

2024 ICMA Better Student Media Contests

Make plans now to enter the 2024 Iowa College Media Association Better Student Media Contests! The contests are for member student organizations to promote journalism and media education and recognize excellence among Iowa's student journalists and media practitioners through competition. General rules and contest categories are below.

General Contest Rules:

1. Materials disseminated between Oct. 16, 2023 and Oct. 11, 2024, are eligible for consideration for the 2024 contests. In most categories, awards will be given to first-, second-, third-place winners as well as honorable mention. Certificates of award will be presented for all place winners, and notification of winners will be made to state and local media.
2. All entries must be submitted online at betternewspapercontest.com by Friday, Oct. 25, 2024, before 4 p.m. If you need more information on entry submission, call the Iowa Newspaper Association/Iowa Newspaper Foundation (INA/INF) at 515-244-2145. For questions about contest rules in specific categories, contact:
 - Print/Online: Mark Siebert (mark.siebert@simpson.edu)
 - Audio: Pam Ohrt (pamela.ohrt@wartburg.edu)
 - Video: Jerry Johnson (johnson@bv.edu)
3. There shall be only one class of entries for the 2024 Better Student Media Contests. All students will compete against one another regardless of school size, audience size or type of media organization.
4. Any media entity wishing to enter the ICMA contest must be from an ICMA member school with a current, paid membership. Annual dues for ICMA members are \$175. Membership includes your contest entry fee. In other words, before you can enter the ICMA contest your school must hold a current membership. You can submit your membership payment on the ICMA website at <https://www.iowacollegemediaassociation.com>
If your school does not hold a current membership, your entry will not be accepted or judged.
5. Unless otherwise noted, all entries must be original material produced by students at an ICMA member institution, and must have been disseminated on an official student media channel (including but not limited to TV station, radio station, website, print publication, social media channel).
6. Unless otherwise noted, each media organization is limited to three entries per category. Additionally, all submitted work may be entered in a maximum of one contest category.
7. Competition results will not be released until the awards at the Iowa College Media Association convention on February 6, 2025.

Award Categories continued the next page....

Print/Online Awards:

- 1. Best Print/Online News Reporting:** Best coverage of a single news story. Quality and thoroughness of reporting and writing, relevance to the community, and the ability to hold the interest of the reader are considered. Limit of one entry per student.
- 2. Best Print/Online Investigative Reporting:** Best in-depth coverage of a news event or issue that places the issue in the larger context of concerns to the journalist's community. Limit of one entry per student.
- 3. Best Print/Online Profile:** Best coverage profiling a newsworthy individual in the journalist's community. Limit of one entry per student.
- 4. Best Print/Online Sports Reporting:** Best coverage of an event of issue in sports of concern to the campus community. Quality and thoroughness of reporting and writing, relevance to the campus community, and the ability to hold the interest of the reader will be considered. Limit of one entry per student.
- 5. Best Written Feature Reporting:** Best coverage of an individual, trend or event that stresses the human-interest elements of feature reporting. Quality and thoroughness of reporting and storytelling, relevance to the campus community, and the ability to hold the interest of the reader will be considered. Limit of one entry per student.
- 6. Best Sports Feature Reporting:** Best coverage of a sports-related individual, trend or event that stresses the elements of feature reporting. Quality and thoroughness of reporting and storytelling, relevance to the campus community and the ability to hold the interest of the reader will be considered. Limit of one entry per student.
- 7. Best Headline Writing:** Each entry may include up to five headlines by one news organization. Headlines over captions qualify. Include the stories and/or captions in the entry. Headlines are judged for clarity, accuracy, reader impact and imagination.
- 8. Best Opinion:** Entries will be judged on quality and style of writing and reporting, topical relevance and effectiveness of argument. Limit of one entry per student.
- 9. Best Review:** Entries will be judged on quality and style of writing and reporting in a piece of criticism on art, film, music, theater, cuisine or other creative work. Limit of one entry per student.
- 10. Best Staff Editorial(s):** Entries will be judged on the quality and demonstration of editorial leadership by the media organization. Up to three artifacts may be included.
- 11. Best Print/Online News Photo:** Quality of photograph, composition, emotional impact and completeness are considered. Include AP Style photo caption. Limit of one entry per student.
- 12. Best Print/Online Sports Photo:** Quality of photograph, composition, emotional impact and completeness are considered. Include AP Style photo caption. Limit of one entry per student.
- 13. Best Print/Online Feature Photo:** Quality of photograph, composition, emotional impact and completeness are considered. Include AP Style photo caption. Limit of one entry per student.
- 14. Best Print Design:** Entries will be judged according to contest and presentation of information on what the publication considers its best page(s) of the contest period. Entry may include a design spread across multiple pages. Limit of one entry per student/team.

