



Handbook of Operating Procedures

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STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

A. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set forth rules and regulations for the establishment, administration, and operation of official student publications.

B. Role, Authority, and Responsibility of Student Publications

The University considers the student press a valuable aid in establishing and maintaining an atmosphere of free and open discussion. Student publications are a means of disseminating news, of airing campus concerns, and of providing a forum for opinion on local, national, and international issues.

A Student Publications committee – composed of students, faculty, and administrators – is charged with the general responsibility to the University community for the media under its jurisdiction. The committee is directly responsible to the Vice President for Student Affairs, the President, the Chancellor, and the Board of Regents. This committee is primarily a policy-making body assigned with the responsibility of developing and monitoring the policies for all student publications.

Central to the development of such policies is the recognition that protected First Amendment rights extend to university student publications. Therefore, editorial freedom for such publications is protected by allowing editors to develop their own editorial positions and determine news coverage. University officials are not permitted to review copy prior to distribution for the purposes of unlawful censorship, nor may they remove editors or advisors because of student, faculty, administrative or public disapproval of the exercise of legitimate editorial rights.

The content and opinions expressed in recognized student publications do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the University, the Board of Regents, or the student body as a whole. The University assumes no liability for the content of any student publication, but the University urges student journalists to recognize that with editorial control comes responsibility to follow professional journalism standards.

C. Student Publications Committee

1. Membership

- a. Six students, appointed by the President of the Student Government Association on the recommendation of three students from an SGA nominating committee and the recommendation of three students from the student publications staff;



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- b. The Dean of Students (or his or her designee), the director of University Relations (or his or her designee), and one additional administrator appointed by the President of the University;
 - c. Two faculty members elected by the faculty of the Communication Department and one additional faculty member selected by the Faculty Senate;
 - d. The Student Newspaper Advisor, the Student Newspaper Editor, and the Vice President for Student Affairs, each of whom will be non-voting members.
2. Terms of Office/Selection of Officers
- a. Administrators and faculty members shall serve two-year, staggered terms.
 - b. Students shall serve one-year terms beginning October 1 and ending September 30.
 - c. The committee shall elect its own chair each October for a one-year term.
 - d. Each October the committee will also select an Executive Board, composed of the Committee Chair and four other members of the Student Publications Committee, at least two of whom must be full-time employees of the University. The Newspaper Editor and Advisor for The Pan American will also each be non-voting members of the Executive Board.
3. Duties
- a. To establish, review, and amend policy documents regarding student publications subject to the approval of the University administration and The University of Texas System Administration.
 - b. To establish requirements and qualifications for editors, appoint the editors of official student publications, and if necessary, remove them from office.
 - c. To establish reasonable rules as to the time, place, and manner of distribution on campus of official student publications.



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- d. To seek the counsel and advice of the Student Publications Advisor, the Student Newspaper Editor, and other knowledgeable staff and faculty.
- e. To arbitrate disputes between editors, advisors and the University community.
- f. To review and make recommendations concerning budgets for official student publication submitted to it by the advisor.
- g. To consider written charges of substance filed against an editor, advisor, or committee member.
- h. To conduct regular evaluations of student publications.

D. Official Student Publications

- 1. An official student publication is defined as a publication (a) which is edited by a student and/or student team all of whom are officially registered with the Office of Admissions as a student attending The University of Texas-Pan American, and (b) which is recognized officially by the Student Publications Committee.
- 2. The Pan American is the official student newspaper at the University of Texas-Pan American.
- 3. Members of officially recognized student organizations desiring to publish, aid in publishing, circulate or aid in general circulation of any newspaper, yearbook, magazine or similar journalistic material claiming or implying University sanction shall obtain authorization from the Student Publications Committee.
- 4. The University of Texas Board of Regents prohibits the distribution on campus of any piece of literature that is obscene, libelous, or directed to inciting or producing imminent lawless action.

E. Role and Responsibility of Student Editors

Editors of official student publications shall be appointed by the Student Publications Committee in accordance with established committee policies and guidelines regarding requirements and qualifications for editors. Student editors shall be responsible for fulfilling the duties and requirements of editorial positions as outlined in the Student Publications Guide. Student editors shall, within the provision of this policy, have final authority over what is published. Editors shall be governed by the "Code of Ethics" of the Society of Professional Journalists. Editors shall be responsible for working in



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conjunction with the faculty advisor(s) in order uphold this code. When an editor has any doubt about the appropriateness for publication of potential copy, the Editor is obligated to bring such doubts to the attention of the advisor for counsel and guidance.

In determining the content of their publications, editors should consider the following:

1. Making editorial decisions based on reader interest and sound journalism principles.
2. Reviewing material to improve sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
3. Verifying facts and the accuracy of quotations.
4. Providing balanced news coverage of campus events.
5. Including factual support for editorials.
6. Encouraging rebuttal comment and providing space when appropriate.

F. Role and Responsibility of Student Publication Advisor(s)

The student newspaper advisor shall be full-time employee of The University of Texas-Pan American appointed by the Chair of the Department of Communications, subject to the approval of the Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs. The student newspaper advisor shall provide professional guidance, training, and support to the editors and staff of the student newspaper. The advisor shall be available to advise the student editor with regard to issues related to good journalistic practice and ethics, but in so doing the advisor will serve as counselor rather than censor. Under no circumstances will material be withheld from publication without the editor's consent unless the advisor believes such material is indicative of illegal speech.

