

THE UNIVERSITY STAR

Introduction

This is the official handbook of the staff of The University Star. All members of student media staff must read and acknowledge that they have read and understand the values and policies contained in this handbook at the beginning of each semester. This handbook will also be made available on the server for reference.

Changes to the Handbook

Any member of The University Star staff may propose an amendment to this handbook during the first 30 days of each long semester. The Editorial Board will be notified of the proposed change and should solicit input from the student staff. A change may be recommended with a 2/3 majority vote of the Editorial Board members present at the time of the vote. No abstentions will be allowed. No absentee voting will be allowed. The proposed changes will then be put forward to The University Star Advisory Committee, which will consider the proposal during its meeting during each long semester. Both the proposal and recommendation will go before the Editor in Chief selection committee, which will have final say in the matter.

Statement of Values

The University Star strives to uphold the following non-negotiable core values:

- Accuracy
- Impartiality
- Honesty and integrity
- Inclusivity and fairness
- Transparency and accountability
- Humanity and public service

As a student-led publication, we view our newsroom as a learning experience and strive to uphold the highest standards of journalistic ethics. We aspire to the goal of encouraging constructive conversation among our campus community and serving as a forum for discussion and debate.

Operational Policies

Office Hours

Student Media's central administrative offices and The University Star are open daily (Monday through Friday) from 9 a.m. to 5 pm. in the Trinity Building. Access to the building will be through key card only.

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Editors and managers will keep various office hours that will be posted. Depending on assignments, all editors are required to maintain office hours. Student Media does not permit remote employment for editors during the fall or spring semester.

Contacts

Inquiries regarding Student Media may be answered in person at the Trinity Building, by emailing the editor in chief at StarEditor@txstate.edu or calling the main office, 512.245.3487.

Building Access Policy

The Editor in Chief will provide the adviser an updated list of students each semester who will have key card access to the Trinity Building. This is to ensure the security of students and equipment housed in the building.

Do not allow anyone who is not a member of the KTSW or University Star staff to follow you into the building or to access the building. All editors and most staff members have ID card access, as does the cleaning staff. If an unauthorized person gains access to the building, call UPD or 911 immediately. Always make sure the door closes securely behind you. Do not prop doors open.

Be aware of your surroundings as you near the building and make note of any suspicious people in the area; if you see something suspicious, do not try to enter the building and call UPD at 512-245-2805. If you believe the situation justifies it, call 911.

Computer Usage Policy

All computers and equipment (printers, scanners, card readers, etc.) are the property of the State of Texas. Use is solely for students employed by *The University Star*. The computers and equipment are for *The University Star* assignments only. Personal use is not allowed.

Downloading software is prohibited. Students can address their software needs to the Media Specialist. Work files should be stored on the server and not on the local drive. The video department can store video files on local drives but must delete or move them after the project is completed. Files stored on local drives are subject to deletion every Friday after noon. Keep work files in the server as organized as possible. Please delete any obsolete files to ensure order and more storage space. Keep the computers and equipment physically clean and neat. Do not place any adhesives on them. Do not abuse printing privileges. Print only what is needed.

Contact the Media Specialist with any problems with the computers or equipment. Any physical damage, loss, or theft of the computers or equipment due to negligence can result in the placement of a hold on the student's Texas State academic record. This includes a hold on graduation, registering for classes, etc. The hold will be in place until the Media Specialist or other full-time staff member clears their record.

Multimedia Usage Policy

All multimedia equipment (cameras, tripods, mics, lights, etc.) is property of the State of Texas. Equipment use is solely for students employed by *The University Star*. This equipment is for *The*

University Star assignments only. Personal use is not allowed under any circumstances.

Requests to borrow equipment must be approved by the Media Specialist or other full-time staff member. If approved, students must fill out and sign a checkout sheet to document what equipment they are borrowing. Due to the limited amount of equipment, borrow times are limited to 24 hours. If a weekend assignment is required, students may check out equipment on Friday after 12 noon and will be required to return the equipment on Monday before noon.

Students are required to supply their own memory card for camera use. Ask the Media Specialist for details. While borrowing equipment, the student is fully financially responsible for the repair or replacement of any piece of equipment damaged, lost or stolen. On check in, students are required to ensure that all equipment is neat and orderly (cables wrapped properly, etc.). If the equipment runs on a rechargeable battery, students are required to charge it on the designated power strip in the Media Specialist's office.

Any damage, loss or theft of the equipment will result in the placement of a hold on the student's Texas State academic record, which includes a hold on graduation, registering for classes, etc. The hold will be in place until the Media Specialist or other full-time staff member clears the student's record.

Letters Policy

The University Star welcomes letters from our readers. Letters must be 300 words or fewer to be considered for publication. Writers must include their full name, mailing address, major and academic year designation (for students), phone number and e-mail address when submitting a letter. Submissions that do not include this information cannot be published. This information is seen only by the editors and is not used for any commercial purpose. Letters become the property of *The Star* and may be republished in any format. The letter may be edited for length and clarity. An editor will contact the letter writer if their letter is a candidate for publication. *The Star* will not run letters that are potentially libelous, discriminatory, obscene, threatening or promotional in nature.

Corrections Policy

The *University Star* strives to ensure accuracy in all its reporting. In the event of an error, an audience member should contact the Editor in Chief at StarEditor@txstate.edu within 10 days to ensure a timely correction. Corrections in the print edition will be printed in the newspaper and corrected immediately in the corresponding story online with a notation that the story has been updated. Corrections appearing on the website will be corrected in the original story on the website, as well as listed on the corrections page.

Advertising Policy

The *University Star* will not accept ads that are libelous; promote academic dishonesty; violate federal, state or local laws; or encourage discrimination against any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, age, color, gender identity, creed, religion, national origin or disability.

Advertisers must be honest about the products or services their ads promote. Content that is advertising in nature must be clearly labeled as such. It is deemed the responsibility of the advertiser to comply with all laws and regulations applicable to the marketing and sale of its product or service. All political advertising must comply with all applicable laws, including all federal elections laws, Federal Election

Commission regulations, copyright laws, defamation law, and other state or local laws and regulations. We reserve the right to edit or reject any ad copy, photos, graphics or entire ads. *The University Star* encourages responsibility and good taste in advertising.

Only student media leaders can determine whether an advertisement adheres to the student media advertising policy. Each medium/platform is required to abide by the stipulations of the student media advertising policy.

Privacy Policy

The University Star is committed to ensuring the privacy of our readers. We have designed this privacy policy knowing that our audience members are concerned with how their information is utilized and shared.

Information collected by *Universitystar.com*

When visiting *UniversityStar.com* our audience may provide us with two types of information: website usage information and personal information that is knowingly disclosed. With this information, we can keep our audience informed as well as enhance our readership experience when using all of *The University Star's* products. Please review the information below for specific details on how we utilize your data.

Personal Information Readers May Provide

Newsletter Communication

To keep our audience up to date on the latest news in the San Marcos community, *The Star* provides a weekly newsletter. Subscribers who do not want to receive newsletters from *The University Star* may choose to unsubscribe at any time. Any correspondence received via email may be retained including the content of email messages, email addresses and *The University Star's* responses.

Website Usage Information

The University Star's website utilizes cookies as well as analytic scripts to gather information about how our website is used. The information we gather through cookies and analytics may include the date and time of your visit, the pages that were viewed and the order of the visitation, the time spent on each page, and demographic information that Google analytics collects from its users. In addition to this, *The University Star* gathers Internet Protocol (IP) addresses to protect our audience in the event that someone may be attempting to access *The University Star's* website with malicious intent.

