

THE DAILY COUGAR POLICY MANUAL AND ETHICS HANDBOOK

THE DAILY COUGAR POLICY MANUAL

Section 1: EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

a. Discrimination

The Daily Cougar provides equal treatment and opportunity to all persons without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, veteran status or sexual orientation. Anyone who feels they have not been treated equally should first inform the editor in chief. Complaints against the editor in chief should be made to the director of Student Publications and the Student Publications Committee.

b. Sexual harassment

The University classifies sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination and is illegal. Sexual harassment need not pertain to only unwanted advances or use of influence. The following may constitute such a charge:

- unwelcome flirtation, leering, propositions
- favoritism based on relationship (coupled with its effect on the rest of the staff)
- sexual remarks, whether intended as a joke or towards a specific group; such remarks may include explicit derogatory language or innuendo
- use of sexually oriented photos, posters, cartoons or displays unrelated to the job
- graphic or degrading language — whether verbal, written or electronic
- unwelcome physical contact
- actual or threatened physical assault

Sexual harassment occurs when such conduct is made a term or condition of employment; is used for evaluation purposes or personnel decisions; creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment; or interferes with work.

If anyone feels he or she is being subjected to harassing behavior, he or she must ask the offending party to refrain from the harassing activity. If the offender fails to do so, further action is needed and the complainant should notify the editor in chief as soon as possible. The editor in chief must document all harassment incidents and keep them in a personnel file.

Sexual harassment applies to both sexes. It is not dependent on rank or level of authority. Whether or not the people involved were in a prior consensual relationship cannot be used as a defense. Sexual harassment is a serious charge and should not be thrown around lightly. Anyone who continues to engage in such conduct following prior written warning will be dismissed.

c. General harassment

The Department of Student Publications does not tolerate harassment of any kind. The department will hold annual workshops on harassment in the workplace, which all editors are required to attend and all staff members are encouraged to attend.

d. Dismissals and reassignments

No staff member shall be dismissed or reassigned without receiving written notification indicating reasons for the action. Any section editor wishing to dismiss or reassign a staff writer has the authority to do so, but must get the written approval of the editor in chief beforehand. The editor in chief has the discretion of dismissing anyone on the editorial staff, regardless of section assignment.

Section 2: BEHAVIOR

a. Alcohol, drugs and smoking on department property

Alcohol and drugs are not permitted in the newsroom per University policy. Any staff member found with alcohol or drugs will be dismissed. No staff member will come to work or be on assignment under the influence of alcohol or any drug.

Per University policy, smoking is permitted only outside in authorized locations.

b. Alcoholic consumption and drug use on assignment

No staff member will accept or consume an alcoholic beverage or use drugs while representing The Daily Cougar. This covers staff members on Cougar assignments as well as staff members who are not on an official assignment, but are representing The Daily Cougar in public.

c. Dating

Favoritism based on personal relationships may be construed as discrimination or harassment, so intrastaff dating must be handled with care. It is not advisable for subordinates to date their supervisors.

d. Disruptive behavior

Though the atmosphere in the newsroom is casual, remember that it is a place of business and staff members should conduct themselves accordingly. Respect fellow staff members' requests for quiet in the newsroom and keep the newsroom an open and welcoming place for visitors. However, the editor on duty may ask visitors to leave the newsroom, especially if they become disruptive.

e. Speaking for the newspaper

The only people who should speak on behalf of The Daily Cougar in any public forum, including the media and public meetings, are the editor in chief and the director of Student Publications. Other staff members may speak in such situations only if the editor in chief gives them permission to do so.

Direct requests from external media outlets should be directed to the editor on duty or the director of Student Publications. If a reporter from an external media outlet comes to the newsroom, he or she is to be directed to the editor on duty or the director of Student Publications.

The editor in chief must notify the University's Office of Internal and External Communication prior to any interviews by external media outlets, regardless of the time of day. University permission to participate in such interviews isn't required, but the University must be notified.