15. Best Print Newspaper Front Page: Entries will be judged according to content and presentation of news on what the paper considers its best front page of the contest period. Limit of one entry per news organization.

16. Best Magazine Cover or Special Section Cover: Entries will be judged on creativity, clarity and quality of images/graphics and typography. Limit of one entry per news organization.

17. Best Online Design: Entries will be judged according to presentation of information and media elements on a single digital page. Limit of one entry per student/team.

18. Best Graphic or Illustration: Entries may be either a stand-alone infographic or a supplement to a published story. Entries will be judged on overall design and the effectiveness/depth of information conveyed. This category excludes motion graphics. Limit of one entry per student/team.

Audio Awards

19. Best Air Personality: The entry should consist of clip reels or highlight reels that demonstrate the announcer's air personality. This category is for shows that feature ONE announcer only. Portions of songs, PSAs or promos may be used if it helps with the transition between breaks. Entire songs should not be included. The highlight reel should be no longer than 10 minutes in length. Limit of one entry per student.

20. Best Promo: The entry must be standard broadcast length of exactly 30 or 60 seconds. This promotional spot should demonstrate creative use of voice, effects, music and writing. Limit of one entry per student/team.

21. Best PSA: The entry must be standard broadcast length of exactly 30 or 60 seconds. The public service announcement must be for a LOCAL community service or organization in the school's market. The PSA should demonstrate creative use of voice, effects, music and writing. Limit of one entry per student/team.

22. Best Newscast: The entry must be one newscast excluding commercial breaks. Writing, editing news judgment and special features will be considered. Limit of one entry per student/team.

23. Best News Programming: Entry must be a news special program or coverage, outside of a regularly scheduled newscast, designed to inform an audience of an issue or event. Public affairs programming is accepted in this category. Limit of one entry per student/team.

24. Best Show (entertainment): Entry must be a weekly or regularly scheduled program. One or multiple talent(s) is acceptable. The entry may contain comedy skits, original music, talk show or other show of non-news content. The air check or segment samples can be no longer than 15 minutes in its entirety. This entry MUST be different than entries submitted under the Best Air Personality category. Limit of one entry per student/team.

25. Best Sports Broadcast: Entry should include play-by-play announcing for a collegiate team, color/commentary or both. Entry should not exceed 15 minutes of an unedited broadcast. Limit of one entry per student/team.

26. Best Sports Program: Entry must be a regularly scheduled program that is sports-focused and does NOT include play-by-play. Examples could include call-in shows, coaches' roundtable discussions, or sports talk programming. Entries may be edited to showcase highlights and should not exceed 10 minutes in length. Limit of one entry per student/team.

27. Audio Feature Package: Best audio feature coverage of an individual, trend or event. Quality and thoroughness of reporting/writing, relevance to the campus community, use of nat sound, and the ability to hold the interest of the listener will be considered. Limit of one entry per student/team.

28. Long-form Audio Package: Best long-form audio package will offer in-depth coverage of an issue, experience/event, or human-interest subject. Quality and thoroughness of reporting/writing, sourcing, relevance to campus community, use of nat sound, and the ability to sustain narrative will be considered. Length for long-form will be between 7-15 minutes. Limit of one entry per student/team.

