**Editorial Policy**

\*Note: The [Journalism Education Association’s model editorial policy](http://jeasprc.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/jeamodeleditpolicy-2013.pdf) has been used and adapted to fit a multimedia journalism program.

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**Mission Statement**

*We believe that the stories journalists share have the power to make an impact on the community it serves. We believe they should hold close the values and core fundamentals of journalism, including the pursuit of truth, accuracy, and transparency. We believe journalism should be used to give a voice to the stories that have remained hidden and to uncover the unknown. Journalists should strive to maintain high ethical standards in their work. Journalism should be used to inspire and promote positive discussions within our neighborhoods.*

**Freedom of the Press**

(Multimedia Publication) is the official student-produced medium of news and information published/produced by students. The (Multimedia Publication) has been established as a designated public forum for student editors to inform and educate their readers as well as for the discussion of issues of concern to their audience.

The publication will not be reviewed or restrained by school officials prior to publication or distribution. Advisers may – and should – coach and discuss content during the writing process. Because school officials do not engage in prior review, and the content of the (Multimedia Publication) is determined by and reflects only the views of the student staff and not school officials or the school itself, its student editorial board and responsible student staff members assume complete legal and financial liability for the content of the publication.

Electronic media (including online, broadcast and podcast media) produced by (Multimedia Publication) students are entitled to the same protections – and subjected to the same freedoms and responsibilities – as media produced for print publication. As such they will **not** be subject to prior review or restraint.

*The adviser will act as a mentor and guide, but final decisions will be made by the editorial board. The adviser can offer legal advice if needed or help to guide students to the appropriate channels to answer questions or concerns.*

Student journalists may use print and electronic media to report news and information, to communicate with other students and individuals, to ask questions of and consult with experts and to gather material to meet their newsgathering and research needs.

(Multimedia Publication) and its staff are protected by and bound to the principles of the First Amendment and other protections and limitations afforded by the Constitution and the various laws and court decisions implementing those principles.

(Multimedia Publication) will not publish any material determined by student editors or the student editorial board to be unprotected, that is, material that is libelous, obscene, materially disruptive of the school process, an unwarranted invasion of privacy, a violation of copyright or a promotion of products or services unlawful (illegal) as to minors as defined by state or federal law.

Definitions and examples for the above instances of unprotected speech can be found in Law of the Student Press published by the Student Press Law Center.

***Role of an Adviser***

*The role of an adviser is to guide and support students through the fundamentals of journalism through honesty, transparency and responsible news gathering.*

- *Advisers will help to coach and guide students in selecting stories for publication, identifying news values and publishing within an open forum, but the editorial board will make final decisions for publication.*

- *Advisers will maintain professionalism in the newsroom while playing a key role as an educator and leader.*

- *Advisers maintain a focus on ethical and responsible journalism.*

o *[SPJ Code of Ethics](https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp)*

- *Advisers will help develop a structured editorial policy that allows for the student editorial board to make suggestions and edits for final publication of material.*

- *Advisers will help to facilitate discussions, brainstorming sessions and editorial meetings, but students will be encouraged to lead.*

- *Advisers will provide guides translating the workflow and identifying the student roles within a newsroom.*

- *Advisers should offer guidance without censorship.*

The adviser will not act as a censor or determine the content of the paper. The adviser will offer advice and instruction, following the Code of Ethics for Advisers established by the Journalism Education Association as well as the Canons of Professional Journalism. School officials shall not fire or otherwise discipline advisers for content in student media that is determined and published by the student staff.

***Editor-staff relations***

*The editorial board will consist of the publication’s student editors. The editorial board will be the final decision makers when it comes to the publishing content. No single vote from a member is greater than the next. The editorial board should request legal advice when necessary.*

The views stated in editorials represent that of a majority of the editorial board. Signed columns or reviews represent only the opinion of the author.

The duly appointed editor or co-editors shall interpret and enforce this editorial policy.

***Staff Positions***

- *Editors (co-editors and the editor-in-chief) will be picked with input from previous editorial board and adviser.*

- *Staff Journalists (print, video or photo) will apply for new staff positions through an application process. New and returning members must provide past work (if applicable) and class prerequisite assignments as requested.*

**Letter to the Editors**

(Multimedia Publication) may accept letters to the editor, guest columns and news releases from students, faculty, administrators, community residents and the general public. We ask that letters to the editor, guest columns or other submissions be 300 words or less and contain the author’s name, address and signature. All submissions will be verified.