Information Shared with Third Parties

The University Star respects the privacy of our audience and sincerely appreciates the time you spend visiting our website or reading our newspaper. We will not provide your personal information with any third-party vendors and/or associates. The only time we may disclose your personal information is if required to do so by law and/or subpoena, or if we believe that such action is required to (a) conform to the law or comply with legal process served on *The University Star*; (b) protect and defend the rights and property of *The University Star*; (c) act under circumstances to protect the safety of our audience.

Websites linked to The University Star

In order to provide excellent service and reach all our audience members, The University Star's website is linked to several external sites such as Facebook™, Instagram™, LinkedIn™, Soundcloud™, Twitter™ and Youtube™. The University Star is not held accountable for the practices employed by external websites that are linked to or from universitystar.com, nor the information that may be published there. When our readers navigate off universitystar.com or star.txstate.edu our privacy policy will no longer be applicable and readers will be subject to the policies of the external websites.

Copyright Statement

The University Star is published by Texas State University as a service to the Texas State community and as a learning experience for aspiring journalists. The newspaper is overseen by the Student Publications Board and the Student Media Advisers. New issues appear weekly Tuesday during the fall and spring semesters and are distributed free on campus. The editor-in-chief and staff are selected through an application and interview process each spring. Opinions expressed in *The University Star* are not necessarily those of Texas State University's administration, Board of Regents, College of Fine Arts and Communication, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, or Student Publications Board.

The entire content of *The University Star* is protected under the Federal Copyright Act. Reproduction of any portion of any issue by any means, mechanical or otherwise, is not permitted without the express written consent of Texas State University.

Personnel Policies

Student Media Eligibility Requirements

Students must be enrolled at Texas State University each long semester (fall or spring) they hold a position with Student Media. Editorial Board positions require students to be enrolled full time with 12 or more credit hours and the ability to hold office hours on the main campus. The Editor-in-Chief must be enrolled as a full-time (minimum 12 hours) student at Texas State each long semester (i.e., fall or spring) of employment by student media. **However, students graduating at the end of any given semester of their employment may be enrolled in fewer than 12 hours.** Enrollment during summer semesters is not required, provided the Editor-in-Chief and Station Manager are each enrolled and registered for a minimum of 12 hours in the subsequent fall semester.

A student who withdraws at any point during employment must notify his or her student media adviser before withdrawing. Students must also notify their Student Media advisers before dropping a class resulting in the student completing fewer than the minimum hours required for the position.

All students must meet minimum GPA requirements to apply for employment and to maintain employment with Student Media. The Adviser will verify the overall and cumulative GPA of students applying for employment with Student Media. Those who do not meet the minimum requirement will be ineligible for employment. The minimum GPA for the Editor in Chief is 2.5, the minimum GPA for Editorial Board Members is 2.25, and the minimum GPA for all other Student Media staffers is 2.0.

Once employed by Student Media, students must maintain the listed minimum GPA for each semester they are enrolled and employed by Student Media. Failure to have or maintain at least the minimum required GPA will render the student ineligible and is cause for removal from Student Media employment.

As a regular practice, Texas State University faculty advisers will verify enrollment status, cumulative and overall GPA when students apply for student media positions at the completion of each long semester and at the end of the summer sessions. Student who apply or are hired for Student Media positions give faculty advisers the authority to verify their eligibility. Students employed by Student Media during the summer are not required to enroll in summer classes as long as they are enrolled and registered for the subsequent fall semester.

Staff Membership

Each Student Media member organization has its own method for determining staff membership. Only staff members are eligible for the full benefits of Student Media, including compensation, travel and advancement.

Staff Meetings

It is the responsibility of managers and editors to have weekly meetings with their staffs. These should primarily be used to plan ahead, communicate necessary information, discuss relevant issues or project blockers, and motivate staff members regarding their roles on the team.

Leaving Staff

Any Student Media staff member has the right to resign his/her position at any time. The resigning student is asked to submit a written statement of resignation to their supervisor and the Adviser. If this student has equipment belonging to Student Media, that equipment must be returned at the time of resignation. Additionally, the editor in chief will provide the Adviser with information to remove key card access to the Trinity Building for anyone who has resigned or been terminated.

Disciplinary Action

Staff members may only be dismissed by their supervisors, in consultation with the Adviser. Dismissal for poor or unsatisfactory performance of duties requires the receipt of at least two written warnings. To dismiss a staff member, the supervisor must present that staff member with:

- An oral warning with a follow-up letter stating the practices to be corrected
- A final written warning with a Personal Improvement Plan (PIP), which will notify the employee of corrective action to be taken and that a continuation of the unsatisfactory/poor practice may result in dismissal. The supervisor, staff member committing the infraction and a witness should sign each notice
- Written notice of termination.

Examples of poor performance include, but are not limited to:

- Inefficiency or incompetency in the performance of duties
- Negligence or apathy in the performance of duties listed in this handbook
- Careless, negligent or improper use of state property or equipment
- Failure to maintain satisfactory and harmonious working relationships
- Demonstrating a pattern of failure to report to work at the assigned time and place
- Repeated corrections needed for stories

Dismissal Without Warning

Any staff member may be dismissed from his/her position by their supervisor, upon consultation with

the Adviser without warning or advanced notice for just cause relating to personal conduct detrimental to Texas State University in order to avoid undue disruption or work or to protect the safety of persons or property. In such cases, the staff member may be instructed to leave the premises at once or at a specified time.

Examples of detrimental personal conduct include:

- Plagiarism or altering a photograph
- Gross misconduct or conduct unbecoming a staff member
- Conviction of a felony
- Misuse of state funds and/or state property
- Willful damage or destruction of property
- Willful acts endangering the lives and/or property of others
- Insubordination (refusal to accept a reasonable assignment by a supervisor)
- Failure to meet GPA or enrollment requirements
- Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol, drugs/narcotics or other substances
- Accepting gifts in exchange for influence

Formal Grievance Procedure

Any student who has been dismissed from his/her position may appeal that decision in writing to the Student Publications Board within 14 days. The Student Publications Board Chairperson will receive the formal grievance and appoint a three-member committee of Board members to consider the appeal. The committee will select a chairperson within that group and conduct proceedings as it sees fit, to include testimony from the parties involved and selected witnesses. The committee's final recommendation shall be forwarded to the Board for its consideration.

Media Practicum

MC 2111

Students may earn college credit for their work with Student Media. To do so, a student must apply for and be hired by one of Texas State's Student Media organizations. Once hired, the students must complete the form for MC 2111 in coordination with the faculty adviser for the corresponding student media organization and student manager prior to the start of the semester for which they are seeking credit. Once the form is completed and signed, it must be returned to OM 102 for an override that will allow the student to register for the course. To earn credit, the student must work at least 60 hours per semester for one of Texas State's student media organizations. Upon satisfactory completion of their assignment, the student will earn one credit hour. The course is graded as credit (CR) or no credit (F). MC2111 is repeatable for credit twice.

Job Descriptions

Editor in Chief

Editor in Chief will be responsible for the content, editorial direction and maintaining the high standards of The University Star. The Editor in Chief will regularly monitor the website and social media for content and quality that is consistent with ethical and journalistic standards.

