

I. Priorities

This code of ethics draws from three sources: the NPR Code of Ethics and Practices; the PBS “Editorial Standards and Policies”; and the PRNDI Code of Ethics.

This document sets out the WFIU/WTIU news departments’ guiding principles in reporting the news, and outlines standards of performance and conduct for department employees. In establishing these guidelines, we hope to guarantee a hallmark of honesty, integrity, reliability, and credibility. In particular this statement spells out policy on a) ethical standards in gathering and reporting the news; b) defining conflicts of interests for WFIU/WTIU news department staff; c) the news department’s independence from influence by underwriting, grant funding, and other (financial) aspects of the station’s operation.

In addition to the policy outlined in this document, WFIU/WTIU news staff (including volunteers, interns, and other part-time, free-lance, or unpaid workers) are bound by Indiana University standards of conduct and procedure.

II. Principles

- A) **Fairness.** All reporters and editors should strive to present multiple views when covering an issue or topic. While all views may not be included in a single story, WFIU/WTIU should strive to present a wide range of viewpoints, and if diverging viewpoints are included in coverage, every effort should be made to present those differing views in a timely manner.

In addition, all WFIU/WTIU reporters and editors will strive to keep their personal opinions and biases out of all news copy. News copy should not be used to advance one’s personal agenda. To the fullest extent possible, news copy should be devoid of explicit or implied opinion.

- B) **Accuracy.** WFIU/WTIU will strive to confirm claims of fact, and reporters will make no claim (outside of claims of general knowledge) without attribution. When material is controversial and not a matter of opinion, WFIU/WTIU will endeavor to confirm statements through multiple (at least two) sources. Reporters and editors **must** be vigilant in avoiding implied claims, innuendo, failures of omission, etc.
- C) **Honesty.** WFIU/WTIU news does not intentionally mislead or deceive the sources we use to develop stories, nor do we wish to deceive our listeners. Thus, in our interviews, sources must ALWAYS be informed when comments are considered on the record. And while audio editing of interviews is an integral part of radio journalism, no interview will be edited with the intention of misrepresenting or altering the fundamental content of a source’s comment. Honesty also requires that

if we derive information from another media source, that we properly credit that source. And, if we make a mistake of fact in our coverage, we correct it in a timely manner.

- D) **Respect.** Civility should be the hallmark of our interviews. While reporters are expected to be diligent, and, when required, hard-nosed in asking important questions, sources must always be treated with respect and courtesy. We must at all times be sensitive to sources' anxieties, especially when material being covered is delicate or inflammatory, or when the source may suffer some repercussion from his or her comments.

In addition, respect implies that we recognize the diversity of the communities and neighborhoods we serve, and that we strive to reflect that diversity and multiplicity in the range of stories we cover.

- E) **Decency.** Because we have been accorded the opportunity to use public airwaves to inform the public about issues and topics of interest and concern, we should always keep in mind the responsibility to provide reporting that is informative, helpful, and—in consonance with our station mission—inspiring. Salacious or inflammatory material serves no one's interest.

III. Conflict of Interest

WFIU/WTIU news reporters and editors should avoid all conflicts of interest, and even the appearance of conflicts. Such an appearance undercuts listeners' trust in the accuracy and legitimacy of information we supply.

A conflict of interest means that one's private interests are in conflict with the faithful completion of one's professional obligations and duties.

Any employee in the WFIU/WTIU news department is therefore required to disclose to his/her superior:

- a) Any conflict between an assigned duty and his/her personal interest. Such a conflict, for example, might include being assigned to cover a club or organization to which one belongs.
- b) Any effort to influence coverage of an issue through either through pay or other remuneration.
- c) Any ethical, religious, or other impediment to the fair and accurate reporting of the news.

The supervisor, perhaps in consultation with the station manager, will determine whether the incident constitutes an untenable conflict of interest.

IV. Free-lancing and other work

Employees of WFIU/WTIU news use university-owned equipment to gather the news, and many/most receive compensation for their work. Therefore any content gathered using university equipment or

university-paid labor is the property of the university, and cannot be resold to a third party. However, there are occasions when such “sharing” of information is allowed: When news is provided to state or national networks, in which the station and/or the university receives proper credit and reference. Similarly, news “product” can be shared with other Indiana Public Broadcasting radio stations.

However, if employees paid by WFIU/WTIU and the university receive payment for their work from other agencies using IU facilities, that money will revert to the station.