The (Multimedia Publication) editorial board reserves the right to withhold a letter or column or other submission and/or return it for revision if it contains unprotected speech or grammatical errors that could hamper its meaning. Deadlines for letters and columns will be determined by each year’s student staff, allowing sufficient time for verification of authorship prior to publication.

**Errors/Corrections**

Staff members will strive to correct errors prior to publication; however, if the editorial board determines a significant error is printed, the editorial board will determine the manner and timeliness of a correction.

*In the case of an error, the editorial board and staff members must provide total transparency and work to correct the error immediately and with care.*

*Corrections to errors must be made with an editor’s approval and include an editor’s note on each publication, including print and online.*

**Balance and Objectivity**

The staff of the (Multimedia Publication) will strive to report all issues in a legal, objective, accurate and ethical manner, according to the Canons of Professional Journalism developed by the Society for Professional Journalists. The Canons of Professional Journalism include a code of ethics concerning accuracy, responsibility, integrity, conflict of interest, impartiality, fair play, freedom of the press, independence, sensationalism, personal privacy, obstruction of justice, credibility and advertising.

**Legal Advice**

The student editor and staff who want appropriate outside legal advice regarding proposed content – should seek attorneys knowledgeable in media law such as those of the Student Press Law Center. Final content decisions and responsibility shall remain with the student editorial board.

***News Gathering***

*News judgment and value should be considered when making editorial decision. Ask yourself the following questions:*

- *What purpose does this story serve?*

- *Who does my story serve?*

- *Is there an issue presented? Can a solution (if applicable) be presented as well.*

- *Is the story timely?*

*News gathering should include timely and in-depth interviews. Interview questions should be submitted to editors for approval and with revisions to follow if changes are necessary.*

*Students should keep notes and recorded interviews (on-the-record) for reference when writing content and for reference in case of a rebuttal. If recording an interview, audio or video, make sure to explicitly ask for approval to record on the record.*

***Confidential Sources***

*When should you use confidential sources?*

- *Is the story of public concern or interest?*

- *Is it the only way to get the information?*

- *Is the confidential source providing information that can be verified or fact-checked?*

*Confidential sources should be used as a journalist’s last option due to the nature of the sensitive information. If you must use an anonymous source for the public good in sharing information or a story, vet your source and remain transparent with your audience. Sharing this information with your readers/viewers/listeners is a way to build trust and remain transparent.*

- *Why did you not name your source?*

- *How do you know the information is credible?*

***Shield Law (Ohio)***

*The* [*law*](http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/2739.12) *has not been applied to high school or college journalists, but protection is likely for reporters to protect them against revealing a confidential source. The law also broadens its coverage to include television and radio broadcasters, including print.*

*The state shield law protects the identity of the sources. It does not protect other information collected in the news gathering process.*

**Plagiarism**

*Plagiarism, including the misrepresentation and falsification of quotes, will not be tolerated. If it is found a student has fabricated information, quotes or misrepresented material, it may result in immediate dismissal or failing grade.*

**Controversial Coverage**

(Multimedia Publication) will not avoid publishing a story solely on the basis of possible dissent or controversy.

*Controversial issues, along with any and all material published, should be handled with care and responsibility.*

*The editorial board and staff members will discuss whether the controversial issue is:*

- *timely*

- *accurate*

- *serves a journalistic purpose*

- *serves the greater good*

- *minimizes harm*

*The editorial board and staff members should discuss any available or possible alternatives in case there’s discussion related to potential consequences of publishing the issue.*

**Advertisements**

The (Multimedia Publication) editorial board reserves the right to accept or reject any ad in accordance with its advertising policy.

