

## **PREAMBLE TO THE SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS' CODE OF ETHICS**

"Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility. Members of the Society share a dedication to ethical behavior and adopt this code to declare the Society's principles and standards of practice."

### **CODE OF ETHICS OF NC STATE STUDENT MEDIA**

The goal of any journalist – whether a reporter, a photojournalist, a designer or an editor – is to seek truth and publish it.

To guide the journalist in seeking the truth, the NC State Student Media has a Code of Ethics – an outline for standards of conduct and moral judgments – that is designed to protect and strengthen the publication's journalistic integrity and credibility. Whether it's a question of accepting a gift or an issue of source anonymity, the Code of Ethics provides the reporter with guidelines and sets the track for ethical soundness.

For example, journalists must avoid conflicts of interest, whether the conflicts are real or simply perceived. Journalists always must strive for accuracy in everything they do. Deceiving or misinforming the reader, deliberately or accidentally, is one of the worst sins in journalism. Factual errors and conflicts of interests erode and cripple a publication's credibility as a source of news and opinion. Therefore, journalists need to follow a Code of Ethics to preserve and to build their publication's credibility.

The Code of Ethics is an ever-evolving reference document with which every staff member should be knowledgeable. The editor of the publication retains the final judgment on all ethical questions, and ultimately, the editor shoulders the consequence of unethical practices.

This Code of Ethics is not meant to replace the professional codes of the Society for Professional Journalists, the National Press Photographers Association or other professional media-related associations. Instead, it's meant to supplement them.

### **PRIVILEGES**

*Free food* — Reporters should make every effort to pay for their own food at events that they are covering. It's acceptable to participate in a meal or refreshments provided at an event if all media receive the same treatment.

*Free travel* — Reporters may not accept free or discounted travel arrangements to events they will be covering. The Student Media will pay for all properly-authorized travel. There are two exceptions to this rule. Reporters and photographers covering out-of-town play-off games may ride on the team charter when invited and when no other mode of transportation is available but will pay for such travel. Reporters or photographers traveling on assignments that need military protection may make use of military transportation as necessary.

*Free tickets and passes* — Reporters may accept tickets and passes to events that they plan to cover for Student Media. It is unacceptable to use such passes for personal use.

*Gifts* — Reporters should not accept gifts, unless the gift has an estimated value less than \$10. If the gift has significant monetary value, the reporter should send it back to the sender or donate it to charity. If a reporter accepts an insignificant gift, all subsequent gifts from the same sender should be sent back or donated to charity. Any material given for review immediately becomes property of Student Media.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

*As a member of a club, organization or team or as a family member or friend*— Student Media employees will not cover an event that is organized by, supported by or related to a club, organization or team in which they or their immediate family member is a member or candidate for membership. Staff members will decline all assignments that involve their family, friends, roommates and any organization or company of which they are a member, an employee or a volunteer. Likewise, staff members should not cover a person or entity that they have publically decried or protested as a private citizen. This includes reporters, photographers, videographers, DJs and editors. Such staff members may, however, consult with the other staff members assigned to such a story, but should hold no decision-making or editing power over such a story or decisions on whether such an assignment should be made.

*As candidates for any elected office in Student Government or any other campus-wide elected office* — Employees must suspend their work at Student Media through the duration of the campaign, as defined by Student Government or the organization holding elections, including any run-offs for that position. Staff members may resume their work at Student Media once the elections are complete, but may not take assignments related to that position or those elections.

*As a reporter writing opinion pieces* — No Student Media employee may do both objective news coverage and editorial commentary on a single issue, person or event, with the exception of sports reporters who routinely cover the same sports and teams. That is not limited to editorial commentary in Student Media publications, but also all other publications, media outlets, blogs, social media platforms and means of publishing commentary, even if it is not 100 percent accessible to the public. A person may, however, contribute to the discussion or writing of an unsigned editorial if they are on a publication's editorial board and cover the topic objectively.

## **REPORTER IDENTIFICATION**

Reporters should identify themselves to potential sources before the start of an interview. A reporter may only misrepresent his identity while on the job under one of two circumstances, both with the express knowledge of the section editor involved and the editor.

A reporter may misrepresent his identity if conducting a restaurant, a theater or some other type of review, where his or her presence being known may affect the outcome of the review.

