

# THE COLLEGIAN

California State University, Fresno

## **Editorial Staff Policy Manual**

Revised 9/28/10

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This manual serves as a newsroom reference regarding general information, policies and proper procedures for editorial staff members of The Collegian, the student newspaper at California State University, Fresno, as well as a guide for members of the university community interested in the operation of the paper.

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# About The Collegian

## *Mission statement*

The Collegian serves as the student newspaper for California State University, Fresno, currently publishing three days a week in tabloid-sized form and online. Its purpose is twofold:

1. To provide the university community with news of interest and provide a university forum of public opinion, all presented in a professional manner.
2. To provide experience and training for students interested in the newspaper and its online component that will enable them to acquire the tools necessary to participate in their chosen field.

## *General Information*

The Collegian is a newspaper business, serving students, faculty, advertisers and the public. It is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Staff members are often in the office during non-business hours performing duties pertinent to publication of the newspaper.

The Collegian is located in Speech Arts, Room 169, on the university campus. The mailing address is 5201 N. Maple Ave. SA42, Fresno CA 93740-8027. The general phone number is (559) 278-5735.

The Collegian is protected by freedom of the press rights granted by the First Amendment, and although it can be asked for explanations of news judgment or editorial policy, it is not required to submit advance copies of work considered for publication to any group or person outside The Collegian staff.

The Collegian is funded by a student fee referendum passed in April 2005, which is collected from each student each semester, in addition to advertising revenue.

Staff members agree to conduct themselves in a courteous and responsible manner, and agree to abide by policies and guidelines stated in this manual.

The Collegian does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, gender, religion, beliefs, ethnic background, sexual orientation or national origin.

## *Governing Board*

The Board for The Collegian consists of the university president, or a representative appointed by the president; the dean of student affairs; the student body president or designee; the chair or faculty designee from the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism; and a student representative of the College of Arts & Humanities, appointed by the dean.

The Board has authority to approve major capital expenditures, authorize supplement publications, investigate com-

plaints upon referral from the Faculty Adviser or Editor in Chief, resolve conflicts concerning budget or operations, and make changes to this governing document. The Board does not have authority to make Collegian content decisions.

# Editorial Organization

## *Advisers*

The journalistic arm of The Collegian's operation has a Faculty Adviser and an Online Adviser. The Faculty Adviser is a faculty member of the Mass Communication and Journalism Department. The advisers offer no hands-on input, such as actual writing or videography, that would appear in The Collegian, but they may review editorial content at any time in an effort to critique and enhance the learning experience. The Faculty Adviser meets with the MCJ 105 Newspaper Workshop class. The Online Adviser meets once or more weekly with the online staff.

## *Overview*

Any currently enrolled Fresno State student is eligible to serve on The Collegian staff. Key editors must enroll in MCJ 105 Newspaper Workshop.

Before joining The Collegian, students, advisers and employees of the student newspaper are expected to understand guidelines for libel, invasion of privacy, obscenity and other areas considered inappropriate for publication.

Staff members are expected to maintain a professional demeanor and should be aware they are perceived as representatives of The Collegian. They must maintain a high level of confidentiality of any content expected to be published.

Editors are expected to provide a training ground for their subordinates and should spend up to two weeks at the end of the semester training their replacements.

## *Hiring Process*

The Collegian prefers to hire its core staff for a term of two consecutive semesters, if possible. Terms may include reassignments during the second semester. Reviews are conducted by the Faculty Adviser at mid-term of each semester. Staff may work for The Collegian for no more than four semesters total in the same position so other students can have the opportunity to learn and practice journalism. Hiring beyond the fourth semester must be for a substantially different role on the staff.

All editorial staff must enroll in MCJ 105 Newspaper Workshop, and cannot be concurrently enrolled in MCJ 129 Online News Workshop or MCJ 143 Advertising Sales.

## The editors

**Editor in Chief:** Ensures the overall quality of The Collegian's editorial operation.

**News Editor:** Assigns, edits and does layout for the news section. Submits news budget one or more issues in advance.

**Features Editor:** Assigns, edits does layout for the features section. Submits features budget one or more issues in advance.

**Sports Editor:** Assigns, edits and does layout for the sports section. Submits sports budget one or more issues in advance.

**Arts & Entertainment Editor:** Assigns, edits does layout for the A&E section. Submits A&E budget one or more issues in advance.

**Opinion Editor:** Assigns, edits and does layout for the opinion section. Submits opinion budget one or more issues in advance.

