

East Tennessee State University

Student Publications Committee

Policies and Operation Procedures

1. NAME AND PURPOSE

- 1.1. The name of this organization is the Student Publications Committee of East Tennessee State University.
- 1.2. The purpose of the Student Publications Committee is to provide the framework and policies as a stable foundation for the staff and readers of the student newspaper, the *East Tennessean*, and the university community, regardless of regular changes in executive and staff positions. The committee is to:
 - 1.2.1. Develop, recommend and review sound policies for the *East Tennessean*.
 - 1.2.2. Provide maximum opportunity for learning journalism in the full spirit of the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.
 - 1.2.3. Encourage participating students to maintain a high standard of performance, academically as well as professionally.
 - 1.2.4. Screen applicants and appoint the executive editors of the *East Tennessean*, and assure due process when, in the judgment of the committee, the executive editor or a staff member acting on their behalf may be removed for cause.
 - 1.2.5. Review complaints which the executive editor or the adviser has not handled to the satisfaction of the complainant.
 - 1.2.6. Review the annual budget prior to submission to the Student Activities Allocation Committee.

2. POLICIES

- 2.1. General policies of the Student Publications Committee are:
 - 2.1.1. The executive editor is ultimately responsible for the entire content of the student newspaper.
 - 2.1.2. The adviser should be present at all personnel meetings involving the editor and staff members to advise, consult, and aid with procedural questions. The adviser has the authority and responsibility to maintain order and decorum in the office and to ensure that university rules and regulations are followed.
 - 2.1.3. The executive editor has the authority and responsibility to discipline a staff member(s) for one or more of the following reasons:
 - Failure to follow established policies and procedures
 - Failure to meet prescribed deadlines
 - Missing production night without an acceptable excuse or forewarning

- Unethical or unprofessional conduct
- Missing an unacceptable number of staff meetings
- Failure to meet written expectations of job description

2.1.4. The executive editor has the responsibility to attempt to resolve staff issues, but if this attempt goes unheeded or unresolved, then according to the severity of the violation, sanctions may be taken including the following:

- Verbal warning
- Written warning
- Probation (in consultation with the adviser)
- Suspension without pay (adviser must be present)
- Termination (adviser must be present)

Documentation of sanction(s) must be in writing and submitted to the adviser for inclusion in the individual's(s') personnel file(s).

- a) A staff member may only appeal a suspension or termination.
- b) If a staff member wishes to appeal, the staff member must submit his or her appeal in writing to the chair of the Student Publications Committee within three (3) business days after the editor's decision. The chair of the Student Publications Committee will then be responsible for gathering information about the situation to determine whether or not a hearing before the Committee should be held.
- c) If a hearing is warranted, the chair of the Student Publications Committee is responsible for setting a hearing date that is timely for the staff member, executive editor, and adviser to attend. There must be at least three (3) Committee members present, with one being a student. The executive editor may not serve on the appeals board. If the individuals involved are unable to attend, the Committee may still render a decision – to uphold, overturn, or modify the executive editor's decision.

2.1.5. The Student Publications Committee has the right and responsibility to discipline the executive editor for one or more of the following reasons:

- Failure to follow established policies and procedures
- Missing production night without an acceptable excuse or forewarning
- Unethical or unprofessional conduct
- Missing an unacceptable number of staff meetings
- Failure to meet written expectations of job description

The process described in 2.1.4 will be followed by the Student Publications Committee in the event a formal complaint is brought against the executive editor. Any appeal of the Student Publications Committee's action(s) is to be made in writing within three (3) business days after the Committee's decision to the Vice President of Administration and Student Affairs, who may uphold, overturn, or modify the decision of the Student Publications Committee.

