

Nov. 15, 2024

Dear New England Newspaper and Press Association Judges,

The Quinnipiac Chronicle is nominating Cat Murphy (BA '24) for the 2023 "Top College Journalist" award.

Murphy, who joined The Chronicle in the spring semester of her freshman year, served as The Chronicle 2023-24 news editor after having been the paper's associate news editor the previous year.

She received her Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from Quinnipiac University in May 2024 after completing her degree in three years. Murphy graduated summa cum laude at age 20 with the highest GPA of any graduating journalism student. She was awarded the School of Communications' "Outstanding Achievement in Journalism" award, which is presented to a graduating senior in the journalism program who has "shown academic achievement, made significant contributions to the program, campus life and/or shown excellent leadership qualities on campus." Murphy is now pursuing a master's degree in journalism at the University of Maryland as an investigative journalism fellow at the Howard Center for Investigative Journalism.

NENPA has encountered Murphy's name before. Her six-part reporting series on Quinnipiac's accessibility — which is attached, along with the cover letter The Chronicle submitted at the time — won first place in NENPA's in-depth reporting category for the 2022-23 academic year, when the judges wrote the following:

"This series is an excellent example of in-depth reporting that effected change. The reporter supported her findings with strong data that clearly showed that the university was grossly noncompliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Cat Murphy is a force to be reckoned with – and Quinnipiac is better off because of her."

This series reshaped accessibility at Quinnipiac, drawing attention to it and driving real change. Case in point, the university subsequently replaced all of the broken Braille signs in one residence hall and [later overhauled the Office of Student Accessibility's accommodation system](#).

Simultaneously, her co-written article on the Quinnipiac University president's \$3.85 million house in Arizona was awarded second place in the news category, and she contributed to the two staff pieces that won first and second place in the multimedia reporting category.

Murphy, whose nonstop investigative reporting defined her college journalism career, won second place in the Drake Group Education Fund's national student journalism contest for investigative reporting on intercollegiate athletics. Her winning story — "What happened to TK?" — was a five-week investigation into the bizarre circumstances surrounding the firing of Quinnipiac head women's lacrosse coach Tanya Kotowicz.

Murphy has also won more than a half-dozen Connecticut Society of Professional Journalists awards for her student reporting at Quinnipiac, including five this year. She won first place in the sports news category earlier this year for “What happened to TK?”, as well as first place in the general reporting category for her investigation of the university’s \$48 million hedge fund portfolio in the Cayman Islands. In both 2023 and 2024, The Chronicle won first place in the breaking news category for bombshell stories about [a former Quinnipiac basketball player’s domestic violence arrest](#) and [the Department of Justice’s investigation into the Quinnipiac physician assistant program’s compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) — both of which Murphy contributed to. She was also among the co-winners of the 2024 first-place award for page 1 layout, 2023 first-place award for innovative digital storytelling and 2023 third-place award for general reporting.

Nothing drove Murphy’s reporting more than her passion for public records. Her obsession with financial records — particularly with tax documentation, such as audits and 990s — was foundational to her reporting on [Quinnipiac’s hedge fund portfolio](#) and [consistent financial control issues](#). Likewise, her ability to obtain police records led her to [uncover an on-campus arson](#), while her deep understanding of zoning and building documents allowed her to [report on the university’s construction projects](#) unlike any other student reporter.

This past year, Murphy’s innate news instincts fueled her unparalleled coverage of Quinnipiac’s inexplicable administrative turnover. In the end, her reporting called attention to an otherwise unnoticed mass exodus of Quinnipiac officials that saw 14 senior and mid-level administrators resign over the course of 18 months.

But Murphy did not confine herself to hard news reporting — or even to writing. She was known to write the [occasional news feature](#) or [second-day story](#), and she was a consistent contributor to The Chronicle’s photo coverage. Murphy’s love for sports also propelled her [beat coverage of the Quinnipiac women’s ice hockey team](#) her senior year.

Murphy dedicated her college career to reporting the stories that matter, even when it meant facing enormous pushback from Quinnipiac’s administration. When all was said and done, she graduated having written nearly 140 articles on every topic imaginable over the course of two years.

For all these reasons, The Chronicle strongly believes Murphy should be honored as the 2024 “Top College Journalist.”

The Chronicle greatly appreciates your consideration.