

\$10.5M Knight Foundation grant launches Knight Center for the Future of News at ASU's Cronkite School

New initiative aims to restore trust in media, help local outlets develop resilient business models

By Marshall Terrill , ASU News
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Arizona State University's [Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication](#) is launching the [Knight Center for the Future of News](#) — a transformative new initiative designed to reimagine journalism in the U.S. and build a stronger, more trusted and financially sustainable news ecosystem.

Thanks to a \$10.5 million grant from [John S. and James L. Knight Foundation](#) and an additional \$4 million investment from ASU, the Knight Center will serve as a national hub for research, experimentation and practical solutions to the most urgent challenges in journalism.

ASU President Michael Crow believes the Knight Center is crucial for maintaining the integrity of journalism and driving it forward.

“ASU tackles society’s pressing challenges, and collaborating with Knight Foundation to advance a new era of exceptional journalism is imperative to the health of our democracy,” Crow said. “The Cronkite School has built a legacy of leadership and excellence in journalism, and the Knight Center for the Future of News will draw from that base to develop new approaches for the essential exchange of information that drives our world forward.”

From restoring trust and credibility in media to helping local and regional outlets develop innovative business models to developing new ways of storytelling and newsgathering, the Knight Center will bring together creative minds from across the field to accelerate real change.

“Local news is rapidly evolving, with innovative business models emerging across the country,” said Maribel Pérez Wadsworth, president and CEO of Knight Foundation. “ASU and the Cronkite School have long been leaders in research and collaboration in this space, making them an ideal partner to help shape the future of the industry and to host this hub for information, connection and shared insight.”

The grant is the single largest donation in the Cronkite School’s history and is part of ASU’s Changing Futures campaign, managed by the ASU Foundation for a New American University.

“Knight Foundation’s transformational commitment to establish the Knight Center for the Future of News is a testament to their belief in the fundamental role journalism plays in ensuring engaged communities and a vibrant democracy,” said Lindsay Walker, an executive director of development at the ASU Foundation. “Knight has demonstrated unwavering support of the Cronkite School for more than three decades. Their latest gift will amplify the impact and reach of top-tier journalism education and training at a pivotal moment in time for the nation’s media landscape.”

The Knight Center will build on Cronkite’s nationally recognized “teaching hospital” model, ASU’s interdisciplinary research centers and industry partners.

The Knight Center for the Future of News will feature three dedicated labs and a central innovation hub:

Journalism, Community and Democracy Lab — addressing declining public trust in news and developing strategies to rebuild credibility.

Sustainability Lab — exploring revenue models to ensure the long-term financial viability of news organizations.

Innovation in Reporting and Storytelling Lab — experimenting with emerging storytelling and information-gathering tools, including artificial intelligence, to engage new, younger and broader audiences.

The Information Hub — connecting thought leaders, gathering insights and disseminating best practices across the industry.

Cronkite School Dean [Battinto Batts](#) said the Knight Center for the Future of News will play a key role in accelerating the needed innovation and transformation during a transitional time in journalism.

“As just one example, we’re seeing single-person operations launching their own podcasts, newsletters or blogs, where they’re building their own audience,” Batts said. “I’d say that’s healthy for journalism and a more democratized version of journalism because we have many more voices.”

[Julia Wallace](#), the Frank Russell Chair in the Business of Journalism, will serve as the Knight Center’s launch director.

“There’s so much out there about what’s broken in the media,” Wallace said. “What we’d like to do is focus on what’s right, what’s working and how can we make innovation happen even faster. That’s really our mission.”

Wallace said a national search for an executive director will begin shortly and that the Knight Center for the Future of News will be up and running on July 1. It will be located in the Arizona Center in downtown Phoenix.

Learn more about the Knight Center at cronkite.asu.edu/knightcenter.

Changing Futures campaign

This investment is part of ASU's [Changing Futures campaign](#).

ASU is committed to providing inclusive educational access and innovative solutions to the complexities of modern life. Fueled by philanthropic investment and unique partnerships, the university's Changing Futures campaign is committed to raising resources to have a direct and significant impact on the communities we serve.

The campaign focuses on six key areas: enhancing education access, developing leaders, promoting sustainability, strengthening communities, advancing health and developing impactful technology.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



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