

A photograph of a modern building facade. On the left, a tall, narrow vertical panel features a large, minimalist clock face with gold hands and hour markers. Below the clock is a large, intricate relief sculpture in a similar gold color, depicting a stylized figure or scene. The building has a clean, architectural style with white and grey tones and large windows. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

# The Falcon

2020 - 2021 HANDBOOK

“As Seattle Pacific’s Independent student-run newspaper, The Falcon is devoted to honest reporting. We strive to portray an inclusive and transparent picture of what happens on and around campus, while holding ourselves and our community accountable.” — The Falcon Mission Statement.

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# Introduction

Founded in 1934, The Falcon is Seattle Pacific University's independent student newspaper. This policy handbook is established to put into written policy those things that were scattered through a variety of material and handed down through the years. This will establish an ongoing and living document. Each year, The Falcon's policies may be challenged, argued, created and changed in board meetings, debate, newsroom banter and inter-departmental discussions. Changes are ratified by the editorial board after which they are transcribed into this institutional handbook for future Falcon staffers to use and follow. The handbook must be reviewed every other year (even years) during the fall quarter to ensure that it is up-to-date. This handbook serves as a newsroom reference book for writers and editors - a concrete list of what to do and what not to do in specific situations. The book also can be a way of introducing new staffers to The Falcon's accepted methods and protocol. More than just an internal guide, this Policy Manual has been compiled to provide information about the student newspaper to the community at large. As a result, it is hoped that interactions between students and community members will proceed as smoothly as possible.

## General Policy

### Purpose of The Falcon

The purpose of The Falcon, as stated in the Board of Student Media Bylaws, is to publish a student newspaper. The paper is directed primarily at the students, faculty, and employees of Seattle Pacific University and the residents of its neighboring areas, and contains educational and informational articles not normally or frequently contained in the commercial press, along with a significant amount of news and editorial coverage and general student comments of particular interest to the greater university community. A secondary purpose of this organization is to promote interest in the art of collegiate journalism and to educate and train students at Seattle Pacific.

### Operations

**Location:** The Falcon House is located on the south side of campus in the Dravus parking lot.

**Access:** Editorial staff, advisor and OSS have access to Falcon House and offices. Staff can make plans with editorial staff to gain access to offices.

### Editorial Staff

The Editorial Board (EB) makes all essential institutional decisions for The Falcon. The EB is made up of the:

- Editor-in-Chief (EIC)
- News Editor
- Features Editor
- Opinion Editor
- Sports Editor
- Copy Editor
- Photography Editor
- Multimedia Editor
- Layout Editors (2)
- Assistant News Editor

## **Position Descriptions and Duties**

### **Editor-in-Chief (EIC)**

- Supervise a staff of 10 editors, one business manager, and at least a dozen of quarterly staff in producing a weekly newspaper
- In cooperation with the Faculty Advisor, implement student media organization policies, functions and standards as recommended by BSM
- In conjunction with the Business Manager and Faculty Advisor, oversee the publication's financial operations
- Reading rough drafts of staff articles and submitting comments in a timely manner
- In conjunction with the Faculty Advisor, interview, hire and/or dismiss members of the editorial staff and other staff members
- Encouraging staff reporters to take on ambitious reporting assignments and mentoring them throughout the reporting/writing process
- Providing assignments and feedback to photographers and designers
- Reviewing J1 students' work and selecting which articles are appropriate for inclusion in The Falcon
- Leading by example
- Writing articles and submitting them on time
- Maintaining consistent, strong academic work
- Helping to prepare for, plan, coordinate and execute community service and convention events
- Selecting final topics for The Falcon issues, helping to edit and lay them out
- Uploading The Falcon articles for the online edition in a timely manner
- Establishing policies and working to ensure that the processes by which The Falcon issues are created, function effectively.
- Maintaining constant communication with the FA and with all staffers and EB members
- Working with the advisors in a respectful and thoughtful manner to everyone's mutual benefit
- Being receptive to critique and feedback from EB members and the advisers and using it to improve their work

### **Section Editors (News, Assistant News, Features, Sports, Opinion, Multimedia)**

- Finding good topics on your beat for junior staffers to cover
- Helping reporters figure out whom to interview and preparing them for interviews
- Mentoring reporters to write articles in the correct journalistic style for the section
- Writing articles of their own and submitting them in a timely manner
- Being receptive to critique and feedback from EB members and the advisors and using it to improve the work
- Voting on policies and working to establish sound policies as needed
- Leading by example
- Maintaining consistent, strong academic work
- Covering topics in a timely manner
- Attend weekly meetings and production nights

### **Copy Editor**

- Being receptive to critique and feedback from EB members and the advisors and using it to improve their work
- Leading by example
- Maintaining consistent, strong academic work
- Know the Associated Press style and implement it when editing articles
- Work closely with the section editors to properly headline articles

## **Photography Editor**

- Working with staff photographers to ensure that all stories have good photos to run with them
- Coordinating with the other EB members to determine what assignments need to be covered
- Helping photographers get to the right places and take the right photographs
- Selecting which photos should appear in the print and online editions of The Falcon
- Completing photography assignments of their own and submitting them in a timely manner
- Being receptive to critique and feedback from EB members and the advisors and using it to improve their work
- Voting on policies and working to establish sound policies as needed
- Leading by example
- Maintaining consistent, strong academic work

## **Layout Editors**

- Designing and executing page layouts on tight deadlines
- Creating infographics to support articles
- Working with EB members and staffers to determine what infographics are needed and what page layouts could be enhanced through design
- Work with EB members to determine when articles need to be cut down to fit pages
- Being receptive to critique and feedback from EB members and the advisors and using it to improve their work
- Voting on policies and working to establish sound policies as needed
- Leading by example
- Maintaining consistent, strong academic work
- Be able to produce and submit finalized PDFs of pages before 2 a.m. on Wednesdays on print weeks in order to ensure it is printed on time

## **Business Manager**

- Ensuring the newsroom has adequate supplies
- Sending tearsheets and invoices to advertisers in a timely manner
- Soliciting advertisements
- Filling out SGA and other paperwork for events, activities etc.
- Supporting all other members of the EB
- When possible, writing articles of their own and submitting them in a timely manner
- Being receptive to critique and feedback from EB members and the advisors and using it to improve their work
- Voting on policies and working to establish sound policies as needed
- Leading by example
- Maintaining consistent, strong academic work
- Working with printers to ensure that all bills are submitted to ASSP VP of Finance for payment.

