



CENTER FOR MEDIA INNOVATION

Point Park University

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The Center for Media Innovation announces media partnership, shifts its focus in wake of global pandemic

PITTSBURGH, PA – The Center for Media Innovation at Point Park University is launching the Pittsburgh Media Partnership, an unprecedented collaborative effort among media outlets in the Greater Pittsburgh region.

The Partnership will support journalists from 20 participating news organizations as they work to ensure local communities get the information they need during this crisis. It was formed earlier this year in response to the dire economic challenges facing the local news industry, with a mission to support a vibrant, diverse and independent media ecosystem.

Its structure -- generously funded by The Heinz Endowments and the Henry L. Hillman Foundation -- supports collaboration among the media outlets when it can help the most, which includes significant enterprise journalism. While the group had been meeting for months to develop its first project together, the board recently agreed to shift the focus to COVID-19 coverage, given the unusual nature of the story and the resources required to cover it.

"One of the Center's primary goals is to support professional journalism, which is why we established the Partnership in the first place. Current world events and the impact its having on professional journalism warrants a temporary shift in strategy as we see news outlets struggle with sudden, lost advertising revenue while they strain their resources to inform the public," said Andrew Conte, director of the Center for Media Innovation. "We're grateful that our donors share our vision and support this shift. We could not do any of this without them."

In addition to finding ways to collaborate on pandemic-related news coverage, the Partnership also is in the process of determining additional support, including technology grants and funding projects pitched by freelancers to help supplement work done by staff members of participating news organizations.

"Our mission is to support our region's journalists and their work in the middle of a tumultuous time for the business of local news," said AmyJo Brown, project editor of the Partnership. "In that sense, the mission isn't changing with the current crisis."

The 20 news organizations that joined the Partnership signed on recognizing there are times that call for working together on a story that deserves more than any one organization can do on its own, Brown said.

“This effort was already going to be a historic collaboration among Pittsburgh’s media organizations,” she said. “Now it’s more of a critical one, given the daily breaking news cycle of the coronavirus pandemic and the demands on the newsrooms, which are all working around the clock to be sure everyone gets the information they need.”

While newsrooms are usually good at reacting quickly when there is an emergency or catastrophe to cover, a sustained, ongoing response to a crisis needs a different structure, said Stefanie Murray, director of the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University, which has been tracking and studying the growing number of collaborative news initiatives across the country.

Collaboration is always important, but it’s “simply critical” during times of crisis, she said.

“Journalists working together — across company lines — to meet a community’s critical information needs can better serve people, can reduce duplication and can be a vehicle to provide a much stronger, longer-term response,” she said.

Participating Pittsburgh media outlets include:

- 90.5 WESA
- Ambridge Connection
- Environmental Health News
- Homewood Nation
- McKees Rocks Gazette 2.0
- Mon Valley Independent
- New Pittsburgh Courier
- NEXTpittsburgh
- Pittsburgh Business Times
- Pittsburgh City Paper
- Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle
- Pittsburgh Quarterly
- Postindustrial
- Presente Pittsburgh Media
- PublicSource
- Soul Pitt Quarterly
- Storyburgh
- Trib Total Media
- Unabridged Press
- YaJagoff!

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The Center for Media Innovation at Point Park University is a state-of-the-art incubator and collaborative space designed to prepare students for success in a media industry intertwined with the latest technology, while also supporting professional journalists and educating the public at large. The Center features TV and radio/podcast studios, a photo studio, a multimedia newsroom, and a transformational presentation and gallery space. Visit CenterForMediaInnovation.com to learn more.

Point Park University, immersed in the heart of Downtown Pittsburgh, focuses on student success through innovative experiential learning opportunities. Point Park enrolls approximately 4,000 students in more than 100 undergraduate, master's and doctoral programs offered through its Conservatory of Performing Arts, Rowland School of Business, and schools of Arts and Sciences, Communication, and Education. The University's alumni and students represent all 50 states and 34 countries around the world. Visit PointPark.edu to learn more.