

Game On

KSPA Fall Conference • University of Kansas • Sept. 24, 2025



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STARTING OFF	8:30-9 a.m. Check-in on the 5th Floor	Advisers, check in your schools at the KSPA registration desk . Students, join us for doughnuts and meet with yearbook companies in the Parlor on the fifth floor.
	9-9:20 a.m. Ballroom	Welcome by KSPA, the KU Journalism School Dean and state sweepstakes trophies!

Locations	9:30-10:05 Session 1	10:15-10:50 Session 2	11-11:35 Session 3	11:45-12:20 Session 4
Alderson Room 4th Floor Capacity: 75	Feedback is Fuel: Why Contests Lead to Stronger Student Journalism — Entering journalism contests can feel intimidating, but it's one of the best ways for students to grow. This beginner-friendly session shows advisers and students how to take that first step, from choosing contests to submitting work with confidence. Learn why outside feedback matters, how it strengthens skills, and how contests can motivate young journalists to reach new levels. You'll leave with practical tips, resources and inspiration to get started right away. — LAURIE FOLSOM advises the live MVTV student broadcast at Mill Valley High, MV Studios as well as Audio/ Video Production. During 28 years advising, she has taught both broadcast and print journalism along with graphic design and photo at Free State and Leavenworth High. Focus: Advising Journalism, Leadership & Team Building, Competitions	Adobe Unlocked: What's New & Next — Stay ahead of the curve with the latest updates in Illustrator, InDesign, Premiere Pro and Photoshop. This hands-on workshop highlights exciting new features designed to make your creative process faster, smarter and more dynamic. From advanced design tools to streamlined editing options, you'll learn how to apply these updates to real-world journalism projects. Walk away with fresh skills, inspiration and the confidence to elevate your storytelling with Adobe's newest innovations. — HEATHER LAWRENZ is the Adobe expert for the KU School of Journalism. Focus: Adobe	Building a Better Infographic – Design Tips to Capture Readers — Learn how to transform data and information into eye-catching visuals that tell a clear story. In this session, you'll explore design essentials — including style, typography, layout, color and imagery — that elevate your infographics from basic to professional. Discover how to make complex ideas easy to understand, while keeping your audience engaged. Whether for school projects, publications or social media, you'll leave with practical tips and creative strategies to build stronger, more effective infographics. — HEATHER LAWRENZ is the Adobe expert for the KU School of Journalism. Focus: Design	Illustrate Your Story: Photoshop Photo Composites — Bring your storytelling to life with powerful photo illustrations and composites. In this session, you'll learn how to create strong editorial visuals that blend photography, illustration and design using Adobe Photoshop. Explore new features that make editing faster and more intuitive, while discovering best practices for building polished, professional-quality work. From technical tricks to creative approaches, you'll gain the skills to craft compelling illustrations that enhance your journalism and capture your audience's attention. — HEATHER LAWRENZ is the Adobe expert for the KU School of Journalism. Focus: Design
Ballroom 5th Floor Capcity: 525	Freeze Frames — Student journalists at KU are photographers 24/7 when they are in my photo class. I ask them to use whatever cameras they have with them to document their daily lives. That means all kinds of candid moments are collected for an assignment that I call Freeze Frames. Come hear how you could use this approach for your publication — and how it can make great social media content too! — ERIC THOMAS has been a professional photojournalist, a journalism teacher, the executive director of KSPA, a columnist and a photography instructor. Most recently, for the Kansas Reflector website, Thomas earned first place in column writing among the largest publications in Kansas. Focus: Photojournalism	Tips for using type and space in yearbook layout — Want to improve your placement of photos and use of typography in your yearbook layouts? This session will help you avoid the hot mess that can result from not designing with purpose. — CAROL HOLSTEAD teaches visual storytelling and writing in the School of Journalism as the University of Kansas. Focus: Design, Yearbook	KSPA Visual Contests: A recipe for success — Interested in participating in the KSPA regional/state contests this year? Join us for tips on competing in our flagship contests. There's a method to the madness, we promise! We'll focus on entries for our design, photo, multimedia, video and social media categories. A separate session at 11:45 a.m. will cover writing entries. — KATHY HABIGER is in her 30th and final year of advising student publications at Mill Valley High School. She is currently the president of KSPA. Focus: Photojournalism, Design, Multimedia & Broadcast Journalism, Social Media, Competitions	The 3 W's of theme — If you've already planned your theme, you'll have a chance to see if you can explain the Why, Words and Wow — and if you are still searching for a theme, come learn about these 3Ws and why they are so important in your yearbook. We'll look at lots of examples. — BECKY TATE has spent 35 years advising student journalists at Shawnee Mission North. Active in KSPA and NSPA leadership, she's earned top national honors including JEA's 2019 Yearbook Adviser of the Year. Outside the classroom, she's happiest with a good book, a cold Diet Coke and anything Disney. Focus: Yearbook