## **Staff Reporters/Writers/Photographers**

- Submitting work in a timely manner
- Maintaining communication with their section editors
- Coming to weekly staff meetings
- Bringing story ideas to meetings and clearing them with their section editors
- Editing according to section editors and EIC



## **The Role of Faculty Adviser**

The Faculty Adviser (FA) along with any advisory assistants are not responsible for the content of The Falcon. They act as mentors, sounding boards and writing and photography coaches. The adviser(s) must work to train editors, writers, designers and photographers both in specific journalism classes and during the day-to-day operations of the newspaper. The adviser(s) strive to instill in Falcon staffers a sense of what constitutes good writing and good journalism practice and works to increase awareness of the history and legal issues of the press. They may review student writing when asked and, in consultation with the EIC, may work to ensure the students not to put into print any article that may contain libel, inaccuracy, lack of depth in reporting, copyright infringement, or plagiarism. All messages sent to the Faculty Adviser will be redirected to Editor-in-Chief and provide assistance when asked.

## **Staff Membership**

### **1. Anti-Discrimination Clause**

The Falcon does not discriminate based on age, citizenship, color, disability, gender, race, religion, national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, or status as a disabled veteran. The Falcon actively seeks a diverse staff.

### **2. Eligibility**

Any Seattle Pacific University student who is carrying 8 or more credits while maintaining a GPA of 2.5 or higher is eligible to become a full and active member of the organization. Students attending any masters program housed at the SPU campus are also eligible to be full members provided they meet the GPA requirements, however, they are only eligible for editorial board positions on a guest basis. All EB members who do not maintain the minimum grade point average of 2.5 shall be remanded to probationary status and dismissed from their post until the quarter grade point average is brought back up to a 2.5 at which point they may apply for the position again, however, position is not guaranteed.

### **3. Staff Positions Staff positions include:**

Writers/reporters, photographers, designers, multimedia producers.

### **4. Termination**

A staff member who is deemed to have violated any part of the code or intent of the policies of The Falcon, as expressed in the Policy Manual or The Falcon Constitution, may be removed from his or her position by the EIC or by the decision of the FA. The EIC and/or The Faculty Adviser may terminate any reporter or EB member found to have violated any part of the code or intent of the policies of The Falcon or who fails to carry out the duties of his or her post.

## **Conference Participation**

### **CMA:**

Each academic year 3-4 of the most ambitious, hard working students from The Falcon staff may be invited by the FAs to attend a University Media Association conference that is attended by 1,800+ student journalists from around the country (travel, hotel and registration fees paid). To be invited is a high honor that acknowledges the staffer's leadership skill, progress in reporting, ability to learn from critique and overall dedication. Conferences offer hundreds of training sessions and opportunities to network with industry professionals. Students who attend are held to the highest moral and ethical standards of comportment and will be sent home if they don't meet the standards.

### **SLDC:**

Each quarter all Falcon editors are required to attend the conferences hosted by the Student Leadership Development Committee. In Fall Quarter, the conference is over the course of a week. Editors must arrive back on campus prior to the start of the quarter. During the conference, they will produce their first "Welcome" edition of The Falcon. In Winter and Spring, the SLDC's conference is one night and all editors are required to attend. Attendance will be checked by SeaPacs being swiped at the door.

# Protocol

## 1. Code of Ethics

All Falcon staff members adhere to The Falcon Code of Ethics. (Appendix A)

## 2. Conflict of Interest Guidelines

All Falcon staff members adhere to The Falcon Conflict of Interest Guidelines. (Appendix B) The EIC has final say in all situations involving possible conflicts of interest.

## 3. Dress

All reporters dress and act professionally at all meetings, games, interviews and other newsworthy events where professional attire is expected. All staff must be wearing a press badge when covering events. Badges will be given at the beginning of each quarter and returned at the end of each quarter unless staffer is returning for the next quarter.

## 4. Petitions

To preserve objectivity, writers in the News section who sign petitions may not cover any subjects related to the petition's topic without talking to the EIC and outlining the article to make sure it is being covered fairly.

## 5. Spokesperson

NO Falcon staff members may speak for The Falcon in an official capacity except for the EIC. All other staff members must acknowledge, when speaking in public and associated in any way with The Falcon, that their views are their own and not those of The Falcon.

## 6. Responsiveness

Staff members will respond to, or report to the EIC, all requests for information, or queries and concerns of the campus community and the general public.

## 7. Ownership

All article submissions made to The Falcon by students --including editors, full-time staff members, probationary staff members, non-staff contributors, freelancers and alumni contributors-- automatically become property of The Falcon and may be edited and printed as the EB sees fit. All submissions are final and cannot be withdrawn. Any article, drawing, photo, multimedia or layout spread is considered to be submitted if it is presented to the editors for consideration in hard copy, on a computer disc, or via email. No submission is guaranteed to run in the print or online versions of The Falcon. The Falcon retains exclusive rights to submitted work. Any republication must receive proper approval from the EB a note must run with the publication saying: "Originally printed in The Falcon on {date}. Reprinted by permission." Unauthorized reprints constitute violations of copyright law and will be pursued as such.

## 8. Removal of Content

The Falcon does not remove content from our websites once it has been published unless discussed with EIC and FA that it brings harm to another person. Factual errors can be corrected, but a correction note must be included at the bottom of the story. Typos, grammar and spelling errors can be corrected without any notification to the reader.

# Coverage

## 1. Topics

The Falcon covers as many newsworthy events in the university community as possible, recognizing that coverage decisions will be based on comparative newsworthiness of story ideas and space and resource constraints. We do not refrain from covering events that already have been covered by a mainstream media outlet in the area. Coverage does not necessarily mean that The Falcon supports certain topics.

(Coverage continued)

## 2. Requesting Coverage

Any campus or community member who believes they have a topic worthy of newspaper coverage is encouraged to bring it to the attention of the Editorial Board; the easiest way to do so is to email the paper with a description of the event including dates and times along with contact information. The EB will evaluate all ideas brought for its consideration, and, provided there are enough human resources to do so, will assign a reporter to cover any story that is deemed newsworthy.

## 3. Complimentary Tickets

As is standard in the journalism industry, when an event planner wants to ensure that a particular event receives coverage in *The Falcon*, they should contact *The Falcon* in advance to request coverage and should provide complimentary tickets or an entrance pass for press. The provision of tickets does not ensure a “positive” article. Except in the case of opinion pieces such as reviews and editorials, all articles will be balanced in their coverage without any positive or negative bias whatsoever. Opinion pieces are the exception and represent only the personal opinion of the reviewer. All opinion pieces are clearly identified as such by appearing on the Op/Ed or Reviews pages of the paper.

