

2026 College Better Newspaper Contest

General Information

Entry Deadline:

Entries must be uploaded by 11:59 p.m.,

Friday, October 2, 2026

2026 dues must be paid in full to enter the contest.



Contest Period:

August 1, 2025, through July 31, 2026

Contest Site:

Contest File Submission Requirements:

All digital files must be uploaded through the Michigan Press Association BNC contest website.

You can access the contest site here:

<https://www.newspapercontest.com/Contests/MichiganPressAssociation.aspx>

You may also access the contest through the Michigan Press Association website by going to Events & Training > Contests and Awards > Enter Contest.

All URLs, links, passwords, and other access information must be functional. If judges cannot access the submitted materials, the entry may be disqualified.

Photos must be submitted in high-resolution JPG format.

Help: Call Diana's cell at **517-610-4813** or Don at **616-275-0444** or email **bnc@michiganpress.org** for questions about the contest or rules.

Presentation of Awards:

Judges shall award first, second and third place in all contest categories, editorial and advertising—with the option of awarding honorable mention if they deem necessary. Judges reserve the right to award fewer or no awards if a category does not have adequate entries with sufficient merit.

An out-of-state press association will judge all three contests. Contest results will be announced in 2027 at the Annual Convention. Many awards will be presented at the awards ceremony. Certificates will be sent to the winning newspapers shortly after.

Contest Rules

Who Can Enter:

Any college publication or student in Michigan that is a member of the Michigan Press Association Collegiate Division (MCPA) is eligible to enter the College Publication Contest.

Entry Fee:

The entry fee is \$5 per entry. These fees are non-refundable. **Full payment must accompany your entries or be received at MPA by the contest deadline, or your entries will be disqualified.** MPA will not invoice newspapers for their contest fees.

Once you have completed all of your entries and uploaded all required files, click "Entry Billing" to pay for your contest entries.

⚠ Do not pay until you are completely finished entering the contest. If you pay before all of your entries are completed, you will be charged for all entries and the base fee again. There is no way to pay for entries separately.

At the bottom of the Entry Billing page, you will see your total amount due and the available payment options:

💳 Credit Card/PayPal: Payment is confirmed after the transaction is completed.

📄 Check: Your payment will be marked as paid once the check has been received.

Be sure to log in and check your account before the contest deadline to confirm that your entries and payment have been properly submitted.

MAILED PAYMENTS SHOULD BE POSTMARKED ON OR BEFORE October 2, 2026, and sent to:

**Michigan Press Association
James Tarrant
1642 Yosemite Dr.
Lansing, MI 48917**

Deadlines

Work must have been published between August 1, 2025, and July 31, 2026.

All entries must be uploaded by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, October 2, 2026.

The deadline will not be extended

Divisions:

Division 1..... Newspapers publishing print or online more than weekly.

Division 2..... Newspapers publishing print or online weekly.

Division 3 Two-year college publications or newspapers publishing print or online less than weekly.

Division 4..... Student Membership

Student Membership:

If a student member is also freelancing or works for a college newspaper all work done for that member should be entered under the college newspaper. If they are working for another member as an intern, they need approval from that publication to enter the work.

How to submit entries online: These rules are on the contest website.

BASIC INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1—The Association Code needed to register is **MPA26** (CASE SENSITIVE). Register on the contest website using your email address. You will receive a confirmation email, which you will need to complete registration. Use the link above to register.

Step 2—Login [here](#) (or use the link above). You will see a page showing any entries you have already submitted. Complete rules for College, General (Newspaper), News Media and News Media Individual contests are available above (click links). Some browsers, such as Safari, will open the rules in a new window; others will require you to download the PDF file to your computer.

Step 3—Click on the “Add New Entry” link.

Step 4—On this page, select your newspaper name. A lot of information will autofill. If that information is incorrect, please email bbc@michiganpress.org or call **517-610-4813** or Don at **616-275-0444**. Your Division/Circulation Class will be selected for you based on MPA Assignment. Fill in the preparer’s name.