Regionalist Room 5th Floor Capacity: 18	Building your Portfolio for Kansas Student Journalist of the Year — Looking to apply for Kansas Student Journalist of the Year? Learn some tips and tricks for building a portfolio from past winners that could help you with your own portfolio. — MAYA SMITH Maya Smith is a sophomore at the University of Kansas studying journalism and political science. While attending Lawrence High School, she earned 2024 Kansas Student Journalist of the Year. She currently is a freelance reporter for the Kansas Reflector. CUYLER DUNN is a student at KU and reporter for local news organizations including the Lawrence Times and Kansas Reflector. He is an alumnus of Lawrence High School, where he was named the 2022 KSPA Student Journalist of the Year. He worked for KSPA for two years as a student assistant. Focus: Building a portfolio	Kansas Student Journalist of the Year: Help Me Get Started — You've gotten the advice. This two part session will give you more time to ask questions of the students who have won the honor and get their help as you start your own portfolio. — MAYA SMITH Maya Smith is a sophomore at the University of Kansas studying journalism and political science. While attending Lawrence High School, she earned 2024 Kansas Student Journalist of the Year. She currently is a freelance reporter for the Kansas Reflector. CUYLER DUNN is a student at KU and reporter for local news organizations including the Lawrence Times and Kansas Reflector. He is an alumnus of Lawrence High School, where he was named the 2022 KSPA Student Journalist of the Year. He worked for KSPA for two years as a student assistant. Focus: Building a portfolio, Advice & Planning	Theme Development: Becoming a Stronger Designer — This session will focus on the details of designing your pages while making sure that your theme is driving the choices that you make in your design. We will discuss connecting the coverage, design and copy to the theme that you have selected. — KRISTY DEKAT is a member of the KSPA board and has been a journalism adviser for 25 years. She is the publications adviser at Gardner Edgerton High School where she advises the Trailblazer (yearbook) and The Blazer (online news). She strives to share her passion for journalism with her students. Focus: Design, Yearbook, News Mags	From Classroom to Camera: Elevating Student Broadcasting — Learn how ASB Classroom, an online broadcast curriculum, equips advisers and students with the tools to produce professional, engaging content. This session highlights strategies to simplify instruction, spark creativity, and build real-world broadcast skills that elevate any high school program. — LAURIE FOLSOM advises the live MVTV student broadcast at Mill Valley High, MV Studios as well as Audio/ Video Production. During 28 years advising, she has taught both broadcast and print journalism along with graphic design and photo at Free State and Leavenworth High. Focus: Multimedia & Broadcast Journalism, Advising/Teaching Journalism
Big XII Room 5th Floor Capacity: 75	Nose down, butt up: How to find and write interesting stories — Want to be an investigative reporter? We'll talk about building sources, finding leverage, speaking truth to power, and not being dull. — SHERMAN SMITH is the editor in chief of Kansas Reflector, which he founded in 2020. A three-time Kansas Press Association journalist of the year, he writes about things powerful people don't want you to know. Focus: Reporting, Writing	Sports Journalism in a New Era — From podcasting to website creation while keeping old school journalism at your roots. — JEFF WURTZ is the host of the TVL Spotlight, a high school sports podcast in the Twin Valley League in Northeast Kansas. Focus: Multimedia & Broadcast Journalism, Social Media, Sports Journalism, Writing	Streamline your photo workflow with Lightroom — From basic editing tools to using presets for consistent style, we'll explore how to use Adobe Lightroom for the complete photo workflow. We'll cover the basics of editing, how to batch edit photos to save time, and ensure work is publication-ready. — HEATHER SPRINGER , CJE, has been the adviser at Olathe South since 2018. Outside of advising, Springer is a professional photographer, a gym rat, a scuba diver and a mom to many adorable fur children. Focus: Photojournalism	KSPA Writing Contests: A recipe for success — Interested in participating in the KSPA regional/state contests this year? Join us for tips on competing in our flagship contests. There's a method to the madness, we promise! — KATHY HABIGER is in her 30th and final year of advising student publications at Mill Valley High School. She is currently the president of KSPA. Focus: Writing, Competitions