An editor may allow a reporter to misrepresent his or her identity if the information at stake is unobtainable any other way, and it is vital to the coverage.

## **SOURCE REQUESTS**

Sources will never be invited to review or edit work before it is published. Also, reporters will never pre-submit questions for an interview. A source has the right to deny an interview at any time. A reporter may discuss what another source said about a given topic with another source he is interviewing. Reporters, however, are not obligated to discuss what other sources said.

## **"OFF-THE-RECORD" and "NOT-FOR ATTRIBUTION" INFORMATION**

Information given to reporters "off the record" will not be used directly in the story. Information given as "not for attribution" may be used by reporters in the story. However, the information should not be directly linked to the source. The reporter may write "a professor in the Department of English said," or "a starting member of the football team said." The reporter will promise neither "off-the-record" nor "not-for-attribution" privileges to a source without the express permission of the editor.

## **SOURCE ANONYMITY**

Reporters are to use a source's first and last name in all cases not forbidden by law, unless the reporter makes a compelling case for preserving a person's anonymity and is given express permission from the outlet's editor-in-chief or station manager to quote the source anonymously.

## **NO RESPONSE SOURCES**

If reporters take legitimate and appropriate measures to contact a source, and the source does not return their inquiry, then the reporters may write either "declined to comment," "would not respond" or "was unavailable for comment." The verb "refused" should only be used in such a setting with the permission of an editor and only when the source directly refused to comment.

## **CORRECTIONS**

All Student Media are obligated to correct any error they make as soon as possible, no matter the level of consequence for the error. The corrections should be in a fixed, consistent location in the publication. [CLICK HERE](#) for Corrections Policy.

## **ATTRIBUTION**

All information from sources, including official documents, books, letters and emails, other articles and websites, should be attributed.

## **USE OF PROFANITY**

As student media, we have great leeway in regard to what we print. However, as representatives of NC State University and the Student Media, and as students, we have certain responsibilities, one of which is to maintain a certain standard of professionalism. We have a responsibility to our readers — the students, faculty and staff and members of the surrounding community — to report the most accurate and nonbiased information we can possibly obtain.

To maintain and build our reputation, the media we produce should maintain high standards, standards reflective of the community in which we operate. To that end, the Student Media should not allow free rein when deciding what words are fit to publish and what words are not.

The Student Media will publish "crap," "hell," and "damn" only when in direct quotations and only when absolutely necessary for understanding the concept. Publications will use these words in opinion columns, features stories and commentaries only when the word is necessary for understanding or emphasis of a concept. Excessive cursing as an attempt at humor will not be tolerated.

Media outlets will not publish any other words considered profane or obscene. In the case of such a word appearing in a quotation, the word will be edited at the discretion of the editor. If it is decided that the word will remain, only the first letter will be printed, followed by hyphens for each of the remaining letters, i.e., "f—."

If the word appears in a column, story or commentary by a staff reporter or guest writer, the word will be substituted with an appropriate word or phrase, keeping as close to the writer's original meaning as possible. Racial slurs will not be published unless their presence is merited by the content of the story, and in that case, only when the slur appears in a direct quotation and in context.

The editor will have final say regarding all profanity and racial slurs that appear in publication.

### **OTHER WORK**

Some Student Media employees may have another, non-media job, so long as there are no conflicts with their responsibilities for Student Media. Such employment may not conflict with Student Media, University, state or federal policies, rules or laws. The employee should let his or her editor know of any potential conflicts of interest immediately.

Employees may work for more than one on-campus publication, as long as they don't hold salaried (i.e. paid monthly) positions in more than one publication.

Employees may freelance for off-campus media, as long as they do not cover the same event for both publications, and the off-campus obligations do not conflict with the employee's commitment to Student Media. No University equipment may be used for such assignments.

### **OPEN MEETINGS & OPEN RECORDS**

North Carolina Law says media have access to most state-, local- and university- government meetings and records. Reporters should be knowledgeable of such laws and exercise them while reporting.

### **PROFESSIONAL CODES OF ETHICS**

- [\\_Society for Professional Journalists Code of Ethics](#)
- [\\_National Press Photographers Association Code of Ethics](#)
- [\\_National Press Photographers Association Special Report: Ethics in the Age of Digital Photography](#)
- [\\_Radio Television Digital News Association Code of Ethics](#)