- Recruit and regularly provide feedback to editorial board members.
- Schedule and attend weekly budget meetings.
- Schedule and attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Communicate with adviser about training needs.
- Run all production and staff meetings.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 18 hours per week Tuesday through Friday.
- Set and enforce all editorial deadlines.
- Oversee all editorial content and page design.
- Handle all editorial staff personnel issues.
- Discuss The Mainpoint during weekly budget meetings to ensure a majority of editorial board members are in agreement with the direction of the editorial.
- Ensure sections coordinate to meet special advertising editorial content needs.
- Copyedit articles before publication in print or online.
- Be knowledgeable in AP style, Media Law, WordPress, InDesign and Photoshop.
- Keep a running calendar and coordinate coverage of big events or special sections with section editors.
- Attend events as the representative of The University Star.
- Act as a role model for professional behavior for the editorial staff.
- Respond to reader inquiries, questions and/or requests for interviews.
- Finalize contest entries with adviser.
- Attend all outreach activities each semester or appoint an editor to attend.
- Ensure all content meets the highest standards of journalistic ethics.

Managing Editor

Managing Editor will be responsible for uploading online content to The University Star's website, assisting the Editor-in-Chief in editing, scheduling and advising section editors. Alongside, maintaining the publication's website the managing editor will also collaborate with the engagement and design editor to help provide social media content.

- Must be present on production night.
- Must be present at weekly budget meeting.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 15 hours per week Tuesday through Friday.
- Schedule coverage of the newsroom from 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. during the week.
- Provide a list of staff who need building access each semester to the adviser.
- Provide a list of staff who need press credentials each semester to the adviser.

- Have all staff sign employment contracts and provide these to the adviser.
- Keep a running list of write-ups and disciplinary actions against staff members.
- Keep a spreadsheet of staff training attendance.
- Schedule staff to cover outreach activities.
- Copyedit articles before publishing online.
- Be knowledgeable in AP style, Media Law, WordPress, InDesign and Photoshop.
- Coordinate monthly multimedia project, or as needed.
- Meet deadlines.
- Check *University Star* email account several times a day.
- Follow up with Section Editors on applications within 48 hours.
- Reply to emails within 24 hours.
- Assist with contest entries as needed.
- Assist with two outreach activities per semester.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meeting.
- Ensure all content meets the highest standards of journalistic ethics.

News Editor

News Editor will be responsible for maintaining a news reporting staff of at least 10 reporters who will produce five to eight print articles a week and/or three to five online articles. The news editor will have the jurisdiction to determine senior reporters based on performance and will have hire/disciplinary power over section staff as he/she sees fit.

- Must be present on production night.
- Must be present at weekly budget meetings.
- Hold weekly meetings among news staff.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 12 hours per week Tuesday through Friday.
- Ensure all staff are in appropriate SLACK channels and have CAMAYAK access.
- News Editor will be responsible for determining what assignments are newsworthy to include in the budget.
- Update and maintain the weekly budget.
- Ensure reporters are meet deadlines and will guide reporters.
- Copyedit all articles before turning into EIC and meet deadlines.
- Provide coverage for a variety of beats such as: city council, faculty senate, student government, president's cabinet, crime, politics, etc.
- Be knowledgeable in AP style.
- Ensure breaking news is covered and update EIC on coverage plans.
- Help lead multimedia projects with managing editor.
- Communicate effectively with multimedia staff to ensure every article has a photo or graphic.
- Meet deadlines.
- Check *University Star* email account several times a day.
- Reply to applications within 24 hours.
- Reply to emails within 24 hours.
- Assist with contest entries as needed.
- Assist with one outreach activity per semester.

- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meeting.
- Ensure all content meets the highest standards of journalistic ethics.

Assistant News Editor

The Assistant News Editor assists the News Editor.

- Must be present on production night.
- Attend weekly section meetings.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 10 hours per week Tuesday through Saturday.
- Edit weekly stories.
- Assist with breaking news.
- Be knowledgeable in AP style.
- Write at least one story each week.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Required to attend one Star Training per semester.

Life and Art Editor

Lifestyle Editor will be responsible for maintaining a lifestyle staff of at least 10 reporters who will produce five to eight print articles a week and/or three to five online articles. The Life and Art Editor will be responsible for providing live coverage of festivals throughout the year, as well as both community and campus events. The Life and Art Editor will have the jurisdiction to determine senior reporters based on performance and will have hire/disciplinary power over section staff as he/she sees fit.

- Must be present on production night.
- Must be present at weekly budget meetings.
- Hold weekly meetings among lifestyle staff.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 12 hours per week Tuesday through Friday.
- Ensure all staff are in appropriate SLACK channels and have CAMAYAK access.
- Update and maintain the weekly budget.
- Be knowledgeable in AP style and social media practice.
- Provide coverage for a variety of beats such as: San Marcos community, campus life, food, health, fashion, technology, music, fine arts, etc.
- Copyedit all lifestyle articles thoroughly and meet deadlines set by EIC.
- Communicate effectively with multimedia staff to ensure every article has a photo or graphic.
- Meet deadlines.
- Check *University Star* email account several times a day.
- Reply to applications within 24 hours.
- Reply to emails within 24 hours.
- Assist with contest entries as needed.
- Assist with one outreach activity per semester.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Ensure all content meets the highest standards of journalistic ethics.

Assistant Life and Arts Editor

The Assistant Life and Arts Editor assists the Life and Arts Editor.

- Must be present on production night.
- Attend weekly section meetings.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 10 hours per week Tuesday through Saturday.
- Edit weekly stories and live-event stories as needed.
- Be knowledgeable in AP style.
- Write at least one story each week.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Required to attend one Star Training per semester.

Opinions Editor

Opinions Editor will be responsible for maintaining an opinions staff of at least 10 columnists who produce five to eight print columns a week and/or three to five online columns. The Opinions Editor will be responsible for ensuring there is a diverse variety of opinions included in this section. The Opinions Editor will determine what column ideas are worthy to go on the budget based on column ideas provided by columnists. The Opinions Editor will have the jurisdiction to determine senior reporters based on performance and will have hire/disciplinary power over section staff as he/she sees fit.

- Must be present on production night.
- Must be present at weekly budget meetings.
- Hold weekly meetings among opinion staff.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 12 hours per week Tuesday through Friday.
- Ensure all staff are in appropriate SLACK channels and have CAMAYAK access.
- Update and maintain the weekly budget.
- Be knowledgeable in AP style.
- Be responsible for writing or assigning the Main Point.
- Copyedit all columns and meet deadlines set by the EIC.
- Communicate with illustrators effectively to provide accurate illustrations for columns and editorial cartoons.
- Read, choose and verify Letters to the Editor for publication.
- Ensure section represents a range of opinions and ideas on campus.
- Meet deadlines.
- Check *University Star* email account several times a day.
- Reply to applications within 24 hours.
- Reply to emails within 24 hours.
- Assist with contest entries as needed.
- Assist with one outreach activity per semester.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Ensure all content meets the highest standards of journalistic ethics.

Assistant Opinions Editor

The Assistant Opinions Editor assists the Opinions Editor.

- Must be present on production night.
- Attend weekly section meetings.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 10 hours per week Tuesday through Saturday.
- Edit all columns.
- Be knowledgeable in AP style.
- Write one 500-600-word column weekly.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Required to attend one Star Training per semester.

Sports Editor

Sports Editor will be responsible for maintaining a sports staff of at least 10 reporters, and produce five to eight print articles a week and/or three to five online articles. Sports Editor will assign live game coverage and work closely with sports staff to ensure all home games are covered. Sports editor will have the jurisdiction to determine senior reporters based on performance and will have hire/disciplinary power over section staff as he/she sees fit.