**Photo Editor:** Assigns and edits photographs; maintains photo equipment; responsible for ensuring complete and accurate outline information.

**Copy Editor:** Ensures the overall quality of content in The Collegian through editing of story text, headlines, cutlines, captions, informational graphics, and other such items.

## Additional staff

**Writers and photographers:** Stories and other content will be produced primarily by the core staff of students enrolled in MCJ 105. Students enrolled in MCJ 102W Reporting and MCJ 108 In-depth Reporting are also considered contributing staff.

**Freelance contributors:** Outside contributions offered to or solicited by The Collegian are accepted only from students, unless they are in the form of a letter to the editor or a guest column. Anyone approved for freelance contribution must report to the appropriate editor and conform to Collegian policy. Payment will be considered and contracted in advance only for outside contributors solicited by The Collegian. Those contributing articles of opinion or arts reviews will not be paid. Those contributing on a regular basis should be encouraged to enroll in MCJ 105.

**Copy editors:** Must have completed MCJ 104 Editing of Publications, unless otherwise approved by the FA.

## Ethnic supplement publications

The Asian Pacific Review, Hye Sharzhoom, Uhuru Na Umoja and La Voz de Aztlan are ethnic publications that appear as supplements to The Collegian. Each supplement must have a faculty or staff adviser from an appropriate academic department or program. Those advisers select the supplement editors, who in turn select their respective staffs in consultation with the advisers.

## General Policies And Guidelines

The Collegian office is open to the public each day. People come in to purchase advertisements, suggest story ideas and make inquiries. The Collegian staff must project a professional, business-like image, and all members of the staff are expected to keep their work areas presentable and to be responsive and polite when answering the phones and greeting people who come to the office.

All members — students, faculty and paid employees — are bound by policies and guidelines of The Collegian, which provides a learning environment but still should adhere to the policies of safety, professionalism and management.

The advisers, with input from the Editor in Chief and/or Advertising Managers, may discharge members of the staff if policy is violated.

### *General responsibilities*

Students who participate on The Collegian and supplemental publications should comply with standards of accuracy, fairness and balance as outlined in the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics. Staff members are responsible to their editors in meeting these professional standards and in meeting deadlines.

Collegian staff members are responsible for the content of the newspaper. They shall see that no material published is unlawful or that intentionally supports a substantial disruption of university activities without an ethical journalistic explanation.

### *Conduct*

The Collegian has zero tolerance for any and all ethical violations.

Collegian staff shall not demean readers, viewers, other staff or former staff through The Collegian, The Collegian Online or through any other media.

### *Newsroom issues*

#### **Language**

The Collegian will not publish any material intentionally using abusive language, profanity or that singles out certain groups for the reason of shock value or stereotyping. The Collegian recognizes that stories may, at times, include some of these elements because of the context of the stories, but editors will take care in the handling of these issues and how they should be presented to the public.

#### **Letters to the editor**

The Collegian welcomes letters on topics of interest, and it publishes a policy in each edition. Letters should be no

longer than 250 words and must be typed and accompanied by the letter writer's full name, address, and a working phone number and e-mail address. The letter writer is asked to include if he or she is a and any affiliation with a club or group if the letter focuses on that club or group. Unsigned letters will not be printed.

Letters will not be published until a Collegian editor verifies the authenticity of the letter with the letter writer. Staff members or contributors to The Collegian may not submit letters.

The Collegian reserves the right to edit letters for space considerations, spelling, grammar and style. Letters must follow the same guidelines that any other publishable item in the newspaper follows. Letters that include obscenity, racial bias, libel and serious factual errors will not be published.

Letters can be submitted by "hard copy" to the Collegian office or by e-mail at [collegian@csufresno.edu](mailto:collegian@csufresno.edu).

## Contests

The Editor in Chief and section editors are responsible for being aware of contests in which The Collegian might be eligible. Contest rules should be distributed to all staff members, and those staff members are responsible for submitting entries to their respective editors. Staff members are responsible for preparing the entry so it conforms to contest rules. Editors, with input from advisers, will meet and determine the best entries for a contest but should submit the maximum entries allowed for each category. Disputes regarding entries will be settled by advisers.

## Complaints

No matter what the nature of the complaint is, The Collegian staff should not admit wrongdoing on behalf of The Collegian. An apology could be construed as an admission of guilt that puts The Collegian in legal danger. Staffers should listen and try to understand the nature of the complaint, making an effort to connect the caller with someone who can resolve the issue. All the information should be gathered and given to the Editor In Chief and the Faculty Adviser. If the complaint is not about a factual error, the caller should be encouraged to submit a letter to the editor.

