

2026 GEORGIA COLLEGE PRESS ASSOCIATION BETTER NEWSPAPER CONTEST

Contact Sean Ireland at sireland@gapress.org or 770-454-6776 with questions.

ENTRY RULES

1. All entries must be entered by **Monday, December 8, 2025**.
2. Each college or university may submit no more than one entry in EACH general category and no more than four entries in EACH individual category.
3. Online publications may enter all individual categories of the contest. Entry is not allowed in General Categories. A PDF of a web page or a link to the page with bylines and publication date stamps should be entered.
4. If the same entry/article is to be entered in two or more categories, a separate exhibit must be provided for each category entered.
5. All entries must have been published between November 15, 2024, and December 8, 2025.
6. All entries must be written by a student registered at the institution at the time the entry was published and the member must be in good standing of the Georgia College Press Association at the time of entry.
7. No award will be given in any category in which fewer than three entries were received.
8. GCPA asks that judges not award ties or honorable mentions.
9. All individual entries become the property of GCPA.
10. The comments from judges on the winning entries will be distributed immediately following the awards ceremony.
11. Any college or university paying 2025-2026 dues is eligible to enter the GCPA Better Newspaper Contest. **Dues fees must be paid to be eligible.**

12. Division Breakdown

For General Categories:

Division A – 5,000+ students—combined enrollment - undergraduate and graduate programs

Division B – 0-4,999 students—combined enrollment - undergraduate and graduate programs

For Individual Categories:

Group I – work done by freshmen and sophomores at the time the work was published.

Group II – work done by juniors, seniors and graduate students at the time the work was published.

- The freshman/sophomore and junior/senior designations will be based on the credit-hour cut-offs recognized by the student's college or university.

- A collaborative entry that is the work of students in Group I and II should be entered in Group II.

- If there are fewer than three member publications entered in either group for an individual awards category, entries in both groups will be judged together.

**EDITORIAL CONTEST
BASIC ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS**
www.newspapercontest.com/Georgia

Please follow the steps below to ensure that your entry will not be disqualified from the contest.

BNC Entries must be SUBMITTED ONLINE by Monday, December 8, 2025.

The electronic entry system will be online and open for entries on Monday, November 17, 2025.

Step 1 — Register at www.newspapercontest.com/Georgia. Your association code is GAPRESS. Use one email address and password for all entries — email address and password will need to re-registered each year, even if they are the same from previous year. You will receive a confirmation email, which you will need to complete registration. Remember your password.

Step 2 — Log in to www.newspapercontest.com/Georgia. You will see a page that is mostly blank. This is where you will start each time you log in. As you submit entries, this page will display a list of those entries. A complete set of rules is available on the contest home page.

Step 3 — Click on the “Add New Entry” link. All submissions will need to be added in this system.

Step 4 — On this page, select your newspaper name. Information will auto fill on this page. **If that information is incorrect, please call GCPA at 770-454-6776. Your division will be selected for you based on your university or college’s enrollment per the GCPA contest rules.**

Step 5 — Further down, at the Entry section, select “College,” “College Group I,” or “College Group 2” from the contest type drop-down menu. Make your selection based on the contest category you are entering. For General categories, select “College.” For individual categories for entries produced by juniors/seniors, select “College Group II.” For individual categories for entries produced by freshmen/sophomores, select “College Group I.”

Step 6 — Select the contest category. This is a drop-down menu for your convenience. Menu options depend on whether you select “College,” “College Group II,” or “College Group I.” This field will clear each time you save an entry, so you must select a category for each new entry. When you select the category, special instructions will appear below it. For general categories, your entry will be given the Division A or Division B designation based on the enrollment of your school.

Step 7 — Below the rules is an explanation/cutline box. Some contest categories require an explanation. If an explanation is required, it will be specified within the special instructions. The explanation/cutline box is limited to 3,000 characters. It’s 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://. Some categories, such as Best Website, require a URL.

Step 8 — Include the name of the entry. It will be helpful if the entry name matches the headline on the pages so the judge can find it easily. Photos should have a brief description. You may also want to name your files in the same manner. If a judge cannot tell what is to be judged, the entry could be discarded without a refund.

Step 9 — 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.

Step 10 — Add your file or files. You can drag and drop files or use the “Add files” button to navigate your files. Upload as many files as are necessary to complete your entry but refer to the special instructions for file type and any limitations. Compress PDFs using Adobe Acrobat if uploading large sections or entire issues. When dragging and dropping files, you may select multiple files and drop them all at once. **Use only letters and numbers when naming files. Do not use spaces or symbols, which cause errors.**

Step 11 — Click the “Save” button when you have completed your submission. 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 12 — 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 5 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 13 — Once you are finished submitting all entries, please review the list. You may not change an entry, but you may delete the entry and resubmit it. Click on the magnifying glass to the left of the entry in the list of entries to see the full entry, including a thumbnail of any files that you uploaded. Clicking on the thumbnail image will open a pop-up window showing the image larger.