- Must be present on production night.
- Must be present at weekly budget meetings.
- Hold weekly meetings among sports staff.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 12 hours per week Tuesday through Friday.
- Ensure all staff are in appropriate SLACK channels and have CAMAYAK access.
- Update and maintain the weekly budget.
- Be knowledgeable in AP style and sports.
- Cover a variety of sports.
- Not only provide live game coverage, but also sports features.
- Communicate effectively with multimedia staff to ensure every article has a photo or graphic.
- Copyedit all sports articles before turning in to EIC and meet deadlines set by EIC.
- Maintains a professional relationship with Texas State Sports Information Directors.
- Meet deadlines.
- Check *University Star* email account several times a day.
- Reply to applications within 24 hours.
- Reply to emails within 24 hours.
- Assist with contest entries as needed.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Ensure all content meets the highest standards of journalistic ethics.

Assistant Sports Editor

The Assistant Sports Editor assists the Sports Editor with various activities.

- Must be present on production night.
- Attend weekly section meetings.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 10 hours per week Tuesday through Saturday.
- Be knowledgeable in AP style and sports.
- Edit feature stories and recaps

- Attend games, live tweet and produce content for print and online.
- Learn how to post recaps and create a budget.
- Find story ideas about Texas State sports, club sports, intramural sports and different sports events throughout the year.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all staff meetings.
- Required to attend one Star Training per semester.

Copy Chief

Copy Chief will be responsible for maintaining a staff of at least eight editors. Copy Chief will not only edit for AP style, grammar, and punctuation but also for story angles and story flow. The Copy Chief will have hire/disciplinary power over section staff as he/she sees fit. As the final eyes before EIC, the copy chief must thoroughly review all articles and columns to ensure they are ready to be published.

- Must be present on production night.
- Must be present at weekly budget meetings.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 12 hours per week Tuesday through Friday.
- Ensure all staff are in appropriate SLACK channels and have CAMAYAK access.
- Be knowledgeable in AP style, grammar, spelling, punctuation and journalism standards.
- Maintain an on-call schedule of copyeditors for breaking news.
- Communicate effectively with other section editors when there is a question about a story.
- Hold weekly copy meetings open to all *The University Star* staff.
- Meet deadlines.
- Check *University Star* email account several times a day.
- Reply to applications within 24 hours.
- Reply to emails within 24 hours.
- Assist with contest entries as needed.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Ensure all content meets the highest standards of journalistic ethics.

Design Editor

Design Editor will maintain a staff of three to five graphic designers and assist in keeping a consistent brand and design throughout the print edition of *The University Star*. Design editor will assist in multimedia projects and aid managing editor when needed. The Design Editor will have hire/disciplinary power over section staff as he/she sees fit.

- Must be present at all production meetings.
- Be present at monthly staff meetings.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 12 hours per week Tuesday through Friday.
- Ensure all staff are in appropriate SLACK channels.
- Host weekly meetings among design staff.
- Be knowledgeable in InDesign and Photoshop.
- Create templates and stylesheets for a consistent look.
- Design layout of weekly paper and assist in social media and branding graphics.
- Meet deadlines.

- Check *University Star* email account several times a day.
- Reply to applications within 24 hours.
- Reply to emails within 24 hours.
- Assist with contest entries as needed.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Ensure all content meets the highest standards of journalistic ethics.

Creative Services Director

Creative Services Director will maintain a staff of three to five graphic designers and assist in keeping a consistent brand and design throughout The University Star. Creative Services Director will assist the PR and Advertising teams as needed. The Creative Services Director will have hire/disciplinary power over the section as he/she sees fit.

- Be present at monthly staff meetings.
- Communicate weekly with advertising, PR and adviser on upcoming needs.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 12 hours per week Tuesday through Friday.
- Ensure all staff are in appropriate SLACK channels and have CAMAYAK access.
- Host weekly meetings among design staff.
- Be knowledgeable in InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator.
- Assist in social media and branding graphics.
- Responsible for marketing design and merchandise.
- Design T-shirt for each semester.
- Design “house ads” and ads for advertising clients as needed.
- Responsible for weekly e-newsletter content and design.
- Check *University Star* email account several times a day.
- Meet deadlines.
- Reply to applications within 24 hours.
- Reply to emails within 24 hours.
- Assist with contest entries as needed.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Ensure all content meets the highest standards of journalistic ethics.

Multimedia Editor

Multimedia Editor will be responsible for maintaining a multimedia section at least 15 photographers/videographers. Multimedia Editor will ensure his/her staff is communicating effectively with other sections to ensure every article has a photo, graphic or illustration. Multimedia Editor will have hire/fire power over the section as he/she sees fit.

- Must be present at all production meetings.
- Be present at monthly staff meetings.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 12 hours per week Tuesday through Friday.
- Ensure all staff are in appropriate SLACK channel and have CAMAYAK access.
- Be knowledgeable in photojournalism and AP style.
- Help provide separate photography for social media.

- Produce at least one video a week.
- Choose photos and prepare for publication.
- Read and copyedit all cutlines and captions.
- Ensure a photographer is present at live coverage events and breaking events.
- Update file photos every month.
- Assist with contest entries as needed.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Ensure all content meets the highest standards of journalistic ethics.

Engagement Editor

Engagement Editor will be responsible for the University Star's social media platforms. The engagement editor will be responsible for updating posting on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram everyday/multiple times a week. Engagement Editor will coordinate posts with section editors.

- Must be present at all production meetings.
- Be present at monthly staff meetings.
- Hold office hours for a minimum of 12 hours per week Tuesday through Friday.
- Assist managing editor in posting online articles to the website.
- Copyedit all content before it is posted online.
- Maintain the University Star's branding through its online presence and interact respectfully with followers.
- Be on call for breaking news and ready to post.
- Provide consistent social media content across all platforms.
- Manage social media accounts and DO NOT delegate to other staff members.
- Collaborate with multimedia editor and design editor to provide videos and graphics catered to social media.
- Assist with contest entries as needed.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Ensure all content meets the highest standards of journalistic ethics.

Advertising Sales Manager

Advertising Sales Manager will be responsible for tracking ads from all sales staff. The Advertising Sales Manager should plan to work 15 hours per week and will be paid stipend as well as a commission on all closed and paid advertising. This person is responsible for updating the spreadsheet that contains all ads and the dates they are to be posted or published.

- Communicate overall sales goals to advertising staff.
- Set goals for account executives and design incentives.
- Recognize top sellers.
- Maintain a calendar of upcoming special issues.
- Coordinate special issues with the Editor in Chief.
- Manage and motivate a team of account executives to meet their monthly sales goals.
- Present your forecast at official weekly sales meetings.
- Collect reporting from sales team to monitor call logs, meetings, pipeline, and closed business.

- Assist team in identifying customer needs and developing proposals.
- Perform customer satisfaction check-in calls and surveys.
- Resolve customer concerns or complaints.
- Ensure spreadsheet is filled out correctly and ads are running as scheduled.
- Secure ad material from Advertising Account Executives and provide to the Design Editor by Friday.
- Provide the Design Editor with a runsheet for each issue on Friday.
- Communicate upcoming social media ad post needs to the Engagement Editor each week.
- Track and manage your own sales pipeline.
- Communicate with your advertiser clients through phone, email, and face-to-face meetings.
- Close your own deals.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.

Advertising Account Executives

Account Executives will be hired and trained to sell multi-media packages including digital, mobile, social media, print, and signage. Account Executives should plan to work 10 hours per week and will be paid a commission on all closed and paid advertising.

