



PHOTO, 4B
Arts at A-State

Multimedia journalism degree program to be no more after spring 2027

Present Day: ●

<p>1921: First edition of The Herald prints</p> 	<p>1967: ASU-TV begins broadcasting</p>	<p>2014: Red Wolf Radio created</p> 	<p>2015: Journalism and radio-television programs combined into one college: the Department of Media</p>	<p>2016: Delta Digital News Service (DDNS) created</p> 	<p>2017: ASU-TV broadcasting for 50 years</p>	<p>2018: Board of Trustees approves creation of School of Media and Journalism</p>	<p>2019: Red Wolf Radio celebrates five years on air</p> 
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NEWS EDITOR

Arkansas State University's accredited multimedia journalism (MMJ) program will be no more after spring 2027.

Students currently enrolled in the program will remain enrolled and will continue in the path of that degree. Students coming in spring 2024 cannot select it as a major due to it being phased out.

Interim Dean Brad Rawlins, Ph.D., sent out an email Oct. 24 alerting students that the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) discontinued the degree due to low enrollment.

The ADHE found A-State's bachelor of science

MMJ program to be "non-viable." It was cut June 30, leading up to the Fall 2023 semester along with 12 other programs in the ASU System.

"I think one of my primary concerns is that we continue to have the reputation as one of the top journalism programs in the state," Rawlins said. "I am very interested in making sure that whatever changes we make within the program are done in a way that it continues to maintain the reputation we have as a journalism program."

A-State is one of two schools in the state with an accredited journalism program. The only other one is at the University of Arkansas.

Enrollment in the MMJ program has been on a steady decline. For Fall 2023, there are 20 students enrolled in the major. The minor numbers are

not tracked. Information about past enrollment was not available from the School of Media and Journalism (SMJ) or the Office of Institutional Research.

Last summer, Chancellor Todd Shields, Ph.D., and Provost Calvin White, Ph.D., met with faculty and staff, informing them of the cut and proposed the opportunity to combine as one degree plan with the creative media production (CMP) program, the other major in the School of Media and Journalism.

"I think there is a lot of crossover between those two programs. (We need to) find a way to maximize the use of those resources across both programs and create an option for journalism students to find an emphasis or an area within that," Rawlins said.

Lillie Fears, Ph.D., is the

MMJ program coordinator and oversees the curriculum for the program. Fears received both undergraduate and graduate degrees from A-State. She is on sabbatical until the end of the semester and thinks there is a solution.

"It's important to stay student-focused. If we stay student-focused and want to do what's best for students, we will figure out how to do that," Fears said. "I want to give people the opportunity to receive what I received. What it really boils down to is to just re-work it on paper and we can keep everything we have. That's all (the provost and chancellor) ask if you really look at it."

Fears mentioned the importance of Arkansas State's number of students with Pell Grants and marginalized backgrounds. She is from

Helena-West Helena, Arkansas.

"For me to sit up here and not come up with a solution so they can come and receive an education that will help and improve their lives, I couldn't sleep. I would never do that," Fears added. "It is my sincere plan to make journalism education possible for people coming behind me."

With the current degree program to end in 2027, Rawlins said students need to stay on track and not fall behind due to the phase-out, per ADHE.

"This is from the directive from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, we need to teach it out at the earliest available time, which is going to be spring of 2027. The letter even states to stay on track with this," Rawlins said about the phase-out scheduled.

The CMP and MMJ

programs both share student-led media outlets such as ASU-TV, Red Wolf Radio, The Herald and Delta Digital News Service (DDNS). Students of any major across campus can participate.

"I can imagine the publications such as The Herald a stand-alone sort of like Ole Miss," said Fears, former adviser, about the 102-year-old newspaper. "I feel like if it comes down to that one day, The Herald could still operate. There's a lot of schools where the media operates separate from the school."

Nevertheless, Roy Ockert, a 1967 graduate and alumnus of the journalism program, said the discontinuation of the degree program was a tragedy. He is a former Herald editor and an endowed scholarship donor to the program.

CONTINUED:
JOURNALISM, 3A

Photos courtesy of The Herald, Red Wolf Radio and Arkansas State University. Graphic by Rachel Rudd | Editor-in-Chief and Rebecca Robinson | News Editor

ASU System President takes job as CEO of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities

CAROLINE AVERITT

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Chuck Welch, Ph.D., Arkansas State University System President, will become the new president and CEO of The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Jan. 15.

The Washington D.C.-based organization, a group of 350 higher education institutions working to expand student access and opportunity, announced this change Tuesday.

"It's obviously a bittersweet career move for me," Welch said in an A-State press release. "I love the ASU System and the team we've put together and I'm proud of our accomplishments. But this is a terrific opportunity with an organization I believe in."

The ASU System Board of Trustees will meet via Zoom at 1:30 p.m. today to discuss Welch's replacement.

Ian Buchanan, an administrative specialist III for the University Advising Center and president of the Staff Senate, said he hates to see Welch leave, but is happy for him. "I had a phenomenal

relationship with Dr. Welch. He was very warm, very welcoming, very funny," Buchanan said. "I hope that whoever assumes that position in the future will continue to uphold the values of the university, uphold the values of our trustees board and also uphold the spirit of camaraderie that our board has with the faculty and staff."

Edward Salo, Ph.D., associate director of Heritage Studies, serves as Faculty Senate President. He said he enjoyed working with Welch.

"He knew everyone. When you saw him he'd say your name, talk to you, remember things," Salo said. "He loved being around students."

Buchanan said Welch has been a pillar of the ASU System and this will be a big change, mostly for staff and faculty.

"I don't think that there will be any type of negative effect as far as students are concerned. I think that we have great admin, faculty and staff in place to help with the transition," he said.

Salo said he hopes Welch's replacement will bring positive changes to A-State.

"Our next system president, I want them to be someone that's definitely going to be



PHOTO COURTESY OF ISSUU

Chuck Welch, Ph.D., speaking at Henderson State University, which is part of ASU System. Welch will be the new president and CEO of the AASCU effective Jan. 15.

out there getting more support for the university, telling all the great stuff we do and making sure we have what we need and what students need," Salo said.

Welch has been serving as president of the ASU System since 2011, in which he has hired chancellors for each of the seven campuses in the system. Welch served as the longest-tenured higher education president at Arkansas State University.

Under Welch's leadership,

the ASU System saw three campus mergers, the opening of the New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine-

Arkansas, the opening of the Querétaro, Mexico campus and the relocation of the ASU System office to Little Rock. Welch also helped foster the relationship between the Embassy Suites Hotel and the Red Wolf Convention Center.

He previously served as

chair of the AASCU Board of Directors from 2019-2021 and is the executive sponsor of the organization's New Presidents Academy and Emerging Leaders Program. "I'm excited to promote the likes of AASCU member institutions like Arkansas State University and Henderson State University with this national higher education platform," Welch said in an A-State press release.

THIS WEEK IN THE HERALD:

OPINION, 2A

- Unionize your workplace now
- There is no such thing as "bad" art

NEWS, 3A

- Mr. RH0meo
- Stress levels heighten as engineering students take FE exams

NEWS, 4A

- African Students Association brings Africa to A-State
- Mechanical engineering students host robotics competition

SPORTS, 1B

- Higginbottom shines in home opener against Huskies
- Whitlock tabbed SBC Offensive Player of the Week

ARTS & E, 2B

- A noisy review of A-State's "Noises Off"
- Pop Pick
- Set your expectations "Higher" for Chris Stapleton

LIFE, 3B

- Native American Heritage at A-State