

PINNACLE

COLLEGE MEDIA AWARDS

CONTEST INSTRUCTIONS

Contest information:

(rules, categories, FAQ, etc.) is at <https://collegemedia.org/pinnacle-awards/>

These are directions for preparing and submitting entries. Please read through the instructions before you begin.

- If you have questions about rules, eligibility, deadlines or updating contestant information, contact: CMA at info@collegemedia.org or (518) 306-1123
- If you have questions about the BetterBNC platform (tech support questions), contact: BetterBNC 24/7 at www.betterbncsupport.com.
 - Click on "Start Trouble Ticket."
 - Or, call 360-427-6300 8a.m. – 5p.m. PST Monday through Friday.

IMPORTANT: BetterBNC is optimized for the Google Chrome browser; and Firefox for PC and Macintosh/Apple.

Please have a recent version downloaded and installed for the best contest experience.

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

IMPORTANT: There are two ways to enter the contest, depending on your role and the type of submission you're making:

Contestant Manager – For the primary contact or administrator of your organization, who is responsible for submitting entries on behalf of your team.

Authorized Entrant – For individuals authorized by their media organization to submit entries.

If you do not have a profile, email: info@collegemedia.org for assistance creating a profile.

Better BNC Support cannot create a profile for you.

If you entered Pinnacles in 2025, your profile is still in the system, but your password has been reset.

Your temporary password is **bnc** (lowercase).

After logging in with this temporary password, the system will prompt you to update your password. The new password will be used for this year's Pinnacles contest.

ENTRY FEE **\$20** **\$40**
Members Non-Members

Deadline
JUNE 17, 2026
Midnight • EST

DIVISIONS

Division I: 10,000+

Division II: 3,000 – 9,999

Division III: under 2,999

Two-Year Schools

on -campus undergraduate enrollment (not including distance education)

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AUTHORIZED ENTRANT & CONTESTANT MANGAER

Logging In

1. Go to www.betterbnc.com.
2. Click on **Contestant Login** and select **2026 CMA Pinnacles**
3. Select the appropriate contestant type:
 - If you are the **primary contact for your organization**, select **Contestant Manager**. Then, skip to “4. Contestant Manager Login.”
 - If you have been authorized to **submit entries on behalf of your media organization**, select **Authorized Entrant**. Then, skip to “5. Authorized Entrant Login”.
 - If you do not have an account, contact staff at info@collegemedia.org

Submitting Entries

2. 1. Click “Submit Entry” from the Manage Entries page
2. Select a Division (group of Categories)
3. Select a Category
4. Enter the entry headline or title
5. Add entry content (may vary by category): if you need instructions on “uploading your entries” see next page
6. Add Comments, if appropriate
7. Enter Credits
8. Click “Submit Entry”

Payment

3. 1. When all entries are submitted, log into your account
2. Navigate to the Manage Entries page
3. Click “Calculate Entry Fees”
4. Follow the on-screen instructions to pay for your entries

! If you entered Pinnacles in 2025, you have a profile, but your password has been reset.

If it's your first time logging in this year, use the temporary password: **bnc** (lowercase).

After logging in with this temporary password, the system will prompt you to update your password. The new password will be used for this year's Pinnacles contest.

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UPLOADING YOUR ENTRIES

- If an entry is determined to include any intellectual property not owned or properly licensed by the contestant, it may be disqualified at the discretion of the judges.
- College Media Association contests recognize excellent STUDENT work featured in STUDENT media outlets. By entering CMA contests, entrants are confirming that the work was created, edited, produced and published by students. Work from joint student-faculty collaborations and work by professional journalists (even if they are currently enrolled in a program) should not be submitted.
- Each entry must have been created during the most recent academic year.
- Entries are limited. Each media outlet at a college or university may submit only one entry per category. A college or university may have multiple media outlets, but each outlet may submit only one entry per category.
- An entry may only be submitted once for an individual award. Entries submitted in multiple categories will be disqualified.
- Two-year schools may enter in the Two-Year Division OR in the school size division most appropriate for the campus size. No work may be entered in two divisions in the same category.
- AI policy: The final product must be student-authored and human-created.
- All categories must be submitted online. Online entries can include links, PDF, TXT, GIF, PNG, or JPG files.