- Close your own deals.
- Develop customer relationships and grow business in your unique sales territory.
- Communicate with your advertiser clients through phone, email, and face-to-face meetings.
- Identify customer needs and present proposals.
- Notify customers of upcoming special issues or sales.
- Enter sales opportunities and manage sales forecasts in spreadsheet.
- Present your forecast at weekly sales meetings.
- Attend all sales meetings.
- Achieve personal sales goals.
- Obtain insertion orders/qualified written confirmation of all advertising orders.
- Obtain artwork files and payment from advertisers by deadline and provide these to the Ad Manager.
- Track all customer activity in spreadsheet.
- Reply to advertiser within 24 hours.
- Check in with the Advertising Manager a minimum of once per week.
- Inform Advertising Manager of any dissatisfied customers or customer complaints.
- Required to attend weekly sales meetings/trainings.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.

Public Relations Assistants

PR assistants will be responsible for spearheading a semester-long calendar of outreach events, both internally and externally. All hiring, training and coaching will be conducted by the University Star adviser. Students will spend up to 10 hours per week working on PR projects.

- Identify and coordinate two community service projects each semester.
- Identify and coordinate community outreach opportunities on campus.

- Create and coordinate a calendar of social activities for University Star staff each semester.
- Coordinate with Managing Editor on recruitment activities for new staff.
- Create sign-up sheets and track attendance at events and activities.
- Coordinate with Creative Services Director for needs.
- Write press releases as needed.
- Be knowledgeable in AP Style.
- Join the PR SLACK channel and maintain effective communication.
- Required to attend weekly meeting with adviser.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Required to attend one Star Training each semester.

Reporters

- Write one article per week with multiple sources in each.
- Attend weekly budget meetings held by section editors.
- Be knowledgeable in AP Style.
- Meet editing deadlines.
- Submit story pitches by section editor's desired date.
- Communicate effectively with photographer or illustrator.
- Assist with breaking news.
- Find time with section editor for one-on-one meetings.
- Attend all staff meetings.
- Record all interviews.
- Withhold bias from articles.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Required to attend three Star Training sessions each semester.

Columnists

- Provide at least one 500–600-word column per week.
- Attend weekly budget meetings held by opinions editor.
- Student must disclose organizations he or she is involved with.
- Column pitches must be pitched with at least one person other than the opinions editor as a witness. If you can't pitch it in front of people, then you have no business writing it.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Required to attend three Star Training sessions each semester.

Staff Photographers

- Photographers and videographers will be scheduled to cover stories and live events.
- Responsible for editing and uploading to Camayak.
- Responsible for creating two-sentence minimum cutlines for photos.
- Cutlines should be written in present tense and AP Style.

- Required to attend weekly staff meetings.
- Required to contact reporters within 24 hours of being assigned to a story.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Required to attend three Star Training sessions each semester.

Illustrators

- Illustrators will be scheduled to work with columnists and reporters to create an illustration.
- Required to contact reporters within 24 hours of being assigned to a story.
- Required to attend weekly staff meetings.
- Responsible for editing and uploading to Camayak.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.

Social Media Specialists

- Do not follow or unfollow any accounts on any social media platform.
- Read stories completely to create appropriate captions.
- Live tweet if necessary.
- Attend weekly staff meetings.
- Be knowledgeable in AP Style.
- Reply to direct and private messages.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.

Copy Editors

- Edit all articles for AP Errors.
- Fact check claims made in articles.
- Make sure hyperlinks are working.
- Make sure phone numbers and websites are correct.
- Provide comments or feedback to section editors about article mistakes.
- Fact check sources used in stories, including name and title.
- Required to attend bi-weekly all-staff meetings.
- Required to attend weekly copy editor training.

Designers

- Must be present every Friday to design paper.
- Design two to three pages each week.
- Coordinate with others on the design team.
- Be available on Monday's production night *if* needed.
- Attend weekly design meetings to discuss preliminary layout designs.
- Be knowledgeable in InDesign and Photoshop.

- Coordinate with section editors to discuss new layout ideas.
- Create charts, diagrams, and informational graphics as required.

Personal Conduct Policies

Student Media staff members should at all times avoid libel, the use of obscene material (as defined in the rules and regulations of the Federal Communications Commission), false or inauthentic allegations, attacks on personal integrity or character, and any forms of harassment and innuendo. Further, all Student Media staff are to honor the Texas State University Student Code of Conduct.

Diversity Policy

Student Media is committed to maintaining an environment free of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or religion for its employees and its student staff members.

Discrimination on the basis of race or sexual orientation is a violation of state and federal civil rights and employment regulations. Student Media therefore adheres to good personnel policies.

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is an action that humiliates, belittles or disadvantages a person based upon a distinguishing characteristic and a pre-existing opinion of that characteristic.

What is insensitivity?

Insensitivity occurs when a party says something biased toward the race or sexual orientation among other things of another party. This insensitivity causes feelings of humiliation, anger and frustration.

What is cultural harassment? Culture harassment is taking place when the culture, defined as an individual's or a group's unique way of life, is attacked verbally or nonverbally, and this action is found reprehensible by members and non-members of the group in question. All of these acts can be linked to the sexual harassment policy, which states, "Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive office environment. This is *environmental*

How can I recognize discrimination, insensitivity or cultural harassment?

Discrimination may include such actions as choosing or not choosing a person for a task solely on basis of race or sexual orientation or harshly criticizing the work of one person over another based on the aforementioned characteristics of the person.

Insensitivity or cultural harassment includes such actions as making racist, sexist or other jokes that are meant to offend, hanging flyers that demean a certain group, using expressions that equate sexual orientation with a negative action (such as "That's so gay."), using language meant to target someone's ethnicity in a negative way.

Any offensive verbal or physical gesture becomes harassment when the person at whom the action is directed makes it clear that this behavior is unwelcome and unwanted.

Environmental harassment may occur when an employer allows a hostile environment to exist. Displaying culturally offensive objects, calendars, pictures in the workplace, telling inappropriate jokes or stories may all contribute to a hostile environment. Such situations do not have to be directed toward a particular individual for that person to file a complaint.

Complaints

Students are to report to their editor or manager any conduct perceived as discriminatory. The editor or manager may discuss it with an adviser. It must be reported to the Director.

Students have the opportunity to pursue their allegations without fear or retribution. Alleged offenders will have the opportunity to defend themselves. Student Media is obligated to investigate every complaint of discrimination or cultural harassment.

Informal procedures

A student staff member who feels that she or he may be the victim of discrimination or cultural insensitivity/harassment should discuss the incident informally with the editor or manager, who will notify the Director.

Every attempt will be made to resolve the problem informally. The student may be advised to talk to the alleged offending party. The student may ask the Director to talk to the alleged offending party. The investigation will be kept as confidential as possible.

Formal procedures

If a complaint cannot be resolved with informal procedures, a student may initiate formal complaint procedures by contacting the Director.

A formal complaint involves a written statement of charges, which provide details on the incident(s) of wrongdoing. The Director will investigate the complaint. This investigation includes interviews with the alleged offender and any witnesses named by the accuser. The investigation will be kept as confidential as possible.

Resolution

If the investigation concludes that discrimination, insensitivity or cultural harassment has occurred, the proven offender may be subject to discipline or immediate dismissal, depending on the severity of the situation.

Sexual Harassment Policy

Student Media is committed to maintaining an environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex for both its employees and its student staff members. Harassment on the basis of sex is a violation of state and federal civil rights employment regulations.

What is sexual harassment?

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's status on the Student Media staff. This is quid pro quo harassment.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for decisions affecting the individual's role on the staff. This is indirect harassment.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive office environment. This is environmental harassment.

How can I recognize sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment can be verbal or physical. Verbal sexual harassment may include the following: sexual propositions, sexual innuendoes and sexual remarks about clothing or physique, whistling in a suggestive manner or making suggestive or insulting sounds.

