

# COLLEGIATETIMES

## Code of Ethics

### A. Introduction

Our duty is to serve the campus and community, not to win contests or design a paper only staff members would read. Coverage of events on and off campus should represent the diversity of our readers. Reporters, photographers and editors must approach every assignment without bias or prior judgment.

Staff members are representing the Collegiate Times at all times. This document is to be used as a guide only. All items are subject to change by the editor-in-chief. This document is to be revised each and every year. Any questions not covered in this section should be directed to the editor-in-chief.

### B. Responsibility/ Decision-making process

It is the responsibility of the Collegiate Times to maintain journalistic integrity. The public's right to know is the most important guiding principle when making ethical decisions. We must not take freedom of the press lightly -- it is our duty to speak out on unpopular issues and to question the norm. As many people as possible should be involved in the decision-making process to represent as many viewpoints as possible.

### C. Accuracy and Fairness

The Collegiate Times will attempt to prevent inaccuracies, carelessness, bias or distortion through either emphasis or omission. We will admit all substantive errors and correct them promptly. The following guidelines will assist our staff:

1. Every story should be free of errors and misrepresentations. Every fact or allegation should be checked and double checked.
2. Every headline, cutline and graphic shall portray as accurately as possible the stories they represent.
3. All pertinent viewpoints should be addressed in all stories.
4. Any editorializing and opinion shall be clearly labeled as such. There is no place for opinion in a news, sports, or features story, unless labeled as a column.
5. The Collegiate Times staff will not be influenced by any special interest group.

Any significant error made by a CT staff member caused by carelessness can result in disciplinary action and, if serious or often enough, immediate termination.

### D. Good Taste

Obscene words should be avoided, but not edited out simply because they are considered obscene by some readers. Unnecessary words should always be avoided when writing for the news, sports and features sections unless directly quoted. In columns obscene words may occasionally be used if justified. The decision to edit out unnecessary words is left to the editor. In letters to the editor and commentaries, there is more freedom to run obscene words. They will not be edited out simply because they are obscene. An ellipsis is the best alternative to unnecessary obscenity and/or blasphemy. Care should be taken when laying out stories so that double meanings are not produced.

### E. Conflicts of interest

To maintain the appearance of objectivity, staff members may not be involved in political activities, organizations and activities that could compromise the ability to report, edit or photograph without prior judgment. The appearance of bias is to be considered before signing any petition. If there is any conflict, a writer, photographer or editor can be withdrawn from an assignment. No staff member will report about an organization or activity they are involved in or an individual or individuals they are involved with on a personal level. No reporter may quote someone they live with, are friends with or work with. Any staff head who seeks to hold a staff head position in any other media organization on campus must receive the approval, in writing, of the CEO of both organizations after a meeting at which all parties are present.

### F. Freebies and gifts

Absolutely NO free gifts shall be taken by any Collegiate Times staff member. Any trip that is specifically for the purposes of a story shall be paid for by the Collegiate Times. Offers of free trips from

companies seeking publicity should be turned down to avoid conflict of interest. Admission to events such as concerts or speeches can be accepted. When reviewing a restaurant, the reporter should not accept a free meal. Staff members should not look for or accept anything not offered to the general public. All CD's acquired for the purpose of reviews are the property of the Collegiate Times and will be given away as gifts to staff members or donated to some charitable cause. No one reviewing a CD will be allowed to keep or sell that CD unless given to them by the Collegiate Times at the end of the semester or year.

Any violation of the CT freebies policy is cause for immediate dismissal.

#### **G. Diversity**

A person's race, religion or sex should be included only when such information is clearly relevant, and staff members are expected to avoid usage's that may perpetuate racial, religious or sexual stereotypes. Patronizing references can be as offensive as outright bigotry. Care should be taken when identifying a source by race, ethnicity or sexual orientation. The source should be asked what he/she prefers to be referred as.

Absolutely no tolerance will be given to discrimination of any kind. If an instance of discrimination occurs by a CT staff member there will be no warning — it is cause for immediate dismissal. We are here to report the truth and give voice to the voiceless — we do not spread stereotypes.

#### **H. Photojournalism**

NO content alteration of photos will be accepted.

Dodging or burning areas of a photograph that does not affect the content AND correction of technical defects of a photo IS permitted. However, no digital alteration will be allowed except in the case of special section covers, where the integrity of the photo must still be maintained.