International Room 5th Floor Capacity: 20	Editors' Round Table — As an editor of a publication, it can sometimes feel like you're on an island and no one else "gets it." Come meet editors from other schools to see what works for them, share ideas and get help if needed. —MICHELLE HUSS & RACHEL CHUSHUK advise publications in the Blue Valley school district in Johnson County, Kansas. Both Chushuk and Huss have almost 35 years of combined experience advising award-winning yearbooks, newspapers & websites. They are full of ideas and can problem solve with the best of them! Focus: Leadership & Team Building	Show me how — You've got the idea. Now you need the advice of an expert reporter who has reported on just about everything you can think of. Come to this session to get help with those tricky reporting questions. —HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH has been a reporter for The Associated Press for nearly 25 years, covering crime, courts, education, features and more. Before that she worked at The Topeka Capital-Journal. She loves kayaking in her free time. Focus: Reporting, Advice & Planning	Clean Your Copy — The goal: The best work you can publish. The gremlin: Sloppy mistakes. This session: How to recognize and fix common errors so your publication is polished and professional. —LISA MCLENDON is associate dean for student success at the University of Kansas School of Journalism and teaches editing and writing classes. She arrived at KU in 2012 after spending 12 years as a newspaper copy editor in Wichita and Denton, Texas. Focus: Editing, Writing	Take Cover! — Find Coverage Ideas for your publication. —AMY MORGAN & TUCKER LOVE are journalism teachers at Shawnee Mission West and Shawnee Mission South High Schools. Focus: Ideas & Brainstorming
Jayhawk Room 5th Floor Capacity: 80	The Day After — What TikTok and the Tabloids Can Teach Us About Continuing Coverage — We tend to focus on getting one big story, but what if the news is still developing? We'll explore what merits a follow-up and how to make it compelling. —MEGAN MOSER is the executive editor of the combined Manhattan Mercury and News Radio KMAN newsmag in Manhattan, Kansas. She is a graduate of Kansas State University, where she was editor-in-chief of the Collegian newspaper. Focus: Editing, Multimedia & Broadcast Journalism, Reporting, Social Media, Writing	AI basics for journalists — Generative AI is everywhere, but that doesn't mean it's appropriate for everything. We'll talk about what AI actually does, where and how it can help journalists, and where journalists need to be cautious. —LISA MCLENDON is associate dean for student success at the University of Kansas School of Journalism and teaches editing and writing classes. She arrived at KU in 2012 after spending 12 years as a newspaper copy editor in Wichita and Denton, Texas. Focus: AI & Journalism	Ingredients of Creativity — So you just finished making an entire yearbook last year from scratch, or just finished all your newspaper issues. How do you come up with something new and fresh? In this session, we'll talk about how to come up with new, unique ideas and make the creative process work for you and your staff. —CHRIS HEADY advises the yearbook and newspaper at Shawnee Mission Northwest High School. His students have won state and national awards for writing, design and photography, including NSPA Pacemakers and Best of Show awards. Heady was a 2025 JEA Rising Star recipient. Focus: Ingredients of Creativity	Editorial Cartoons and Why Satire is More Important Now than Ever — Learn how to use editorial cartoons to comment on issues in a fun and effective way while bringing new students into your publication. —BRENDAN PRAEGER is a KSPA board member who has advised award-winning publications at Wabaunsee High School and Manhattan High School. He currently teaches English at Rock Creek High School. Focus: Design, Social Media, Writing
Centennial Room 6th Floor Capacity: 30	Be the Unicorn — 12 ways to become a better leader — Based on William Vanderbloemen's book of the same name, we'll look at 12 practical ways to become a better leader for your publication. Whether you're a leader by title or just want to support others in your publication, the world can always use more unicorns! —HEATHER SPRINGER, CJE , has been the adviser at Olathe South since 2018. Outside of advising, Springer is a professional photographer, a gym rat, a scuba diver and a mom to many adorable fur children. Focus: Leadership & Team Building	You Have to Care About Details — A big part of reporting is noticing details. What is a person wearing? What gestures are they making? What is their tone of voice? What's in the background? What color is the vehicle, and what kind of vehicle is it? Word choices matter. —JOHN HANNA has been a reporter for The Associated Press in Topeka since 1986. He's a member of the Kansas Newspaper Hall of Fame. Focus: Reporting	Copyright, or Copywrong? Understanding the basics of fair use — How many times have you wondered whether you can use