

# University of Michigan's Wallace House creates new Knight-Wallace Midwest Fellowship

The University of Michigan's Wallace House is expanding its program with the addition of two fellowships targeting Midwest founders, editors and senior reporters who are focused on local and regional news.

The new Knight-Wallace Midwest Fellowship was created to combat shrinking and disappearing newsrooms in the Midwest, said Wallace House Director Lynette Clemetson.

"There are numerous challenges facing Midwest newspapers," Clemetson said. "Among them, the shift to digital and social news consumption and the expectation that content should be free."



(Image by Wallace House, Knight-Wallace Fellowships for Journalists and the Livingston Awards)

A recent [report](#) from the Knight Center and the University of North Carolina found that one in four newspapers in the U.S. has shut down or merged since 2004. Since then, over half of newspaper jobs have been terminated.

The Midwest Fellowship is funded by entrepreneurs Dug and Linh Song. The Midwest Fellows will join the rest of the Knight-Wallace fellows in receiving a \$75,000 stipend, health insurance, international travel and access to classes, seminars, and workshops.

The Knight-Wallace Fellowship is named after legendary 60 minutes correspondent Mike Wallace, who graduated from the University of Michigan in the 1930s. Wallace gave a large donation as well as purchased the house that is used as Wallace House's headquarters on the campus of the University of Michigan.

Ann Arbor, where the University of Michigan is located, became the first city to lose its daily newspaper in 2009 when the Ann Arbor News closed and merged with the media group MLive. The Ann Arbor News now publishes a paper twice-weekly and offers a daily online.

Changing these statistics "requires training, mentorship, and financial support," Clemetson said. She hopes the fellowship will fill the void left by disappearing news outlets.

Midwest News Fellows will team with advisors from entrepreneurship programs at the University of Michigan Law School and Ross School of Business to address the goals and challenges of journalism ventures. They will not have to leave their news organizations to be a part of the program and will receive up to six months of mentoring after the fellowship is over.

Applicants must be from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas,

Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

Peggy Lowe, a reporter for KCUR, said her life was changed when she became a Knight-Wallace fellow in 2008. Lowe is thrilled by the new opportunities afforded by the expansion of the fellowship and believes it acts as an “investment” in individuals who are innovating local news.

The fellowship “offers recipients the break of a lifetime,” Lowe said. “It changed my life. I got a break from the daily grind of a newspaper, I met fellow journalists from around the world, we traveled to places I’d never been, and most importantly, I had the time to really think about what the second half of my career would be.”

Other recipients, like Amy Maestas, a digital editor at the Salt Lake Tribune, said the fellowship allowed her to focus on learning ways to keep journalism sustainable.

“After the fellowship, I led a team of people across my company. Our work was nationally recognized by industry organizations, and we provided guidance to other newspapers,” Maestas said.

Other fellowship programs in the United States offer similar immersive programs. Some of these programs include the Nieman Fellowship at Harvard, the Knight-Bagehot Fellowship at Columbia, the Knight Science Journalism Fellowship at MIT, and the JSK Fellowships at Stanford.

“We are making a concerted effort to extend support to people trying to sustain journalism in the Midwest,” Clemetson said. “One of the key differences of this Midwest News Fellowship is that we will work with news leaders who cannot afford to fully step away from work during the program.”

Applications for the [fellowship are now open](#) and the deadline to apply is Feb. 1.

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