## 4. Participation

To preserve objectivity, staffers who cover events or groups may not participate in those events or groups. Editors must refrain from editing content relating to groups or events in which they have participated.

# Interviews

## 1. Accuracy

Reporters must always attempt to verify the accuracy of their quotes and information after or during an interview or by email. If there can be any confusion with a quote or accuracy of a fact, the reporter must confirm it with the interviewee or it cannot be published. All reporters are required to sign the fact checking worksheet before articles are published.

## 2. Events

When covering large scale events such as fund-raisers, galas and performances, reporters will make every effort to interview the organizers ahead of time to get ample background information. When reporters attend events they are expected to arrive at least fifteen minutes early and stay for the entire event in order to ensure thorough reporting. They will attempt to avoid inconveniencing event participants and will not disrupt any formal proceedings. They may, however, talk to all participants as opportunities arise during the course of any event. Set interview times and places are made only for talking one-on-one with event coordinators or school administrators, faculty, staff or trustees.

## 3. Questions

Reporters will supply a list of questions to any interview subject ahead of time if requested, but additional questions may be added during the interview process. Reporters’ questions are aimed solely at recording the truth in its entirety. Questions should be polite whenever possible, but may be pointed or firm if necessary.

## 4. Calling at Home

Reporters will not call sources at home or late at night unless there is an emergency or they are invited to do so. Phone interviews need to be set up ahead of time to ensure professionalism.

## 5. Email and Text Interviews

Time constraints sometimes require that interviews be conducted via e-mail correspondence, but this method must be used only as a last resort. Face-to-face interviews are always preferable. Phone interviews are also preferable. When conducting an interview via email, the reporter must make it clear that the responses made will be “on the record” and may be quoted for the article. Email interviews must be identified as such using the phrase “In an email interview [person’s name] said” before any quote or paraphrase given in the text. Text message or social media interviews are not allowed unless cleared by EIC. Avoid social media and text interviews.

## **6. Advance Copies**

Advance copies of articles are RARELY sent to University administrators or other members of the SPU community for approval. If there is a request for what is termed “prior review” it must first go to the EIC as well as the adviser. They will determine if the request can be met and if so, in what format. However, interview subjects may call or email the editor-in-chief to go over any direct quotes or paraphrases that may appear in the article to ensure accuracy. Note: the reporter must also check facts with the interview subject; if the subject believes this has not occurred, or additional information has come to light, the subject may contact the EIC and ask that the article not appear in print until fact-checking has been completed. The EIC’s response will depend largely on print deadlines.

## **7. Private Meetings**

Reporters use the phrase “in an interview with The Falcon” when describing interviews with prominent figures who have met or spoken privately with Falcon reporters and/or editors. Reporters may use the phrase “in an exclusive interview with The Falcon” when The Falcon is the only member of the media interviewing that figure.

## **8. Audio Records**

Reporters may use audio recorders in addition to taking hand-written notes during interviews, but in accordance with Washington law must always ask the subject(s) for permission to record before doing so.

# **Names & Identification**

## **1. Names & Titles**

When individuals are identified for the first time in an article, their professional title should be given followed by their first and last name (for example: Dean of Student Affairs, Dr. Diane Campbell). All names and titles must be double checked by reporters. When students are interviewed, their title is given as their year at SPU followed by their major (for example: sophomore Liberal Arts major, Jorge Sanders-Ramirez). When King County or other local residents are interviewed they are identified by name and residence location (for example: Sgt. Andrew Atkins of West Windsor Township).

## **2. Charged of Convicted**

To provide stories that are fully informative, the names of suspects identified by the police or those charged with crimes are printed. Persons who have been convicted also will be named.

## **3. Suspects**

For safety reasons, suspects at large are identified in news stories by all known characteristics, including race. Stories will refer to a suspect’s charges as “alleged” until guilt is determined by the appropriate court of law.

## **4. Victims**

To avoid further public injury, the victims of assaults are not named, unless they are public figures.

## **5. Sexual Identity**

Transgender and nonbinary individuals will be referred to by the pronoun of their choice.

# **Sources & Citations**

## **1. Anonymity**

Anonymity is only offered in rare circumstances. Reporters can quote sources without naming them in their stories only if they know the sources’ names, and the sources offer firsthand knowledge of an event or conversation which could not be obtained elsewhere. There must be a great reason for anonymity. Sources who offer information cannot be quoted if they refuse to give their true identities to The Falcon and cannot offer a sufficient explanation why they do not want their names to appear in the paper. Sources who make legitimate requests that their names not be used and offer important information will be cited anonymously. Their true identities will not be revealed to the outside community. Reporting based on anonymous sources has the

*(Sources & Citations continued)*

## **2. On or Off the Record**

Any information a source gives while speaking “on the record” can be cited or used in a news story. Information gathered from sources who explicitly say all or part of an interview is “off the record” cannot be attributed to that source. A reporter may, however, use the off the-record information when speaking to other sources without identifying the initial source. If those other sources confirm or give the same information as the initial source while speaking on the record, that information can then be used or cited in the story.

## **3. Contact**

If a reporter repeatedly calls and leaves messages for a source without successfully making contact before deadline time, the reporter may indicate that the source “could not be reached for comment.” When a source is provided an opportunity to respond, but does not do so, the reporter will indicate this by saying “refused to comment.”

## **4. Number**

Reporters must cite at least two sources (at least three is preferred) in every news story. The only exception is a story that involves a subject only one source can discuss.

# **Editing**

## **1. Process**

Every article appearing in The Falcon must undergo a lengthy editing process intended to prevent all mistakes in grammar, accuracy and omission. All pieces, including those appearing in the opinion section are edited by all section editors, copy and EIC for style and content. Breaking news is the exception. It must be read by at least the copy editor, assistant news, and EIC. The story may also be read and critiqued by the faculty adviser if they ask EIC and or they are asked by the writer or EIC. Any story deemed potentially sensitive or libelous may be withheld from publication by either an editor or the Faculty Adviser(s). The EIC is responsible for all matters of taste, libel and any other potential legal issues, but may elect to convene the EB to vote on whether to run a particularly sensitive story. The faculty adviser(s) may review student writing and, in consultation with the EIC, will work to ensure that any article not fit for publication for reasons of libel, inaccuracy, lack of depth in reporting, or plagiarism is not printed. These are the only reasons an adviser may interfere with the content choices of The Falcon’s EIC and other editors.

