



2026 Collegiate Newspaper & Website Competition

Sponsored by the Ohio News Media Association and the Ohio News Media Foundation

General Requirements

Contest period covers January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025. Contest opens to entries on January 1, 2026 and closes to entries on February 9, 2026.

If you have submission questions, contact Jason Sanford at 614-486-6677, ext. 1014, or jsanford@ohionews.org

- Step 1:** Register at www.newspapercontest.com/ohio to submit entries. The Association Code is: **ONMA2026** (all caps). The entries are divided into two divisions based on undergraduate student enrollment. **Division A** consists of student enrollment of 10,000 or more, while **Division B** is less than 10,000 enrollment.
- Step 2:** Entries that have multiple pages must be submitted as a multi-page PDF (if your publication is web-based only, simply select print and save the entry as a PDF). The entry title must be clearly identified in the PDF or in the "Explanation or Outline" box on the entry form.
- Step 3:** In Category 1-News Coverage, one issue must be from Fall 2025.

Collegiate papers which are ONMA members have no entry fees for the collegiate competition. Papers which are not ONMA members will be required to pay \$20 per entry.

Frank E. Deaner General Excellence Award in Collegiate Journalism

~~~~Requirements and Points Chart~~~~

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Any newspaper submitting entries in **Category 1: News Coverage** and at least two other categories will be entered **automatically** in the Frank E. Deaner General Excellence award competition. Papers **must** be entered in Category 1: News Coverage and at least two (2) other categories of your choice to be eligible General Excellence Award. After all judging is completed, each qualifying newspaper is awarded appropriate points from the list below. The award is given to the top paper in each division.

CATEGORY	1st	2nd	3rd
1. News Coverage **	20	15	10
2. In-Depth Reporting	10	7	5
3. Arts & Entertainment	10	7	5
4. Editorial Writing	10	7	5
5. Sports Coverage	10	7	5
6. Design	10	7	5
7. Photojournalism	10	7	5
8. Headline Writing	10	7	5
9. Best Multi-Media Package	10	7	5
10. Best Website	10	7	5

****You must be entered in Category 1: New Coverage and at least two other categories to be eligible for the Frank E. Deaner General Excellence Award.**



Category Descriptions and Requirements

IMPORTANT! Multiple page entries must be submitted as multi-page PDFs.

URLs linking to submissions are NOT allowed except in Category 9 – BEST MULTI-MEDIA PACKAGE.

Category 1 - NEWS COVERAGE – One entry per newspaper

You must be entered in this category and 2 others to be eligible for the Frank E. Deaner General Excellence Award.

- Submit three (3) issues: one (1) issue from **Fall 2025** and two (2) additional issues within the contest period.
- Judged on the overall quantity and quality of campus and community coverage, including hard news and features (excluding advertising).
- Digital only publications should save their submissions as PDFs that reflect coverage for these periods.
- No special editions.

Category 2 – IN-DEPTH REPORTING – Multiple entries per newspaper

- Entry consists of one entire article or series of articles within the contest period.
- Entry title must be clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Cutline" box on the entry form.
- Judged on the depth of reporting on a single issue or series of related issues. These may include investigative reporting, enterprise reporting or an analysis of a subject or issue.

Category 3 - ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT – Multiple entries per newspaper

- Submit three (3) different feature stories, or one entire series, selected within the contest period.
- Entry titles must be clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Cutline" box on the entry form.
- Judged on the overall impact of the feature story or series of stories to include content, writing quality, photography and layout.

Category 4 - OPINION WRITING – Multiple entries per newspaper

- *An entry consists of 3 different columns per columnist* within the contest period. Entry title must be clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Cutline" box on the entry form.
- Judged on the overall quality of writing, clarity and local impact.
- Only one entry **per columnist**.

Category 5 - SPORTS COVERAGE – One entry per newspaper

- Submit three (3) sports sections within the contest period.
- Judged on all aspects of local sports, writing and photo quality and overall appearance of the sports section.

Category 6 – DESIGN – One entry per news organization

- Submit two (2) issues: one (1) issue from **Fall 2025** and another issue within the contest period.
- Digital only publications should submit screen grabs from these periods.
- Judged on the overall look of the newspaper or PDF facsimile edition with emphasis on placement and organization of headlines, photos, stories, art and ads.
- Judges will also consider frequency, quality and appropriate uses of color, original art and original graphics.
- No special editions.

Category 7 – PHOTOJOURNALISM – Multiple entries per newspaper

- 3 photographs = 1 entry. Submit three (3) different photographs included on the full newspaper page in high resolution versions of either the PDF or JPEG formats with photos clearly identified in the "Explanation or Cutline" box on the entry form.
- Entries will be judged based on the submitted PDF or JPEG files plus how appeared in print or online.



Category Descriptions and Requirements

IMPORTANT! Multiple page entries must be submitted as multi-page PDFs.

URLs linking to submissions are NOT allowed except in Category 9 – BEST MULTI-MEDIA PACKAGE.

Category 8 - HEADLINE WRITING – Multiple entries per newspaper

- Submit the headline with full article and date within the contest period. The headline must be clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Coutline" box on the entry form.
- Judged on the creativity and effectiveness of the headline.

Category 9 – BEST MULTI-MEDIA PACKAGE – Multiple entries per newspaper - only 1 per person or team

- A multi-media package is a story with at least two of the following elements: podcast, written story, audio, video, interactive graphics or still images.
- Entry consists of URLs and screen grabs from the contest period.
- Please include and describe any use of social media used in this package in the "Explanation or Coutline" box on the entry form.
- Judged on impact of a digital package on a single topic.

Category 10 – BEST WEBSITE

- Websites will be judged on content, ease of navigation, layout, design and advertising
- Websites will be randomly “visited” by the judge during a two-week period. Please be sure to provide the URL for your website in order to be considered in this category.

Recognition and Awards

The Ohio Collegiate Competition awards and the Frank E. Deaner General Excellence Award ** will be presented at the Ohio Newspaper Fellowship Day on March 26, 2026, in Columbus. The Frank E. Deaner General Excellence Award winners from each division will receive a plaque. Certificates will be presented for all winners in each category.

ENTRY DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 9, 2026

If you have questions, contact Jason Sanford at 614-486-6677 ext. 1014 or email jsanford@ohionews.org.

** Frank E. Deaner was the executive director of the Ohio Newspaper Association for 20 years, retiring in 2011. Frank was instrumental in establishing the collegiate competition. He is a graduate of Ohio University where the Frank E. Deaner Scholarship provides two scholarships to students each year.

***Winners will be recognized at the
ONMA Ohio Newspaper Fellowship Day
on March 26, 2026 in Columbus.***