



Knight Chair in Audience Engagement and Trust in Media
Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication
Arizona State University
Phoenix, Arizona

THE SEARCH

The [Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication](#) at Arizona State University (Cronkite School) seeks an accomplished industry professional and/or scholar with an industry-focused research portfolio to serve as the Knight Chair in Audience Engagement and Trust in Media (Knight Chair).

Supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, this endowed chair is one of only 26 Knight Chairs in Journalism nationwide. The Knight Chair will join a select network of professionals and scholars who bridge the newsroom-classroom divide through innovative teaching, major outreach projects, and their own research or creative activity. Together, Knight Chairs advance journalism and media education, and the practice of it, by developing new models for the field, fostering partnerships, and producing research or creative activity that strengthens trust and transparency in media.

The Knight Chair will join the Cronkite School at a pivotal moment for journalism, as news organizations grapple with declining trust, audience fragmentation, and rapid technological advancements. Working within ASU's innovative environment and the Cronkite School's scholarly and professional network, the Chair will have the opportunity to lead a visible, applied effort to understand why large segments of the public feel unseen or underserved by news and information venues, and to test concrete ways that rebuild trust. The Knight Chair will work at the intersection of journalism, technology, and democracy, bridging together research faculty, professors of practice, and using the School's "teaching hospital" newsrooms and centers as laboratories for experimentation. By leveraging the framework and scale of ASU, the Chair will help further solidify Cronkite as a national leader in shaping the future of trustworthy journalism.

This is an exceptional opportunity for an accomplished professional or scholar to shape the future of journalism by strengthening public trust and developing new ways to connect with audiences in a rapidly evolving media landscape. With support from the endowment, the Chair will pursue research and creative activity that generates practical solutions for how journalists inform, engage, and serve communities, and also extend their reach nationally.

The specific assignments and opportunities for the Knight Chair at the Cronkite School are, by design, flexible. The successful candidate will bring thought leadership, creativity, and a demonstrated commitment to collaboration and impact, both within the academy and industry. As an innovative educator and thought leader, the Knight Chair will collaborate with faculty, professionals, and students to integrate audience engagement strategies into journalism education and practice. Through teaching, mentorship, and public engagement, the Chair will cultivate a new generation of journalists who are equipped to report with integrity, empathy, and technological fluency. As such, the Chair will help prepare the next generation of journalists to navigate the ethical, technological, and cultural dimensions of engaging different audiences in today's media environment and information landscape. In their work, the Knight Chair will embody the Cronkite School's commitment to journalism that informs, empowers, and connects communities, helping to sustain a more informed democracy.

The Chair is expected to maintain an active research and/or service portfolio. For scholars, this includes contributing to academic publications and working directly with the news community and outlets themselves. Both professionals and/or scholars are expected to provide thought leadership to drive innovation in the industry and the academy, including the development of groundbreaking training and education programs for ASU's Learning Enterprise. The endowment provides resources to support the Chair's research and creative activities, including, but not limited to, a dedicated graduate assistant. Additionally, the Knight Chair will collaborate with other Knight Chairs nationally to advance innovation in journalism education.

The Knight Chair will teach one course per academic year related to audience engagement, media transparency and trust, and/or other related topics, for advanced undergraduate and graduate students, with specific course assignments to be determined in consultation with the dean. For example, one course assignment may be a skills course, and another could be embedded in one of Cronkite's many centers. The Chair may additionally serve on School and University committees, mentor undergraduate and graduate students, and represent ASU and the Cronkite School through active roles in industry and/or academic associations, public scholarship and thought leadership, community and/or industry outreach, and similar service activities.

To be successful, the Knight Chair will build on the Cronkite School's existing strengths while addressing the following key opportunities and challenges:

- Advance impact-driven innovation that blends research, practice, and emerging technologies to shape the future of Journalism
- Serve as a visible national voice in a rapidly evolving media landscape
- Mentor and prepare the next generation of journalists
- Deepen and expand collaborations with news organizations
- Elevate the Cronkite School's reputation as a forward-thinking leader in trust, engagement, and journalism innovation

For more information about ASU, the Cronkite School, and Arizona, please refer to Appendices I, II, and III starting on page 5.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Required Qualifications

The Knight Chair will hold the rank of Professor with tenure or Academic Professional with continuing appointment. Both appointment pathways carry similar privileges and benefits, including continuing appointment expectations, sabbatical leave opportunities, and academic freedom protections. This is an academic-year appointment (fall and spring semesters) based at ASU's Downtown Phoenix campus, though summer projects may be available.

Candidates for the role of Administrative Professional with continuing appointment must have a strong and extensive career background in journalism, preferably at a major market or national media organization, mentoring experience, and a record of national leadership, success, and impact in news. For the administrative professional role, the Chair will follow an internal process of evaluation upon hire, much like the expedited tenure review of the professor.

