



OP 91.303: STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

PURPOSE

To clearly define the relationship between Mississippi State University and The Reflector, which is an official publication by and for the students of Mississippi State University.

POLICY/PROCEDURE

It is the policy of Mississippi State University that student journalists shall have the right to determine the content of all official student publications. Student publications shall remain free of censorship and advance approval of copy. The Reflector (including the online edition) has been established as a forum for student expression and as a voices in the uninhibited, robust, free, and open discussion of issues. The Reflector should provide a full opportunity for students to inquire, question, and exchange ideas. Content should reflect all areas of student interest, including topics about which there may be dissent or controversy.

Guidelines

1. The university provides office facilities, financial, and budgetary assistance, technical help, and staff who advise the publications.
2. The Student Publications Committee is composed of students, university personnel, and professional journalists. It is charged with reviewing the operation of student publications and recommending broad policy for business and editorial management of the publications. The university's Executive Council endorsed a document ("Student Publications Committee Responsibilities," April 20, 1998) which lists specific duties, including selection of student publication editors and censure or removal of the editors for cause. That document is set forth below:

The Student Publications Committee is charged with reviewing the operation of student publications and recommending broad policy for business and editorial management of the publications. The editors of student publications exercise control over the content of the publications. The university, the Student Publications Committee, and other university personnel provide advice, technical help, and financial assistance. Student publications shall remain free of censorship and advance approval of copy. This editorial freedom entails a corollary obligation to operate student publications under the canons of responsible journalism. In its role of reviewing and recommending publications, the Student Publications Committee shall:

- *Advise the Vice President for Student Affairs, the student publications and others regarding matters related to student publications.*
- *Mediate disputes between student publications staffs and the university administration and others, as well as disputes within the staff of student publications*
- *Review editorial and operating policies and procedures of each student publication annually and recommend changes as appropriate.*
- *Safeguard the financial stability and editorial independence of each student publication.*
- *Review the budget and financial operation of each student publication.*
- *Review and approve salaried staff positions of the publications.*
- *Set selection procedures and criteria for and appoint editors-in-chief of publications.*
- *Censure or remove the editors of student publications for cause.*
- *Recommend the establishment of new student publications.*

3. The university provides advisers to student publications. The advisers are not censors. No person who advises a student publication will be fired, transferred, or removed from the advisership by reason of his or her refusal to exercise editorial control over student media or to otherwise suppress the protected free expression of student journalists.
4. The Reflector will not be reviewed by school administrators prior to distribution or withheld from distribution. Advisers are not school administrators and may read and/or view portions of or all of publications during production when requested by student editors in order to consult with students prior to publication as well as after publication. Advisers are not required to read, view, or approve materials to be published and cannot withhold items from publication or withhold publications from distribution.
5. The university and the advisers assume no liability for the content of the student publication, but do encourage all student journalists to recognize that with editorial control comes responsibility, including the responsibility to follow professional journalism standards such as those set forth in codes of ethics for organizations such as the Society of Professional Journalists, the Associated Press Managing Editors, and the American Society of Newspaper Editors.
6. The responsibilities of the student media are as follows:

- a. With freedom of the press and the resulting ability to determine all content of student publications, student editors and staff have a corollary obligation to operate student publications under the canons of responsible journalism.
- b. Students who work on the staffs of the student publications should:
 - i. Perform their duties and responsibilities in an ethical and professional manner and strive to produce media based upon professional standards of accuracy, objectivity, and fairness;
 - ii. Abide by federal, state, and local laws; university regulations and policies; and the standards of appropriate professional associations;
 - iii. Attempt to represent the university with dignity and fairness;
 - iv. Review material to improve sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and punctuation;
 - v. Check and verify all facts and verify accuracy of quotations; and
 - vi. In the case of editorials or letters to the editor concerning controversial issues, determine the need for rebuttal comments and opinions and provide space if appropriate.

REVIEW

The Vice President for Student Affairs is responsible for reviewing this operating policy every four years, or as needed.

REVIEWED BY

/s/ Regina Hyatt
Vice President for Student Affairs

10/10/2023
Date

/s/ Tracey N. Baham
Associate Vice President, Institutional Strategy & Effectiveness

10/11/2023
Date

/s/ Joan Lucas
General Counsel

10/30/2023
Date

APPROVED BY

/s/ Mark E. Keenum
President

11/27/2023
Date