

STATEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON, UNIVERSITY FACULTY COUNCIL AND JOURNALISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE REGARDING THE BLUE & GRAY PRESS

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.

The Blue & Gray Press, the student newspaper, is defined to include the print product and related digital platform and social media accounts, and shall be under the exclusive editorial control of the students. All decisions regarding the publication and distribution of journalistic content in The Blue & Gray Press shall be made by The Blue & Gray Press editorial board. No University administrator, faculty member or employee shall determine content or discipline a student for the publication of content that is protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and consistent with university policy.

The newspaper will provide a full opportunity for its students to inquire, question and exchange ideas. Students and editors will strive to reflect all areas of student interest, including topics about which there may be dissent or controversy.

The University urges all student journalists to recognize that with editorial control comes responsibility, accountability, and potential liability for all content and newsgathering decisions. Student journalists exercising editorial control have sole responsibility and accountability for content and newsgathering decisions, and accordingly must be mindful of all potential consequences of those decisions, including potential liability and/or responsibility for violations of applicable University policy.

No person who advises student media will be in violation of school policy by reason of their 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.

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 on professional standards of accuracy and fairness, consistent with the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics, which is updated regularly and posted on the organization's website.
2. Review material for sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation, consistent with AP Style Book. A new version of the book is published each spring.
3. Reasonably check and verify all facts and the accuracy of quotations and determine the need for corrections and retractions as needed.
4. In the case of editorials or letters to the editor concerning controversial issues, determine the need for corrections or rebuttal comments and opinions and provide space or airtime, as appropriate.
5. Develop their own editorial and program policies, consistent with Society of Professional Journalists standards, within a Blue & Gray Press Manual and Style Guide, which is printed each fall and maintained at the newspaper office.
6. Elect their own editorial staff, hold them accountable for meeting the standards as defined by professional organizations and The Blue & Gray Press and determine consequences when student editors and/or content of the paper fail to meet those standards.

Student journalists and editorial staff will be protected from censorship and discipline, suspension or removal based on the publication of content that is protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Students are still subject to the policies of the University, including the Honor Code, the Code of Student Conduct and Title IX.

The First Amendment does not protect all communication. Exceptions to the First Amendment include but are not limited to 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.)

II. ADVISER

1. The instructional duties include, but are not limited to:
 1. Educating students on reporting and writing and the code of ethics that governs newspaper writing/publication
 2. Scheduling students to write for each issue
 3. Providing a critique after the publication of each issue
 4. Setting and publicizing curriculum and grade standards. Working with students to assess their work
2. The advising duties include, but are not limited to:
 1. Consulting with students about long-term decisions concerning the paper's policies and procedures

2. Providing general oversight to assure that The Blue & Gray Press policies are adhered to - both in letter and spirit
3. Overseeing student contracts associated with the newspaper
4. Working with editors to resolve staff disputes
5. Defending students' First Amendment rights to the campus and local community
6. Consulting with the Journalism Advisory Committee

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 after publication relating to the professional standards discussed above.

As stated above, the adviser will not be a censor.

III. JOURNALISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Journalism Advisory Committee has been established as a standing University committee by the University Faculty Council, which determines its composition and duties.

1. The Journalism Advisory Committee requests that the student Finance Committee should simultaneously notify them, along with student editors, on allocation of budget decisions to The Blue & Gray Press.
2. The committee requests that The Blue & Gray Press establish a standard operating procedure every fall semester.
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, and the matter cannot be handled by the student editorial staff themselves, at the request of the majority of the editorial staff the committee will have the authority to remove the editor through a procedure providing appropriate due process.
4. At the request of the majority of the editorial staff, the committee will review serious policy disputes between the adviser and the student editors that cannot be resolved by the parties in dispute. The resolution process is laid out in the newspaper's standard operating procedure.
5. The committee recommends policies to ensure consistent handling of matters related to The Blue & Gray Press. These include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Policies and procedures regarding the committee and adviser
 - b. Issues that cannot be resolved by the student journalists and the adviser alone.
6. The committee reviews student-established policies and procedures to ensure consistent handling of matters related to The Blue & Gray Press. These include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Guidelines for the allocation of student activities fees

b. Guidelines for the appointment of student editors