

The Voice Turns 80!

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Sports Editor

For 80 years, The Voice has documented the history of Fayetteville State University – but its own story began with uncertainty. Originally founded as The Fayetteville State Teachers College Voice, the first issue was released in February 1946. Its founding editor-in-chief, freshman Clyde Reid, was unable to serve after being inducted into the armed services. In an emergency session, junior Romaine Clark stepped in to lead the publication.

From its earliest days, The Voice operated as a working newsroom where students learned to report, write, and inform their campus community. The responsibility to report as both participant and observer has remained constant.

Former editor-in-chief Trey Nemeck reflected on his role, noting that “even one story can change the way a community sees itself.” For Nemeck, the newsroom itself embodied that purpose: a collaborative space where student journalists develop both their reporting and their understanding of the campus they serve.

That responsibility became most visible during periods when the paper had to rebuild. Because the organization depends on student involvement, its activity fluctuates over time.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, advisor Mr. Jeffrey Womble, now the university ombudsman, was brought in to help stabilize the newspaper, strengthening production and design through a partnership with the Fayetteville Observer, where he worked as a reporter.

Under his leadership, The Voice became one of the few student newspapers at the time to print in full color, he said, marking a shift that helped the quality of presentation.

Mr. Womble also recalled moments that reflected the pace of that environment. While preparing layout for an upcoming issue, student staff noticed a fire across Murchison Road at the construction site of the University Place Apartments, prompting them to scrap their planned front page and pivot to breaking news coverage – a decision that mirrored a professional newsroom.

That same adaptability defined the experience of alumna and communication and media studies Professor Deirdre Hawkins, who worked with The Voice from 2008 to 2010 during a period when the paper temporarily lost its print edition. Rather than pause operations, the staff shifted formats.

“If we can’t print, we’re still going to find a way to tell stories,” she said, noting that they would work with Bronco TV to produce news segments.

Despite limited resources, the experience built confidence and reinforced the publication’s role on campus.

“The Voice was a launchpad for me,” Prof. Hawkins said.

As the media landscape shifted, so did The Voice. For Ms. Nieema Williams former news editor and current FSU public communications specialist, who joined in 2016, that evolution included both traditional reporting and digital production. What began as an extra credit assignment quickly developed into deeper involvement after her coverage of a campus performance made the front page.

Ms. Williams later expanded into layout design, photography and digital media – skills she now applies to her work with Bronco Pride Magazine and in her role as director of communications.

That urgency carried into more recent years. Former Editor-in-Chief Keyona Smith, and current public relations professional, described returning to campus after a safety alert was issued, quickly regrouping with her team to report on the situation. They became one of the first outlets on the scene, working alongside local media and applying reporting skills they developed through The Voice.

For Smith, the moment underscored the responsibility that comes with student journalism – to report with accuracy and urgency. It’s an experience that reinforced her approach to storytelling and continues to shape how she engages with media today.

For current WABE reporter DorMiya Vance, the paper’s impact extended into long-term development. As editor-in-chief during the COVID-19 pandemic, she led the shift towards digital platforms, expanding its reach through social media and collaborations with Bronco TV.

Vance credits The Voice with building discipline, leadership and adaptability – skills she still applies in her professional work as an Emmy-award-winning journalist for Atlanta’s NPR affiliate.

“The Voice was and still is the foundation of my career,” she said, reflecting on how the experience prepared her to navigate both newsroom and digital media environments.

Eight decades later, The Voice continues to be shaped by the students who produce it. Each generation enters the newsroom ready to learn, contribute and leave behind work that builds on the university’s ongoing history.

Through the Years...



Section	# 1st	# 2nd	# 3rd	# HM
Best of Show - Newspaper	4			
Best of Show - Online News	7			
Feature Writing			1	
News Writing			1	2
Opinion Writing	1	1	2	3
Photography			1	1
Sports Writing				3

More than 330* Editions

62* Editors-in-Chief

27 North Carolina College Media Association Awards

* Statistics are current based on archival data available.