Section 3: DEPARTMENTAL EQUIPMENT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

a. Student Publications equipment

i. Computers

Newsroom computers are for staff use only. Section editors' computers are for section editors' use alone; staff members may use them only after obtaining permission. If all computers are in use, anyone not working on Daily Cougar business may be asked to give up a computer.

ii. Servers and hard drives

The Daily Cougar file servers and hard drives are to be used for business purposes only. Staff members will not store personal material, files or classwork on the Cougar servers or hard drives. Such material may be

deleted without warning.

iii. *E-mail accounts*

Editors should refrain from using their Daily Cougar e-mail accounts for personal correspondence. Likewise, editors' personal e-mail addresses should not be used to conduct Daily Cougar business. Editors will at no time disclose their e-mail passwords.

iv. *Photographic equipment*

Student Publications-owned photographic equipment, including cameras and accessories, is to be used only for department-related business and must not be taken off campus without the permission of the editor on duty. Equipment must be returned as quickly as possible after an assignment is completed.

v. *Keys*

Front door keys are for section editors only and are obtained from the business manager for a \$5 deposit. No editor will loan a key to a staff member not authorized to have a key without prior consent of the Business Office. Keys are to be turned in to the business manager at the end of the semester or end of employment at The Daily Cougar. Lost or stolen keys must be reported to the business manager immediately.

vi. *Desks*

Only those staff members with desk assignments shall occupy assigned desks. No staff member will occupy an assigned desk without prior permission from the section editor. Section editors are free to decorate their desks and areas as they wish, as long as the decoration does not violate any University policy.

vii. *Telephones and voice mail*

Telephones are to be used by staff members only. Anyone not on staff wishing to use a newsroom telephone must obtain permission from a section editor. Long distance calls must first be cleared by a section editor. All section editors will maintain logs of long distance calls made by their staff members, including the dates and times of the calls, the numbers and parties called, the purposes of the calls and the durations of the calls. These logs must be turned in to the editor in chief upon request.

Staff members in the newsroom are expected to answer the main line and provide assistance to callers or transfer them to the appropriate extension.

Editors will at no time disclose their voice mail passcodes.

b. Intellectual property

All stories, photos and art written, taken or created for The Daily Cougar, whether published or not, are owned and copyrighted by the Department of Student Publications. They may be used for personal clips without permission, but may not be reprinted in another publication or by a wire service without the approval of the editor in chief or the director of Student Publications. All stories, photos and art reprinted in other publications or by wire services must carry proper attribution: The name of the writer, photographer or artist and The Daily Cougar's name. Personal Internet sites may not be linked to The Daily Cougar Online without permission from the director of Student Publications.

All published and unpublished photos, negatives and digital photo files for which a staff member is paid by the Department of Student Publications, whether or not they were created using department-owned equipment, are the property of the department.

c. Competing publications

Staff writers will not use Daily Cougar equipment to write, complete or research stories or take photographs for another publication without prior consent from the editor in chief or managing editor.

Section 4: COMPLAINTS, PUNISHMENTS AND APPEALS

a. Complaints

Any complaints regarding infractions of the above policies should be made to the offending staff member, either verbally or in writing. If the complaint cannot be resolved between staff members, the complainant should report it to the editor in chief or managing editor. If the editor in chief or managing editor does not resolve the complaint, consult the director of Student Publications.

Complaints concerning the managing editor should be made to the editor in chief. Complaints concerning the editor in chief should be made to the director of Student Publications.

b. Punishments

Infractions will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Punishments will range from a letter of reprimand to an immediate dismissal, based on the severity of the infraction. Repeated violations will not be tolerated. No one will receive more than two warnings, either verbal or written, for any violation.

c. Appeals

Anyone who feels he or she was unfairly dismissed, treated or discriminated against has the right to make an appeal before the Student Publications Committee. Anyone wishing to be placed on the SPC's agenda must contact either the Daily Cougar representative, the SPC chair or the director of Student Publications.

