Pinnacles FAQ

Why did the Pinnacles change?

The Pinnacles process and categories have changed a bit each year, but the contest was overdue for a full revision. There were anachronistic categories and practices based on organizational history that was no longer relevant.

What’s the deal with the school size categories?

Many members from smaller schools didn’t participate in Pinnacles because larger schools with more resources and larger staffs won every year. Many other journalism organizations have categories so that similar organizations with similar resources compete against each other. It was time to incorporate that into CMA contests.

What are the school size categories? And why were those sizes picked?

The categories are Division I 10,000+ campus undergraduate enrollment (not including distance education), Division II 3000-9999, Division III 1000-2999, Division IV under 1000. The school sizes were picked based on the Carnegie Foundation’s categories which provided us with information about how many schools were in each category.

If only one Division IV school enters, do they win automatically?

No, any category with fewer than three entries will be grouped with the next higher category. The award will be designated with the division of the higher category.

How do you know this will work?

We tested these categories with the Apple Awards in March. We did have a few categories that needed combining, but the changes resulted in higher participation overall.

Will this be a lot more work for judges?

Yes and no. Yes, there are a lot more categories. But, this will hopefully mean that the categories will have fewer entries. A category of 170 general news stories is terrible for judges and unfair to students. Smaller numbers per category will, hopefully, result in less frustration for judges and fairer decisions.

Will CMA lose money on more trophies?

We didn’t on Apples. We hope that entries will increase overall and balance out the trophy expenses. And, improving fairness and equity for all of our members is worth taking some financial risk.

Why is CMA charging for organizational entries?

Free organizational entries are no longer sustainable for CMA.
Why are some categories gone, reorganized or renamed?

Categories were changed/created to reflect the changing college media landscape. The categories were based on consultation with members, college media leaders and industry experts.

Will the categories change again next year?

This was a significant overhaul. There will probably be adjustments next year, just as there has been each year. But there won’t be another major overhaul until a future CMA board looks at the contest and is aghast at how out-of-date it is.

I would like to help with judging.

Hooray! Email us at info@collegemedia.org