Step 5—Select the contest class. These are drop-down menus for your convenience. This field will clear each time you save an entry, so you must select a class for each new entry. When you select the class, special instructions will appear below it.

Step 6—If necessary, provide an explanation of your entry. The explanation/cutline box is limited to 3,000 characters. It is a good idea to write your explanation in another program, such as Word, and copy/paste into the explanation box. If a URL is required, fill in the URL box; there is no need to type “http://.”

Step 7—Include the name of the entry. If uploading full-page PDF files, it will be helpful if the entry name matches the headline on the page so the judges can find it easily. If the judges cannot tell what is to be judged, the entry will be discarded without refund. **Remember what you put in here is what appears on the certificate.**

Step 8—Include the name of the person or people who should be credited for any award. This is generally the writer, reporter, photographer, graphic artist, cartoonist, etc. It is not necessarily the name of the person submitting the entry nor the person picking up the award at the awards ceremony. **Remember what you put here is what appears on the certificate. Make sure you have something in the credit field, if nothing is there, we will either leave blank or put staff.**

Step 9—Add your file or files. You can drag and drop files or use the “Add files” button to navigate your files. Generally, files should be in PDF format except photos, which should be in high-resolution JPG format. Other files and URLs may be acceptable as noted in the special instructions. Upload as many files as are necessary to complete your entry but refer to the special instructions for any limitations.

Step 10—When you have completed your submission, click the “Save” button. If you click the “Back to list” button, you will lose the entry you just completed. After clicking “Save,” you will be directed back to the list of your entries.

Step 11—To submit another entry, click “Add New Entry.” As long as you have not logged out of the system, your newspaper name will still be in place, and you can simply start at **Step 6** again. You may log out and log back in later to continue adding entries. You will need to select your newspaper name each time you log in.

Step 12—If you are done submitting entries, please review the list. You may not change an entry, but you may delete an entry and resubmit it.

NOTE: Please try to keep file sizes under 5mb to aid judges in accessing entry content. For larger files such as Special Sections, options include Dropbox, Google Drive, or any service that lets you “share” files via URL. Please make sure the file is public, or a password is provided and that it can be printed. If a file cannot be easily accessed, it could be skipped over for judging.

IF APPLICABLE: To add digital-only content or audio/video entries, copy and paste the content’s web address into the provided website URL field. To host your content online, either upload it to a free streaming content website (e.g., YouTube) or talk to your IT person about adding it to your website. Make sure the content will be accessible online throughout the contest and awards process. Here are some examples of free streaming content websites where you can upload audio and video content: Audio: www.kiwi6.com, www.tindeck.com; Video: www.youtube.com.

IMPORTANT: Ensure that items are not behind a paywall or a password-protected area. If they are, you must provide username/password info in the Comments section of your entry. Judges may disqualify your entry if work samples are inaccessible.

How to Enter

1. **Select the best entry for each competition.** Choose the best issue, story, or photo for each category. Keep the judging criteria and any special rules for the category in mind when selecting your entry.
2. **Provide background information when helpful.** Entrants may include brief information about the community or communities they serve, the newspaper's publishing conditions, or the entry itself. Use the **Comments** area when submitting your entry to provide this information to the judges. Any communication intended for the judges must be included with each individual entry rather than in one letter covering multiple entries.
3. **Categories 29–36 marked with ** are open to all divisions.** These categories do not count towards the College Publication of the Year Award. See the **Special Contests** section for more information.
4. **Enter the correct newspaper.** Make sure each entry is attributed to the correct newspaper.
5. **Review all entry information carefully.** Make sure the headline, entry name, and credit information are exactly as you want them to appear on certificates and in press releases. The information submitted with the entry will be used for these purposes.
6. **Provide login information when required.** Make sure the login information is included with any entry that requires it and that the judges can use the login. Do not submit a paywall that requires judges to create their own account. If the required login information is not clearly provided, the entry will be disqualified.
7. **Make sure all URLs, links, and passwords work.** If judges cannot access the submitted materials, the entry will be disqualified.
8. **Submit photos correctly.** Photos entered in photo categories must be submitted as high-resolution JPG files. Do not submit a PDF or URL for photo category entries.
9. **Include all required attachments.** Make sure all files and attachments needed to complete the entry are included before submitting.
10. **New for 2026:** Everyone who enters the contest will be signed up to serve as a judge in 2026.