Make sure your content is accessible online for the entire contest and awards process.

Test your links from outside your organization to ensure they work properly.

You can upload audio and video content to free streaming sites like:

- Audio: kiwi6.com, soundcloud.com
- Video: youtube.com, vimeo.com

Important: Do not use links that are behind paywalls or require passwords.

Judges will not request access or wait for fixes. Entries that can't be accessed will be disqualified.

Film & Audio Festival

The CMA Film and Audio Festival is accepting entries as part of the overall Pinnacles process.

Entrants will have the opportunity to win a Pinnacle AND be featured in the 2026 CMA Film and Audio Festival in Kansas City.

If you've entered the work in the Festival before, you'll simply complete your entries in the Pinnacles system. Be sure to read and follow the instructions for ensuring your work is visible to judges and available for screening.

All submissions MUST be links. Video and audio files can not be uploaded to BNC.

By entering, you agree to the following:

- The video may be shown at the Film and Audio Festival Screening at the convention
- The video may be uploaded to the CMA film and audio festival website for others to see
- All the work was completed by students.

CATEGORIES

Creative Audio Performance

Best DJ Personality

Short Documentary

Long Documentary

Creative Film

Vertical Short Video

Feature Package (audio/video)

Podcast

General News Package (audio/video)

Video Newscast

Video Public Service Announcement

Audio Public Service Announcement

Sports Feature (audio/video)

Audio/Video Sportscasts

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ORGANIZATIONAL AWARDS

Organizational Pinnacle winners are determined through a two-stage process. Outlets (newspapers, websites, etc.) earn a score based on their Pinnacle entries and the top five outlets are then ranked by a panel of judges.

HOW IT WORKS

Every individual entry that places in the top five (1st, 2nd, 3rd, or Honorable Mention) is considered a finalist and earns points:

1st place = 5 points; 2nd place = 3 points; 3rd place = 2 points

Honorable Mention = 1 point

- Only finalist entries are counted in the average (non-finalist entries are excluded).
- The outlet's total finalist points are divided by the number of finalist entries to calculate an average score.
- The top five outlets (by average score, within each division) are passed to a panel of judges, who rank them based on the submitted work. Judges do not see scores—only the top five.

EXAMPLE:

The Daily Newspaper (Division 2)

25 entries submitted: 10 entries are finalists:

- 2 first-place = 10 points
- 2 second-place = 6 points
- 3 third-place = 6 points
- 3 honorable mentions = 3 points
- Total: 25 points / 10 entries = 2.5 average

If 2.5 places The Daily Newspaper in the top 5, **and they have submitted and paid for the Newspaper of the Year category**, then their materials will be reviewed by judges for final placement.

CATEGORIES

Weekly Newspaper of the Year	Audio Outlet of the Year
Periodic Newspaper of the Year	Feature Magazine of the Year
Media Website of the Year	Literary Magazine of the Year
Video Outlet of the Year	Yearbook of the Year

ELIGIBILITY

To be considered for an organizational award, such as Newspaper of the Year, your outlet must:

1. Submit entries in individual categories (e.g., Best Feature Story, Best Sports Photo)
2. Submit a separate entry to the corresponding organizational category (e.g., Newspaper of the Year) and submit five (5) of the same materials (links, PDFs) that were submitted individually. Judges will consider the quality and breadth of the representative elements submitted. Entries must NOT include essays or additional information.
3. Pay the entry fee for the organizational category.

\$20.00 per entry

Important: If you do not submit and pay for the organizational category, your outlet will not be considered for that award—even if your individual entries score highly.

Each organization may enter only ONE organizational category.

Organizations are considered distinct if they have a separate editorial structure and staff, even if some content is shared. For example, a website that has its own editorial staff, but includes content from the radio station, would still be a separate organization.

Entering one organization in multiple categories will result in disqualification.