## **2. References**

### **a. AP Stylebook**

The Falcon follows the Associated Press Stylebook in all references to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and national origin. Such language reflects that conventionally considered most accurate, unbiased and representative.

### **b. Sexual Crimes**

In cases of sexual crimes, the word “rape” is always used when appropriate; “Sexual assault” is used to define all forms of sexual crimes other than rape. The policy matches the police department’s policy for description of sexual crimes.

# **Layout**

## **1. Lead Stories**

The lead story always is placed on the top, left-hand corner of the page - the area that tends to attract the human eye’s attention first.

## **2. Positioning**

Positions of stories on each page are determined by the editors based on the stories’ newsworthiness and appeal. More important stories are positioned above less newsworthy stories.

# Graphical Elements

All graphics express the artist's own interpretation of the column or article he or she is illustrating and may not editorialize. The exception to this rule is made for editorial cartoons which are clearly identified as such.

# Correction & Retractions

## 1. Circumstances

Corrections will be printed when The Falcon has made a significant spelling, typographical, reporting or editing error. Minor typos, grammar and spelling errors can be corrected without any notification to the reader.

## 2. When to Print

The Falcon will print all verified corrections, retractions and clarifications as soon as possible. Such corrections, retractions and clarifications will include the headline of the original story, its date of publication and the correct information. Corrections, retractions and clarifications are approved by the editor-in-chief. If a question of accuracy is raised, The Falcon is obliged to look into it with speed and diligence, but The Falcon will not correct, retract or apologize for stories that are verifiably accurate.

## 3. Online Edition

In addition to posting all clarifications, corrections and retractions online, The Falcon edits the original story on the Web site to be as accurate as possible.

## 4. Retractions

The Falcon will issue a retraction if presented with credible and verifiable information indicating that the findings or facts reported are wholly unreliable or inaccurate as a result of misconduct or honest error. Retractions are not made when stories are verifiably accurate or when a correction will suffice.

## 5. Letter to the Editor Option

The Falcon will try to print all letters received. Letters should be 250 to 300 words long. Any exceptions will be made at the discretion of the editors. We reserve the right to edit all letters submitted for brevity, grammar, content and clarity. The writer must include full name, year and major if a student, professional title if a Seattle Pacific University employee. If it is determined that a letter writer's political or professional capacity or position has a bearing on the topic addressed, then that capacity or position will be identified at the editor's discretion.

# Copyrights & Reproduction

All material featured in The Falcon or The Falcon Online Edition is copyrighted and the exclusive property of The Falcon. No portion of these publications may be copied or reproduced without the express written permission of the EIC. The EIC will consult with the staff member producing the work before permission to reprint or otherwise copy a piece is given.

# Online Policy

## 1. General

The Falcon Online Edition follows all general policies except where otherwise noted.

## 2. What is it?

The Falcon Online Edition is The Falcon's Web site. Most student-produced portions of the print version appear in the online version. Courtesy photographs appear as well. No Associated Press or syndicated stories, graphical elements or photos appear online.

## 3. Differences from Print Version

Elements in The Falcon Online Edition may be different from those in the print version. Stories, headline and captions are not cut for space considerations. If a section has too many stories that don't fit into the designated

14 space, it will be advertised in the print edition as being exclusively online.

#### **4. Special Features**

In addition, The Falcon Online Edition may carry special features that do not occur in the print edition. Multimedia may be added, along with related documents and links to outside sources that support or augment information presented in articles.

#### **5. Maintenance**

The Falcon Online Edition may be assembled and maintained by the multimedia editor, but the final authority over all content on The Falcon Online Edition rests with the EIC.

#### **6. Links**

When The Falcon Online Edition features links to several external Web sites such as other online publications for the benefit of its users. The Falcon is not responsible for the content of any Web sites linked from The Falcon Online Edition.

#### **7. Updates**

The Falcon Online Edition is updated as often as possible. Some stories may appear online only, and may be posted between print editions. particularly when there is breaking news. On weeks that are exclusively online, stories are spaced out according to section. On Tuesdays, Sports are published. On Wednesday, News and Opinions are published. On Thursdays, Features are published.

#### **8. Article Removal and Added Statements**

As a rule The Falcon does not remove articles from the Online Edition. A core journalistic principle is that history cannot and should never be rewritten, covered up, nor amended.

- Under specific circumstances a statement may be included at the bottom of a column indicating that the views expressed no longer coincide with the author's current perspective, but that newspaper policy prohibits removal of the article. Former contributors can request up to three such notes and must make the request(s) within five years of the original publication date in order to be considered. The circumstances under which a note might be considered include how incendiary the original article was/is, how much potential impact on the safety or livelihood of the writer it may now have, and any other aspect as the Editorial Board deems relevant in the specific case. Final say on whether or not a statement may be added lies with the current Editorial in Chief.

## **Complaints**

1. At first, complaints about the behavior of a member of The Falcon staff or about the content of an article should be made in writing to the Faculty Adviser within one month of any incident or the publication date. The complainant must clearly identify him or herself and provide contact information if a response is anticipated.
2. The FA in consultation with Student Life and any other assisting advisers will consider the complaint and reply in writing within seven working days, provided the complaint is lodged by an individual or group with a direct interest.
3. If the complainant is unhappy with the Faculty Adviser's response and course of action, they may ask the Dean of Students of Seattle Pacific University to call a meeting of The Falcon Editorial Board and Faculty Advisers to consider their complaint.
4. If no amicable settlement can be reached, the Dean of Students --in conjunction with any other administrators she deems appropriate-- will convene within fourteen working days of having received the complaint. In conjunction with the Faculty Adviser she may advocate for whatever remedy is most efficient for remediating the problem, providing it does not involve any financial penalty nor the removal from office of the Faculty Advisers, nor cause any First Amendment or other legal violation.
5. Where First Amendment issues are at stake, the Dean of Students is encouraged to seek counsel from the Student Press Law Center before issuing a decision.

# Business & Advertising Policies

## Ad Rates

Rate cards are updated regularly and posted online at [thefalcon.online/adrates](http://thefalcon.online/adrates).  
Download complete rate card PDF online.

## Business Manager

The Business Manager (or the editorial board if there is no current advertising editor) decides the placement of all display advertisements in The Falcon. The student reporters' work always takes precedence over advertisements.

### 1. Prepayment

Prepayment of an advertisement does not guarantee publication, because all advertising is subject to review by the advertising manager and the Editorial Board. The Editorial Board reserves the right to refuse any advertisement, including inserts, or to label any ad that does not identify its sponsor clearly as "Paid Advertisement."

