

2018 JACC NorCal Regional Publication Contest

JUDGE'S GENERAL CATEGORY COMMENTS

Twenty judges evaluated 589 entries in 27 categories for 17 colleges that entered the 2018 JACC NorCal Regional Publications Contest. In total 140 entries were selected for some type of honor: first through fourth place awards and honorable mentions in 24 categories. Judges awarded honorable mentions at their discretion if the quality of the work and the number of entries in the category warranted it. Meritorious honors were given to unranked winners in Enterprise News Story/Series. Some judges provided general comments about the quality of work in the category as a whole. Those are provided below. General Excellence in print and online categories were evaluated against a set of standards, not competitively. Individual judging forms with specific comments for each publication that entered will be distributed to each individual college.

DIVISION: NEWSPAPER WRITING

News Story: No general comments

Enterprise News Story/Series: The best of these stories show the power of using public records and interviews to build a compelling case. There is good evidence of digging in many of these stories. The ones that fell a bit short weren't as adept at blending data and human sources, even if the ingredients were still there. There was a good range of topics considered here, though sexual harassment and crumbling campus infrastructure were recurring themes.

Feature Story: No general comments

Profile Feature Story: Very strong entries overall.

Editorial: No general comments

Critical Review: Virtually all of the writing was fine, although there were a few entries that read more like features instead of critical reviews.

Opinion Story: My criteria for the winners of this competition were whether the piece was readable, organized logically and factually, and if I'd want to hire this person for my staff if I were still in the position to do that. All four of the winners are strong contenders and would be a great addition to any newsroom staff. Really a pleasure to read all these thoughtful pieces, each with a personality all its own.

Column Writing: No general comments

Sports Game Story: The winners in this category found interesting aspects of their events and parlayed them into compelling stories.

DIVISION: GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

Editorial Cartoon: No general comments

Front Page Layout: A number of publications showed significant improvement in their designs over past contests. The gap in quality between the consistent leaders and the rest of the field has narrowed considerably. There was one disqualification because only a single page was submitted when the rules called for three pages.

Inside Page Layout: A nice outing for the northern schools. While some pages were better than others, many stood out. Some of the bigger flaws were the out-of-focus photos which as a reader is a concern, and as a photographer I see red flags. There was also a redundancy of photos in some of the packages. A clear-cut Overall Shot, Medium Shot, and Close-up shot should be incorporated in any kind of photo layout... when the photos are basically the same shape and size, and there is no clear-cut Lead Photo, it takes away from the display.

Informational Graphic: The winners in this category displayed a sound understanding of the use of graphic design to highlight compelling information. However, a few entries were really just logos or advertisements.

Illustration: No general comments

Photo Illustration: No general comments

Student Designed Ad: Overall, I was pleased by the diversity of approaches and the general use of simple, striking, effective images.

DIVISION: PHOTO

News Photo: No general comments

Sports Feature Photo: Too many of the entries in this category were sports action images, not sports feature photos, as defined in the rules.

Feature Photo: No general comments

Photo Story-Essay: There were many strong entries in this category. It was difficult selecting the four top entries.

Sports Action Photo: Winners quickly stood out from the competition.

Environmental Portrait: No general comments

DIVISION: MULTIMEDIA

Webcast/Broadcast News: No general comments

Online Photo Story-Essay: Some common issues I saw in many entries:

- Lots of signs being held and too few moments of interest.
- Repeated ideas or angles that indicate poor editing.
- Focus, or the lack of. Faces should be sharp.
- Photog could get closer and/or provide different perspectives.

Video Journalism: No general comments