

# **CRONKITE NEXT: Adapting to Expand our Mission and Impact**

## **Executive Summary**

Adaptation and evolution are the goals of this five-year (2023-2028) strategic plan, entitled **CRONKITE NEXT: Adapting to Expand our Mission and Impact**. This document is the product of a collaborative process that began in the fall of 2021 with input and recommendations from the Cronkite School's faculty and staff. It was completed by members of the Cronkite Leadership Team, led by the Dean, and facilitated by the University Design Institute of Arizona State University.

## **Strategic Goals and Priorities**

- Increase our commitment to serving the critical needs of students
- Increase undergraduate and graduate enrollment on-campus and online
- Update facilities, technology and infrastructure
- Communicate broadly and effectively
- Strengthen financial position
- Strengthen Faculty and Staff

## **Strategic Actions**

- I. Re-allocate and invest current resources into strengthening Cronkite as it relates to:**
  - The student experience
  - Recruitment marketing
  - Technology/Building Infrastructure
  - Marketing and Communications
- II. Seek additional sources of revenue while practicing fiscal conservatism**
- III. Grow our relevance and prevalence globally by strengthening and expanding our research and practical experiences in:**
  - Audience Engagement and Research
  - Media Literacy/Consumption
  - Misinformation/Disinformation
  - Journalism: Local, Investigative, Business, Global, Sports, Solutions
  - Strategic Communications
  - Innovation and Entrepreneurship
  - Culture and Inclusion
- IV. Focus on career and leadership development for faculty and staff**

# **CRONKITE NEXT: Adapting to Expand our Mission and Impact**

## **Introduction**

Media is prevalent in our global society, providing more job opportunities than ever – not just within newsrooms. Companies, brands, organizations and governments all seek people who can tell a story that can penetrate the white noise of information and be deemed credible by the intended audience. At the same time, media, as a business, faces some tremendous challenges, namely: the decline of public trust, the lingering lack of diversity and financial pressures.

The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication sits at the intersection of higher education and industry; a teaching hospital that enthusiastically embraces the responsibility to use its resources and expertise to confront media's contemporary challenges and opportunities. Cronkite's ability to continuously succeed in this endeavor and remain relevant requires that it constantly evolve and adapt to the changing conditions in education and industry.

That need for evolution is at the core of this five-year strategic plan (2023-2028), **CRONKITE NEXT: Adapting to Expand our Mission and Impact**. This document is the product of a collaborative process that began in the fall of 2021 with input and recommendations from the Cronkite School's faculty and staff. It was completed by members of the Cronkite Leadership Team, led by the Dean, and facilitated by the University Design Institute of Arizona State University.

During this 20-month process, it became abundantly clear that Cronkite is in a period of transformation. While we retain our status as a leading journalism school that teaches students how to become reporters, editors and producers, we have also expanded our emphasis and offerings in the field of strategic communications. We must now prepare to expand our scope even further, due to a confluence of societal and economic factors, and emerging enrollment trends in higher education. This mandates that we also focus on training people to be effective and responsible consumers, developers, and conveyors of media, regardless of whether they become journalists or strategic communicators in the formal sense. This is essential to our world, essential for our discipline, essential for Cronkite.

Cronkite must, therefore, increasingly embrace its role as a mass communication school that serves a diversity of learners. We must reach as many people as possible; in as many modalities as possible, aligning with Arizona State University's charter and its nine design aspirations as the New American University. And we must do this guided by the values and principles that we have always adhered to: fairness, accuracy, innovation, an appreciation for diversity, and excellence in execution. This is our path forward for continued relevance and sustainability as a school.

We approach this evolution and expansion of our mission with many factors in our favor:

- A respected and recognizable brand among our peers in higher education and the media.
- University-wide support for journalism, marketing, strategic communications, branding and storytelling / content creation.
- Our operations in Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles, and our global programs, offering opportunities to leverage our place and serve new and diverse constituencies..
- The ability to reach broad audiences with courses, degree programs, certifications and events via the university's multitude of platforms and approaches to learning.
- A strong track record of harnessing the cross-platform power of our collective areas of expertise to shine a spotlight on specific problems and highlight potential solutions.

