

VIMFest Rules, Guidelines, & Categories

About The Contest

The AEJMC Festival of Visual & Interactive Media contest was created by the Visual Communication (VISC) division, in partnership with several AEJMC divisions, as an opportunity to have your creative research, or student work, vetted in a blind-juried, peer-reviewed international competition.

Winners will be announced virtually, at the AEJMC Southeast Colloquium in March 2026. Winners will be notified in advance that their work is being recognized so they may virtually attend the ceremony. At the ceremony faculty and student awards will be given for Gold, Silver, and Bronze in each of the categories. Gold student winners in each category will receive a \$50 award sponsored by the VISC division.

Please read the rules and guidelines that follow, for all details, including entry categories, eligibility requirements, submission requirements, and judging information.

General questions? Contact the 2025-2026 Festival Contest chairs Shane Epping (sepping@uwyo.edu) or Chad Sherman (csherman2@setonhill.edu).

[Online Entry Form Link](#)

Faculty Guidelines

The rules in this section only apply to faculty submissions. For student submissions, please see the relevant section below.

Entry Fees

Faculty submissions are free. Faculty must be an active member of AEJMC and the VISCOM division.

Eligibility Requirements

1. Entrants must be current members of AEJMC.
2. The faculty competition is only for projects created predominantly by a faculty member, as opposed to work carried out by a student(s) with the guidance of a faculty member.

3. Entrants may only submit original creative work/creative research, for which they maintain predominant authorship over the project's content and aesthetics. Any non-entrant-produced assets must represent less than 20% of the entry or have been significantly altered from the original asset. Similarly, any non-entrant labor must represent less than 20% of the entry. All non-entrant assets and labor must be explicitly declared in the entry form.
4. Works-in-progress are ineligible.
5. Work must have been completed or published/broadcast or shown during the 2025 calendar year to be eligible. Note that a project could have been started at any time but must be finished within this timeframe.
6. Entrants must clear all licenses, copyrights, and permissions to ensure that the submission can legally and ethically be presented at AEJMC conferences and on AEJMC websites. If an entity other than the entrant owns the rights to all or part of the submitted program, the entrant must include written consent from the owner or an authorized representative of the owner in the entry form.
7. Entrants must grant AEJMC the limited rights to exhibit the work at AEJMC conferences and on AEJMC websites.
8. Entrants must adhere to the category requirements in which they enter.
9. Group projects are eligible in only some categories. Group projects are defined as: any entry where 2+ members work together to create a product. All team members must be listed on entries in such cases.

Submission Deadlines & Instructions

1. Entries must be received no later than 11:59 P.M. EST on January 31, 2026. Late entries will not be accepted.
2. There is no limit on how many faculty entries may be submitted.
3. All entries must be from faculty/professionals with a full-time teaching appointment at an institution of higher learning.
4. Work should not be openly attributed. Do NOT display your name or the name of your school in your work unless it is part of the design. All personal identifying information should be removed from your digital files including the metadata to ensure a blind review. If you are submitting a video, please remove the credits. Entries that do not meet this criterion will be disqualified. The work is meant to be blindly reviewed. Please follow these guidelines to ensure fair judging.
5. Entrants must follow the online procedures for electronically submitting all entries. Submissions that fail to work or are not comprehensible for any reason will result in the disqualification of the entry. Failure to properly complete any portion of the submission process will disqualify the entry from the competition.
6. Determine the appropriate faculty category for each entry:
 - a. Photography - Single Photo
 - b. Video/Animation
 - c. Graphic Design/Advertising
7. For each entry, submit the following:

- a. An entry title;
- b. A brief description of the entry for the judges to view, including a statement about your role in the production and the names and roles of any other people (or co-authors) who made a significant contribution to the project. Include in your description any attribution of any assets not created by the faculty member;
- c. A link to your file. The link should lead to the file where the committee can view the work (we recommend Dropbox or Google Drive for hosting your file). Please set permissions to allow public viewing. Do not move the file from this location until after the contest presentation in March.

Judging Process

1. Judges cannot be contestants.
2. Entries will be evaluated according to the following criteria:
 - a. Relevance to the entered category;
 - b. Craftsmanship and technique;
 - c. Aesthetics, composition, and/or principles of art/design;
 - d. Objective, fit, and context (how well does the work fit/meet the overall goal);
 - e. Creativity, uniqueness, and originality;
 - f. Use of appropriate technology.
3. Communication educators and/or industry professionals will judge submissions in categories that align with their areas of expertise. Judges will not be assigned to review an entry where there is an obvious conflict of interest or in cases where the judge is institutionally affiliated with an entrant.
4. Every effort will be made to conduct a blind review of each submission.

Winners

Each category will have the potential for Gold, Silver and/or Bronze winners. Honorable Mentions may also be given out if applicable.

Faculty Entry Categories

Photography - Single Photo

A single image captured through a digital or film camera for the purposes of journalism by one person/entrant. Utilitarian photo retouching, editing, or color correcting may be accepted, although images must not be rendered digitally to create a different image from what was captured in reality. Effectively, entrants should adhere to ethical norms of photojournalism.