THE DAILY COUGAR ETHICS HANDBOOK

The power given The Daily Cougar as a news gathering organization brings with it enormous responsibility. The Cougar is accountable to each reader, subject and source. If the newspaper staff purports to deal with facts and publish only that which is true, the staff must be true to itself. With that in mind, The Daily Cougar expects every staff member to observe the following rules and guidelines.

Section 1: SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS CODE OF ETHICS

The Daily Cougar adheres to the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics, as do thousands of other editors, writers, reporters and photographers.

a. Preamble

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.

b. Seek Truth and Report It

Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information. Journalists should:

- Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
- Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
- Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.
- Always question sources' motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.
- Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
- Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.
- Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.
- Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained in the story.
- Never plagiarize.
- Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it's unpopular to do so.
- Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.
- Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.
- Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.
- Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
- Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
- Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

c. Minimize Harm

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect. Journalists should:

- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
- Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention.
- Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
- Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
- Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
- Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
- Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

d. Act Independently

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know. Journalists should:

- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
- Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
- Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.
- Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

e. Be Accountable

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other. Journalists should:

- Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
- Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
- Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

Section 2: LIBEL

For information on libel and First Amendment rights, see the Associated Press Briefing on Media Law.

Section 3: REPORTING, WRITING AND EDITING

a. Plagiarism

Copying other written work, photos or any other printed material is strictly prohibited. Material taken from other sources, including those on the Internet and in press releases and press photos, should be properly attributed, giving credit where it is due. Staff members who plagiarize will be dismissed.

b. Lying in print

Readers trust published material to be both accurate and true. Though mistakes are made, every effort must be

made to ensure the accuracy of a work. If a staff member submits an article, cartoon or photograph containing information he or she knows to be false, the staff member will be dismissed.

c. Full disclosure

It is The Daily Cougar's responsibility to disclose in articles, whenever possible, any relationships the newspaper has with a subject. For example, articles about student fee hearings should indicate the Cougar is partially funded by student fees; as another example, should a staff member be involved in an activity the newspaper is covering, he or she should be identified somewhere in the article as a member of the Cougar staff.

d. Sources

i. Confidentiality and anonymous sources

Quoting nameless sources may threaten the credibility of the newspaper, especially if the source is later found to have provided false or misleading information. Therefore, the use of anonymous sources is highly discouraged and must be approved by the editor in chief.

If the news is of such a nature that it cannot be reported without information from a confidential source, reporters should respect sources' wishes to remain anonymous. Before using information from an anonymous source, every effort must be made to get the same information from a source who is willing to be identified. If an anonymous source is used, he or she should be identified according to his or her relation to the subject, i.e., "a professor who attended the meeting" or "a source close to the president's office."

ii. Composite and fictional sources

Writers will at no time attribute information or quotes to fictional people or invent a composite source based on several sources to protect identities.

iii. Relationships with sources

Staff members must be very careful when cultivating relationships with sources and potential sources, as getting too close to a source may affect the news gathering process and create conflicts of interest. Reporters, photographers, cartoonists and editors whose personal relationships affect their work are subject to reassignment or disciplinary action.

By the same token, reporters must not interview their friends, relatives or Student Publications staff members (unless the article directly relates to the department), except to obtain background information.

e. The interviewing process

i. Disclosure

Reporters will plainly identify themselves as reporters for The Daily Cougar and inform sources that information gathered may be used in the newspaper when conducting interviews, whether in person, by telephone or by e-mail. When interviewing by e-mail, reporters should provide alternate contact information, such as a telephone number or their section editors' telephone numbers, to allow sources to verify reporters' identities.

ii. Notes and recording

All interviews must be documented through notes, a recording, or both. Records will be kept in plain sight during an interview and should be removed upon the source's request. If a reporter is recording a telephone interview, he or she should notify the source that the conversation is being recorded and should stop the recording if asked.