In most cases, reader objections or administrative challenges to complaints regarding published stories, opinions, review or advertisements should be handled by the reporter or representative with input from the supervising editor or adviser, if necessary. If the situation becomes hostile or jeopardizes coverage, the Editor In Chief, an adviser and the reporter or representative should determine a proper procedure to follow, which could include meeting with the hostile party.

## Official statements

Official statements regarding the policies and actions of The Collegian should only be made by the Editor in Chief or advisers. Any comments regarding The Collegian by staff members should be made with the clarification that the comment is not an official position of the newspaper.

## Corrections and retractions

There is a significant difference between a correction and retraction. Often, complainants demand a retraction. Be sure to inform readers of the difference without admitting wrongdoing or promising that a correction or retraction will be published.

A correction is published when The Collegian has made a significant spelling, typographical, reporting or editing error on any published material that appears in the newspaper or online. A retraction is more serious and involves admitting that there are significant errors in a single published story and that it deserves an apology or a new story with correct information.

The Collegian's policy is to correct significant errors of fact in a timely manner. A significant error would be if a story notes that there 12 horses in a parade, when there were actually eight. If the story mentioned the horses were off-white in color and a reader complained that they were beige, this could be determined by editors as not significant enough for a correction.

All corrections must be approved by the section editor and the Editor in Chief, in consultation with the Faculty Adviser. Corrections should be worded so the mistake is not repeated. The correction should not include an apology. An example of a publishable correction:

*A story on Page 3 of The Collegian incorrectly stated the number of flute players in the California State University, Fresno, marching band. The correct number is six.*

## Conflicts of interest

Staff members should conduct themselves in a manner that protects them from conflicts of interest or from the appearance of conflicts of interest. No staff member may publish material about a campus activity or activity related to the campus on a topic in which that person is involved. A member of a sports team cannot write about that particular team. A member of a student group cannot write about that particular group.

Collegian staff members covering events should not engage in activities that would show bias toward that coverage, such as cheering at a sporting event or applauding a political candidate. Staff members signing petitions should not cover events related to the petition topic.

Staff members should avoid interviewing or photographing friends for a story unless they are coincidentally the only reliable source for that story. Staff members should

not purposely attempt to use other staff members as sources for stories or photographs. Staff members also working for other publications are not to provide pertinent story information to the other publication or cover events for both publications without permission of an adviser and the Editor in Chief.

Involvement in student politics, holding student government office and service in university organizations should be avoided if it compromises the integrity of student journalists.

Editorial stances regarding a certain group should not be made by members of The Collegian who are also part of that group.

Staff or freelancers may work for other publications as long as that publication and the work he or she produces is not directly related to campus. In all cases, the Editor in Chief and appropriate adviser should be informed.

Conflicts of interest most often exist when an individual student makes his or her own arrangements. The Editor in Chief and appropriate adviser should be notified of any potential conflicts as soon as possible.

### **Property guidelines**

All content submitted to The Collegian becomes the property of The Collegian. Ads designed by The Collegian are also the property of The Collegian.

Editors determine what content will be submitted and what content will be published. The Collegian retains exclusive rights to content submitted for one publication cycle, unless otherwise determined by the editors. The rights for editorial outtakes and/or declined content then revert to the student. The rights for advertising outtakes and/or declined content remains with The Collegian.

For core and contributing staff, content submitted for The Collegian may not be sent elsewhere without the consent of the Editor in Chief, in consultation with the Faculty Adviser.

A freelancer is paid for the content that is published in The Collegian. The Collegian retains exclusive rights to the editorial content it has purchased and published. The outtakes and/or declined editorial content are the freelancer's to sell after The Collegian gets first choice, regardless of whose equipment and/or press passes were used. This may apply to advertising but only with prior approval of both the Editor in Chief and the Faculty Adviser.

If a student's work that appears in The Collegian generates revenue, based on a special request to use the content after it has been published in The Collegian, then the student is entitled to a portion of that revenue. The Business Manager decides the amount that is reasonable, in consultation with the Editor in Chief and the Faculty Adviser. This includes ads and advertising content outtakes, in consultation with the advertising coordinator.

Students may collect and display their published Collegian content on a personal or professional Web site only for purposes of showcasing their work. That work, previously published in The Collegian, may not be made available for use or sale.

### **Equipment use**

The Editor in Chief may approve the use of The Collegian's equipment and/or press passes to staff based on availability, in consultation with the appropriate editor. A freelancer is expected to use his or her own equipment and to secure his or her own press pass, unless otherwise approved by the Editor in Chief.