Physical harassment may include the following: any inappropriate touching or feeling, brushing against someone, coerced sexual acts or intercourse, assault. Leering or ogling is also considered harassment.

Any offensive verbal or physical gesture becomes sexual harassment when the person at whom the action is directed makes it clear that this behavior is unwelcome and unwanted.

Environmental sexual harassment may occur when an employer allows a hostile environment to exist in the workplace. Displaying sexually offensive objects, calendars, pictures in the workplace; telling sexually oriented jokes or stories may all contribute to a hostile environment. Such situations don't have to be directed towards a particular employee for that employee to file a complaint of environmental harassment.

Complaints

Students are responsible for reporting to the executive any conduct perceived as sexual harassment. The executive may discuss the situation with an adviser. The incident must be reported to the director.

Students have the opportunity to pursue their allegations without fear of retribution. Alleged offenders will have the opportunity to defend themselves.

Student Media is obligated to investigate every complaint of sexual harassment. Cases of alleged sexual harassment will be resolved in the least disruptive, most informal manner possible, depending on each situation.

Formal procedures

If a complaint cannot be resolved with informal procedures, a student may initiate formal complaint procedures by contacting the Adviser.

A formal complaint involves a written statement of charges that provides details on the incident(s) of sexual harassment. The director will investigate the complaint. This investigation includes interviews with the alleged harasser and any witnesses named by the accuser. The investigation will be kept as confidential as possible.

Resolution

If the investigation concludes that sexual harassment has occurred, the proven offender may be subject to discipline or immediate dismissal, depending on the severity of the situation.

Social Media Policy

Overview

The University Star recognizes the crucial role social media plays in providing local news and information to our readers, viewers and business partners. While social media enhances our commitment to our local community on multiple platforms, the use of social media by Student Media staff requires special attention.

This policy governs the publication of and commentary on social media by staff members. For the purposes of this policy, social media means any platform for online publication and commentary, including without limitation blogs, wiki's, social networking sites such as Facebook, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube. This policy is in addition to and compliments any existing or future policies regarding the use of technology, computers, e-mail and the Internet. As technologies, products, practices and legal parameters evolve, so will this policy.

Student Media staff need to evaluate their social media use in conjunction with this policy and other important policies in this handbook, as well as federal, state and local laws. Questions should be addressed to your supervisor.

For ease of use, the policy is separated into sections regarding professional accounts owned by Student Media that are maintained by staff, and personal accounts.

General Information

- We recognize that social media offers benefits and carries risks—both when it is used for business purposes and in your personal lives. Use common sense and guard *The University Star's* reputation, your reputation and your personal information while using social media, just as you would in other areas of your life.
- Take responsibility for your words and assume that anyone can see what you post and who you “like.” Communicate with the highest level of integrity and professionalism.
- Realize that as a staff member of *The University Star* that strives to be fair and balanced in its news reporting, your social media commentary may carry added weight in our community.
- Always comply with the Terms of Use and other policies of the social media platforms you are using. Do not plagiarize or copy the work of others.
- Become familiar with the Code of Conduct, other Student Media policies, and the laws and regulations that impact your use of social media.

- Social media identities, logon ID's and user names may not use Student Media's name. Individual Student Media accounts associated with a student's role as reporter, photographer, editors, etc. are not allowed.

Personal Use

- The University Star content (videos and text) created for work purposes (i.e., for publication or broadcast) may not be posted on a personal account before it is published or broadcast on the official The University Star accounts unless you have permission of a supervisor.
- If you post your professional work product on your personal social media account, remember that *The University Star* owns all intellectual property rights to that work product even though it is posted on your personal account.
- You are a representative of *The University Star* and should be aware of how your actions on your personal account impact the brand and credibility of all of our organization.
- Inappropriate postings, such as discriminatory remarks, harassment and threats of violence, or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject you to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- Do not speak on behalf of *The University Star* on your personal account unless you are authorized to do so by your supervisor. Additionally, do not publish anything that compromises the organization's reputation as a reliable news and information source.
- Maintain confidentiality of newsroom discussions, sourcing and other information.

The University Star Organization Accounts

- An official social media organization account is intended to promote and expand *The University Star's* brand and activities.
- *The University Star* must be the administrator and owner of all accounts under *The University Star* name. Organizational accounts have specific goals set by *The University Star*, which are assigned to the staff members moderating the account.
- Organizational accounts should reflect standards of good taste and judgment. Discourse should be courteous, fair and lawful.
- Content on an organizational account must comply with *The University Star's* policies. Content that is not lawful or does not comply with *The University Star's* policies will be removed and you may be disciplined or your employment terminated.
- Do not use someone else's intellectual property (including photographs, video and text), except with a license or other legal basis.
- If writing about a product that can be interpreted as an endorsement or using a testimonial, disclose any and all connections with the seller of that product or service. Likewise, if referring to the findings of research that was conducted at *The University Star's* request, disclose the connection.
- All journalistic standards apply. Clarify or correct mistakes as necessary.

Helpful Hints

- **Be Respectful.** Always be fair and courteous to colleagues, customers, sources, news subjects, readers and viewers. Consider that you are more likely to resolve work-related concerns by speaking directly with your colleagues than by posting concerns on a social media site. If you post a complaint on social media, avoid using statements, photographs, audio or video that

could be viewed as libelous, malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating; disparage customers, sources, vendors, users, viewers or readers; or might constitute harassment or bullying. Such conduct might include posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or contribute to a hostile work environment based on race, sex, disability, religion or other status protected by law or company policy.

- **Guard your reputation.** First and foremost, remember that your social media activities reflect on your reputation and on the reputations of *The University Star*. As a member of *The University Star* staff, your social media activities, even at home or on your personal time, can affect your work life forever. Don't do things in social media spaces that would embarrass yourself or *The University Star*.
- **Be professional.** The Internet has blurred the line between public and private, personal and professional. Just by identifying yourself as a *The University Star* staff member, you are creating perceptions about your expertise as well as about the organization. In your use of social media reinforce the idea that you are reasoned, professional and knowledgeable. Post an appropriate photo of yourself. Use privacy tools to restrict your most private information.
- **Be transparent.** If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out.
- **Write what you know.** Make sure you write and post about your areas of expertise. Stay away from speculation about the work or talents of others, including co-workers and competitors. You can be personally responsible for content on blogs. Remember that social media can go viral quickly. What you write can be distributed widely, is ultimately your responsibility, and lives on forever. Comply with journalistic standards and copyright and trademark laws. For example, don't plagiarize or cut and paste from another site.
- **Use common sense.** Follow others on social media sites that may be helpful to learning about your job or your beat, or how better to utilize social media. Manage your "friends" carefully to avoid concerns of bias. For example, if you follow leaders of one political party on Twitter, others may perceive a bias if you don't follow leaders of other political parties. In other words, don't let your association with a group, as a 'fan' or otherwise, be misinterpreted.
- **Pause before publishing.** If you're about to publish news that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, don't shrug it off and hit 'send.' Take a minute. Figure out what's bothering you and fix it. If you're still unsure, you might want to discuss it with your editor or the adviser. Ultimately, the responsibility for what you publish is yours. Strive for accuracy, clarity and transparency with the audience; correct factual errors; assure diverse voices in your stories. Double-check and verify information gathered from social networks before you take the information into a print, on-air or online story for *The University Star*.
- **Be careful.** Posting personal information online can put you at risk. Take care when posting photos, addresses and phone numbers, information about where and when you work, personal routines, or anything else that could compromise your safety or that of your co-workers.
- **Make it a conversation.** Be real and personable. As long as it doesn't jeopardize the reporting/exclusivity of a story, consider sharing parts of the reporting process with your followers. Where does your reporting have you traveling? What meeting are you sitting in? Talk to your social media audience like you would talk to real people in professional situations. Avoid overly dull or 'composed' language. Don't be afraid to bring in your own personality.
- **Avoid conflict.** Try to avoid contentious conversations with readers. While you should defend your work and the company's journalistic reputation, take the high road in disagreements. The reader doesn't have to remain calm, but you should. Don't be baited into saying something you would regret or would reflect badly on you or *The University Star*.

