

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 ethics. We train our students to create content that accurately reflects the community, culture and commerce of Southern Arizona, as well as scholarship that helps our region better understand itself.

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
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; postgraduation 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