Reporters should understand that any notes or recordings they make should be accurate and detailed because they may need to be consulted later. Also, staff members may be asked to share notes with other staff members or editors at a later time and should be prepared to do so.

iii. *Going off the record*

Reporters should respect sources' wishes to make comments off the record and should use off-the-record information only as background material, which should be verified. Technically, information is considered off the record only if a source specifies he or she wants it to be off the record before giving the information. However, sources sometimes make the request after giving information; in that case, it is up to the reporter's judgment how to proceed. Remember that in some cases, a source may be persuaded to give information on the record if he or she is presented with a well-reasoned argument.

iv. *Sources who do not respond*

Remember that there is a difference between a source who is not available for comment and a source who refuses to comment. Staff members should always make every reasonable effort to contact a source in person, by telephone or by e-mail. If it is not possible to contact a source by press time for a particular article, indicate in the article what efforts were made to contact the source — for example, "Smith did not return phone calls or e-mails Thursday." Only report that a source refused to comment if he or she specifically refused to do so.

f. Quotes

i. *Integrity of quoted matter*

Printed matter appearing inside quotation marks must be entirely accurate and verifiable by a reporter's notes, recording or correspondence. If a reporter is unsure of the exact wording or content of a quote, he or she should paraphrase instead. Quotes must never be reconstructed from memory alone, nor should material that is not a direct quote be placed inside quotation marks.

ii. *Altering quotes*

The content of quotes must not be altered in any way, even for errors in grammar. Should the grammar or construction detract from the meaning of the quote, paraphrase.

iii. *Quoting from multiple or previous interviews*

When quoting from multiple interviews with the same source or quoting from previous interviews with a source, the writer must make it clear in the article that he or she has done so.

iv. *Substitution and abbreviation*

Substitution in quotes, used to clarify meaning, must be done carefully and must never alter the intent or content of the quote in any way. Quotes must also never be condensed in a way that alters their intent or content or abbreviated so their context is lost.

When abbreviating a quote or omitting unnecessary words, use ellipses to ensure readers know such a change has been made.

g. Photos

i. *Altering and cropping photos*

Photos published in The Daily Cougar will not be altered in any way other than for quality control and must never be flipped. Photos accompanying feature articles (in feature layouts only) may be altered, but must carry a "photo illustration" credit. Crops of photos must be made responsibly and should never alter the context of the photos.

ii. *Sensitive photos*

Images portraying tragic events, victims of crime or death must be treated with great caution if a photo's publication has the potential of causing pain to the subject or his or her family members and loved ones.

iii. *Photos from external sources*

Photographs from external sources must be identified as such, either with the photographer's name and organization or a "courtesy of" line.

h. Identifying the accused

The Daily Cougar will not identify anyone accused of a crime until charges are formally made. Even then, until a suspect is convicted of a crime, it must be made clear that he or she has only been accused of the crime. The word "alleged" does not clear the newspaper of responsibility in these matters; back up all charges with official sources. When a suspect is cleared of charges, the Cougar will publish an article reporting it.

i. Vulgar and profane language

The Daily Cougar does not allow vulgarity and profanity in print. Should vulgarity or profanity come up in quoted matter, paraphrase the quote to remove the offending language. In rare cases, vulgar or profane language may be allowed to stand if it is necessary to convey emotion or characterize a certain situation. The editor on duty must approve such uses.

j. Stereotypes and the written word

Writers and cartoonists should use care when dealing with members of specific cultures or groups. Don't use stereotypes or words that give negative connotations. Use of some stereotypes or negative descriptions — whether true or not — could leave the writer and newspaper open to libel. Refer to Associated Press and Daily Cougar style for the correct way to refer to certain groups.

k. Prior review

If a source asks the reporter to submit an article to him or her before publication, the answer should be, "That is not Daily Cougar policy." Instead, reporters can reassure a source by reading the source's quotes back to him or her. Should the source press, he or she may be directed to a section editor or the editor in chief. If a staff member has questions or concerns about prior review requests, he or she should consult his or her section editor.

l. Corrections and clarifications

The Daily Cougar is obligated to point out errors made in reporting and correct the record. Any writer who notices a mistake should approach an editor to ask for a correction. Depending on the nature of the mistake, the Cougar will publish either a correction or clarification. Corrections will always appear in an area labeled "Corrections." If a source calls an editor to report being misquoted, take a full statement from the source to obtain the correct information, then confer with the reporter and consult his or her notes or recording. If the paper is in the wrong, a correction is needed.