- **Be the ears and eyes of your community.** Social media can truly empower both journalists and the public. Be the eyes and ears by providing news others can use while out and about (such as news about traffic or events).
- **Keep learning.** Identify and pay attention to savvy and informative social media users in the community. They can provide information and can help your own social media talents grow. Keep in mind that this is an evolving medium. It means you need to be flexible and change as technology, interests and the needs of readers, users and viewers change.

Code of Ethics

Free Travel

To remain as free of influence or obligation to report a story, the journalist, in pursuit of a story, should not accept free travel, accommodations or meals related to travel. For convenience, sports reporters may travel on team charters, but the publication should pay the cost of the transportation and related expenses. The same pay-as-you-go policy should apply to non-sports reporting as well, including businesses and governments. Free travel and accommodations that are non-coverage related and provided by a vendor may be accepted if the primary purpose is for education or training and is related to the fulfillment of an agreement or contract.

Gifts

Gifts should not be accepted. Any gift should be returned to the sender or sent to a charity. If the gift is of de minimis (no significant) value, such as a desk trinket, small food item or pen, the staff member may retain the gift. As a guideline, if the value is under \$10, the gift may be kept. More than one gift in one year, even if under \$10, from the same giver, may not be accepted.

Free tickets, Passes, Discounts

If money is available, staffers assigned to cover a sporting event, lecture, play, concert, movie or other entertainment event should pay for admission. Free tickets or passes may be accepted by staff members assigned to cover an event or by those attending for legitimate news purposes. Press facilities at these events may only be used by staff members who are assigned to cover the event. Free tickets or passes may be accepted by staff members for personal use only if tickets are available on the same complimentary basis to non-journalists.

Ownership of Books, Records, Other Products Given for Review

Any materials given to the publication for review become the property of the publication and not of any individual staff member. The editor reserves the right to disperse the property in an equitable way.

Other Employment

Other employment should not conflict with the staffer's first responsibilities to the publication. Every staffer must report any other employment to the editor to avoid any conflicts of interest with assignments or other staff editorial or business responsibilities or influences.

Other Campus Media Work

To avoid a conflict of interest, a staffer should not hold similar positions on two or more campus news, public information or public relations media or organizations.

Online Media Work

Student journalists working with established student media may consider starting their own blog or digital-media sites to serve their campus communities. Care should be taken to keep in mind the potential consequences on the student media as that work impacts the ability of the student press to serve its mission in the campus community.

Other Off-campus or Freelance Media Work

Approval of work for an off-campus news medium and freelance media work should be sought in advance of the commitment. It is permissible only in a non-competitive medium, on a staffer's own time and should not conflict with the staffer's obligations to the publication.

Membership in Campus Organizations

Staffers may not cover a campus organization they belong to, or participate in any editorial or business decisions regarding that organization. Staffers may provide story leads about the organizations to which they belong to other staffers. Staffers should report their memberships to their supervising editor. To maintain the role of the press as an independent watchdog of government, a staffer should not be an elected or appointed member of student government.

Outside Activities, Including Political

Political involvement, holding off-campus public office and service in community organizations should be considered carefully to avoid compromising professional integrity and that of the publication. The notion of the journalist as an independent observer and fact-finder is important to preserve. A staffer involved in specific political action, especially in a leadership role, should not be assigned to cover that involvement.

Relationships and Coverage

Staffers must declare conflicts and avoid involvement in stories dealing with members of their families. Staff members should not cover — in words, photographs or artwork — or make news judgments about family members or persons with whom they have financial, adversarial, romantic, sexual or closely personal relationships. Intra-staff dating is not recommended if one person assigns or evaluates the work of the other person or if one is in a position to promote the other to a higher staff position.

Use of Alcoholic Beverages While on Assignment

Even though a staffer may be able to drink legally, no drinking in a social setting such as a dinner or reception is allowed to avoid any suspicion by a source or the public that the staffer's judgment, credibility or objectivity is impaired by alcohol. When covering an event where alcohol is served, staffers should not accept free drinks. Staffers should avoid the appearance that they are being "wined and dined" by any source or group.

Plagiarism of Words, Art, Other

Plagiarism is prohibited and is illegal if the material is copyright protected. For the purposes of this code, plagiarism is defined as the word-for-word duplication of another person's writing or close summarization of the work of another source without giving the source proper credit. A comparable prohibition applies to the use of graphics. Information obtained from a published work must be independently verified before it can be reported as a new, original story. This policy also forbids lifting verbatim paragraphs from a wire service without attribution or pointing out that wire stories were used in compiling the story. Material that is published on the Internet should be treated in the same way as if

it were published in more traditional media.

Fabrication of Any Kind

The use of composite characters or imaginary situations or characters will not be allowed in news or feature stories. A columnist may, occasionally, use such an approach in developing a piece, but it must be clear to the reader that the person or situation is fictional and that the column is commentary and not reporting.

Electronically Altered Photos

Electronically altering the content of photos for news and general feature stories or as stand-alone news and feature photos is not allowed. Exceptions to this would be adjustments to contrast and similar technical enhancements that don't affect the truthfulness of the subject and context of the subject or the scene. Content may be altered for creative purposes as a special effect for a feature story if the caption or cutline includes that fact and if an average reader would not mistake the photo for reality. These photos must be tagged as photo illustrations.

Photo Illustration and Re-enactments

Set-ups or posed scenes may be used if the average reader will not be mis-led or if the caption or cutline tells readers that it is a photo illustration or a re-enactment or re-staging of an event, including award presentations. Recording the original action is always preferred.

Use of Photographs of Victims of Accidents, Fires, Natural Disasters

The question of privacy versus the public's right to know should be considered. The line between good and bad taste and reality and sensationalism is not always easy to draw. Care should be taken to maintain the dignity of the subject as much as possible without undermining the truth of the event. In making a final decision on a photo of this type, an editor should consider: Do the readers need information from this photo that helps explain the event better than words or another photo? Who is hurt by the publication of this photo? How would I react if my photograph was taken at such a moment of tragedy and anguish?

Reporting Names, Addresses of Crime Victims

Staffers need to know the ethics that govern the publication of the names and identities of crime victims. Customarily, the names of rape victims are not published; however, some news media have asked victims of sexual assault to identify themselves for publication. This may be negotiated between the victim and the publication. Victims of nonsexual crimes may be identified, but the publication has a responsibility to give some protection to the victims such as giving imprecise addresses. With the exception of major crimes, predetermined by the editor, an arrested person is not named until charges are filed. However, to avoid a subjective list of exceptions, it is acceptable to withhold all names, regardless of the crime, until charges are filed.

Cooperation with Law Enforcement, Government, College Administration

To be an effective watchdog on other agencies, a publication must remain independent. The publication should not take over any of the duties of any outside agency; cooperation or involvement in the work of these agencies should be restricted to what is required by law. Staffers should know any freedom of information, open meetings and shield laws that apply to their work. If a staffer thinks any public authority is interfering with the staffer's functions as a journalist, the incident should be reported to the editor. The editor should then seek advice from groups such as the Student Press Law Center, American Civil Liberties Union or an editor or media attorney for a nearby, non-student publication.