In the case of sensitive issues, such as victims of violent crimes, permission may be needed to run the photo pending the editor's decision, to minimize harm to the individual.

Photographers shall not use "set-up" or posed photographs. In the same way that reporters do not make up quotes, photographers do not reconstruct scenes or events with the purpose of making them appear as if they were "found moments".

To maintain the appearance of objectivity, the Collegiate Times will not run photographs of any CT or SPPS staff member or other EMCVT division head unless that person is the direct subject of the story. No photos will run of the photographer's friends, roommates or co-workers.

All photographers are required to submit caption (or cutline) information with each set of negatives. Such information should include subjects names (with proper spellings), majors or occupations, where the picture was taken and what the event is, as well as any other relevant information. When information is not provided, the photographer will not receive photo credit.

#### **I. Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the act of lifting the words or work of others and representing it as one's own. The Collegiate Times will not tolerate plagiarism and, if such an instance should occur, the individual will be terminated without prior notice. Any material taken from other sources MUST be attributed.

#### **J. Privacy**

The Collegiate Times will use caution when publishing information that can cause significant harm to an individual. The decision to print sensitive information such as the names of rape victims will be made by the editor in conjunction with an editorial board discussion.

#### **K. Sources**

Unnamed sources should be avoided as much as possible. They can be used to find sources that will go on the record. A fake name can not be used. Information has been corroborated for accuracy and the section editor must believe the source is a trustworthy person. Make sure the source is reliable and is not leaking an opinion rather than fact. The identity of the source should be made available to the editor and the section head. Pledges of confidentiality must first be approved by the editor.

#### **L. Corrections**

Corrections are published as soon as possible. They should be concise and include the reason for the error, if known, as well as provide the correct information. All correction forms should be given to the

news editor. If warranted, a new story should be published as soon as possible following the error to clarify any mistake. The editor will proof all corrections before publication.

**M. Ownership of material printed in The Collegiate Times**

All rights to material prepared for or obtained by the Collegiate Times staff and the Student Publications Photo Staff will become the property of the Collegiate Times and can be used when the need arises without having written approval. The photographs that appear in, or are assigned by the Collegiate Times, are the property of the paper for one year, when the rights revert back and the negatives are returned to the photographer. No photo taken on a Collegiate Times assignment may be used in any fashion without the permission of the editor of the Collegiate Times. Negatives of photos shot for the Collegiate Times are not to leave the SPPS office for that year without the written permission of the editor.

**N. Letters to the Editor**

All letters and columns must be run with the name(s) of the authors and majors or occupations at the bottom. The opinions editor is responsible for verifying each letter by calling to be sure it is owned by the author stated. All letters/columns must have a signed letter to be placed in the CT business office stating authenticity. No unsigned letters/columns will be printed and no letter/column will be run without a name and phone number on the original.

**O. Sports and Sports Travel**

Professionalism is mandatory whenever covering any athletic event. Absolutely no cheering or favoritism will be tolerated. When in the football press box and basketball press table, sports reporters must wear acceptable attire (shirt and tie) and all talking will be kept to a minimum. All rules and regulations of the "Working Press Box" NCAA guidelines must be adhered to or covering of these sports will be prohibited. Sports reporters may not participate in any activity which compromises journalistic integrity (such as raffles and giveaways). All reporters represent the Collegiate Times and will do so in a professional manner, whether at home or on the road.

Courtesy is required to all athletes, administrators and sports information employees. Any violation will result in immediate dismissal.

**P. Copy/ Door Codes**

The copy code and door code will be assigned only to specific editors and managers by the editor and business manager. Those assigned the codes will not be allowed to distribute that information.

**Q. Treatment of Office Equipment/ Personal Use**

The Collegiate Times office and computer equipment is for CT purposes only. Any printing, copying, long distance phone use, fax use, e-mail use, or other use of CT equipment and supplies is acceptable only by approval of the editor or business manager. Staff members may be charged for use of such equipment. Any violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action and possible termination.

**R. CT Letterhead**

The Collegiate Times letterhead is to be used only by the editor or business manager. If needed for passes, copying rights, etc., the editor or business manager should be contacted well in advance.

**S. Identification**

Most reporters and editors will be provided with ID's for use in covering events. These ID's are to be used ONLY for stories or photo shoots assigned by the Collegiate Times. ANY misrepresentation of these ID's, use by non-CT staffers, or other misuse of CT identification, whether verbal or implied, is cause for immediate dismissal.