

Ben Sessoms

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Experience

Carnegie-Knight News21 | 10-week national reporting fellowship at Arizona State University
Phoenix, Arizona

Reporting Fellow, May 2019–August 2019

- One of 37 hand-selected journalism students from across the country to cover local and federal responses to natural disasters in the U.S.
- Traveled to nine counties across eastern North Carolina and South Carolina to cover long-term disaster recovery from Hurricanes Matthew and Florence
- Conducted nearly 30 video interviews, including several hurricane survivors, regarding long-term natural disaster recovery
- Captured video footage in severely impacted communities across eastern North Carolina and South Carolina
- Assigned as lead writer for story focusing on natural disaster effects on impoverished communities in eastern North Carolina
- Wrote an 800-word story on flooding in Dillon, South Carolina, during Hurricanes Matthew and Florence
- Wrote an in-depth, long-form story on how impoverished communities are affected by natural disasters

The Appalachian | Independent student newspaper at Appalachian State
Boone, North Carolina

News Editor, October 2017–December 2017

- Assigned stories to reporters on news desk
- Determined newsworthiness of stories pitched from reporters
- Edited stories submitted from reporters

News Reporter, August 2016–September 2017

- Conducted interviews and researched online databases to gather source material for stories
- Primarily covered Appalachian State administration and social issues on campus
- Awarded 2016–2017 News Reporter of the Year

Watauga Democrat | Biweekly print circulation at 2,300 with 100,000 unique online visitors per month
Boone, North Carolina

Intern Reporter, May 2017–August 2017

- Conducted interviews by phone, by email and face-to-face to gather information for stories
- Took photos for assigned stories
- Covered local events such as former EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy speaking at Appalachian State
- Wrote an 800-word feature piece about an environmental group called Appalachian Voices

Education

Appalachian State University | Boone, North Carolina
Bachelor of Science, Journalism and Communication Studies
Class of 2019

North Carolina State University | Raleigh, North Carolina
Completed five courses in coding and data analysis
August 2013–December 2014

Activities

Appalachian State Debate Team | Intercollegiate competitive debate team
Debater, August 2016–May 2019

- Debated topics mostly based on current events and public policy
- Ranked as top 15 national debater during the 2018-2019 academic year

PR Director, August 2017–May 2019

- Wrote press releases after tournaments conveying general tournament information and team results
- Updated team social media accounts on multiple platforms to maintain online presence and awareness of team affairs

Assistant Captain, August 2018–May 2019

- Assisted debate coach in teaching new members how to structure arguments
- Wrote weekly news quizzes for team members to test overall knowledge of current events