- 2.1.6. Editors and staff appointees must have earned a 2.0 grade point average for the preceding semester and must have an overall grade point average of at least 2.0 for all academic work to be eligible for employment at the East Tennessean. This minimum GPA should be maintained throughout the term of employment. Staff members whose semester or cumulative GPA falls below 2.0 will receive a warning letter from the East Tennessean advisor, which will initiate counseling with the advisor. Staff members have one semester to raise their semester GPA to a 2.0, and two semesters to raise their cumulative GPA to a 2.0 to continue employment with the student newspaper. Staff members who are terminated due to GPA are eligible to be rehired when their cumulative GPA is at least a 2.0.
 - 2.1.7. All staff members should keep themselves informed of policies, codes and decisions of the Student Publications Committee and seek advice of the publication's adviser in matters of importance concerning the publication.
 - 2.1.8. Student publications must adhere to libel, postal and other laws and regulations governing the American commercial press.
 - 2.1.9. A student publication should have a broad appeal to the university community, and its staff should look to the Code of Ethics of the American Society of Newspaper Editors as a guide to acceptable journalism practices.
 - 2.1.10. The executive editor and section editors must keep regularly scheduled office hours each week, in addition to working on production nights. The executive editor must stay until the newspaper is completed on production nights. Section editors must stay until their sections are completed on production nights. All staff members must attend scheduled staff meetings and should check in regularly.
 - 2.1.11. Staff members are discouraged from employment by another communication medium if the coverage areas overlap. If a staff member covers the same beat for the *East Tennessean* and another communication medium, the staff member should report the situation to both organizations.
- 2.2. Business policies
 - 2.2.1. The student publications will strive to carry out good business practices. Good business practices for a publishing organization include stating advertising rates and policies clearly and applying rates and policies consistently.
 - 2.2.2. The student publications adviser will be responsible for the preparation of a budget for the coming academic year. This must be approved by the Student Publications Committee before being submitted to the Student Activities Allocation Committee for consideration.
 - 2.2.3. Advertisements should be designated by the word "advertisement" on the copy in any instance in which the text or pictures are not clearly recognizable as advertising matter. Political advertisements must be

marked by the words “political advertisement paid by _____.”
The source of public service advertisements must be identified within the ad.

- 2.2.4. Pictures of persons may not be used in advertisements without the written permission of those persons. When claims accompanying the picture of a person in the advertisement are attributed to him or her, written permission to be quoted in the copy must be obtained.
- 2.2.5. Advertisements known to be false or misleading will not be accepted for publication.
- 2.2.6. Passes, gift certificates, records, tapes, books or other token payments will not be accepted by an individual in exchange for an ad.
- 2.2.7. Advertisements which are contrary to university policies or which violate the laws of the State of Tennessee will not be accepted.
- 2.2.8. All advertising is subject to the approval of the executive editor who reserves the right to refuse any ad. The executive editor should consult with the student advertising manager before making any decisions regarding advertising. Students also may seek the advice of the student publications adviser when making such decisions. Advertisements with the following content have been deemed not worthy of approval:
- Fraudulent or illegal content
 - Racial, ethnic, religious or sexual orientation prejudicial content
 - Pornographic content
 - Alcoholic freebies or encouraging excessive drinking
 - Profane or obscene content, as dictated by campus community standards.
 - Any ad that supports or condones plagiarism
- 2.2.9. The policies concerning alcohol-related advertising are:
- Advertising of alcohol is acceptable but must conform to Tennessee law.
 - Advertising for alcoholic beverages should not contain pricing. Also, advertising for free alcohol will not be accepted.
 - Advertisements for alcoholic beverages must also include advertising for food products.
 - All alcohol advertisements will include a Tennessee state drinking age disclaimer, and a drink responsibly reference, i.e. “This establishment encourages responsible drinking and a strict adherence to Tennessee’s legal drinking age of 21.”
 - Alcohol advertisements should not contain references to events or programs that include demeaning sexual or discriminatory portrayal of individuals.
 - Advertisements should adhere to all TBR and ETSU guidelines concerning distribution, possession and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages on campus property or in campus facilities.
- 2.2.10. All monies collected from advertising must be deposited with the university business office within two days of the date received.

