Starting a NAJA Student Chapter

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Our Mission

The Native American Journalists Association has more than 500 members across the nation. These members are the backbone of our operations.

What's the importance of a NAJA student chapter? Chapter development is one way in which NAJA engages students, professionals, associates and supporters from academic, nonprofit and corporate sectors, empowering them to attain the highest ethical standards for reporting on Indian Country.
Who We Are

The Native American Journalists Association, based on the campus of the University of Oklahoma, has a unique and challenging mission. Its primary goal is to improve communications among Native people and between Native Americans and the general public.

The work of the association addresses Native journalism and encompasses a wide range of issues affecting the development of Native media and communications professionals.

Native leaders have been long aware of the importance of the media to Native communities. Since the establishment of the Cherokee Phoenix, Indian Country's first Native newspaper originally published in 1828, there have been continuous efforts to address the news and storytelling needs of their communities. Today, Native media have progressed from local and regional audience to a national and international scope to meet the communication needs of Native people. Out of this historical context came the influences, philosophy and Native experiences which gave rise to the formation of a Native American Journalists Association.

In 1983, a group of 30 Native American journalists met at Pennsylvania State University. The conferees agreed that a national organization was needed to organize and support the Native media, address the widespread barriers and challenges facing Native journalists, and build on the strengths of Native communications.

The participants agreed to meet again in early 1984 at the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. At that meeting, they created a constitution and by-laws establishing the foundation for a national organization called the Native American Press Association.

The name was changed in 1990, to the Native American Journalists Association to better reflect the organization's broader goals and the inclusion of radio and television professionals among its membership. Prior to the name change, NAPA laid much of the groundwork for the present organization. The following year, the founding members sought and secured its 501(c)(3) or tax-exempt status.
Checklist to Get started:

- Create a chapter membership roster that lists each member’s school classification, major and graduation date.

- Include a portrait, bio (including school information), email and social media information for all officers. This information may be used by NAJA to list as resources for other students in the area.

- Create a list of school media information (newspaper, social media, web sites, radio and TV stations, etc.).

- Draft a nomination letter from the student chapter advisor, who must be a full-time journalism professor and a NAJA member at a sustaining institutional membership university.

- Draft an outline of student chapter bylaws. NAJA will provide a by-law template.

- Provide candidates for the chapter’s officers: president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. Each must be a current NAJA student member in good standing. NAJA recommends a minimum of four students to start a student chapter.

- Create an outline of three Native journalism initiatives (programs, membership drives, fundraisers, community service projects, etc.) for the school year. These initiatives are led by the chapter and initiative goals must be submitted to NAJA for approval. NAJA strongly encourages a fundraiser/s that supports sending student members to the annual conference and/or to support the Native American Journalism Fellowship for college students. NAJA is happy to support, review and discuss the developments of these initiatives.
Elections should be held for the following positions:

- **President**
  Responsible for overseeing meetings and chapter initiatives

- **Vice President**
  Responsible for operating the chapter’s social media accounts and for handling all marketing and communications aspects of Chapter initiatives. Steps in for President when necessary.

- **Secretary**
  Responsible for taking minutes at all meetings and disseminating them to chapter members

- **Treasurer**
  Responsible for ensuring dues from chapter members are paid for and for handling all incoming and outgoing chapter money
Annual NAJA student dues are $20 and include:

- A voting membership for Native American undergraduate and graduate students.

- Access to NAJA’s weekly newsletter, exclusive scholarships opportunities for Native media students and a discounted National Native Media Conference registration rate.
Adopt the NAJA Student Chapter By-Laws

I. Mission and Role

The Native American Journalists Association has nearly 500 members across the nation. These members are the backbone of our operations. What’s the importance of a NAJA student chapter? Chapter development engages students and connects them with professionals, associates and supporters from academic, nonprofit and corporate sectors, empowering them to attain the highest ethical standards for reporting on Indian Country.

II. Ethics

All NAJA chapters will follow journalistic ethical codes and adopt the Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics (www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp), and NAJA style guides that specifically address coverage of Indian Country. NAJA guides may be found at www.najanewsroom.com under the “Resources” tab.

III. Chapter Formation

Complete the affiliate application available at najanewsroom.com and submit according to the instructions. NAJA requires an online/phone interview with the potential president and advisor prior to student chapter approval. Chapter representatives must contact NAJA to set up an interview once an application has been submitted. Prior to the online/phone interview, a training guide will be sent to the potential chapter.

IV. Approval and Annual Audit

NAJA Board of Directors will vote to approve or deny any submitted student chapter application during the next available monthly meeting on a rolling basis.

Once a chapter earns affiliate status, it must complete and submit an annual chapter audit to the national office to maintain affiliate status. See annual audit information in Section 3 of this form. Chapters are required to submit completed audit forms to NAJA by March 1 annually.

V. Select a Faculty Advisor

The Chapter shall elect or ratify annually for a one-year (renewable) period the Faculty Advisor who must be a full-time journalism professor and a NAJA member at a sustaining institutional membership university. The Faculty Adviser shall be recognized as the official faculty representative in and to the Chapter, and shall act as the official link between the student Chapter and NAJA. The elected Faculty Advisor shall assume office on June 1.

VI. Officer Election

In the case of a new Chapter, officers should be elected for the remainder of the academic year during the Chapter’s first meeting.

Subsequently, Chapter officers should be elected for the following academic year during a meeting before April 15 each year.
VII. Meetings

The Chapter shall meet at least once during each month that school is in session at a designated location within the campus community. Meeting times and locations shall be voted on by approved by Chapter President and faculty advisor.