### 2. Rate Adjustment

The Falcon reserves the right to adjust advertising rates with 30 days notice.

### 3. Materials

The Falcon is not responsible for materials submitted for use in ad production unless given prior instructions for return when submitted.

### 4. Rejection

The Falcon reserves the right to reject ads for reasons of taste, suitability for its readership, or if there are significant concerns about the business practices of the advertising entity. In all such cases the matter must be settled by a majority vote by the Editorial Board.

### 5. Tearsheets

Along with invoices, The Falcon will send tearsheets to advertisers to confirm that an ad has appeared in print so long as a request for tearsheets is made in advance of publication.

## Corrections for Advertising

### • Make - Goods

Adjustments for material errors or omissions will be made at the discretion of the advertising manager. No adjustments will be made unless the error or omission is reported to the advertising manager within two weeks of the ad's publication. Liability for adjustments is limited to the cost of the advertisement. The Falcon is not liable for printer error.

### • Ads

Any changes in copy must be submitted in writing prior to the advertising deadline.

### • Ad Cancellations

1. **Deadlines** - All cancellations must be made prior to the advertising deadline.

2. **Refunds** - Advertisers who pull an advertisement after the deadline will be charged the full cost of the ad.

There is no refund for canceled classified ads.

### • Ads and Liability

The advertiser assumes all liability for any ad it places in The Falcon and agrees to hold The Falcon and its agents harmless for the content of all advertising authorized for publication, including any photograph, likeness, name, logo, trademark, representation or any other material the advertiser provides. Responsibility for libel is joint and several between The Falcon and the advertiser.



- **Copyright**

By placing an ad The Falcon, advertisers are purchasing space and circulation only. All artwork and typesetting produced by The Falcon becomes the newspaper's property and cannot be used by the advertiser in other publications without written permission from The Falcon. Distribution Requests - Any local business or institution that would like The Falcon distributed at their venue should contact the paper directly. The Falcon seeks to ensure access to the paper to our community.

## **General Reporting Guidelines**

- **Bomb Threats**

Adjustments for material errors or omissions will be made at the discretion of the advertising manager. No adjustments will be made unless the error or omission is reported to the advertising manager within two weeks of the ad's publication. Liability for adjustments is limited to the cost of the advertisement. The Falcon is not liable for printer error.

- **Deaths and Suicides**

Provided there are enough reporters to do so, The Falcon covers all deaths of members of the University community, even when the cause of death is suicide. In cases of suicide, the Society of Professional Journalists ethical principle of "minimizing harm" guides all coverage. Editors take special care in positioning stories, graphics and hotline information appropriately, and work diligently to ensure the focus of the story is the community, on mental health needs and resources and not on individual families' trauma.

- **Cover Stories and Investigative Reports**

The front page and news pages often include investigative and longer form journalism. The Falcon has come to be known for this type of work which is the result, in part, of the change in production schedule that allows for more in-depth and group work. These stories always are made to look distinct and recognizable as features.

- **News Analyses and Opinions**

A story that examines a news event or issue from an interpretive or critical angle must be labeled as a "News Analysis" or "Op/Ed." These analyses generally rely on informed sources and unbiased data to illustrate a viewpoint on an issue or event.

- **Editorial Cartoons**

Any editorial cartoon reflects only the opinion of the cartoonist, not that of the EB. Syndicated cartoons are intended for entertainment only. EB has the choice to not include editorial cartoons if they feel it is not in the best interest of The Falcon.

## **Graphic Art**

Graphical elements are assigned to columns at the EIC's discretion.

## **Letters to the Editor and Website Comments**

1. **Acceptance**

Priority is always given to letters and comments fewer than 400 words. Hate speech, speech which may incite violence, and speech that disparages or attempt to intimidate any person or group will not be accepted. Letters must include the author's name, email address, accurate telephone number, school, year and title. Website comments must include the author's name and email. As a condition to posting the comment, the author will be required to verify their identity.

2. **Submission**

Letters to the editor and web comments can be submitted by anyone - student, faculty members, staff members, administrators, University affiliates, Seattle residents, etc. Unsigned letters are never printed. Falcon staffers cannot submit letters to the editor.

# Photography Policies

## Captions

Except in the case of stock photos no photos are ever run without a caption identifying the main group, person or people featured in the photo. Unless the photo size does not permit, students are identified with their name, and title if applicable; faculty members are identified with name and title; all others are identified with name and place of residence.

## Coverage

### 1. General

Staff photographers will generally be assigned to beats and paired with staff writers in so far as possible, but their beat assignment may shift from issue to issue.

### 2. Tip-Offs

Photographers generally cover events on the basis of departmental assignments. When The Falcon receives phone tip-offs, however, the editors use their discretion in sending photographers to cover the event.

## Credits

### 1. Photo Illustration

Posed pictures will be labeled in the credit as “Photo Illustration” and are used for graphical artwork to present the general concept of a story. Except for photo illustrations and portraits, all photographs are candid shots. Any photo altered in any way will be labeled as a photo illustration.

### 2. Placement

Except in the case of stock photos, credits always appear in small capital letters at the lower right-hand corner of the photograph unless the photograph is smaller than two inches.

### 3. Timeliness

Photos taken within a week of publication or from the most recent relevant event are credited with the photographer’s name. Photos more than a week old or earlier are credited with the photographer’s name or Falcon File Photo. Sports photos of a different game than described in the article are credited with the photographer’s name or “Falcon File Photo.”

### 4. Features

Photo essays, collections of photos presented to illustrate a theme, occasionally appear. They may also appear on The Falcon Online Edition.

## Photo Use

### 1. Distortion

All published photos are accurate representations of reality. Photo techniques that distort the image will be identified in the caption (e.g. multiple exposure or use of a wide-angle lens). Ideally, published photos will be in focus, exposed well and free of glaring scratches or imperfections.

### 2. Color & Brightening

Because newsprint darkens photos, photos may be color balanced in Photoshop prior to placement.

### 3. Duplication

The same photo will never be published twice except in cases of small mug shots or file photos.

### 4. Photography of Children

Requests of parents who ask that their child photograph not be taken or used are honored, provided the child is under 16 years of age and not in a public place. Children over age 16, but not yet 18, can give (or not) their own permission.

*(Photo Use continued)*

## **5. Public Photography**

When a person is in a public space (including a public community university campus) reporters may take photographs of them and run them in print as the law permits. Falcon photographers will not interrupt classes in progress to take photos or in any other way cause a classroom distraction. Falcon photographers may photograph security officers at any time provided their picture taking does not interfere with the security officer's ability to carry out his or her regular duties.

