



## Breaking Barriers: Navigating the Digital Divide in the Realm of Journalism

Auburn, Ala. — On the plains of [Auburn University](#), where the sunsets scream orange and blue and the eagles soar, much more brews on campus. It is not all about Saturday in Jordan Hare or lemonade at Toomer’s Corner; it’s about access and equality. The digital divide is very real for some students. Whether they can complete assignments on time is a question they struggle with everyday. Connectivity is an issue for many students that cannot afford Wi-Fi at their house or cannot get to campus easily to use their Wi-Fi.

Imagine a student sitting in their house, laptop open, ready to conquer their assignments. But wait—there’s no Wi-Fi signal, no high-speed internet. All that’s there is a loading icon mocking their aspirations. This is the reality for many students, especially those from rural areas or economically disadvantaged backgrounds.



Journalism student, Sarah, working on her degree at Auburn University.

“We often assume that everyone has equal access to technology, but that’s far from true. The digital divide affects students’ ability to learn, research, and participate fully in today’s interconnected world,” said Dr. Sarah Aghazadeh, Associate Professor of Communication.

For lots of people the internet is a privilege, not a right.

Sarah Cater is a first-generation college student majoring in journalism at Auburn University. Her family lives in a small town with limited internet options. When she returns home for breaks, her academic life grinds to a halt.

“I can’t access online resources, submit assignments, or even join virtual study groups,” Jasmine said. “It’s like I’m in a different universe and I’m scared to fall behind.”

However, [Auburn University’s School of Communication](#) isn’t sitting by. Professor Mike Milford, a passionate advocate for bridging the digital gap, said, “We’re not just teaching

communication; we're empowering our students to be digital citizens. That means addressing the barriers head-on.”

Auburn University is advocating for students to all have equal access to the internet. Whether that is ensuring that housing offers free Wi-Fi, or helping to establish Wi-Fi in local businesses around Alabama, they are on it.

These new [Wi-Fi hotspots](#) allow students to continue their education when they are home for holidays or breaks. Students like Jasmine are able to access courses, collaborate, network and stay informed while home.

Sources:

<https://academics.siu.edu/comm-media/journalism/>

<https://bulletin.auburn.edu/undergraduate/collegeofliberalarts/departmentofcommunicationjournalismcmjn/#text>