Scrutiny of a Public Person's Life

Conflicts exist between a person's desire for privacy and the public good or the public's right to know about a public person's life. Persons who freely choose to become public celebrities or public servants should expect a greater level of scrutiny of their life than a private person— even a private person who suddenly is involved in a public situation. Staffers should make judgments based on the real news value of the situation, common sense and decency. Reporters and photographers should not badger a person who has made it clear that he or she does not want to be interviewed or photographed. One exception is those who are involved in criminal activity or in court. Publishing intimate details of a person's life, such as their health or sexual activities, should be done with extreme care and only if the facts are important for the completeness of a story and reflect in a significant way upon the person's public life.

Profane, Vulgar Words, Explicit Sexual Language

The primary audience of a college publication is adults. Profane and vulgar words are a part of everyday conversation, but not generally used for scholarly or general audience writing. During the interview stage of news gathering, staffers will encounter interviewees who use words can be viewed as vulgar and profane. The staff may publish these words if the words are important to the reader's understanding of the situation—the reality of life—or if the words help establish the character of the interviewee. The staff may decide to limit references to prevent the vulgar or profane language from overshadowing the other, more important facts of the story. Profane and vulgar words are not acceptable for opinion writing— columns, editorials and other commentary. Although they may be vulgar or profane, individual words are not obscene. Explicit language—but not vulgar, street language—describing sexual activities and human body parts and functions should be used for accurate reporting of health stories and, in a more limited way, for sexual crime stories.

Sexist Language

Staffers should avoid sexist labels and descriptive language such as policeman or fireman. Replace such language with neutral terms and descriptions.

Negative Stereotyping

Staffers should take care in writing to avoid applying commonly thought but usually erroneous group stereotypes to individuals who are a member of a particular group. Generalizations, often based upon stereotypes, can be misleading and inaccurate. In a broader sense, writers, photographers and artists should avoid more subtle stereotyping in their selection of interviewees and subjects of photographs or illustrations. Some examples of negative stereotypes: unmarried, black teen welfare mothers; unemployed, alcohol-using Native Americans; overweight, long-haired white biker outlaws; effeminate gays; inarticulate, "dumb" blonde women. It is also advisable to avoid sexual stereotyping in choice of subjects for stories, photographs and illustrations on sports or political or social issues such as equal rights.

Use of Racial, Ethnic, Religious, Sexual Orientation, Other Group Identifiers

Identification of a person as a member of any population group should be limited to those cases when that membership is essential for the reader's complete understanding of the story; it should be done with great care so as not to perpetuate negative or positive group stereotyping. When identifiers are used, it is important that the correct one be used. Some examples of identifiers: Hispanic, Jew, lesbian, Italian, person with AIDS (PWA), physically challenged, deaf (or partially deaf). Please consult the style manual of the Associated Press or another news organization for guidance in properly and accurately

identifying individuals on the basis of their membership in ethnic or religious groups or on the basis of their sexual orientation.

False Identity, Stolen Documents, Concealed Recording, Eavesdropping

In the ordinary course of reporting, no staffers shall misrepresent themselves as anything other than representatives of the publication. In extraordinary circumstances, when an editor judges that the information cannot be gotten in any other way and the value of that information to the readers is important, the editor may authorize a misrepresentation. Staffers may not steal or knowingly receive stolen materials regardless of their importance to a story. Except in situations judged by an editor as extraordinary, a staffer shall not record an interview or meeting without the interviewee's permission or the obvious placement of a recording device (not hidden) at the start of the interview or meeting in which case the interviewee or news-makers do not object and are aware of the presence of the recording device. Committing an illegal act to eavesdrop on a source is not allowed. State laws on the use of recording devices should be checked.

Granting and Preserving Confidentiality to Sources

A reporter should not promise confidentiality to a source without the permission of the editor. Confidentiality should only be given if there is a real danger that physical, emotional or financial harm will come to the source if his or her name were revealed. The editor should have all the facts and the source's name before the decision is made. The editor should know of any laws pertaining to confidentiality and disclosure before a decision is made. A reporter should make every attempt to get the same information from another source who agrees to be named since the goal is to attribute all information to a specific source for all stories.

Anonymous Sources

Generally, anonymous sources are not used in stories. Information that comes from an unnamed or unknown source should not be used unless it can be verified through another, known source. If two independent sources verify the information and both are unnamed, an editor may decide to publish the information with careful consideration of the need for immediacy and the news value of the information. The source may be identified generally as one associated with an agency to give some degree of credibility to the information. Anonymous sources should not be used if the danger exists that the reader might not believe the information if sources are not given; the publication's credibility might suffer; information obtained later from a named source and verified might disprove the information given by the unnamed or unknown sources.

No Response from Subject

If the subject of a story does not respond to a reporter's inquiry, the reporter may use the failure to respond in the story. However, use the verb "refused" to respond cautiously because of its connotation. It is often better to use "declined" or "would not respond." If the subject cannot be reached, it is acceptable to say that the subject was not available for comment. The difference between not responding and not being available for comment should be clear to the reader.

Sources on the Internet

Reporters who use the Internet and e-mail to interview sources should identify themselves as a reporter immediately, and should verify the source's identity with a follow-up telephone call. The source should be told that the information given is for a story. Information from Internet chat rooms and bulletin boards should not be used except as background. Since some information on the Internet may not be accurate, verification of facts through another source is especially important. Raising particular concern

among journalists is information from so-called “user-generated” sites such as Wikipedia, YouTube, blogs, Facebook and others. While not necessarily inaccurate, such sites allow users to post information and allegations without the benefit of editing or fact-checking.

Ownership of Work

Regardless of whether a staffer is paid or a volunteer, the publication “owns” the published and unpublished work done by staffers if the work was done as a staff assignment. Ownership of unpublished work may revert to the staffer at a certain time if the editor agrees with this arrangement. The publication has unlimited use of the work. The act of voluntarily joining a staff indicates approval of this policy. To clarify work-ownership issues, editors should have staff members sign an ownership agreement regarding their work. As is practiced in professional media, readers of the student press should be made aware that ownership of reader submissions is taken by the student press at the time of submission.

Separation of Reporting from Commentary

To help the reader separate fact-based reporting from commentary, in the form of personal columns, editorials, analysis and similar opinion writing, all commentary should be labeled or somehow clearly and consistently identified as opinion, especially when it is outside the editorial or op-ed pages and mixed with fact-based reporting.

Influence of Advertisers

Editors should guard against attempts made by advertisers and others in the publication’s business office to influence the editorial content of the print or online publication. The editorial staff reserves the right to make all decisions about any editorial coverage an advertiser may get in the publication, including advertising supplements. Readers should not perceive that an advertiser is getting favorable editorial mention simply because the advertiser has bought space in the publication.

Acceptance of Reader Feedback

Editors and reporters should invite reader feedback and participation in the publication. Reaction by readers to what has been published should be invited through all methods of communication: paper, e-mail, website, phone, fax and in-person visits. The publication should hold periodic open forums or open houses for readers. Reader opinions and suggestions on a range of issues can be solicited at these forums and can form the basis for future reporting or commentary.

Reporter’s Checklist

Through all steps in the reporting process, from conceptualizing the story assignment, through information gathering and pre-writing, to writing, editing and final publication, a reporter must answer these questions:

1. Why am I reporting the story?
2. Is the story fair?
3. Have I attempted to report all angles?
4. Who will the story affect?
5. Can I defend my decision to report the story?

- *Source: Associated Collegiate Press Model Code of Ethics*