### **Passes**

Members of The Collegian may seek credentials to events that they are planning to cover, even if these events are off campus, with approval of an editor. It is against The Collegian policy for an individual to obtain a credential for an event without permission from an editor or without intention of covering the event for The Collegian. Those covering events are not allowed to obtain extra credentials for associates not a part of The Collegian.

### **Requests for content**

The Editor in Chief, in consultation with the Faculty Adviser and the appropriate editor, may choose to send Collegian work to another publication on a case-by-case basis. This may include cooperation with other student publications. Special requests from other publications will be produced only if they do not interfere with The Collegian's needs.

The Editor in Chief should consult with the appropriate editor of the outside publication and insure that proper payment and/or credit line is given. The other publication should be told if the work has or will run in The Collegian. The Editor in Chief should explain that special requests come after the needs of The Collegian and cannot be guaranteed.

### **Fiction or poetry**

The Collegian does not publish fiction or poetry unless such works are an integral part of the story; for instance, a feature on a student poet could include an example of his or her work.

### **Wire copy**

The Collegian subscribes to wire services that provide content produced by other news organizations and that are published in the student newspaper. When wire stories are used to blend with student-produced stories, credit should be given to the wire service at the end of the story. A wire

story updated with a new, student-written lead or a couple of internal paragraphs is still credited to the wire service. The point at which a story is more student-written than wire-written is a decision that should be made by the appropriate section editor.

## 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, or if it is used, it should be clearly attributed as "from the Internet." Since some information on the Internet may not be accurate, verification of facts through another source is especially important.

## Photo guidelines

The integrity of the documentary photograph is the same as that of a quote. In a news medium, readers expect photos and stories to be truthful. 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 scene. Content may be altered for creative purposes as a special effect if the caption or credit line includes the fact and if an average reader would not mistake the photo for reality. These photos must be tagged as a photo illustrations. Photo illustrations must in no way resemble documentary photographs.

## Freebies

No staff member should, during the course of generating content for *The Collegian*, accept products or services for personal use for which they would normally pay. Items received in the mail (CDs, movie passes, DVDs, etc.) must be called to the attention of an editor. Those items used in pursuance of an assignment may be used for the assignment but then returned to *The Collegian* to be donated to charity. Any gift (food, money, appliances, etc.) sent to a member of *The Collegian* must be returned. The advisers will make determinations on any free items that don't fall under the above policy. Those staffers covering an event in which food is served free of charge and intended for all in attendance may consume the food if the event runs during normal breakfast, lunch or dinner times.

## Confidentiality

A reporter should not promise confidentiality to a source without the permission of the editor. Confidentiality

should only be given if there's 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. A reporter should make every attempt to get the same information from another source who agrees to be named because the goal is to attribute all information to a specific source for all stories.

In turn, Collegian material is not to be distributed to outside interests. Photo negatives, notes, videos and other materials used in gathering information are not to be revealed to the public unless approved by an adviser and the Editor in Chief.

Off-the-record interviews should be avoided. "Off the record" means that none of the information provided may be used in the story. It is something that is done to gain background information that the reporter can use to gather on-the-record information. Clear guidelines must be set at the beginning of the interview — it's either on the record or off. Avoid situations where the subject wants to switch between one and the other.

## Libel

This is the publication of a false statement about a person that holds him or her up to public humiliation, ridicule or contempt. Staffers are expected to be familiar with the section on libel in the Associated Press style manual.

## Legal advice

Editors are responsible for seeking appropriate legal advice on all content that is published in *The Collegian*, if necessary. In addition to consultation with the Faculty Adviser, the following resources may be used:

- California Newspaper Publishers Association, CNPA.com;
- Associated Collegiate Press, StudentPress.org;
- Student Press Law Center, SPLC.org;
- Poynter Institute, Poynter.org.

## Publishing

Never promise that a story, photograph, video or cartoon will appear in *The Collegian*. Often plans change. It is best to tell those who ask that a story is planned for publication during a certain week.

## Advertising placement

Editors may not move ads without permission from the advertising manager, the Editor in Chief, or business manager.

# Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics

## 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.

## 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 reenactments 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 as part of the story.
- Never plagiarize.
- Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.
- Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.
- Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnic-

ity, 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.

## 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.

## 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 organiza-

tions 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 bid-ding for news.

## **Be Accountable**

Journalists are accountable to their read-ers, listeners, view-ers 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.