29. Best Podcast Series: Best audio podcast will be a single entry of an audio story made available through a website to download and/or broadcast. The winning entry will feature good production value, excellent writing, and be a single episode of a multi-episode show. Entry should be no longer than 20 minutes and may be edited from a longer version. Limit of one entry per student/team. Limit three entries per station.

30. Creative Audio: Entry can include an audio drama, music/narration mix, or other creative uses of advanced production audio tools. Entry will be judged on storytelling, technical innovations and/or use of audio production elements. Students are encouraged to edit longer works to no more than 5 minutes and offer a summary/context statement about the scope of the project. Limit of one entry per student/team.

Video Awards

31. Best Video Newscast: Program may be a regularly scheduled newscast of any length, but must include at least one anchor and videotape reports. Entire program should be submitted. Limit of one entry per student/team.

32. Best Video News Programming: Entry can be a news special program or coverage designed to inform an audience of an issue, event or story using techniques different from a regularly scheduled newscast. Limit of one entry per student/team.

33. Best News, Public Affairs and Sports Reporting Video Package: Entry can be a self-contained report from a newscast, public affairs show or sports program. Entry will be judged on journalistic merit and use of visual elements. Limit of one entry per student/team.

34. Best Entertainment Storytelling Video Package: Entry can be a self-contained report from an entertainment production. Entry will be judged on storytelling abilities and use of visual elements and entertainment. Limit of one entry per student/team.

35. Best Variety, Music and Comedy Video Program: Entry can be an entertainment-style program consisting of talk, sketches, comedy, musical numbers, audience participation or stand-ups. Entire program should be submitted. Limit of one entry per student/team.

36. Best Video Sportscasting: Entry should include play-by-play announcing for a collegiate team, color/commentary or both. Entry should not exceed 15-minutes of an unedited broadcast or live stream. Limit of one entry per student/team.

37. Best Short Video Documentary: Examples of a documentary entry are biographies, retrospectives, informational or investigative programs. Entry must be LESS than 15 minutes. Entire program should be submitted. Limit of one entry per student/team.

38. Best Long Form Video Documentary: Examples of a documentary entry are biographies, retrospectives, informational or investigative programs. Entry must be LONGER than 15 minutes. Entire program should be submitted. Limit of one entry per student/team.

39. Best Video Promo or PSA: (Maximum of 90 seconds) Entry will be judged on creative use of visuals, audio, and scripting. Entry will have been created as a promo for the designated student media organization, or a public service announcement for a local community service or organization. Limit of one entry per student/team.

40. Best Experimental Video: Entry can be a short subject, music video, animation, hype video, show opens or anything that would not be included in the Best Storytelling entry. Entry will be judged on storytelling abilities, technical innovations and use of visual elements. Limit of one entry per student/team.

41. Best Corporate Video: Entries in this category will be promotional, educational, or instructional in nature. (Example: a video for a campus entity or local non-profit organization.) Entries will be judged on message design, creative use of visuals, audio, editing, and scripting. This video must have actually aired on the student television station, published on an official student media organization's web page or social media channel, or corporate site. Limit of one entry per student/team.

42. Best Short Film: Entries not long enough to be considered a full-length feature film running 40 minutes or under; fiction, narrative, experimental or animation. Entries that go here are any productions that cannot find a home in the other categories. Entries must be made publicly available. Limit of one entry per student/team.

Multimedia Awards

43. Best Multimedia Storytelling Package: This category recognizes stories that combine writing, photography, video, audio, design, interactivity and/or other storytelling methods in a single package. Components should not be redundant but rather should complement one another and enhance the overall effectiveness of the story. Limit of one entry per student/team.

44. Best Multimedia Slideshow: Quality of slideshows that combine text, graphics, audio and/or video will be considered. Limit of one entry per student/team.

45. Best Media Website: Judges will examine each student media organization's site as a whole on the date of judging for overall excellence in content, design, integration of multimedia elements, audience engagement, and overall effectiveness. Limit of one entry per media organization.

