

Scripps Howard Fund establishes Roy Howard Community Journalism Center at The University of Southern Mississippi

April 30, 2024

CINCINNATI – The Scripps Howard Fund is investing \$3 million to help student journalists learn how to cover under-reported communities while combatting misinformation and providing important journalism.

The Fund selected The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) to host the Roy Howard Community Journalism Center. USM, which plans to launch the center during the 2024-25 academic year, will receive \$1 million per year for three years to create and operate the center.

The center was established in honor of Roy W. Howard, former chairman of the Scripps Howard newspaper chain. Led by a team of professional journalists and instructors, the center will help students provide reliable reporting in their community while building relationships and trust. As part of their coverage, students also will debunk false information and seek to expose the sources of misinformation for their audiences.

“The expansion of news deserts across the country is having a profound impact on the people who live in these communities. Student journalists – who are the future of the profession – have a chance to help solve that problem,” said Mike Canan, director of journalism strategies for the Scripps Howard Fund. “We believe the investment in the Community Journalism Center at USM will provide essential news coverage in the entire Southeast Mississippi region. It also will help students learn how to reach people living in places that no longer have news coverage and might not be eager to trust journalists.”

The Roy Howard Community Journalism Center at USM will include:

- **Experiential learning:** USM will develop a pipeline of young talent for Mississippi’s newsrooms by putting university, community college and high school students to work under the professional guidance of staff, faculty and partners.
- **Local reporting:** Students will create professional-level local content, with source transparency as a fundamental value. The coverage will be available across platforms that connect with an underserved population in Southeast Mississippi.
- **Trust building:** The center will operate a “What is True” section, which will monitor websites and social media streams that have a track record of disseminating misinformation in the targeted region. The team will also host a “What is True” hotline for residents, a podcast and a website to help audiences to separate fact from fiction. The community will also be invited to attend “What is True” events to discuss issues related to news coverage and build media literacy.

“At Southern Miss, we are committed to preparing graduates who are ready for life,” said Dr. Lance Nail, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at USM. “The Roy Howard Community Journalism Center will do just that, as it will be the first fully realized media literacy initiative in Mississippi and will address the news desert of Southeast Mississippi. Now, more than ever, we must provide students with opportunities to flourish in a world where truth is often hidden and facts are seldom the headlines. The Roy Howard Community Journalism Center at Southern Miss will serve our communities while preparing our students to seek out and share truth.”

USM will partner with five Mississippi journalism organizations: Mississippi Association of Broadcasters; Mississippi Press Association; Mississippi Public Broadcasting; Mississippi Today; and Mississippi Scholastic Press Association. The partners will contribute expertise and awareness and distribute the journalism the students produce across the state.

USM will establish the center in three locations: the main headquarters on the campus in Hattiesburg, a bureau on the Gulf Park coast campus and a bureau embedded with Mississippi Public Broadcasting in Jackson. The locations will allow students to establish geographic beats, set up subject area beats and work with partner outlets to develop local and regional stories.

The center will be part of the School of Media and Communication, which is part of the College of Arts and Sciences at The University of Southern Mississippi.

[Learn about all the Scripps Howard Fund's nationally recognized journalism education programs here.](#)

This funding is aligned with [Press Forward](#), a national movement to strengthen communities by reinvigorating local news. For more information, visit pressforward.news.

Media contact: Molly Miozzi, The E.W. Scripps Company, 513-977-3713, molly.miozzi@scripps.com

About Scripps Howard Fund

The [Scripps Howard Fund](#), a public charity established by [The E.W. Scripps Company](#) (NASDAQ: SSP), is dedicated to creating informed and engaged communities through journalism education, childhood literacy and local causes. At the crossroads of the classroom and the newsroom, the Fund is a leader in supporting journalism through award-winning journalism education programs; scholarships, internships and fellowships; funding to advance diversity and inclusion; and support of First Amendment causes. The Scripps Howard Awards stand as one of the industry's top honors for outstanding journalism. The Fund's annual "If You Give a Child a Book ..." childhood literacy campaign has distributed thousands of new books to children in need across the nation. The Fund partners with Scripps brands to create awareness of local issues and support organizations that build thriving communities. The Scripps Howard Fund administers funding for the Scripps Howard Foundation, a private foundation established in 1962 to advance charitable causes important to The E.W. Scripps Company and the Scripps and Howard families.