***Photo/Video Manipulation***

*No photo or video should be manipulated to change its true original form. Anything that is done to change or alter the photo or video’s natural form should be clearly labeled. If minor edits are made to enhance the material’s original state can be made without labels, but major manipulations will not be allowed/published.*

***Copyright***

*Copyrighted material that does not belong to the publication or individual staff members should not be used or published without explicit consent from the copyright holder. If permission is given, credit should be given to the content used on all platforms.*

***Protecting your Journalism***

***\*Information below is from previous coursework that I have adapted for the editorial policy.***

*Report the truth:*

- *If it’s not true, don’t publish it. Journalists have a responsibility to seek the truth and report it in an accurate, objective and fair way. Make sure you keep documentation of your evidence and use trustworthy sources.*

- *Don’t take information at face-value. Journalists should use responsible judgment to ask question as necessary.*

- *If you don’t have the time, make room for it. No story is worth the rush of publication and the risk of publishing false information.*

***Social Media Policy***

*\*The following information has been adapted from previous coursework.*

*Journalists should treat social media as another outlet for publication. Whether it’s on the publication’s platform or on a personal page, sharing, posting and interacting with users should be handled responsibly. It may be possible to create a separate social media page directed for personal use, but staff members should understand its potential impact as readers/viewers may attach your personal views to your stories.*

*GUIDELINES:*

- *Be aware of your actions on social media. It not only reflects on the journalists, but the organization you represent.*

- *DO NOT post images that contain nudity or explicit content or inappropriate images/text that go against the policy of the journalistic media you are representing.*

- *When posting on social media, ask yourself the following questions:*

o *Is this something you would write in a publication? If not, how could this hurt your credibility as a journalist?*

o *Why are you sharing this?*

o *Are you sharing credible information or simply leaving it for the viewer to decide? If not, how could this be harmful or discredit your credibility?*

- *Be honest, transparent and respectful to others as you would while working as a journalist.*

- *If you come across reports of an incident on social media, it is crucial to confirm the information before spreading the information as fact.*

- *It is your responsibility to be transparent. Use social media as a platform to keep up with the community through verification and thorough understanding of specific events.*

- *Treat online sources as you normally would. Journalists should confirm the information being presented and anonymous sources should rarely, if at all, be used as a single source representing fact.*

- *Remain skeptical. Not everything you read on social media is true.*

***Accuracy and Verification***

*Journalists should make every and all attempts to verify the accuracy of the information presented in stories. Students should ask the following questions:*

- *Does the background material support your information?*

- *Is each side presented or offered a chance for a comment or response?*

- *Does the information include attribution?*

- *Have you contacted multiple sources for your story?*

***Treatment of Minors***

*The editorial board will make a decision on the whether to identity minors/juveniles (under the age of 18) in the publication. This decision should be made with care and respect pertaining to a minor’s privacy in all situations. Staff members should ask themselves the following questions as presented by the* [*RTDNA*](https://rtdna.org/content/identifying_juveniles)

-  *Who is served by identifying this juvenile? Why does the public need to know the identity? What is my journalistic purpose in identifying the juvenile?*

- *If the juvenile is charged with a crime, what is the strength of the evidence? Have formal charges been filed or is the juvenile just a suspect? How likely are the charges to stick and be prosecuted?*

- *What is the severity of the crime, the nature of the crime and how much harm was done in the process of the crime?*

- *If you do not name the juvenile, who else could be implicated by rumor or confusion about who is charged?*

- *If the juvenile is charged with a crime, will the juvenile be tried as an adult?*

- *What is the level of public knowledge? Is the juvenile's identification widely known already? How public was the juvenile's arrest, apprehension or the incident that landed the juvenile in the public eye?*

- *What alternatives have you considered besides identifying the juvenile?*

- *How will you explain your decision to identify this juvenile to the public, to your newsroom?*

*Find additional questions* [*here*](https://rtdna.org/content/identifying_juveniles)*:* [*https://rtdna.org/content/identifying\_juveniles*](https://rtdna.org/content/identifying_juveniles)

***Obituaries***

*Staff members with the (Multimedia Publication) will publish 300-word obituaries for current students, staff and faculty members and school administrators. Staff members should treat obituaries with care and respect. This can include:*

- *date of birth/date of death*

- *survivors*

- *involvement in organizations/extracurricular activities*

- *hobbies/interests*

*In the case of suicide, cause of death will not be listed. See more:* [*www.reportingonsuicide.org*](http://www.reportingonsuicide.org/)