Video/Animation

Any video or animation project including short and feature length works. Works can include live-action video, animated content, or a combination of both.

Important! For those who enter videos, you must enter the primary team and the roles of those who produced the film (such as the director, director of photography, editor, etc.). The only exception for a sole listed entrant in this category is if you've produced more than 85 percent of the entirety of the work on the film/video.

Submission: YouTube and Vimeo URLs accepted. Single and group projects accepted.

Graphic Design/Advertising

Visual work including branding, design, layout, and/or art direction, created for a product, company, organization, or cause. Advertising examples may include a single or series of print ads, advertorial video, direct mail, interactive & social media, experiential, and/or integrated campaign. General design examples may include branding, identity, retail, and/or marketing-based design material, such as logos, stationary (ex. business card, envelope, letterhead), posters, environmental, infographics, branding campaign, special event, materials, menus, wearables, packaging, retail design, or point-of-purchase. Editorial and multipage design could include book covers, magazine & periodical covers, editorial spread or feature design (single or multi-page), annual report, brochures, or catalogs. Interactive design is also accepted. Examples include websites, app prototypes, motion graphics, and UX design.

Submission: Submit a publicly viewable link to a single to the work in an industry-accepted file format. Solo or group projects accepted.

Student Guidelines

The rules in this section only apply to faculty submissions. For student submissions, please see the relevant section above.

Entry Fees

\$20 per entry.

Faculty who are members of the AEJMC VISC division may nominate one student who may have financial constrictions for the waiving of up to five entries. Please contact the contest chair(s) to apply.

Eligibility Requirements

1. Students must be advised by one or more current faculty members of AEJMC. Students don't have to be a member of AEJMC, but their faculty advisor/sponsor must have current membership.
2. The student competition is only for projects created predominantly by a student, as opposed to work carried out by a faculty member.
3. The entrant(s) must be the person(s) who designed and primarily created the work, or who supervised students in the design and building of the work.
4. All entries must be primarily designed and created by the entrant(s) and not by paid consultants or professional designers or through the use of pre-designed templates.
5. Entries must fit into one of the categories and can't be entered into more than one category. The entrant(s) must choose the appropriate category.
6. Entrants may only submit original creative work/creative research, for which they maintain predominant authorship over the project's content and aesthetics. Any non-entrant-produced assets must represent less than 20% of the entry or have been significantly altered from the original asset. Similarly, any non-entrant labor must represent less than 20% of the entry. All non-entrant assets and labor must be explicitly declared in the entry form. The video category has its own rules, note them below.
7. Works-in-progress are ineligible.
8. Work must have been completed or published/broadcast or shown during the 2025 calendar year to be eligible. Note that a project could have been started at any time but must be finished within this timeframe.
9. Entrants must clear all licenses, copyrights, and permissions to ensure that the submission can legally and ethically be presented at AEJMC conferences and on AEJMC websites. If an entity other than the entrant owns the rights to all or part of the submitted program, the entrant must include written consent from the owner or an authorized representative of the owner in the entry form.
10. Entrants must grant AEJMC the limited rights to exhibit the work at AEJMC conferences and on AEJMC websites.
11. Entrants must adhere to the category requirements in which they enter.
12. Group projects are eligible in only some categories. Group projects are defined as: any entry where 2+ members work together to create an end product. All team members must be listed on entries in such cases. Please consult each category description for entries.

Submission Deadlines & Instructions

1. Entries must be received no later than 11:59 P.M. EST on January 31, 2026. Late entries will not be accepted.
2. There is no limit on how many student entries may be submitted.
3. All entries must be from students or work created by students that was faculty-advised.
4. Work should not be openly attributed. Do NOT display your name or the name of your school in your work unless it is part of the design. All personal identifying information

should be removed from your digital files including the metadata to ensure a blind review. If you're submitting a video, please remove the credits. Entries that do not meet these criteria will be disqualified. The work is meant to be blindly reviewed. Please follow these guidelines to ensure fair judging.

5. Entrants must follow the online procedures for electronically submitting all entries. Submissions that fail to work or are not comprehensible for any reason will result in the disqualification of the entry. Failure to properly complete any portion of the submission process will disqualify the entry from the competition.
6. Determine the appropriate faculty category for each entry:
 - a. Multimedia (Group or Individual)
 - b. Photography - Single Entry - Journalism
 - c. Photography - Photo Essay - Journalism (Group or Individual)
 - d. Photography - Photo Illustration
 - e. Video - Video/Film
 - f. Video - Animation
 - g. Advertising, Interactive, and Design - Advertising
 - h. Advertising, Interactive, and Design - General Design
 - i. Advertising, Interactive, and Design - Interactive & Motion Design
7. For each entry, submit the following:
 - a. An entry title;
 - b. A brief description of the entry for the judges to view, including a statement about your role in the production and the names and roles of any other people (or co-authors) who made a significant contribution to the project. Include in your description any attribution of any assets not created by the faculty member.
 - c. A link to your file. The link should lead to the file where the committee can view the work (we recommend Dropbox or Google Drive for hosting your file). Please set permissions to allow public viewing. Do not move the file from this location until after the contest presentation in March.