Successful scholars applying for the tenured full Professor role will have a Ph.D. in journalism, mass communication, or other relevant discipline, have previously earned tenure at a peer institution, and/or have a strong teaching and applied research portfolio and national reputation commensurate with the rank of a tenured full professor at a Research 1 university. For the academic role, the Chair must earn tenure and rank through an expedited review process.

Desired Qualifications

- Leadership experience in audience engagement and media trust, in industry positions and/or scholarship and teaching;
- Expertise in emerging technologies, including in the use of artificial intelligence and open-source intelligence tools and techniques;
- Evidence of national thought leadership and impact;
- Strong collaboration and interpersonal communication skills;
- Passion for inspiring and training emergent journalists with varied skills and experience.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and full applications should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/arizona-state-university-walter-cronkite-school->

[journalism-and-mass-communication-0](#) . A full application includes the submission of a cover letter, CV or resume, and contact information for three professional references. Successful candidates will demonstrate throughout their materials how their teaching, research, and service will contribute to the fulfillment of the ASU Charter.

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Isaacson, Miller

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Arizona State University. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Arizona State University would supersede any conflicting information in this document.

APPENDIX I: About Arizona State University

Ranked the No. 1 “Most Innovative School” in the nation by U.S. News & World Report for nine years in succession, Arizona State University (ASU) has forged the model for a New American University. Year after year, ASU ranks at or near the top of the list in areas that matter. Under the leadership of [President Michael Crow](#), ASU has developed numerous programs and units that bridge and transcend disciplinary boundaries to enable the exploration and discovery of new knowledge while developing solutions to serve Arizona and the world at large. Since 2004, ASU has become a global leader in sustainability efforts—creating the Global Institute of Sustainability, launching the first School of Sustainability in the country, deploying the largest solar energy portfolio of any university in the U.S., and more. In 2023, ASU joined the prestigious Association of American Universities, highlighting its position as one of the nation’s preeminent research universities.

The University has strong and simultaneous commitments to educational attainment, innovation, and sustainable outcomes, and assumes significant responsibility for the cultural, social, and economic vitality of its surrounding communities. This strategy is built around intellectual fusion, use-inspired research, and scholarship that addresses today’s largest and most essential societal problems. ASU has thrived on an unprecedented combination of academic excellence, entrepreneurial energy, and broad access, and the University’s Charter, adopted in 2014, reflects that vision: ***ASU is a comprehensive public research university, measured not by whom it excludes, but by whom it includes and how they succeed; advancing research and discovery of public value; and assuming fundamental responsibility for the economic, social, cultural and overall health of the communities it serves.***

ASU operates on the principles that learning is a personal and original journey for each student; that they thrive on experience and that the process of discovery cannot be bound by traditional academic disciplines. Through innovation and a commitment to accessibility, ASU has drawn pioneering researchers to its faculty even as it expands opportunities for qualified students, attracting some of the highest-quality students from all 50 states and more than 130 nations.

During the 2024-2025 academic year, ASU enrolled more than 194,000 undergraduate and graduate students, demonstrating the University’s commitment to educational access and providing world-class education at scale. This fall, ASU projects a record-setting 42,900 new first-year, transfer, and graduate students enrolled. A key driver of ASU’s enrollment increases is its commitment to being the preferred university choice for Arizona residents, who account for a projected 18,000 new students, including 9,700 of those students who will join ASU from Arizona high schools. ASU is also poised to host a projected 14,600 international students this year, hailing from 165+ countries. One in three ASU undergraduates are first-generation college students, and more than 60,000 students accessed Federal Pell Grants during the last academic year.

As part of its 2025 Forward campaign, the University is organized around and committed to driving significant progress around FIVE FRONTS:

1. Evolving the New American University (Academic Enterprise, Learning Enterprise, Colleges and Schools, i.e. “the University”)
2. Creating knowledge and innovation to improve the future (Knowledge Enterprise)
3. Cultivating and honoring creativity, community and human potential (Arts, Athletics, Innovation, Cultural Affairs, Social Embeddedness)
4. Enhancing Health Outcomes for All Arizonans (ASU Health¹)
5. Designing and Building for Planetary Health (Global Futures Laboratory²)

¹ In June 2023, the University launched [ASU Health](#) to tackle health-related efforts. Its mission is to integrate health and medical education, research, workforce development, and health outcomes to address the health needs of the state and the nation.

ASU’s commitment to academic excellence, broad access, and social impact drives all of its programs, including those at the Cronkite School.

To learn more about ASU, see www.asu.edu.

APPENDIX II: About the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication

The Cronkite School is widely recognized as one of the nation’s premier colleges of journalism and mass communication. Rooted in the time-honored values that characterize its namesake — accuracy, responsibility, objectivity, integrity — the school fosters journalistic excellence and ethics among students as they master the professional skills they need to succeed in the digital media world of today and tomorrow. The Cronkite School is located on ASU’s Downtown Phoenix campus, in the heart of the nation’s fifth-largest city, with additional centers in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C.