Following are some of the duties of the newspaper advisor:

1. Supervise the business, production and advertising affairs of the organization.
2. Recommend and approve the appointment of all employees other than student editors and student news and editorial staff members.
3. Recommend and administer budgets.
4. Perform general duties in connection with promotion of the student newspaper.



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5. Study editorial problems and procedure and make recommendations for improvements both to the editor and to the Student Publications Committee.
6. Be charged with the responsibility of reducing errors as far as reasonably possible.
7. Serve as professional resource person for the staff by giving advice and answering questions in matters pertaining to the editorial operation of the newspaper. This includes general assistance in production and improvement of the newspaper and in stimulating interest among the staff, including volunteers.
8. Advise the Editor, Managing Editor, or other editor or reporter responsible of any perceived instances of illegal speech.
9. Give advice and answer questions in news editing, news writing, and headline writing.

G. Disputes Between Editors and Advisors

If the student newspaper advisor and the Editor cannot resolve a disagreement on whether copy contains unprotected or illegal speech, the newspaper advisor is authorized to withhold copy for 48 hours pending the appeals process described below.

1. The Editor or advisor will ask the Executive Board to review the issues and make a decision.
2. Should either the Editor or advisor not be in agreement with the decision of the Executive Board, the Editor or advisor may seek the legal opinion of UT System attorneys; the Vice President for Student Affairs will facilitate such an opportunity.
3. In any case where an advisor and/or the Executive Board decides that copy should be withheld, it is absolutely necessary that such a decision be solely the result of a reasonable judgement, based upon demonstrable evidence, that the withheld copy contains elements of unprotected or illegal speech.

H. Student Involvement

Official student publications employ volunteer and paid UTPA students. The editor of each publication selects the staff necessary to produce the publication within university policy and budget requirements. All students, particularly those enrolled in journalism courses, are eligible and encouraged to work with official student publications.



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I. Ethical Considerations

The staff of official student publications at The University of Texas-Pan American are expected to follow the “Code of Ethics” of the Society of Professional Journalists; they should avoid libel, the use of obscene material, undocumented allegations, attacks on personal integrity, and the techniques of harassment and innuendo.

1. The student press shall be free of censorship and its editors and managers shall be free to develop their own editorial policies and news coverage subject to this policy and the Regents’ Rules and Regulations.
2. Censure or removal of editors by the committee shall be only for proper and stated causes. No editor may be censured or removed without proper notice, an opportunity to refute the charges, and a fair and impartial hearing. Removal means removal from all powers, rights, and privileges of a position.
3. All official student publications shall explicitly state on the editorial page or other appropriate place that opinions expressed in the publications are not necessarily those of the University or the student body.

J. Policy on Unofficial Student Publications

Students or student organizations wishing to publish or distribute publications on campus may do so, following the time, place, and manner of distribution policies developed by the University. The University’s administrative officers may monitor said policies and distribution of publications.

K. Complaint Procedures

Any person with a complaint against a student publication may seek redress through the following procedures:

1. The first step: Write a letter to the Editor, talk with the Editor, or both. The Editor will follow up with the reporter or editor responsible for the perceived error. The Editor may consult with the publication’s editorial advisory board as appointed by the publication’s editor.
2. The second step: If the problem is not resolved satisfactorily, the complainant may talk with the publication’s advisor.
3. The third step: The complainant may submit a written complaint to the chair of the Student Publications Committee requesting an audience with the committee.



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The committee will review the complaint to decide if further action is warranted and respond to the complaint in writing. The Publications Committee's decision is final.

L. Dismissal or Removal of Editors

Dismissal proceedings against an editor may be initiated by the advisor. Grounds for dismissal on an editor are limited to malfeasance, and nonfeasance, but require specific charges, such as "failing to produce the publication according to the established production schedule." The Student Publications Committee will conduct a formal hearing within 15 days of receiving the written complaint and provide written notification to the editor 10 days prior to the hearing. Removal of the Editor requires a two-thirds majority vote of the Committee. Editors who are dismissed or suspended from their positions may appeal in writing within five working days to the Vice President for Student Affairs.

M. Advertising Policy

1. University student publications may accept advertising. The decision of acceptance of advertising rests with the student Editor or, if the Editor so chooses, with the editorial advisory board of the publication. Both the Editor and editorial advisory board are encouraged to consult the publication advisor regarding questionable advertising.
2. General Advertising Standards
 - a. Student publications should not accept ads which:
 1. Contain attacks of a personal, racial, or religious nature
 2. Facilitate academic dishonesty
 3. Advocate illegal acts, products, or services.
 - b. Publications which accept political ads should not accept ads only for one candidate or on one side of an issue. Political and opinion advertisements must indentify the name of the individual or organization paying for the ad.
 - c. Advertisers are responsible for accuracy of the contents of the ad, for complying with applicable legal statutes and standard company policies and procedures, and for obtaining model releases, copyright waivers, etc.



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- d. Each student publication should develop specific, comprehensive advertising guidelines and include them in its operations manual.
- e. The University is not responsible for opinions, products, or services advertised in student publications.

N. Review

This policy shall be reviewed annually by the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.