Judging Process

1. Judges are not allowed to review entries from their university's students. The work will be assigned to a judge from another university.
2. Judges will be assigned to one of the following broad categories:
 - a. Video/Multimedia
 - b. Photography
 - c. Advertising, Interactive and Design
3. Entries will be evaluated according to the following criteria:
 - a. Relevance to the entered category;
 - b. Craftsmanship and technique;
 - c. Aesthetics, composition, and/or principles of art/design;
 - d. Objective, fit, and context (how well does the work fit/meet the overall goal);
 - e. Creativity, uniqueness, and originality;
 - f. Use of appropriate technology.

4. Communication educators and/or industry professionals will judge submissions in categories that align with their areas of expertise. Judges will not be assigned to review an entry where there is an obvious conflict of interest or in cases where the judge is institutionally affiliated with an entrant.
5. Every effort will be made to conduct a blind review of each submission. Wherever possible, entrants should remove information that points to the identity of the work's author.

Winners

Each category will have the potential for Gold, Silver, Bronze, Honorable Mention awards. Gold winners will receive a \$50 prize. Students must include a valid mailing address when submitting their work to receive payment. Payment will be handled by AEJMC's national office.

Student Entry Categories

Multimedia (Group or Individual Project)

Editorial/journalism-based projects entered here could be produced by an individual student or a group of students. Group projects can be submitted by groups composed of students in a single class, multiple classes, and/or across a single university. The multimedia projects submitted in this category could include photography, interactive designs, animation, web design, UI/UX, etc. or any combination of media.

Submission: Submit a publicly viewable link to a single to the work in an industry-accepted file format. Group and individual projects are permitted.

Photography - Single Entry - Journalism

A single image captured through a digital or film camera for the purposes of journalism by one person/entrant. Utilitarian photo retouching, editing, or color correcting may be accepted, although images must not be rendered digitally to create a different image from what was captured in reality. Effectively, entrants should adhere to ethical norms of photojournalism.

Submission: Submit a publicly viewable link to the work in an industry-accepted file format. Group projects are not permitted.

Photography - Photo Essay - Journalism (Group or Individual Project)

A series or collection of images captured through a digital or film camera for the purposes of journalism. Utilitarian photo retouching, editing, or color correcting may be accepted, although images must not be rendered digitally to create a different image from what was captured in reality. Effectively, entrants should adhere to ethical norms of photojournalism.

Photo essays must include at least 5 photos.

Submission: Submit a publicly viewable link to the work in an industry-accepted file format. Group and individual projects are permitted.

Photography - Photo Illustration

A single image/entry that illustrates a journalistic topic such as: news, feature, sports, opinion or political that incorporates digital enhancement with tools such as Adobe Photoshop, InDesign, etc. The entry can blend multiple elements such as photography and graphics.

Submission: Submit a publicly viewable link to the work in an industry-accepted file format. Group projects are not permitted.

Video - Video/Film

Any feature length or short live action video or film within the documentary/journalistic tradition that tells truthful stories about real people/real issues in the real world (versus imagined/fiction video). It can include animation as part of the video, but the primary generative work must reflect live action/interviews.

Submission: Submit a publicly viewable link to the work in an industry-accepted file format. Group and individual projects are permitted. You must include the names from your primary team and the roles of those who produced the film (such as the director, director of photography, editor, etc.). If a project is completed entirely by one student, state this on the submission form. Group and individual projects are permitted.

Video - Animation

Any 2D or 3D, non-live-action feature length or short animation such as brand story videos, original story, and explainer or how-to videos. Can include live-action elements but the majority of work should be animated.

Submission: Submit a publicly viewable link to the work in an industry-accepted file format. Group and individual projects are permitted. If applicable, you must include the names from your primary team and the roles of those who produced the film (such as the director, director of photography, editor, etc.). If a project is completed entirely by one student, state this on the submission form. Group and individual projects are permitted.

Advertising, Interactive, and Design - Advertising

Design created for the purposes of communicating a commercial or non-commercial message. Examples may include a single or series of print ads, video (30 seconds or less), PSA, direct mail, interactive & social media, experiential, and/or integrated campaigns.

Submission: Submit a publicly viewable link to the work in an exported, industry-accepted file format (e.g., PNG but not PSD). Group and individual projects are permitted.

Advertising, Interactive, and Design - General Design

Traditional graphic design elements created for the purposes of branding, identity, and/or retail. Examples may include logos, stationary (ex. business card, envelope, letterhead), posters, environmental, infographics, branding campaign, special event materials, menus, wearables, packaging, retail design, or point-of-purchase. Editorial and multipage design could include book covers, magazine & periodical covers, editorial spread, or feature design (single or multi-page), annual report, brochures, or catalogs.

Submission: Submit a publicly viewable link to the work in an exported, industry-accepted file format (e.g., PNG but not PSD). Group and individual projects are permitted.

Advertising, Interactive, and Design - Interactive & Motion Design

Digital design created for online or digital interaction or presentation. Examples include websites, apps, motion graphics, and UX design.

Submission: Submit a publicly viewable link to the work in an exported, industry-accepted file format (e.g., PNG but not PSD). Group and individual projects are permitted.