

Services & Activities Fee Annual Program Review

Program Name: Central News Watch (CNW)
Program Manager: Francesco Somaini (ad interim)
Fiscal Year: FY2023

1. In what ways does your program support CWU students? Please be specific, yet concise.

Central News Watch is the student-led newscast available to the entire CWU student population and beyond on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#). With faculty adviser guidance, the student leadership staff directs and leads a team to cover, write, shoot on video, and assemble information relevant to students, CWU and the community. CNW keeps the campus and local community informed of stories and issues at and relevant to CWU, providing reporting and coverage on topics such as news, features, profiles, sports, events, community and national issues, and much more. All students gain valuable, real-world experience with working in a newsroom, journalistic professionalism, teamwork, management and working under deadlines. CNW students come from various programs and majors on campus, and the opportunity to form part of CNW staff is open to any CWU student, although basic technical training through certain COM courses is required before students may work for the newscast. CNW has also won regional and national awards for its work. A handful of student employees make up the editorial and leadership staff. With mentorship from a faculty adviser in the Media and Journalism program, students oversee the entire production of the newscast – from conceiving of ideas and laying out the schedule of the program, to reporting, writing, recording, and editing stories. Students also promote the newscast on and offline. They rose the challenges of reporting during a pandemic.

2. What are your specific program goals or learning/operational objectives? How are you assessing the effectiveness of your program in achieving those targets?

Students producing stories and other content for Central News Watch learn how to communicate effectively to broad audiences using cameras, TV studio equipment, and proper writing, identify and properly label facts vs opinions, employ news values to select information, and apply ethical standards to the gathering of newsworthy information. Students in paid staff positions at CNW also learn invaluable leadership skills, copyediting techniques, best online and social media practices, marketing, and media relations skills. We assess the targets through a weekly critique, performed in class by and with the support of the faculty adviser, of the published product. The faculty adviser also conducts an ongoing evaluation of the paid staff culminating in a mid-quarter and end-of-quarter assessment of said staff.

3. What is the overall purpose of your program and what service(s) does your program provide?
 - a. Are there overlaps or intersections with other university programs who have a similar purpose or service?

Central News Watch keeps the campus and local community informed of stories and issues at and relevant to CWU, providing reporting and coverage on topics such as news, features, profiles, sports, events, community and national issues, and much more.

The operations and service that CNW provides intersect with those of the other student media: PULSE magazine and The Observer. However, the newsrooms of the three outlets operate separately because they produce different kinds of news and feature stories. They may sometimes cover the same topics, but they generally do so from different angles dictated by the characteristics of the different media: different schedules, formats, and to some extent audiences.

4. How does your program align with the purpose of S&A funding? *“Supporting cocurricular and extracurricular activities and programs participated in by students in the furtherance of their education.”*

All students gain valuable, real-world experience with working in a newsroom, journalistic professionalism, teamwork, technical skills in video production, speaking in front of a camera for remote audiences, management and working under deadlines. By working for Central News Watch, students put in practice knowledge that they learn in virtually all the courses that they take at CWU.

5. How does your program support CWU’s mission and goals? (<https://www.cwu.edu/mission/>)

CWU’s mission states that “In order to build a community of equity and belonging, Central Washington University nurtures culturally sustaining practices that expand access and success to all students. We are committed to fostering high impact practices, sustainability, and authentic community partnerships that are grounded in meaningful relationships.” Central News Watch is a high-impact practice offer that allows all CWU students interested in it to practice the written and oral communication skills that the General Education Program aims to teach, learn leadership skills, enjoy their First Amendment rights, and build a professional portfolio for job hunting purposes. The student-run newscast provides an independent voice (that of CWU’s students—not CWU’s Administration or faculty) that shares information about CWU and the Ellensburg community necessary to pursue the “sustainability,” “meaningful relationships” and “authentic community partnerships” indicated by the University’s mission.

6. Please provide detailed information regarding who utilizes your program? (*Students, faculty, staff, community? Specific demographic information? Class standing, gender, ethnicity, transfer, campus location, etc.*)

Central News Watch is a student-run operation supported by the College of Arts and Humanities through the professional and academic advising provided by faculty and staff of the Department of Communication. The program is open to and utilized by undergraduate students of all demographics (including gender, race and ethnicity), class standing, transfer and non-transfer status. Because the courses taken by students to participate in the operations of CNW are typically offered in person on the Ellensburg campus, students enrolled on other campuses are rarely on staff.

7. How many unique CWU students utilize your program or services?

- a. How do you gather these metrics?
- b. If you do not, what is preventing you from getting that data and how are you determining usage by CWU students?

All 9,000+ students enrolled at CWU are served by and have access to CNW, which is a newscast that can be streamed freely from Facebook and YouTube. Between the Winter quarter of 2021 and the Winter quarter of 2023, 43 (forty-three) unique students have taken COM 442 which is the course in which students enroll in order to produce content for CNW. Of those students, 34 were journalism majors and seven Public Relations majors; the remaining two were pursuing majors or minors in Accessibility Studies and Political Science. Students who take on leadership roles, which are paid positions, in CNW take COM 442 more than once.

- a. An Oracle PeopleSoft (CWU's internal software) query allows the Department Chair and Secretary Supervisor to access the roster of the course taken by students who work for CNW.
- b. N/A.

8. Are there any current vacant positions in your program?

All student media have been operating without a stable business manager for over a year. A temporary business manager hired in the spring of 2022 left the position before their training was completed. A new secretary supervisor of the Department of Communication has been hired and is going to take on the position of student media business manager starting January 9, 2023. The new manager will be able to provide additional information once fully trained.

9. Given the budget reductions taking place and continuing for the remainder of the funding cycle, please tell us what specific impacts those reductions have had on your program compared to what was originally planned and including in your initial base funding request.

None for the reasons explained in the answer to question #10 below. The budget balance is positive despite the reduced S&A allocation because CNW employed fewer students as a consequence of budgetary constraints which prevented the Department of Communication from offering enough broadcast journalism courses.

10. Are there any circumstances or challenges that are currently impacting your ability to use your base funding allocation this year?

Yes. The Department of Communication supports student media indirectly by providing them with instructors who act as professional advisers to the different outlets and with coursework that students interested in broadcast take in order to learn the skills needed to produce Central News Watch. The Department's faculty budget has been reduced forcing it to cancel several journalism courses, which has made it more difficult to train and recruit leadership staff for CNW. As a consequence, for the first time in the department chair's memory, COM 442, which is the course taken by students who work and produce content for CNW, recorded too low enrollment and had to be canceled at the last minute in Fall 2022. The Department is working

on recovering its ability to better support CNW. Last but not least, the pandemic has also meant limited opportunities for traveling to conferences.

11. What growth or increases would you like to see in your program in the future?

We would like to see CNW grow but the enrollment decline CWU has been experiencing does not realistically allow us to project it.