

BLUE & GRAY PRESS STATEMENT OF POLICY (These guidelines are to be published on the Blue & Gray Press website as well as the University of Mary Washington website.)

The University of Mary Washington recognizes the educational and societal value of encouraging the uninhibited, robust, free and open discussion of issues and ideas on America's college and university campuses, as well as the legal protections afforded students' exercise of freedom of expression and press freedom, especially by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

It is therefore the policy of the Office of the President of the University of Mary Washington that the Blue & Gray Press, the student newspaper defined to include the print product and related digital platform and social media accounts, shall be under the exclusive editorial control of the students and no university administrator, faculty member or employee shall have authority to exercise prior restraint or withhold distribution of its content. Nor will any university administrator, faculty member or employee determine content or discipline a student for the publication of content that is protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

It is the intent that the newspaper will provide a full opportunity for its students to inquire, question and exchange ideas and that they will strive to reflect all areas of student interest, including topics about which there may be dissent or controversy.

The university assumes no liability for the Blue & Gray Press, over which it exercises no editorial control. The university urges all student journalists to recognize that with editorial control comes responsibility and potential liability for all content and newsgathering decisions.

Responsibilities of various members of the university in preserving free expression in the Blue & Gray Press are listed below.

I. STUDENT JOURNALISTS

Students who work at the Blue & Gray Press determine, and are responsible for, the content.

These students should strive to:

1. Produce media based upon professional standards of accuracy, objectivity and fairness;
2. Review material to improve sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation;
3. Reasonably check and verify all facts and the accuracy of quotations;
4. In the case of editorials or letters to the editor concerning controversial issues, determine the need for rebuttal comments and opinions and provide space or airtime, as appropriate; and

5. Subscribe to canons of responsible journalism, as stated in the “Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics,” and be free to develop their own editorial and program policies.

The forms of expression not protected by this policy are: obscenity, libel, unlawful invasions of privacy and fighting words (content that is likely to cause a “material and substantial disruption” of university activities such as rioting, property destruction, or seriously disruptive physical activity. Threats of violence are materially disruptive if there is a reasonable belief the author has the ability or intent to carry this out.)

Student journalists and editors will be protected from discipline, suspension or removal based on the publication of content that is protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Once appointed, student editors and student managers may only be removed by the Journalism Advisory Committee through a procedure providing appropriate due process.

II. ADVISER

1. The adviser shall function as a teacher, using the editorial, business and advertising operations to encourage responsible and enlightened journalism.
2. The adviser may give advice and feedback as needed before publication of each issue of the paper but is not privy to final student decisions on these matters. The adviser will provide extensive comments to students on their work upon publication.

The adviser is not a censor. No person who advises student media will be in violation of school policy 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 or for content decisions made by student editors or student managers.

III. JOURNALISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Journalism Advisory Committee has been established as a standing university committee by the University Faculty Council.

1. The committee has final approval over allocation of student activities fees to the Blue & Gray Press. The committee requires that The Blue & Gray Press establish a standard operating procedure when it requests funds, and thereafter to be reviewed and resubmitted every fall semester. The format of these procedures will be provided by the committee.
2. The committee has final approval over the choice of editors for the Blue & Gray Press. The committee delegates the responsibility for day-to-day management of the Blue & Gray Press to these student editors.

3. If an editor does not act in accordance with the operating procedure for the publication or is otherwise determined to be unqualified for their position, the committee will have the authority to remove the editor.
4. The committee must be consulted about any change of adviser for the Blue & Gray Press.
5. The committee will review serious policy disputes between the student editors and the adviser that cannot be resolved by the parties in dispute.
6. The committee recommends policies and establishes procedures to insure consistent handling of matters related to the Blue & Gray Press. These include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Policy and procedure regarding the committee and adviser.
 - b. Guidelines for the allocation of student activities fees.
 - c. Guidelines for the appointment of student editors.
 - d. Issues that cannot be resolved by the student journalists and the adviser alone.

The committee will not discipline a student editor for the publication or broadcast of content that is protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.