## **6. Currency**

Whenever possible, photos should be taken as close to the day the paper is assembled as possible. It is always preferable to take and publish recent photos rather than older photos. Old or file photos are used only when it is otherwise impossible or inconvenient to use a more recent photo, or if a current high-quality photo cannot be obtained. The most recent and most relevant photo will be printed.

# **Reproduction**

## **1. Reprints**

The Falcon may send digital copies of pictures to other publications as a professional courtesy subject to the permission of the EIC. The publication is authorized to publish the picture only once with credit to both the photographer and The Falcon. At the photographer's discretion, staff members may send digital copies of pictures to individuals for their personal use.

## **2. Rights**

All photo submissions made to The Falcon by students - including editors, full-time staff members, probationary staff members, non-staff contributors, freelancers and alumni contributors - automatically become property of The Falcon and may be edited and printed as the EB sees fit. All submissions are final and cannot be withdrawn. Any article, drawing, photo, convergence media or layout spread is considered to be submitted if it is presented to the editors for consideration in hard copy, on a computer disc, or via email. No submission is guaranteed to run in the print or online versions of The Falcon. The Falcon retains exclusive rights to submitted work for six months. Students who wish to submit the same work to other publications must wait 6 months from the date of submission to The Falcon before doing so.

# Appendix A - Code of Ethics

## The Code

The Falcon believes the duty of an independent student newspaper is to act as a carrier of information and a forum for discussion for the University community. WE BELIEVE the duty of student journalists, as agents of independent student newspapers and as American journalists, is to serve the truth. WE BELIEVE student newspapers contribute to public enlightenment, acting on their Constitutional freedom to learn and report the facts and seeking truth as a part of the University community's right to know the truth. WE BELIEVE those responsibilities carry obligations requiring student journalists to perform with intelligence, objectivity, accuracy and fairness. To these ends, we declare acceptance of the standards of practice here set forth:

## Responsibility

Serving the University community's right to know the truth concerning events of public importance and interest is the unifying mission of any independent student newspaper. The motive behind gathering and distributing accurate news and enlightened opinion is to serve the general welfare of the University community. Student journalists who use their status as representatives of that community for selfish or other unworthy motives violate a trust without which independent student journalism cannot operate.

## The First Amendment

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

## Ethics

1. Student journalists must be free of obligation to any interest other than the university community's right to know the truth.
2. Gifts, favors, free travel, special treatment or privileges can compromise the integrity of student journalists. Nothing of value should be accepted in exchange for special coverage, free advertising or endorsements.
3. Use of a position with The Falcon to gain personal advantage or to make inquiries for any other purpose than work for The Falcon is strictly prohibited.
4. Staff members are not permitted to use information not yet made available to the public for personal gain.
5. Staff members may not use Falcon equipment, supplies, services, resources, or other materials owned, purchased, or designated as property of The Falcon for any purpose other than work for The Falcon.
6. Staff members may not threaten sources or promise favorable coverage or money in exchange for information.
7. Staff members must fully disclose their identity to all sources. [All FALCON staffers carry FALCON issued press passes when they are reporting and gathering information. If you are uncertain if someone is a FALCON staffer, ask to see his or her press pass.]
8. Staff members must ask sources before recording conversations.
9. Staff members must obey the law.
10. Involvement in student politics, holding student government office and service in university organizations should be avoided if it compromises the integrity of student journalists. Student journalists should conduct their personal lives as university students in a way that protects them from conflict of interest.
11. The Falcon, its reporters and advisers may not receive awards from any MCCC campus group or organization in recognition of its coverage if such an award might create a real or perceived conflict of interest.

*(Ethics continued)*

12. So-called press releases from government or private sources, student organizations or university officials should not be published without substantiation of their claims and evaluation of their news value.
13. Student journalists will seek news that serves the university community's interest, despite the obstacles.
14. They will make constant efforts to assure that the university community's business is conducted in public and those public records are open to public inspection.
15. Student journalists acknowledge the ethic of protecting confidential sources of information.
16. Any staffer who is found to have committed an academic integrity violation will be dismissed from *The Falcon* and not permitted to return.
17. Plagiarism is an ultimate violation of trust and credibility with our readership and will not be tolerated at The University
  - Any and all material taken from another source must be appropriately cited and attributed, including:
    - a. Information from press releases
    - b. Little-known facts from authoritative sources
    - c. Unique stylistic traits, devices or wording
    - d. Both widely available news and news not widely available obtained from other sources
    - e. Information from another media outlet's exclusive story or scoop
    - f. Information obtained through the efforts of another party or source

### **Accuracy and Objectivity**

- Just as good faith with the public is the foundation of all worthy journalism, so is good faith with the University community the basis of all worthy student journalism.
- Truth is the ultimate goal.
- Objectivity in reporting the news is another goal, which serves as the mark of an experienced professional. It is a standard of performance toward which we strive. We honor those who achieve it.
- There is no excuse for inaccuracies or lack of thoroughness and reporters should make every attempt to get a story right, correct it if it appears to be wrong, and note corrections.
- Headlines should be fully warranted by the contents of the articles they accompany. Graphic elements should depict an event's happenings accurately. Photographs should never be altered for any reason except for brightening when printing on newsprint.
- News reports should be free of opinion or bias and represent all sides of an issue.
- Partisanship in editorial comment, which knowingly departs from the truth, is unacceptable.
- Student journalists recognize their responsibility to offer informed analysis, comment and editorial opinion on public events and issues in the University community.
- News analyses, reviews, opinion columns and perspectives pieces should be labeled as such, so as not to mislead.
- Student journalists at all times will show respect for the dignity, privacy, rights and well-being of people encountered in the course of gathering and presenting news.
- The student newspaper should not communicate unofficial charges affecting reputation or moral character without giving the accused a chance to reply.
- The student newspaper must guard against invading a person's legal right to privacy.
- The student newspaper should not pander to morbid curiosity about details of vice and crime. It is the duty of the student newspaper to make prompt and complete correction of its errors.

- Student journalists should be accountable to the University community for their reports and the University community should be encouraged to voice its grievances against the student newspaper. Open dialog with our readers should be fostered.
- NOTE: Portions of this code of ethics, as well as the following conflict of interest guidelines, were adapted from the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists: Sigma Delta Chi, the New York Times “Ethical Journalism: Code of Conduct for the News and Editorial Departments,” and “Second Takes,” a product of the Oregonian Publishing Company.

