Western Oregon Journal Code of Ethics

Preamble: We at the Western Oregon Journal hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards. Our first responsibility is to our readers and our campus; we believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. We recognize that we are the voice of WOU students and hold ourselves accountable and open to the scrutiny of others. It is our duty to seek the truth and provide a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility. Our biggest asset is our credibility, which stems from our decisions and the way that we make them. All ethical decisions will be made following wide discussion with the entire editorial board, which consists of the editor in chief, section editors and the production manager.

SEEK TRUTH AND REPORT IT
We will be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting, editing and presenting information. Telling the truth must be our ethical cornerstone; the principle against which we weigh all other considerations. We will:
- Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
- Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
- Identify sources whenever feasible.
- Never plagiarize.
- Avoid undercover methods; if used, they must be cleared by the editorial board and explained to readers.
- Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, social status or employment affiliation.
- Support the open exchange of all views.
- Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
- Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
- Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

MINIMIZE HARM
As ethical journalists, we treat sources, subjects, readers and colleagues as human beings deserving of courtesy and respect. We are judged by how we act, not just what we publish. We realize that what we publish can do harm. These concerns should not always override our duty to tell the truth, but must be weighed in our decision making. We will:
- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort.
- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence and attention. Only overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.

ACT INDEPENDENTLY
We are free of obligation to any interest rather than the public's right to know. We will report the news without fear or favor. Our credibility is our most important asset. The appearance of a conflict can be just as damaging as the reality. We will:
- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
- Avoid reporting on associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel, and special treatment, and don't allow personal affiliations to compromise journalistic integrity.