- 2.2.11. The advertising manager of the *East Tennessean* will be chosen among applicants by the office manager in consultation with the adviser and the executive editor.
- 2.3. Editorial policies
- 2.3.1. The *East Tennessean* is the student newspaper of East Tennessee State University. Opinions expressed in the paper are those of the editors and the writers themselves and not necessarily official opinions of the university. The newspaper is not used by the university as an academic laboratory publication.
- 2.3.1.1. The campus newspaper has a responsibility to disseminate campus-related information in advance, as well as to report and interpret news events to all students, faculty and staff members, administrators and alumni of the university, and to give voice to the views and interests of these groups.
- 2.3.1.2. The campus newspaper is to maintain and aid in maintaining – over the interests of particular groups, factions or individuals – the public welfare of the university by helping maintain a rising level of intellectual growth, independent thinking and cultural awareness at the university.
- 2.3.1.3. Anonymous and unsigned letters to the editor will not be published. Letters to the editor must be checked for author authenticity. The editor has the discretion to edit for space, style and grammar and to remove any words which may be offensive to the general audience, without destroying the intent of the letter.
- 2.3.1.4. If a letter or editorial criticizes an individual or group, that individual or group should be given an opportunity to answer the criticism.
- 2.3.1.5. The student editor has the final responsibility and authority for all editorial operations of the newspaper.

3. APPOINTMENT OF STUDENT PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- 3.1. The Student Publications Committee of East Tennessee State University reports to the Vice President for Administration and Student Affairs. The committee is comprised of:
- Two university staff representatives. One representative of the Division of Student Affairs and that individual shall serve as chair, and one representative of the Office of University Relations (the director or designee).
 - Two university faculty members. One from the Department of Communication and one representing the faculty as a whole.
 - Three student members. The executive editor of the *East Tennessean* (The committee chair may excuse the executive editor from voting on personnel issues which represent a conflict of interest.) One student with campus leadership experience nominated by the Student

Government Association (not the Student Government Association president), and one student representing the student body as a whole.

- The Student Publications Advisor will serve as a non-voting, ex-officio member.

Faculty and staff representatives are appointed for three-year terms and may serve no more than two consecutive terms. Student representatives will be appointed for one-year terms and may serve no more than two consecutive terms. The executive editor shall serve during the period of appointment.

4. MEETINGS

- 4.1. The committee should meet regularly, at least two times per fall and spring semester, or as needed.

5. ADVISERS (Adopted from the Code of Professional Standards for Publications Advisers, College Media Advisers)

- 5.1. The adviser of the *East Tennessean* is hired and supervised by the Office of Student Affairs with the advice and input of the Student Publications Committee.
- 5.2. The adviser serves primarily as a teacher whose chief responsibility is to give competent advice to staff members and to be readily available to them. As a teacher, the adviser is a professional educator whose responsibility is to explain and demonstrate. This person must also be respected for professional ability and integrity. The adviser also supervises the office manager.
- 5.3. An academic community requires freedom to exchange information and ideas. The adviser should promote, initiate and sustain institutional policies, which will provide students the freedom to establish their own publications and to conduct them free of censorship or of faculty or administrative determination of content or editorial policy.
- 5.4. An adequate and stable financial basis is a prerequisite for the free and effective functioning of the student press. It is the responsibility of the adviser to work with the staff to ensure strong business and advertising policies and firm accounting practices.
- 5.5. The adviser must guide rather than censor, advise rather than dictate. Availability of the adviser is of utmost importance. The adviser should let it be known that he or she is willing to give guidance, provide counseling and be there when needed. The adviser shares his or her knowledge of journalism with the staff, including helping students understand that the publication must come out on schedule, that deadlines must be met and that professional standards and ethics should be followed at all times.
- 5.6. The adviser should provide instruction that will result in a better publication. The effective adviser tries to emphasize individualized instruction, allowing for individual differences in staff members' abilities to learn. The adviser points out weak areas and works with students to strengthen their abilities in these areas. The adviser makes students

confident of what they can do and attempts to shape their minds in the direction of a realistic future career. The adviser also must make sure that all staff members have an opportunity to develop as fully as possible their potential within the framework of the publication.

- 5.7. The adviser functions as an advocate for the publication staffs and a liaison with the administration for an understanding of the ethics and responsibilities of a free press and of student publications. The adviser must ensure full communication of administrative policy to student editors, as well as communication to administrators of the First Amendment rights of students to print without censorship or prior restraint and the duty of the institution to therefore allow full and vigorous freedom of expression.

6. AMENDMENTS TO GUIDELINES

These guidelines can be amended by a majority vote of the total membership, provided the proposed amendment shall have been brought up for discussion at a prior meeting and the amendment submitted in writing to all members of the Student Publications Committee. These policies and procedures shall be reviewed on an annual basis, and updated as needed.