## **CRONKITE NEXT: Adapting to Expand our Mission and Impact**

- A discernible interest among the general student body of ASU in course offerings that satisfy requirements for the university's core curriculum.

### **Vision, Mission, Future State**

With facilitation by the University Design Institute, and inspiration and ideas from faculty and staff, the Cronkite Leadership Team developed new vision and mission statements as well as the description of the future state that we seek.

- We are guided by the following **VISION:**  
**We believe in the power of media to inform and inspire society to solve challenges big and small.**
- That vision is inspired by this **MISSION:**  
**We educate and empower communicators to create an informed and inclusive society, advancing understanding and connection among creators, audiences, industry and the academy.**
- We seek this **FUTURE STATE:**  
**The Cronkite School is the global leader in educating and empowering communicators. Our programs are scaled to meet the needs of society and accessible to students and learners of all levels and all backgrounds. We purposefully create experiential and immersive learning, outreach, community engagement and research opportunities to maximize impact in the world. Our students, faculty, staff, alumni and partners form one inclusive and global Cronkite Nation, united by a heartbeat of shared goals and values.**

### **Strategic Goals and Priorities**

Guided by a number of factors and sources, including, but not limited to, input from the faculty and staff from the Fall 2021 Retreat, recommendations from the Quadrants Analysis process, data on enrollment trends, and an analysis of infrastructure needs, we have settled on a clear set of goals and priorities. We have determined that Cronkite must:

- Increase our commitment to serving the critical needs of students
- Increase undergraduate and graduate enrollment on-campus and online
- Update facilities, technology and infrastructure
- Communicate broadly and effectively
- Diversify sources of revenue
- Strengthen Faculty and Staff

# **CRONKITE NEXT: Adapting to Expand our Mission and Impact**

## **Strategic Actions**

Our Strategic Goals and Priorities will guide our investment of resources, time and energy. Resource limitations require that we take a phased and strategic approach, addressing the most critical needs first, identified as those that have a direct impact on enrollment and retention, the quality of our educational programs, and the ability to reach and communicate with key audiences.

**Strategic Action 1: Re-allocate and invest current resources into strengthening Cronkite as it relates to:**

- **The student experience**
- **Recruitment marketing**
- **Technology/Building Infrastructure**
- **Communicating our story**

**Details:** Students are our main focus; our best ambassadors. We need to ensure that we continue to offer an experience that is supportive of their needs, and helps them complete their degree. We will hire additional staff in our student services department, emphasizing student well being and mental health. We will enhance our recruitment efforts by hiring additional staff to support our digital marketing and conversion rates. Our building, while still a gem among its peers, is in need of infrastructure and technology updates to keep it at the forefront of the industry. As such, we will implement a multi-million-dollar investment to update classrooms, our broadcast operations, the First Amendment Forum and the lobby of our building. We will also seek to acquire more space in the Cronkite building for our programs. Our capstone experiences and/or professional programs will continue to offer our students critical training and skills to succeed in the industry. We will examine the relevance and continued viability of these programs, evolving and introducing new experiences, where necessary. Marketing and communications are vital to connecting with key audiences and constituencies and telling the Cronkite story. This supports our enrollment as well as our fundraising, donor development and connections to alumni.

**Strategic Action 2: Seek additional sources of revenue while practicing fiscal conservatism**

**Details:** The Cronkite School must strengthen its financial wherewithal if it hopes to expand its mission. We seek to accomplish this through increased donor engagement, grant-funded programs, the development of new degrees and courses to reach broader audiences. We will make more of Cronkite's courses available for all ASU students in the general education curriculum. We will also expand our offerings to learners, implementing certificates and non-degree programs through CronkitePRO, our Learning Enterprise vertical. On the fundraising front, we will engage more large institutional donors or foundations, build better relationships with alumni, and other individuals whose giving priorities align with our mission. We will also seek more grants that provide access to unrestricted funds to support our operations. However, we recognize that such entrepreneurial endeavors, relationship building and grant seeking take time and energy to reach fruition. Therefore, we must remain fiscally conservative, managing operational expenses and discretionary spending. All professional programs will be analyzed for cost efficiencies directly related to revenue from enrollment and fees. During this period, we will