Employees of the WFIU/WTIU news departments are entitled to work for other news-gathering organizations, provided a) such labors are not on university time; b) such labors do not use ANY university resources, such as recorders, microphones, Internet/e-mail accounts; c) such labors do not reflect badly on the university, the station, or the reporter/editor; and d) such labors do not compromise a reporter/editor’s credibility or impair job performance. Employees must ALWAYS get approval for such free-lance activity from their supervisors before agreeing to such freelance assignments.

WFIU/WTIU news employees will NOT engage in any public relations work, nor work for any political or business advocacy interest while working at WFIU/WTIU. Some charity work may be allowed on an ad hoc basis (working in a community kitchen, for example), but is generally discouraged, and must receive prior approval from supervisors.

WFIU/WTIU news employees must not accept speaking engagements without the approval of station management, and will not be allowed to accept speaking engagements that would compromise the station’s reputation and/or the reporter’s/editor’s objectivity. Reporters and editors must get approval from the news director even for voice work or other labors within the university system.

V. “Perks”

WFIU/WTIU news employees will not sell any books or other materials submitted for review. Rather, such materials should be donated to local charities or distributed to staff members. Such products will not be utilized by the station for its own fundraising, as this could be construed as profiting financially from the station’s public responsibilities.

WFIU/WTIU news employees will not accept gifts of substantial value (t-shirts, mugs, baseball caps being examples of nominally valuable items that would be exempt). Tickets to sporting events, except for purposes of review, are prohibited.

WFIU/WTIU news employees will not use non-public information gathered in the course of their official duties for personal financial (or other) benefit.

News staff will not accept outside payment of travel or meal expenses, except when the station has no ability to provide transportation to an event being covered (e.g., activities at the Crane Naval Warfare Center).

VI. Ethical Standards in News Gathering

Plagiarism is reprehensible, and may result in termination.

We will always remember that news is usually about someone. Reporters should put themselves in the place of people they write about, to guarantee they get it right, and do so with compassion and thoroughness. Interviews with children, people who have undergone trauma, and others who may be vulnerable will be treated with respect and compassion. The person is ALWAYS more important than the story.

Any interviews with minors must include authorization of a parent or guardian.

In criminal cases, the names of minors are NEVER released, even if other media outlets have done so. Similarly, any time a minor's name is used in a news item, reporters and editors must consider if the need to use the name is compelling, and weigh the news value against any possible harm that might ensue.

Names of victims of sexual assault are NEVER released, even if other media outlets have done so. Exceptions may be made if the individual wants his or her name released.

Names of people charged with sex-related offenses are not released until conviction.

WFIU/WTIU reporters must always identify themselves to potential sources, and do not use deception to gain information.

WFIU/WTIU interviews will not be conducted until the source has assented to the interview, and the first item on the tape should be the reporter's voice saying "We are recording now," and the next item should be the identification (including title and spelling of name) of source.

If the circumstances of a story may involve legal ramifications, the reporter/editor should contact a) the news director; b) the station manager, and possibly c) the university counsel or other legal resource.

Any material not gathered directly by a reporter (i.e., newspaper article, wire story, etc.) must be confirmed independently. If appropriate, attribution of the original source should be included.

Reporters (and editors) should never make assumptions in copy, even if material comes from a wire service. Names and places should be double-checked.

WFIU/WTIU does not pay for sources or story ideas.

WFIU/WTIU does not allow sources' prior approval of news reports, even when the material involves the university. Nor does the news department allow the submission of questions in advance for approval or review by the source. Any deviation from that policy should be included in the news report.

WFIU/WTIU is not a clip service, and does not provide sources with copies of stories involving interviews with them.

WFIU/WTIU does not generally use "anonymous" sources. On those occasions when anonymous sources are used, the name (and reliability) of such sources must be confirmed by at least two employees of WFIU (preferably a reporter and editor). The source remains **publicly** anonymous.

Reporters should always advise sources when an interview is over, so the delineation of “on the record” and “off the record” is clear.

Full-time employees of WFIU/WTIU news cannot run for office, contribute to a political campaign, or endorse candidates or causes—up to and including the signing of petitions. For part-time employees, these problems will be addressed on an ad hoc basis, but clearly reporters and editors cannot cover candidates or causes where their opinions could be perceived as clouding their coverage.

Employees of the news department may not serve on government boards or commissions, except in an advisory role. They cannot participate as voting members of a decision-making body.

VII. Financial questions

WFIU/WTIU news operations will be insulated from decisions about underwriting, grant funding, and other components of the station’s financial and budgetary processes. Clearly a firewall must exist between financial decisions and news judgments.

VIII. Other

Reporters and editors must never pretend to speak on behalf of WFIU/WTIU or the university.

Reporters’ written notes are considered their personal property. Audio interviews using Indiana University equipment are considered “on the record,” and are property of Indiana University.