that picture you found online? Can you just create something using AI? Who owns that image? We'll talk about how to address those questions and more — and how to protect your own work. —GENELLE BELMAS teaches and researches media law at the University of Kansas J-School. She lives and breathes the First Amendment, and when she's not thinking about free speech, she's drinking coffee, knitting, and collecting index cards. #freespeechrocks Focus: Law & Ethics	Learning on (and about) the Fly — I had no idea that there was a fly that produced flesh-eating maggots that attacked mammals before an editor assigned me a story about efforts to stop it from reaching the U.S. and damaging American cattle herds. A lot of the joy of being a reporter is getting this kind of assignment and getting a crash course on a weird subject. —JOHN HANNA has been a reporter for The Associated Press in Topeka since 1986. He's a member of the Kansas Newspaper Hall of Fame. Focus: Reporting, Writing
Kansas Room 6th Floor Capacity: 120	Watchful eyes — AI is increasingly being used to monitor the work of students across the country. At Lawrence High, students sensed a new program raised serious First and Fourth Amendment issues, and they fought back. Learn more about how they advocated to get Gaggle off of their accounts with the help of the Student Press Law Center and why they are continuing to challenge the system in a federal lawsuit. —MORGAN SALISBURY is a sophomore at KU studying journalism. Before attending KU, he was an editor on the journalism staff at Lawrence High School. He and his peers were winners of the KSPA 2025 Courage in Student Journalism Award and finalists for the Student Press Law Center's 2024 Courage in Student Journalism Award. Focus: AI & Journalism, Law & Ethics	Storytelling: All it takes is an idea — Students will learn how to generate story ideas, how to take the idea and see it grow into a potential story along with visuals, discuss how to interview sources and who you might talk to and why. —PATRICIA WEEMS GASTON joined the University of Kansas after a long, stellar career at The Washington Post, where she was an editor. Gaston also worked at the Dallas Morning News, where she was an assistant foreign editor and co-editor of the 1994 Pulitzer Prize-winning series on violence against women. Focus: Reporting	Culture Builders — Building culture is an ongoing, important process for any publications classroom. There's no single way to build a good culture, but there are lots of things to think about. If you're looking for ideas and new ways to improve your staff culture, this might be the session for you! —TUCKER LOVE advises the Heritage yearbook, The Patriot newspaper and photojournalism staffs at Shawnee Mission South High School. All three staffs have received local, state and national recognitions during his last seven years at SMS. Love enjoys design, writing and drinking black coffee. Focus: Leadership & Team Building	Career advice: Find your passion and go for it! — Professor Patricia Weems Gaston began her career as a high school journalist. She took that knowledge, went to KU and became a Pulitzer Prize-winning editor. She offers a few tips on how to get the career you want. —PATRICIA WEEMS GASTON joined the University of Kansas after a long, stellar career at The Washington Post, where she was an editor. Gaston also worked at the Dallas Morning News, where she was an assistant foreign editor and co-editor of the 1994 Pulitzer Prize-winning series on violence against women. Focus: Planning for the Future
Pine Room 6th Floor Capacity: 45	Feature Writing: Interviewing and Quotes — A good feature story is only as good as the interviews. The session will highlight how to talk to people and use what they say to engage readers. —HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH has been a reporter for The Associated Press for nearly 25 years, covering crime, courts, education, features and more. Before that she worked at The Topeka Capital-Journal. She loves kayaking in her free time. Focus: Reporting	The Places You Can Go in Journalism — Every organization is looking for great storytellers. Learn about the careers connected to the skills connected to your journalism background from traditional media to social media. —STEVE ROTTINGHAUS is in his 11th year as the career and outreach coordinator for the KU School of Journalism and Mass Communications and teaches a class in professional development. He previously worked 20 years in the newspaper industry, primarily as a sportswriter and special sections editor. Focus: Planning for the Future	Continue journalism in college — As high school journalists, you're already journalists and media creators. How can you take that interest to the next level? KU journalism students will tell you about how they've continued to build their skills through their involvement in campus media, as part of campus organizations and with professional media. —KU JOURNALISM STUDENT PANEL includes Quinn Mozena, Advertising Club president; Ryn Drummond, Media Crossroads, producer and intern at WIBW; Gabe Carter, KU PRSSA president; Emily Harter, UDK editor; and Maya Smith, honors journalism student who has interned at the Eudora Times and freelanced for the Kansas Reflector. Focus: Planning for the Future	Ethics of Photo Selection — How do you report the news when the photo shows an unpleasant scene? This session will show you how to use ethics to help you decide which photo is the right one. —STEVE WOLGAST worked in newsrooms for 19 years before making the move to higher education. After 10 years at K-State, where he was the adviser to the Kansas State Collegian, he moved to KU to become the Knight Chair in Audience and Community Engagement in News. Focus: Law & Ethics, Photojournalism