Section 4: OBJECTIVITY

a. Public commentary

In order for the newspaper to remain objective and fair, staff members should not comment publicly on internal matters relating to The Daily Cougar, including situations among staff members, external situations involving the newspaper, assignments, interviews, sources, articles and materials gathered on Cougar assignments. (See Policy Section 2.d, "Speaking for the newspaper.")

b. During interviews

In an interview, a reporter should not give a subject his or her view on the topic being discussed or on any topic likely to be discussed in the future.

c. At sporting events

Staff members representing The Daily Cougar at sporting events should not wear red or any article of clothing showing support for the University's athletic teams. This applies not only to writers and photographers covering the event, but also to any staff members present under Cougar credentials.

d. Columns and analysis

Opinion columns outside the Opinion section — for example, sports commentaries or entertainment columns — should always be clearly labeled as such. When news analysis pieces run, they should be very clearly labeled as “news analysis” and set in opinion text to differentiate them from news articles.

e. Involvement in campus organizations

Staff writers will not cover groups or organizations with which they are involved or departments or offices where they are employed. No staff member may serve on the Student Government Association or hold any SGA appointment. Any staff member fearing a conflict of interest must remove him or herself from assignment.

f. Advertising

Staff members will not be swayed by advertisers or advertising representatives to cover or promote a product, venue, service or event. Staff members will also not be affected by advertisers or advertising representatives who threaten to pull their business from The Daily Cougar based on coverage. Staff members are not to accept story ideas from advertising representatives involving advertisers or potential advertisers. These rules also apply to advertising supplements for which Daily Cougar staff members produce content.

Section 5: REPRESENTING THE DAILY COUGAR

a. Abusing Daily Cougar affiliation

Staff members should only represent The Daily Cougar when conducting official newspaper business. On such business, staff members should not use their affiliation with the newspaper to get treatment or favors beyond those accorded to other members of the media. When not conducting newspaper-related business, staff members should never use their affiliation with the newspaper to receive special treatment, gifts or other favors.

Section 6: GIFTS AND FAVORS

a. Gifts/passes

The Daily Cougar receives packets containing promotional items every day. Items may be kept, if there is no condition placed on their acceptance. As a rule, anything exceeding the value of a T-shirt (about \$10) will not be kept. Under no circumstances should a writer, editor or photographer accept free material in exchange for positive press coverage.

As with gifts, passes will only be accepted if the reviewer is free to write an honest article, free of conditions.

b. CDs, books, DVDs and games

Any item sent to The Daily Cougar for review (including CDs, books, DVDs, video games and concert tickets) is property of The Daily Cougar until it is given to an individual writer in exchange for a review. As with all gifts, ownership of the review material does not ensure a positive review. If a writer takes material to review, he or she must write a review of the item(s). The section editor reserves the right to assign reviews and to distribute reviewable matter in an equitable way.

The solicitation of reviewable matter for personal use is prohibited. Requesting and accepting promotional material without the intent of writing a review may result in dismissal.

c. Travel

Journalists will not accept free travel. This includes sports writers traveling on team charters. The editor in chief has met with the athletics director in the past and made an agreement to let sports writers travel with teams. This does not mean that Athletics is footing the bill. Student Publications pays a reduced portion, allowing staff to cover more away games. The arrangement with Athletics is not contingent on positive coverage. At no point should journalists feel they cannot be truthful when writing because they traveled with the team. Anyone wishing to travel must fill out a Travel Request Form two weeks before the event date, to be signed by either the editor in chief or managing editor.

Section 7: THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

a. Responsibility of the editor in chief

The editor in chief, like all staff members, is expected to abide by the policies and rules set forth herein.

b. Objectivity

The editor in chief is not to make his or her views on any matter public, as doing so could compromise the newspaper's objectivity. Aside from participating in work with the Editorial Board, the editor in chief must not use space in the newspaper as a forum for his or her views.

*Ratified by the Student Publications Committee
April 13, 2006*