Step 14 — Once all entries are submitted and finalized, click the “Billing” button on the list page. This will take you to a page where the entry fee is automatically generated. You may pay by phoning in a credit card to 770-454-6776 or mailing in payment to Georgia College Press Association, P.O. Box 4003, Marietta, Ga. 30061. Please do not email your credit card information. The submission deadline for entering is Monday, December 8, 2025.

Once payment is made, your access to the page will be disabled. If you find out later that you need access, you will need to call the GPA office at 770-454-6776 to have the account enabled.

Please note:

One entry in categories 1 – 8 will contain 4 entire issues of the newspaper. All four issues must be placed in the entry. For category 9 (Improvement Award), all 6 issues must be in the same entry. For all individual categories, each entry must be made separately. **You will only pay one fee per entry in all categories.** You may submit no more than one entry in EACH general category and no more than four entries in EACH individual category.

Please read over each general and individual category for descriptions and specific instructions. **Your entries risk disqualification if they are not prepared properly. Call 770-454-6776 if further clarification is needed.**

GENERAL NEWSPAPER AWARDS

- 1) **GENERAL EXCELLENCE**
- 2) **BEST CAMPUS COMMUNITY SERVICE- NEWS**
- 3) **BEST CAMPUS COMMUNITY SERVICE – FEATURES**
- 4) **BEST CAMPUS COMMUNITY SERVICE – SPORTS COVERAGE**
- 5) **BEST CAMPUS COMMUNITY SERVICE – EDITORIAL EXCELLENCE**
- 6) **LAYOUT AND DESIGN EXCELLENCE**
- 7) **GENERAL ADVERTISING EXCELLENCE**
- 8) **GENERAL PHOTOGRAPHY EXCELLENCE**
- 9) **IMPROVEMENT AWARD**
- 10) **BEST NEWSPAPER WEBISTE**

Newspapers entering categories 1 through 5 must submit 4 issues (to the extent possible, please submit 2 issues from Spring 2025 and 2 issues from Fall 2025. A total of four (4) newspapers must be submitted per entry.

An exception is made for the Improvement Award and new college newspapers.

Each college or university may submit no more than one (1) entry in EACH general category. Online publications are not allowed entry in the general categories. ***However, if issues were not printed due to the pandemic, please submit to the best of your ability and denote such in the entry comments.***

First-place winners in the general awards category will receive an engraved plaque. Second- and third-place winners will receive a certificate.

1) GENERAL EXCELLENCE

Awarded to newspapers in Division A and Division B which are acclaimed the best overall newspapers in their divisions. Evaluation will be determined by the accumulation of points based on:

- 1) Judges' reviews of the General Excellence entry and
- 2) Placement of the newspaper in the general categories of the contest

In evaluating the category entry, the general excellence judges will award points on the following basis (all points listed are the maximum points that may be earned):

News Coverage:	6 points	Advertising Excellence:	6 points
Editorials:	6 points	Layout and Design:	6 points
Sports Coverage:	3 points	Features:	3 points
Photography:	3 points		

A newspaper will then accumulate additional points based on placement in other general categories in the contest based on the following point scale:

News Coverage, Editorials, Advertising Excellence and Layout and Design --

1st - **24** points; 2nd - **18** points; 3rd - **12** points

Sports Coverage, Features, Photography and Most Improved --

1st - **18** points; 2nd - **12** points; 3rd - **6** points

In the case of ties for General Excellence, the following formula will be used: Stage 1 - the newspaper with the most first places in the Better Newspaper Contest will win. Stage 2 - If there is still a tie, the newspaper with the most points in the following categories will win: Layout and Design, Editorials, Features, Sports Section and News.

2) **BEST CAMPUS COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD - NEWS**

Judging is based on service rendered the campus community through the use of news stories about campus and local off-campus activities in keeping with journalistic principles. (SUBMIT 4 ISSUES WITH THIS ENTRY)

3) **BEST CAMPUS COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD - FEATURES**

Judging is based on the service rendered the campus community through the use of fact-oriented feature writing, with particular attention given to the educational/entertainment value as well as to style, originality and initiative. (SUBMIT 4 ISSUES WITH THIS ENTRY)

4) **BEST CAMPUS COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD - SPORTS COVERAGE**

Judging is based on the service rendered the campus community through the use of sports stories, with emphasis on depth and quality of reporting. Style, originality and initiative will be weighed. (SUBMIT 4 ISSUES WITH THIS ENTRY)

5) **BEST CAMPUS COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD - EDITORIAL EXCELLENCE**

Judging based on service rendered the campus community through editorials & columns. **Whenever possible the impact of the editorials on campus life should be indicated by submitting tearsheets from subsequent editions of news, letters to the editor or editorials, affidavits, letters from college officials, etc. **All subsequent material must indicate that it is supporting material. Also, any signed columns or unsigned editorials, must be clearly identified as editorials.**** (SUBMIT 4 ISSUES WITH THIS ENTRY) Editorials relating to off campus issues which interest the members of an academic community will be eligible for competition.