Divine Nine Room 6th Floor Capacity: 30	Esports Press Conference — Welcome to the inaugural season of Esports in Kansas. The Kansas State High School Activities Association voted to add an Esports state championship this year, and many of your schools will be filling out teams. Get a jump start on your stories by attending this session in which students will interview Jeremy Holaday, assistant executive director of KSHSAA, in a press conference style setting, facilitated by a KU journalism student with lots of experience reporting on athletics. Then use that information to help you shape stories about Esports in your student publications! —JEREMY HOLADAY is assistant executive director of the Kansas State High School Activities Association. JACK RITTER is a junior in the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications. Focus: Hands-on Reporting, Sports Journalism	Showing Off the Business Skills Gained in Student Media — Of course, you've learned excellent writing and communication skills working in student media. But many students pick up many types of business skills employers really want. This session will help you translate your business skills onto a résumé and LinkedIn. We'll also talk about ways you can build even more skills in advertising, public relations and social media while supporting and promoting your publications. —SARAH CAVANAH is an assistant professor in the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas. She has worked for several scholastic media organizations and specializes in researching student media. Focus: Advertising, Planning for the Future	Word by Word, Column by column — More than 100 columns later, I have a few insights on what it takes to constantly write your opinion for a news publication. As the weekly columnist for an award-winning non-profit news website, I've learned more about journalism than perhaps any other time in my life: finding topics, creating time to write, working with an editor. It has all demanded a discipline I didn't know that I had. And I love it. —ERIC THOMAS has been a professional photojournalist, a journalism teacher, the executive director of KSPA, a columnist and a photography instructor. Most recently, for the Kansas Reflector website, Thomas earned first place in column writing among the largest publications in Kansas. Focus: Reporting, Writing	Imagine Your Audience — Everyone gets a little treat at this session! (In addition to learning something new.) We will use chewing gum — and a lot of it — to talk about how brands reach their audiences. It's a skill that students at the University of Kansas learn with precision and detail, especially when they study digital marketing communications. How can you imagine your audience in more vividly? Come find out. —ERIC THOMAS has been a professional photojournalist, a journalism teacher, the executive director of KSPA, a columnist and a photography instructor. Most recently, for the Kansas Reflector website, Thomas earned first place in column writing among the largest publications in Kansas. Focus: Marketing & Audience Engagement

Journalism School Tours Meet in Parlors on the 5th Floor Each tour limited to 20. Sign up by noon Sept. 23.	NO TOUR OFFERED	KU JOURNALISM SCHOOL TOUR - MUST SIGN UP IN ADVANCE. CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP	KU JOURNALISM SCHOOL TOUR - MUST SIGN UP IN ADVANCE. CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP	NO TOUR OFFERED
English Room 6th Floor ADVISERS ONLY	KSPA advisers reception/work area, <i>Kathy Habiger, KSPA president - Host</i> <i>Note: Advisers Only</i>	ALL KSPA Advisers Meeting <i>Note: Advisers Only</i>	From Stress to Success: Simplifying Grading While Building Student Ownership — Grading student journalism can feel like a game of whack-a-mole, with every student tackling something different at once. This session introduces a flexible system that makes assessment easier for advisers while giving students meaningful choice and ownership. You'll leave with practical tools and strategies to boost engagement, reduce stress, and support authentic growth—all in a framework that works for both teachers and students. —LAURIE FOLSOM <i>advises the live MTVV student broadcast at Mill Valley High, MV Studios as well as Audio/ Video Production. During 28 years advising, she has taught both broadcast and print journalism along with graphic design and photo at Free State and Leavenworth High.</i> Focus: Advising /Teaching Journalism	KSPA advisers reception/work area <i>Note: Advisers Only</i>