2: Encourage faculty to share research and creative activity around First Amendment issues with relevant scholarly and practice communities
- Tactic #3: Explore expanding affiliate faculty ranks, enabling for more cross-campus collaborations in teaching and research

Strategy #3: Prepare students for media careers of tomorrow

- Tactic #1: Explore creation of required internship course for all journalism majors
- Tactic #2: Require that all journalism graduates assemble a multimedia portfolio showcasing works created during SoJ career
- Tactic #3: Expand career programming, including internship fairs, resume/cover workshops and mock interviewing sessions

OBJECTIVE #5: The School will enhance support services for student success

Strategy #1: Cultivate high school recruitment pipeline

- Tactic #1: Heighten collaboration with the College's recruitment office
- Tactic #2: Develop and implement communications plan for prospective students, including outreach to key feeder schools and engagement by alumni/Journalism Advisory Committee members
- Tactic #3: Develop dual degree pathways for students in other disciplines to obtain joint journalism degree

Strategy #2: Incentivize experiential learning

- Tactic #1: Create experiential learning fund with UA Foundation for philanthropic investment in student internships, domestic reporting, undergraduate research and study abroad
- Tactic #2: Expand pilot “TV Buddy” mentoring program to pair more graduating students with an industry mentor to give portfolio critiques and job placement counseling
- Tactic #3: Grow SoJ’s participation in national award competitions
- Tactic #4: Establish Student Media Leadership team to strengthen connections between School and UA Student Media