6) **LAYOUT AND DESIGN EXCELLENCE**

Judging is based on the overall appearance, layout and originality in design of pages, including the overall design of opposing pages. The use of photography, headlines, artwork and layout of copy will be considered. The quality of photography will also be taken into account. (SUBMIT 4 ISSUES WITH THIS ENTRY)

7) **GENERAL ADVERTISING EXCELLENCE**

Judging is based on the best display advertising, typographical excellence of the ads and effective utilization of the ads. Newspapers entering this category must mark ALL ADVERTISING AND LOGOS DESIGNED BY THE PAPER'S STAFF clearly, either by electronically adding marks on the PDF or making notes on a hard copy and scanning and uploading. (SUBMIT 4 ISSUES WITH THIS ENTRY)

8) **GENERAL PHOTOGRAPHY EXCELLENCE**

Awarded to the newspaper in each classification with the best use of college photographs (produced by a staff member) throughout the paper. Each photograph produced by a staff

member in each edition should be marked NEXT TO THE PICTURE, either by electronically adding marks on the PDF or making notes on a hard copy and scanning and uploading. Remember: Picture quality, cropping, placement, relevance and proper sizing will be considered in evaluating the photographs that appear in the newspapers entered. Outline should give a full description of the photograph. (SUBMIT 4 ISSUES WITH THIS ENTRY)

9) **IMPROVEMENT AWARD**

Awarded to the newspapers in Divisions A and B that have shown the most improvement in all areas listed under BEST CAMPUS COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS. A letter explaining what the newspaper was trying to improve and what was done to make improvements must accompany each entry. Newspapers must be submitted from approximately the same dates in the present calendar year and the calendar year immediately preceding it.

10) **BEST NEWSPAPER WEBSITE**

Best Newspaper Website contest entries must include the following: the URL, and a statement (500 words or less) that includes a description of the site, its attributes, how frequently it is updated, any special supplements, and why it should win best newspaper website. This statement should be entered in the Explanation box. The website will be judged for news content and coverage, visual appeal, navigation, and organization. This category will be awarded to the member publication, not individuals.

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

Now awarded to newspapers in Group I or Group II. See page one for further details of the Group I and Group II divisions.

Each college or university may submit no more than four (4) entries in EACH individual category, (Group I and II combined). First, second and third place certificates will be presented in each of the categories.

Contestants will submit **separate tearsheets for each category** entered, with entry clearly marked, either by electronically adding marks on the PDF or making notes on a hard copy and scanning and uploading. Online publications must submit printed web pages with bylines and publication date stamps as a substitute for tearsheets.

For entries in which impact is a criteria, evidence of impact, clearly marked as such, may be included. This material must be marked "RELATED MATERIAL."

1) **BEST NEWS ARTICLE BASED ON INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING**

Investigative reporting includes a substantial commitment of time and energy to dig beneath the surface and expose often overlooked facts and details.

Criteria in this category will include enterprise, thoroughness, quality of writing and research, effective use of expository style and sensitivity to the ethical issues involved in such reporting. Evidence of impact (follow-up stories, letters to the editor, statements from college administrators or other officials) should be submitted where possible. With investigative stories, include a brief statement explaining the methods and amount of time the reporter used to obtain the story.

2) **BEST GENERAL NEWS ARTICLE**

Judging is based on individual initiative and adherence to accepted principles of newspaper journalism (pyramid, style, etc.). News judgment, thoroughness, fairness, clarity of writing and effective use of quotations will be taken into account.

3) **BEST EDITORIAL OR EDITORIAL SERIES**

Judging is based on the impact on the campus/students, achieved through an editorial or editorial series (signed or unsigned) which deals with campus/student-oriented problems. Proof of impact may be submitted when applicable. Also eligible are editorials concerning off-campus issues of concern to the members of an academic community. Judging criteria for such editorials will include thoroughness and relevance to the spirit of inquiry that an academic environment is designed to foster. Each series is considered an entry.

4) **BEST FEATURE STORY**

Judging is based on appropriate choice of subject matter, development of story, initiative, style and ability of writer to arouse reader interest through the feature of medium.

5) **BEST ENTERTAINMENT STORY**

Judging is based on appropriate choice of subject matter, entertainment value, development of story, style and ability of writer to arouse reader interest through the feature of medium. Entries may include artist or musician features, profiles or previews for concerts and performances.