The Cronkite faculty includes award-winning journalists, strategic communicators, digital media thought leaders, media entrepreneurs and world-class media scholars. Faculty lead a number of knowledge hubs within the School, including the [Donald W. Reynolds National Center on Business Journalism](#); [Knight Center for the Future of News](#); [National Center on Disability and Journalism](#); [News Co/Lab](#); [Media, Information, Data, and Society \(MIDaS\) Lab](#); and Cronkite global initiatives, including the [Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship](#).

Cronkite students work in professional newsrooms and centers, including the Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, Carnegie-Knight News21, and the Cronkite News bureau. Through these immersive opportunities, students gain experiences that help them prepare for leadership in journalism, media, and communication industries.

The Cronkite School offers [undergraduate degrees](#) in journalism and mass communication, sports journalism, digital audiences, mass communication and media studies, and digital media literacy. It also offers [graduate degrees](#), including a variety of master’s degrees and a Ph.D. in journalism and mass communication. In addition, the Cronkite School offers online degrees, dual degree options, as well as minors, a graduate certificate, and other major specializations.

Academic Offerings

Programs offered at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism are as follows:

Program Name	Degree Type	Modality	Location
Journalism and Mass Communication	BA	On-Campus	Downtown Phoenix Campus
Sports Journalism	BA	On-Campus	Downtown Phoenix Campus
Digital Audiences	BS	On-Campus and Online	Downtown Phoenix Campus/ASU Online

Mass Communication and Media Studies	BA	Online	ASU Online
Mass Communication	MMC	On-Campus	Downtown Phoenix campus (with immersion options in Phoenix, Los Angeles, or Washington D.C.)
Sports Journalism	MA	On-Campus	Downtown Phoenix campus (with option for semester in Los Angeles)
Investigative Journalism	MA	On-Campus	Downtown Phoenix Campus
Digital Strategy	MS	On-Campus and Online	Online & Downtown Phoenix campus / Los Angeles (ASU California Center)
Narrative and Emerging Media	MA	On-Campus	ASU California Center
Strategic Communication	MA	On-Campus	Downtown Phoenix Campus
Dual Degree: MD/MMC	MD/MMC	On-Campus	Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine & Downtown Phoenix campus
Dual Degree: Journalism and legal Studies	MA/JD	On-Campus	Downtown Phoenix campus & Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law
Dual Degree: Journalism and Sustainability	MSUS/MMC	On-Campus	Downtown Phoenix campus & School of Sustainability
Digital Audience Strategy	Graduate Certificate	Online	ASU Online
Journalism and Mass Communication	PhD	On-Campus	Downtown Phoenix Campus

APPENDIX III: GREATER PHOENIX

ASU's mission is directly tied to the economic, social, and cultural vitality of Arizona and the growing Phoenix metropolitan region. The University serves one of America's youngest, largest, and fastest-growing cities.

Cost of Living

Greater Phoenix offers the diverse amenities of a major metropolitan region without the high cost of living. As the fifth-largest state in the U.S. and one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing regions in the nation, living and working here is both exciting and affordable.

Business and Industry

Arizona is home to a surging industrial ecosystem, early-stage entrepreneurs, and tech-savvy millennial talent who are breaking new ground across a wide range of industry growth sectors. What's more, Arizona offers a robust portfolio of programs and resources supporting both large and emerging tech companies. The state's rich startup culture continues to thrive and is a preferred choice for technology companies seeking growth. Leading startups have collectively taken advantage of Arizona's high-skills talent base. Arizona's solid reputation and assertive stance on innovation led Fast Company to rank Arizona No. 1 in the country for "entrepreneurial activity."

Low Tax Position

Low personal income taxes and low effective property tax rates offer affordability and opportunities for everyone to thrive.

Arts and Culture

Greater Phoenix is a rich arts and culture environment with diverse museums, theater, concert halls, and cultural centers, such as the renowned Heard Museum, Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona Science Center, Phoenix Symphony, Arizona Opera, Ballet Arizona, and the Arizona Theatre Company.

Outdoors

Phoenix has a number of lakes just a short drive away, offering opportunities for boating, sailing, windsurfing, water and jet skiing, fishing, and more. The area is home to dozens of parks and preserves — both in and around the city — with hundreds of miles of multiuse trails for hiking and biking. The state is home to three national parks, including the Grand Canyon and other popular destination spots like Sedona.

Sports

All four of Arizona's major professional sports teams — Arizona Cardinals (NFL), Phoenix Suns (NBA), Arizona Diamondbacks (MLB), and Arizona Coyotes (NHL) — call the metro Phoenix area home, as do the Phoenix Mercury (WNBA), Arizona Rattlers (IFL) and Phoenix Rising FC (USL). The area has over 170 golf courses.