### **Fair Play Pledge**

The Falcon will make every attempt possible to prevent violations of these standards, and will encourage their observance by all members. Adherence to this code of ethics is intended to preserve the bond of mutual trust and respect between The Falcon and the Seattle Pacific University community.

## **Appendix B - Conflict of Interest Guidelines**

This newspaper is committed to avoiding conflict of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest whenever and wherever possible. On a general level, this means we, as staff members, make every reasonable effort to be free of obligation to news sources and special interest groups. Although collegiate journalism sometimes deviates from mainstream newspaper work, we strive for the highest level of professionalism. There are particulars associated with collegiate journalism that require more specific guidelines. Certain restrictions are more binding than others. Staff members who sense they may be in a potentially conflicting situation are expected to discuss the circumstance with the editor-in-chief immediately. Decisions are made in correspondence with the following guidelines:

### **Outside Activities**

- Staffers at all levels should not cover or write about events in which they play official roles or organizations in which they are members. (Examples: Members of any student group cannot write about that student group. Members of a sports team cannot write about that sport.)
- Reporters should not be affiliated with the ASSP in any capacity.
- If reporters or photographers acquire or intend to acquire leadership roles within other organizations (such as RAs, SMCs, officers in clubs) who advocate positions on university or other policy, they must inform the EIC.
- Editorial columnists may not argue for organizations in which they are members.
- Any appearance of bias will not be tolerated in restaurant reviews, fashion columns, music and movie reviews/previews, and any other feature story regarding University events or groups, particularly upcoming events. The strictest care must be taken to avoid conflicts of interest in these areas, and to avoid even the appearance of “advertising” or in any other way promoting one event and/or group over another, even if actual participation in the group or event has not occurred. All ideas for these stories should be generated in-house, and suggestions for story ideas from outside sources must be thoroughly scrutinized by the appropriate editor before a balanced decision is made on coverage choices.
- Freelance writers and photographers and guest columnists appearing in The Falcon are also bound to these rules.

### **Work for Other Publications**

- Freelance work for media organizations outside the University community is permissible as long as it does not interfere with responsibilities to The Falcon and is not completed with information or resources made available to the staffer through his or her work for The Falcon. If freelance work becomes frequent (more than once a month, for example), staff members should discuss the work and any potential conflicts of interest with the EIC.

### **Whom to Interview, Photograph:**

- Reporters and photographers should not interview, quote or photograph other Falcon staff members, family members, apartment-mates, roommates or friends, unless explicit permission is granted by the editor-in-chief.
- Requests of parents who ask that their child's photograph not be taken or used are honored provided the child is under 16 years of age and in a private rather than public space. Social media is considered a public space.
- When a person is in a public space (including a public community university campus) reporters may take photographs of them and run them in print as the law permits.
- Falcon photographers will not interrupt classes in progress to take photos or in any other way cause a classroom distraction.
- Falcon photographers may photograph security officers at any time provided their picture taking does not interfere with the security officer's ability to carry out his or her regular duties.

## **Appendix C - The Falcon Constitution**

### **Article I – Name**

The name of the newspaper shall be The Falcon.

### **Article II – Purpose**

- The purpose of The Falcon is to publish a student newspaper.
- The paper is directed primarily at the students, faculty and employees of Seattle Pacific University and the residents of its neighboring areas, and contains educational and informational articles not normally or frequently contained in the commercial press, along with a significant amount of news and editorial coverage and general student comments of particular interest to the greater university community.
- A secondary purpose of this organization is to promote interest in the art of daily collegiate journalism and to educate and train students at Seattle Pacific University in the art of print and new media journalism.

### **Article III – Principles**

- Truth is our ultimate goal.
- Objectivity in reporting the news is another goal. News reports should be free of opinion or bias and represent all sides of an issue. The content of The Falcon should never intentionally or knowingly mislead.
- Student reporters, who are gaining experience and skills, must be guided by the Faculty Adviser.
- When errors occur they must be discussed and analyzed to ensure improvement and movement toward the ideals of journalism.

### **Article IV – Membership Anti-discrimination Clause**

- The Falcon does not discriminate based on age, citizenship, color, disability, gender, race, religion, national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation or status as a disabled veteran. The Falcon actively seeks a diverse staff.

#### **Eligibility - Any Seattle Pacific University student**

- Carrying 8 or more credits while maintaining a GPA of 2.5 or higher is eligible to become a full and active member of the organization provided they are either enrolled in or have
- Falcon is an equal opportunity entity, and reserves the right to restrict membership based on an ability to perform the activities related to the organization's purpose.

**Staff Positions – Staff positions include:**

- Editor-in-Chief (EIC)
- News Editor
- Features Editor
- Opinions Editor
- Sports Editor
- Copy Editor
- Photography Editor
- Multimedia Editor
- Layout Editor – 1
- Layout Editor – 2
- Assistant News Editor
- Business Manager

**Article V – Officers**

The Editorial Board (EB) is made up of the following individuals:

- Editor-in-Chief (EIC)
- News Editor
- Features Editor
- Opinions Editor
- Sports Editor
- Copy Editor
- Photography Editor
- Multimedia Editor
- Layout Editor – 1
- Layout Editor – 2
- Assistant News Editor
- Business Manager

**Article VI – Responsibilities**

- The responsibilities of the editor-in-chief and section editors are many. Typically the editors work together to determine what topics will be covered in each issue of the newspaper. Each editor is responsible for generating topics for his or her own section and assigning them to staff writers in cooperation with the Faculty Adviser. The editors work together to make sure that all key campus and local events are covered by the paper and that every issue of the paper features a balanced variety of articles on topics of interest to their audience.
- Editors also edit the articles that are submitted by their staff writers. Editors decide which articles are good enough to appear in print, and which are not. The editor-in-chief can refuse to run any article that she feels is unfit. Final responsibility for the content of the paper rests with the editor-in-chief. Editors also write the headlines for all articles. Finally, they work to organize special issues, they put together community service events, they nominate writers and photographers for recognition, and they have input into how funds are directed.

**Article VII – Termination**

- A staff member who is deemed to have flagrantly violated any part of the code or intent of the policies of The Falcon, as expressed in the Policy Manual or The Falcon Constitution, may be removed from his or her position by a majority vote of the Editorial Board or by decision of the FA.
- The Faculty Adviser may terminate any reporter or editor found to have violated any part of the code or intent of the policies of The Falcon or who consistently fails to carry out the duties of his or her post.



### **Article VIII – Compensation**

All editors have traditionally been compensated in tuition remission.

