



# Code of Ethics

## PREAMBLE

The College Media Association Code of Ethics provides members with guidance on professional and ethical conduct related to their positions.

The CMA membership includes professional advisers of varying levels, professors and instructors with student media advising as part of their job description, faculty and staff who volunteer to advise student media with student or institutional approval, general managers, business managers, chief operators, engineers of college radio and television stations and any other individuals whose job descriptions include oversight of student media outlets as well as supervisors or directors of editorial, business or technical phases of school-authorized student media operations or not-for-profit student media corporations serving college or university communities.

The Code of Ethics is intended to provide a guide for advisers as they build experiences with students, fellow advisers, administrators, and the publics and industries they serve.

## SECTION 1: PROMOTING FREE SPEECH AND A FREE PRESS IN STUDENT MEDIA

Advisers should support free speech and a free press as crucial elements of a self-governing society, the creation of student media as designated public forums, and a free and open atmosphere for students involved in campus media. Advisers should:

- A. Train students on the best practices of their specific media, especially the essential tenets of journalism where applicable.
- B. Develop relationships that help ensure student media is free from content control when free speech rights are not guaranteed.
- C. Advocate for including language in appropriate governing documents that outline student media's independence.
- D. Advocate for the continued support of student media by all stakeholders in higher education communities (financially and/or philosophically), and advocate for free, open access within these communities so that student media may accurately and comprehensively cover their communities.
- E. Advise students on diversity and inclusion practices in staffing and content coverage to promote zero tolerance for identity-based discrimination and provide diversity and inclusion training opportunities for those working in and with student media.
- F. Advise students on individual rights and collective responsibility for freedom of speech and expression.

## **SECTION 2: STUDENT MEDIA AS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

Advisers should consistently strive to support student learning, creativity, autonomy and development. Advisers should:

- A. Never maximize quality by minimizing learning. Student media must always consist of student-driven work.
- B. Defend, critique and teach without censoring, editing, directing or producing, whenever possible.
- C. Work to maximize student opportunities to learn and advance creativity via professional development.
- D. Work to create a physically and professionally safe environment.

## **SECTION 3: TRUST, TRANSPARENCY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST IN STUDENT MEDIA**

Advisers should be trustworthy, transparent and seek to minimize conflicts of interest and bias. Advisers should:

- A. Disclose any professional activities and/or personal obligations that could pose a real or perceived conflict of interest, impacting coverage of advised organizations.
- B. Be accountable regarding personal credibility and that of the students and organizations advised, whenever possible.
- C. Recognize their role as an advocate, resource and confidante for students developing leadership and life skills.
- D. Make students aware of mandatory reporting status when applicable.

## **SECTION 4: CREATING DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE STUDENT MEDIA SPACES**

Advisers should be committed to working with students to co-create and develop diverse and inclusive media spaces that cover all communities those enterprises serve. Advisers should:

- A. Engage people to help students examine the powers and privileges afforded by identity/ies within and outside student media.
- B. Commit to dismantling institutionalized racism and discrimination, inequitable structures, policies and practices.
- C. Advocate for diverse, inclusive and accessible representation in student media, in both its staff and its content coverage.

## **SECTION 5: ETHICAL PRACTICES IN STUDENT MEDIA**

Advisers should be familiar with and adhere to the ethical standards and practices of all the media they advise, including, but not limited to, journalism, broadcast, photography, videography, business, marketing, design and communications. Advisers should:

- A. Seek professional development opportunities in keeping with the changing media industry and landscape.
- B. Make development opportunities for professional and student participants.
- C. Be lifelong learners.
- D. Develop professional and educational connections.

## **SECTION 6: MENTORING IN STUDENT MEDIA**

Advisers should train and mentor students in professional ethical practices. Advisers should:

- A. Train students in the ethics, policies and procedures relative to the media organizations they work with.
- B. Introduce students to the ethics related to their roles within student media.
- C. Encourage students to develop their own personal code of ethics.
- D. Provide training opportunities for students on how to create media environments free from discrimination by virtue of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, institution, color, religion, national origin, disability, political affiliation or other recognized protected classes.

## **SECTION 7: MODELING PROFESSIONALISM IN STUDENT MEDIA**

Advisers should model professional behavior in all environments. Advisers should:

- A. Avoid conflicts of interests.
- B. Maintain appropriate boundaries with students.
- C. Address conflict constructively.
- D. Seek collaborative solutions.
- E. Advise students to confront and report discrimination or harassment, including those instances that are identity-based.
- F. Encourage students to acknowledge and respect individuals' identities, pronouns and/or titles.

## **SECTION 8: ACCOUNTABILITY IN STUDENT MEDIA**

Advisers should help their students, their colleagues, their community and themselves understand when mistakes are made and why. Advisers should:

- A. Encourage those working in student media to develop a 'corrections policy' for their media outlets.
- B. Minimize harm whenever possible and acknowledge responsibility to mitigate and address harm caused.
- C. Recognize mistakes are inherent in the educational process, and students are expected to learn without judgment or unreasonable expectations.
- D. Encourage students to seek independent advice when applicable.

## **SECTION 9: GOVERNANCE IN STUDENT MEDIA**

Advisers should encourage and train students to develop governing documentation including, but not limited to, constitutions, handbooks, training manuals, policies, codes of ethics and style guides. More specifically, advisers should:

- A. Assist in the creation of such documents in accordance with current industry standards, university policy, and local, state and federal laws and assist in ensuring they abide by said documents.
- B. Have access to legal advice needed to carry out duties and advise students.
- C. Assist in crafting policies that promote the creation of a diverse, inclusive and equitable workplace environment.

## **SECTION 10: TECHNOLOGICAL COMPETENCY AND ACCESSIBILITY IN STUDENT MEDIA**

Advisers should raise awareness of current technology and relevant legal, ethical and accessibility concerns and should include students in decision-making processes related to adoptions. Advisers should:

- A. Provide access to training opportunities on current, emergent and accessible technologies that will help students develop skills with current industry standards.
- B. Strive to provide students with the most current and accessible industry standard technology possible to prepare them for professional media.
- C. Keep apprised of industry and/or institutional standards and technology updates/changes.

## **SECTION 11: ADVOCATING FOR EQUITABLE AND RELIABLE FUNDING IN STUDENT MEDIA**

Advisers should work with assigned budgetary entities and advocate for equitable funding for student media outlets. More specifically, advisers should:

- A. Help students develop budgets that support a medium's mission and goals, when applicable.
- B. Inform and include student leaders on spending decisions, when possible.

C. Facilitate communication and decision-making among content creators and business and advertising-related entities.

D. Assist in creating policies and encourage continuity among non-editorial entities.

E. Serve as the main liaison among business, design and content centers.

F. Help all funding agencies understand student media's roles as an educational tool and a professional experience.

G. Advocate for compensation to students to increase access for students from all economic backgrounds, when possible.

H. Explore new funding opportunities and revenue streams.

I. Strive to ensure student media abide by institution, state and federal regulations for spending according to their job responsibilities.

*Revised Code of Ethics approved by the CMA membership on April 26, 2021.*