VIII. Removal of Officers

Any Chapter officer may be removed by a two-thirds vote of the entire Chapter membership during a special meeting held for this purpose. Petition for removal must be submitted to all parties concerned at least three weeks in advance of a special convocation of the Chapter and all parties concerned shall have the opportunity to present their cases. Grounds for removal shall be intentional misconduct so as to bring discredit to NAJA, dereliction of assigned duties, intentional violation of NAJA Bylaws or the Chapter By-laws (see chapter by-laws outlined in handbook), and/or failure to maintain acceptable academic standards. Proceedings in such cases shall be confidential. A removed officer shall be replaced by one elected by a plurality vote of the Chapter membership.

IX. Amendments

These bylaws may be amended by a three-quarters favorable vote of the membership of the Chapter, provided that the amendment shall have been proposed at least one meeting previous to the time of voting. Amendments to the Chapter Constitution and Bylaws, however, shall become effective only upon their approval by NAJA. Such amendments shall conform to the National Bylaws of NAJA.

X. Dues

Timely payment of dues shall be enforced by the treasurer. Membership dues for undergraduate and graduate students are $20 per person. Benefits of membership include:
- Access to NAJA’s weekly newsletter
- Exclusive scholarships opportunities for Native media students
- Discounted National Native Media Conference registration rate.
Meetings

From the beginning, it is important to establish a regular meeting time (preferably at least once a month) and place, which should be voted on and approved by the president.

Initiatives

The chapter should also brainstorm outreach and fundraising initiatives for each academic year. Three (3) initiative ideas must be submitted along with the application for the upcoming academic year.
Student Opportunities and Resources

There are many opportunities and resources available to NAJA chapter members, from conferences to fellowships.

Native American Journalism Fellowship

The NAJF is an opportunity for college and graduate students to deepen and broaden their reporting and multimedia skills, while learning from tribal journalists and news industry professionals from across the country. Selected fellows will have the option of gaining three hours of upper-level internship credit through their respective universities and NAJA.

Student fellows may receive:
- Multimedia training
- Professional NAJA mentor
- Skills for job-readiness
- Connections to media jobs and internships through NAJA’s national network
- Upper-level college credit hours
- Immersion in an on-site newsroom experience during the National Native Media Conference

The Facebook Journalism Project Scholarship

NAJA is a recipient of scholarship funding from the Facebook Journalism Project and will be awarding five $10,000 scholarships through the 2023 academic year.

To be eligible to receive the scholarship, applicants must be enrolled juniors, seniors, or graduate students at an accredited university in the United States pursuing a degree in digital media/journalism/communications with a commitment to storytelling as demonstrated by completed coursework, clips/work samples and a letter of recommendation from professor or internship supervisor familiar with their work and attesting to career commitment.

National Native Media Conference

NAJA hosts a journalism expo and career fair where attendees can network directly with recruiters, gain hands-on experience with the latest tech tools and invest in their careers with personal resume critiques and more. All attendees will have the opportunity to attend any NAJA breakout programs and training sessions.

Conference attendees will include: newsroom decision makers, leaders, station managers, reporters, producers, content managers, editors, freelancers and educators, in addition to tribal media and communications representatives from Native nations across the U.S. and Canada.

Check www.najanewsroom.com for registration details.
Free Press and Free Speech on campus

The Native American Journalists Association has partnered with the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education to provide guidance for student journalists who may experience barriers to free speech or free press on campus.

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), is a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization that defends civil liberties on college campuses. FIRE protects freedom of expression and association for students and faculty across the political spectrum.

You can see where your school ranks on their free speech policies in FIRE’s database; if you do not see your school listed please contact FIRE here to have your schools’ policies reviewed. Learn about your protest rights and political speech rights on campus. For more information on your free speech rights on campus and due process rights check out FIRE’s guides here. If you would like to have someone from FIRE speak at your campus please email rebecca.johnson@thefire.org. Below are some examples of when you may want to contact FIRE.

Barriers to free expression can take many forms. Censorship on campus often occurs through:

- **Refusal of recognition**: Administrators or student governments may try to deny official recognition to a student chapter because of its message or beliefs or because chapters at other schools have engaged in civil disobedience. Sometimes recognition is refused when the school believes a group is too similar in its beliefs to another organization.
- **Refusal of funding**: Student governments may try to deny funds for an organization, event, or speaker because of the message.
- **Requiring permits, permission, or quarantining speech to “free speech zones”**: Administrators might demand advance approval to hold a protest, post flyers, or distribute literature on campus, or limit demonstrations to a small area on campus.
- **Newspaper theft**: When newspapers are stolen en masse, often to prevent others from reading it. Newspaper theft is censorship — a “heckler’s veto” — that silences expression by rendering it inaccessible. For more examples of student press censorship click here.
- **Demands for security fees**: A college might try to require student organizations to pay for the cost of security for an event because it might draw protesters or because the event’s message is controversial.
- **Ban on campaigning**: College officials might move to censor student political expression because of a misguided concern that student speech regarding an election or candidate could jeopardize the school’s non-profit status.
- **Punishment for social media posts**: College officials sometimes try to punish students for protected speech over social media, especially when the speech is controversial and goes viral.

At public colleges, these types of restrictions may violate the First Amendment. At private schools, they may violate the institution’s advertised or promised commitment to freedom of expression. Schools can’t promise free speech in brochures and policies and then refuse to deliver once the tuition check has cleared.

If you have experienced any of the above problems, or any other form of censorship, click here to report it to our partners at FIRE.