### **Article IX – Meeting Procedures**

Meetings of The Falcon Editorial Board occur not less than once a week during the academic term. After initial discussion, any business requiring a majority vote is conducted. Voting will be postponed if a simple majority of active staff members is not present. Voting may be conducted by a show of hands or an anonymous ballot vote if requested.

### **Article X – Miscellaneous**

When the rules and policies of this organization, the content of its Constitution, or the actions of its members conflict with University regulations, the latter shall prevail.

## **Appendix D - Relevant Legal Issues**

### **First Amendment**

The right to a free press, one not subject to censorship by any branch of the government (including public universities), and with the express purpose of curbing the excesses of power is protected by the First Amendment to the US Constitution. It reads: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

### **Fifth Amendment**

Due process ensures procedures --state, federal and contractual-- must be followed when any person is sanctioned. The Fifth Amendment reads: “No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a grand jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the militia, when in actual service in time of war or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.”

### **Tinker and Hazelwood (legal precedents)**

Tinker and Hazelwood are the two most significant cases of student First Amendment rights to ever be decided by the US Supreme Court.

- Tinker v. Des Moines School District (1969) was when students were suspended from high school for wearing armbands to protest the Vietnam War. The students sued, arguing that their freedom of speech rights were violated. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the students. The decision famously noted that students do not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech at the schoolhouse gate.”
- In 1988 the case of Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier reduced, to some extent, the broad rights preserved by Tinker. In Hazelwood a high school journalism class created a final edition of its school paper, the principle censored two stories --one on teen pregnancy, another on divorce- saying they were unfair and inappropriate. The students sued, claiming their rights were violated. In this case, unlike Tinker, the Supreme Court said that, the high school principal is acting in place of the parents (in loco parentis) and therefore, in the case of minors, has the right to censor the paper if there is a valid educational reason to do so. The decision indicated that when the publication (student paper) was an extra curricular activity (as opposed to a class project) then students enjoy somewhat greater freedom than they would for an in-class activity. For public university journalists, the Tinker standard prevails because university students do not fall within the scope of Hazelwood. Private universities, however, are NOT bound by these same laws as they are not public (federally funded) entities. So, if you want to write an article on how often students have sex before marriage and publish it in The Falcon, we may get hate mail, and the administration would have a right to pull the story if they chose to do so.

## **FERPA – Also known as the Buckley Amendment – 1974 – revised 2x**

The regulations provide that educational agencies and institutions that receive funding under a program administered by the U. S. Department of Education must provide students with access to their education records, an opportunity to seek to have the records amended, and some control over the disclosure of information from the records. With several exceptions, schools must have a student's consent prior to the disclosure of education records. Examples of situations affected by FERPA include school employees divulging information to anyone other than the student about the student's grades or behavior, and school work posted on a bulletin board with a grade.

## **FOIA – Freedom of Information Act**

This act allows for the full or partial disclosure of previously unreleased information and documents controlled by the United States Government. The Act defines agency records subject to disclosure, outlines mandatory disclosure procedures and grants nine exemptions to the statute.

## **Sunshine Laws**

Your state's open public records and meetings laws. In WASHINGTON STATE it's the PUBLIC RECORDS ACT. This allows you access to records of all state level governmental institutions. A physical record includes: "any paper, written or printed book, document, drawing, map, plan, photograph, micro-film, data-processed or image-processed document, and information stored or maintained electronically or by sound recording." A record is considered to have a government purpose when it has been "made, maintained, kept on file or been received in the course of official business." Documents available under PUBLIC RECORDS ACT include, but are not limited to: institutional data, meeting minutes, policies and handbooks, official memos, salary information, contracts, attendance sheets, crime logs and statistics (must be made available under the Clery Act).

## **Clery Act**

The Clery Act requires all universities that participate in federal financial aid programs (that mean private universities as well) to keep and disclose information about crime on and near their respective campuses. Compliance is monitored by the United States Department of Education, which can impose civil penalties, up to \$27,500 per violation, against institutions for each infraction and can suspend institutions from participating in federal student financial aid programs. The law is named for Jeanne Clery, a 19-year-old Lehigh University freshman who was raped and murdered by another Lehigh student in her campus residence hall in 1986. The Clery Act, signed in 1990, was originally known as the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act.

\* NOTE: Other legal cases you should know: Dickey, Morse v. Frederick, Hosty.

# **Appendix E - Understanding Open Records**

[Washington Public Records Act the Sunshine Law of Washington.](#) It is the law the requires governmental institutions in the state to provide transparency and make their operations and information available to the public.

- **YOU CAN MAKE INFORMAL REQUESTS**

If necessary, you can make formal written requests for PUBLIC RECORDS ACT-able information and you will likely have to do so to get police reports and the like, but many governmental offices are asked for documents all the time (many are already online) and will give them to you without you having to fill out a form. Build your relationships with people who do office work, because they can make your life a lot easier.

- **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO USE THEIR FORM**

In the Citizens' Guide to PUBLIC RECORDS ACT it clearly states that you are not obliged to use any office's own specific form for written requests. If you want to, that is fine, but any written request will work, so long as it contains all the key parts: your contact info, exactly what you are requesting.

- **YOU MUST GET STARTED EARLY**

Although technically governmental agencies are required to reply to your PUBLIC RECORDS ACT request within one week (seven days starting the day AFTER the request is received) of the time you submitted it. However, they can reply denying your request (usually because you sent it to the wrong office), asking for more information, or indicating they will be delayed because the documents you are requesting are in storage or not readily available. They may also ask for more time if you need a very large quantity of documents. The whole process may take as long as a month. To meet deadlines you **MUST** start the process early: figure out what documents you need, submit it to the right office (call to make sure!), phrase it correctly, and follow up frequently.

- **ASK FOR PDFs**

In most cases it is both faster and cheaper to get pdf copies of documents sent to you via email than having to mess with paper documents (especially since you may face a copying fee for paper documents).

- **CAN I BE CHARGED FOR RECORDS?**

Yes. But they cannot **OVER** charge you. If you are asked to cough up a fee, let The Falcon adviser know and she will ensure it is an accurate fee and provide the funds needed.

- **REDACTING MAY SOMETIMES OCCUR**

When you are asking for documents with sensitive information such as social security numbers or anything that could breach Homeland Security laws or jeopardize law enforcement can be redacted or have just the sensitive info blacked out. This is both good and bad. They can over redact or cover stuff up, but you have far more ability to get hold of otherwise sensitive information.

## Appendix F - Interacting with Student Media

\* See Interacting with Student Media Guide on thefalcon.online.



Established and ratified by:  
Editor-in-chief: Julia Herman 9/1/2020