6) **BEST ENTERTAINMENT FEATURE**

Entries may include picture features, original comic strips, crossword puzzles, word jumbles, or other similar materials. Particular emphasis should be placed on visual impact. Such entries may be one feature or a continuing feature. Each series is considered as one entry.

7) **BEST SPORTS STORY**

Judging is based on the best single sports story with particular emphasis on initiative, depth of reporting and individual style.

8) **BEST PHOTOGRAPH - NEWS**

Judging is based on composition and value in relation to campus activities. Entries **MUST BE** accompanied by newspaper tearsheets. Glossies only permitted with tearsheet.

9) **BEST PHOTOGRAPH - SPORTS**

Judging is based on composition and value in relation to campus activities. Entries **MUST BE** accompanied by newspaper tearsheets. Glossies only permitted with tearsheet.

10) **BEST EDITORIAL OR FEATURE PHOTOGRAPH**

This category is based on the ability of the photograph to tell a story in and of itself, its aesthetic appeal, general composition and relation of subject matter to college students' interest. Entries **MUST BE** accompanied by newspaper tearsheets. Glossies only permitted with tearsheet.

11) **BEST PHOTO ESSAY**

This category will judge a group of photos that tells a story. Submit photographs that were published together in a sequence or series. Entry **MUST BE** accompanied by newspaper tearsheets. Glossies only permitted with tearsheet.

12) **BEST REVIEW**

This category will include reviews of television, movies, books, art, concerts, records, theatre and other forms of entertainment. Judging is based on the writer's knowledge of subject matter, style, quality of writing and relevance to campus community.

13) **BEST COLUMN**

Columns of all types (sports, humor, editorial, etc.) may be submitted in this category. Judging will be based on overall effectiveness, and winning entries will have been found to be exceptional examples of columns of their particular type. Winning columns should exhibit an especially effective treatment of subject matter. Judging will also be based on the writing style and its appropriateness to the column's intended audience and purpose. Each entry will consist of one to three columns by a single writer (to be considered as a unit) or up to three columns by different writers that were printed under a single standing head (also to be considered as a unit). Please submit only tearsheets.

14) **IMPACT AWARD - SPECIAL INDIVIDUAL AWARD**

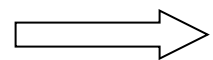
Judging is based on excellence as an individual student cartoonist. Emphasis in judging will be on originality, effectiveness, clarity and impact. Cartoons may deal with any subject, campus, local or national, but must be editorial in content.

- 1) There are to be no more than three cartoons submitted from any one cartoonist.
- 2) The newspaper tearsheet for proof of publication should accompany each cartoon entered. Online publications should submit printed web pages with bylines and publication date stamps.
- 3) Where possible, news stories or editorials relating to the subject of the cartoon should be included (specifically if the cartoon deals with campus and student matters).
- 4) Cartoon **MUST** be editorial in content.
- 5) There is only one Impact Award given; Groups I and II will be judged together to result in one winner.
- 5) All other rules of competition for GCPA entries apply.

GCPA BETTER NEWSPAPER CONTEST ENTRY FORM

If you wish, this form can be used to manually track your entries into the contest. Deadline for entering the contest is **Monday, Dec. 8, 2025**. Awards will be presented at the Press Institute in Athens on March 6, 2025.

Category	# of Entries	Cost per entry	Total
General Excellence	_____	\$4.00	\$_____
Best Campus Community Service Awards • News	_____	\$4.00	\$_____
Best Campus Community Service Awards • Features	_____	\$4.00	\$_____
Best Campus Community Service • Sports coverage	_____	\$4.00	\$_____
Best Campus Community Service • Editorial Excellence	_____	\$4.00	\$_____
Layout & Design Excellence	_____	\$4.00	\$_____
General Advertising Excellence	_____	\$4.00	\$_____
General Photography Excellence	_____	\$4.00	\$_____
Improvement Award	_____	\$4.00	\$_____
Best News Article (Investigative Reporting)	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
Best News Article (Objective Reporting)	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
Best Editorial/Editorial Series	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
Best Feature Story	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
Best Entertainment Story	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
Best Entertainment Feature	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
Best Sports Story	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
Best Photograph News	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
Best Photograph Sports	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
Best Editorial or Feature Photograph	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
Best Photo Essay	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
Best Review	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
Best Column	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
Best Newspaper Website	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
Impact Award	_____	\$3.00	\$_____
TOTAL:	_____		\$_____



2025 GCPA BETTER NEWSPAPER CONTEST ENTRY FORM

(PART 2)

Total Number of Entries: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Georgia Press Educational Foundation Federal Tax ID#: 58-6044342

Payments may be mailed to Georgia College Press Association, P.O. Box 4003, Marietta Ga. 30061.

Contact Sean Ireland at sireland@gapress.org or 770-454-6776 with questions.