46. Best Use of Social Media: Media organizations will be judged based on their overall social media effectiveness during the contest period. Entries may include engagement via traditional social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), blogs, vlogs, emerging social media platforms and electronic newsletters. Media organizations may submit entries as links to their social media channels and/or screenshots of individual posts, emails, etc. Limit of one entry per media organization.

Overall Excellence Awards:

Overall Print/Online Excellence Award:

One student media organization will receive the ICMA Overall Print/Online Excellence Award and will receive a plaque for this honor. The winner of this award will be determined on a point basis. Student media organizations will receive 10 points for each first-place award, 8 points for each second place, and 6 points for each third place award in the print/online categories (1 through 18) The student media organization with the most points from these contests will receive the Overall Print/Online Excellence Award at the ICMA Convention in Des Moines in February 2025.

Overall Audio Excellence Award:

One student media organization will be awarded the ICMA Overall Audio Excellence Award and will receive a plaque for this honor. The winner of this award will be determined on a point basis. Student media organizations will receive 10 points for each first-place award, 8 points for each second place, and 6 points for each third place award in the Audio categories (19 through 29). The student media organization with the most points from these contests will receive the Overall Audio Excellence Award at the ICMA Convention in Des Moines in February 2025.

Overall Video Excellence Award

One student media organization will be awarded the Overall Video Excellence Award and will receive a plaque for this honor. The winner of this award will be determined on a point basis. Student media organizations will receive 10 points for each first-place award they receive in the ICMA contests outlined herein, 8 points for each second place, and 6 points for each third place award in the Video categories (30 through 41). The student media organization with the highest number of total points from these contests will receive the Overall Video Excellence Award at the ICMA Convention in Des Moines in February 2025.

Special ICMA Awards

Pat Pisarik Student Journalist of the Year

This award is given to the outstanding journalist serving collegiate media in the past calendar year. The journalist must be enrolled as a full-time student for the spring and fall semesters in 2024. No more than three students from each ICMA-member college/university may enter the contest. Because excellent storytelling is essential to all forms of media, judges will place particular emphasis on entrants' abilities to effectively locate and tell stories vital to targeted audiences.

To complete the entry, all nominees must submit:

- One nominating letter from the student media advisor
- A 500-word essay from the nominee discussing why he or she should be considered for this award
- Five original media artifacts representing the student's work that were published or aired between Oct. 16, 2023 and Oct. 11, 2024.

The five required artifacts will be submitted online (betternewspapercontest.com) and may include published or aired material that has appeared in campus-supported student media (online, print, broadcast). Artifacts may include any one or combination of the following:

- Original images, video, writing, production work, design, on-air reporting or personality, leadership of a team project

Student nominees must articulate in their essay how they served as the primary contributors of the artifacts they submit for consideration. The stories may be of any length.

Deadline for submission of all materials is Friday, Nov. 29, before 4 p.m. Preliminary judges will include the ICMA President and contest directors, who will determine three finalists. Those finalists will be notified prior to the ICMA conference in February and will interview with the panel of judges prior to the conference. The winner will be announced at the ICMA awards ceremony.

The ICMA Journalist of the Year award will provide \$500 in cash and a plaque to the winner. Finalists for the Journalist of the Year award will be introduced at the awards ceremony on Thursday, Feb. 6, 2025.

This award was named in honor of the late Pat Pisarik, a founding member of ICMA and a longtime journalism professor at Loras College. Pat passionately embraced the role of the press as unbiased contributors to democracy and as a voice for the marginalized.

ICMA First Amendment Award--Deadline for submission is Friday, Nov. 29, before 4 p.m.

Awarded to student journalist or media team who best highlights issues relating to the First Amendment on a college campus. Story or project may rely on any delivery platform (broadcast, print, multimedia or some combination). A brief (~400 word) essay explaining the context for the project is recommended, but not required. No limit on entries per university/college.

The entry/essay for this award will be submitted online (betternewspapercontest.com).