## **CRONKITE NEXT: Adapting to Expand our Mission and Impact**

also forgo or delay expansion of Cronkite programs and/or course offerings beyond our current locations in Phoenix, Washington, and Los Angeles. Our global endeavors will focus on study abroad programs, internships or exchange programs – initiatives that will not require us to incur the costs of acquiring or maintaining additional space. We must also limit or manage faculty course buyouts or release time, except in cases where release time is covered by a grant or other form of external revenue. This must be done to control personnel costs related to recruiting, hiring and training faculty associates.

**Strategic Action 3: Grow our relevance and prevalence globally by strengthening and expanding our research and practical experiences in:**

- Audience Engagement and Research
- Media Literacy/Consumption
- Misinformation/Disinformation
- Journalism: Local, Investigative, Business, Global, Sports, Solutions
- Strategic Communication
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Culture and Inclusion

**Details:** We will leverage the power of our strategic locations, leaning in to being headquartered in downtown Phoenix, the 5<sup>th</sup> largest metropolitan area in the nation, in a state that is highly diverse and at the forefront of key issues such as immigration, climate change, homelessness, sports, microchip manufacturing, misinformation/disinformation, diversity and culture, and political division. We will reimagine our offerings in Los Angeles experience to deliver a program aligned with student interests and enrollment, with an emphasis on content creation, entrepreneurship, inclusion, and culture. We will grow engagement in our Washington space by implementing a program that is more global, and focused on diplomacy, national security, as well as public policy and social justice. We will also pursue collaborations with other ASU units and strategic partnerships with organizations and other minority serving institutions from our DC space.

**Strategic Action 4: Focus on career and leadership development for faculty and staff**

**Details:** In our Future State, we are guided by this desire: “Our students, faculty, staff, alumni and partners form one radically inclusive and global Cronkite Nation, united by a heartbeat of shared goals and values.” To achieve this, we must work continuously to make the Cronkite experience one where people feel a connection, and that it is a place to advance and grow their careers. This means providing faculty and staff timely and clear performance evaluations, developing career plans and goals. And, when possible, and resources permitting, provide leadership training opportunities. The goal is to strengthen our research capacities, expand our expertise in professional programs, create career pathways and promote longevity and stability within our community.

# **CRONKITE NEXT: Adapting to Expand our Mission and Impact**

## **Guiding Principles**

Given that resources are not unlimited, but opportunities are abundant, we must use some guiding principles for making decisions on how to allocate resources and whether to embark on an opportunity. Here are some questions to guide our decision making:

- Does it strengthen Cronkite from a student experience, infrastructure/technology or marketing and communications standpoint?
- Does it align with enrollment trends/forecasting? What does the data say?
- Will it lead to innovation in our approach to education, the industries we serve and society?
- Does it provide access to more people who seek what Cronkite has to offer in terms of education and training?
- Does it support or enhance Cronkite's presence and relevance locally, nationally or internationally?
- Does it increase Cronkite's ability to engage donors (individual/institutional) and offer the potential for non-restricted, low-cost revenue?
- Does it fit with our responsibility to serve as a pillar for society, bringing people together in search of common ground and solutions?
- Does it help contribute to creating a culture of collaboration and personal growth among the students, faculty and staff?
- Does it align with the overall mission of Arizona State University and its nine design aspirations as the New American University?

## **Conclusion**

The year 2024 will be the Cronkite School's 40th anniversary. This is a pivotal time in the history of our school, one that will shape who we are for many years to come. The world needs more of Cronkite; both in terms of what we stand for and what we represent. Our school, our purpose, our work has never been more vital and important than now. It is, therefore, imperative that we expand our scope and reach, but do so with excellence and a commitment to the values and principles that have made us special. Our incredible journey continues.