2026 College Contest Classes**18. News Story**

A story providing coverage of a breaking news event or beat that displays accuracy, depth, clarity, and impact.

19. Investigative Reporting

Explanatory journalism or in-depth reporting on an issue, produced without tight deadline demands. May be one story, or a series of stories on the same topic.

20. Feature Story

A story or series other than straight news that demonstrates unusual literary excellence, originality and insight from a human interest or other feature perspective.

21. Sports News/Features

A sports story showing enterprise, depth, creativity, and impact.

22. Column, Review or Blog, News

An original account of a news, entertainment issue that demonstrates reporting, logic, and clarity, as well as well-defined, articulate positions or arguments.

23. Column, Review or Blog, Sports

An original account of a sports issue that demonstrates reporting, logic, and clarity, as well as well-defined, articulate positions or arguments.

24. Editorial

An opinion that clearly, logically, and definitively explains the newspaper's position on an issue of significance to its readership.

25. Best Writer

Submit three examples best representing a variety of writing styles and subjects. Must be a full-time staff member. **One entry per writer.**

26. Feature Photo

A PDF of the feature photo that shows accuracy, enterprise, depth, clarity, and impact. If not clearly identified, the entry will be disqualified.

27. Front Page Design

An entry is one single page design PDF of the front page ONLY demonstrating clarity and impact.

28. Non-Front-Page Design

An entry is one single page design PDF demonstrating clarity and impact. This can be a news page, sports page, or feature page as long it is not the front page.

****29. Best News-Only Photo**

A PDF of a news photo that shows accuracy, enterprise, depth, clarity, and impact. If not clearly identified, the entry will be disqualified.

****30. Best Sports Photo**

A PDF of a sports photo that shows accuracy, enterprise, depth, clarity, and impact. If not clearly identified, the entry will be disqualified.

****31. Best Photographer**

Submit three examples best representing a variety of styles and subjects. Must be a full-time staff member.

One entry per photographer.

****32. Original Cartoon—Editorial or Entertainment**

A cartoon appearing in print or online. Please provide three examples per entry PDFs or via URL links. If not clearly identified, the entry will be disqualified.

****33. Multimedia Reporting**

A single news, sports or feature story that incorporates writing and other multimedia elements published on a newspaper's website. It should display video capture, editing and voice-over skills and/or audio/voiceover techniques. Please provide a URL link to the story and a one-paragraph statement explaining how all the elements were used in print and online. All URLs, links, and passwords, etc., must be functional. Inability to access the data, the entry will be disqualified.

****34. Single Ad**

An entry is one of three types of advertising: A black and white ad (any size), a spot/full color display ad or an in-house promotional ad. Demonstrates accuracy, clarity, and impact.

****35. Special Advertising Section**

A section with or without editorial-supported content. Contest excludes back-to-school, orientation and/or homecoming sections. **Must be an advertising section in the paper.** Submit one product per newspaper.

****36. Online Newspaper**

An entry demonstrates overall excellence in writing, designing, and advertising for the Web. Submit three editions, saved as an archive, by supplying URL links and dates. If the archive requires a password, submit it with the entry. If the login and password doesn't work, it will be disqualified. **Submit URL (not the link for your website but the newspaper itself) only for this category.** All URLs, links, and passwords, etc., must be functional. Inability to access the data, the entry will be disqualified.

Special Awards, Contests & Instructions

College Publication of the Year Award

The College Publication of the Year Award honors the student publication with the most points awarded for placing in contest categories within their division. Only contest categories 18-28 count toward the award. The student division will not be eligible for Publication of the year.

Points are awarded as follows:

First Place..... 100 points

Second Place..... 70 points

Third Place..... 40 points

Frequently Asked Questions

These are located on MichiganPress.org site under Events & Training > Contests and Awards Contests FAQs
<https://michiganpress.org/contests-and-awards/>