

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.



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

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
 - Metrics: Number of Arizona Sonoran News stories placed in local media
 - Owner: Administrative Associate and Arizona Sonoran News instructors
- Tactic #2: Revive Center for Border and Global Journalism as research catalyst to study Borderlands
 - Metrics: Number of internal grant applications; Number of external grant applications; Amount of grant funding/gifts; Number of guest speakers/visitors
 - Owner: Center for Border and Global Journalism director and School director
- Tactic #3: Partner with UA's Office on Native American Advancement & Tribal Engagement to increase engagement with the state's Indigenous media and peoples
 - Metrics: Number of tribal guest speakers/visitors; Number of faculty/students participating in NAATE activities connected to the School
 - Owner: SoJ Tribal Engagement Liaison
- Tactic #4: Restart Borderlands reporting undergraduate course offering, with a renewed focus on covering Indigenous communities
 - Metric: Student enrollments in border journalism
 - Owner: Borderlands course instructors

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
 - Metric: Student enrollments in GLO majors; Student enrollments in GLO courses
 - Owner: GLO faculty and School director
- Tactic #2: Explore potential for undergraduate certificate in bilingual journalism
 - Metric: Student enrollments in BJP major; Student enrollments in BJP courses
 - Owner: BJP program coordinator and School director

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
 - Metrics: Number of campus partners; Number of community members engaged; Number of internal grant applications; Number of external grant applications; Amount of grant funding/gifts
 - Owner: Science journalism faculty
- Tactic #2: Expand mentored, undergraduate research opportunities
 - Metrics: Number of students in VIP; Number of internal grant applications; Number of external grant applications; Amount of grant funding/gifts; Number of undergraduate student projects completed; Number of students presenting research at conferences
 - Owner: VIP program coordinator

Strategy 2: Forge new connections to local science journalism community

- Tactic #1: Host community workshop on science journalism writing
 - Metrics: Number of attendees; number of faculty participating; exit survey results from attendees; Number of internal grant applications; Number of external grant applications; Amount of grant funding/gifts
 - Owner: Science journalism faculty
- Tactic #2: Connect with local science communication employers to grow enrollment in master's programs
 - Metrics: Student enrollments in JOUR graduate majors; Student enrollments in graduate-level science journalism courses
 - Owner: Science journalism faculty and School director

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
 - Metric: Student enrollments in sports journalism courses; Number of new majors with sports journalism interest area
 - Owner: Sports media faculty
- Tactic #2: Explore other sports media academic content delivery options (certificate, minor, major and interdisciplinary collaborations)
 - Metric: Number of Arizona Sonoran News stories on sports topics; number of cross-campus collaborations
 - Owner: Sports media faculty and School director

- Tactic #3: Establish and fund new domestic travel opportunities for students to cover athletic events
 - Metric: Amount of grant funding/gifts; Number of student participants
 - Owner: School director

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
 - Metric: Amount of grant funding/gifts; Number of student participants; Number of guest speakers; Number of collaborative activities
 - Owner: School director
- Tactic #2: Expand sports-related internships and job placement opportunities
 - Metric: Number of sports-related internships; Number of sports-related employers participating in internship fairs; Number of students securing post-graduate employment in sports media
 - Owner: Internship coordinator

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
 - Metric: Number of TLOs implemented in SoJ courses; Annual TLO assessment report; Number of outdated courses eliminated; Number of course catalog descriptions updated
 - Owner: SoJ faculty
- Tactic #2: Recruit rotating media practitioner-in-residence role to bring visiting scholar-practitioner in journalism technology/research to campus each semester
 - Metric: Number of practitioners-in-residence secured; Amount of grant funding/gifts; Number of student participants
 - Owner: School director
- Tactic #3: Update SoJ's equipment for student check-out use, as well as computer lab facilities in the Marshall Building
 - Metric: Amount of grant funding/gifts; Amount of new equipment purchased
 - Owner: School director and broadcast faculty
- Tactic #4: Launch externship fund for faculty summer upskilling experiences in new technologies and/or leadership in journalism education administration
 - Metric: Number of externships secured; Amount of grant funding/gifts

- Owner: School director

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
 - Metric: Student enrollment in courses; Assessment data from civics attribute
 - Owner: Course instructor and Innovation Action Committee
- Tactic #2: Encourage faculty to share research and creative activity around First Amendment issues with relevant scholarly and practice communities
 - Metric: Number of faculty presentations; Number of faculty publications; Number of off-campus events; Number of internal grants; Number of external grants
 - Owner: SoJ faculty
- Tactic #3: Explore expanding affiliate faculty ranks, enabling for more cross-campus collaborations in teaching and research
 - Metric: Number of affiliate faculty
 - Owner: School director

Strategy #3: Prepare students for media careers of tomorrow

- Tactic #1: Explore creation of required internship course for all journalism majors
 - Metric: Number of students completing internships; post-graduation employment data; student/supervisor internship evaluations
 - Owner: Internship coordinator and Innovation Action Committee
- Tactic #2: Require that all journalism graduates assemble a multimedia portfolio showcasing works created during SoJ career
 - Metric: Number of students graduating with a portfolio; external evaluations of student work
 - Owner: SoJ faculty
- Tactic #3: Expand career programming, including internship fairs, resume/cover workshops and mock interviewing sessions
 - Metric: Number of student participants; post-graduation employment data; Number of career-related events
 - Owner: Internship coordinator

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
 - Metric: Number of student inquiries; number of student admits, number of student accepts; Number of on-campus events; Number of student participants in on-campus events
 - Owner: Events outreach coordinator and administrative associate

- Tactic #2: Develop and implement communications plan for prospective students, including outreach to key feeder schools and engagement by alumni/Journalism Advisory Committee members
 - Metric: Number of communications developed; Open rate for email communications; Number of website visitors
 - Owner: Events outreach coordinator and administrative associate
- Tactic #3: Develop dual degree pathways for students in other disciplines to obtain joint journalism degree
 - Metric: Number of course agreements developed; Number of pathways developed
 - Owner: School director

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
 - Metric: Amount of grant funding/gifts; Number of student participants engaged in programming
 - Owner: School director
- Tactic #2: Expand pilot mentoring program to pair more graduating students with an industry mentor to give portfolio critiques and job placement counseling
 - Metric: Number of students paired with mentors; participant evaluations
 - Owner: Broadcast faculty
- Tactic #3: Grow SoJ's participation in national award competitions
 - Metric: Number of student competitions entered; number of student awards received; Number of faculty competitions entered; number of faculty awards received
 - Owner: Hearst faculty coordinator
- Tactic #4: Strengthen connections between School and UA Student Media
 - Metric: Number of collaborative projects created; Number of student participants
 - Owner: School director