The Elm Staff Manual 2012-13

The Student Newspaper of Washington College

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WHO WE ARE

PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL

The Elm staff manual is a culmination of input from previous and current editors, *The Elm* advisor, and the Board of Publications in an effort to consolidate all rules and procedures by which the publication operates. Along with documenting details of the operating process, the staff manual is meant to give the student newspaper of Washington College a foundation and sense of continuity.

Staff members are expected to familiarize themselves with the content of the manual as much as possible.

HISTORY

The Elm is a weekly newspaper published by and for the students of Washington College. Since its start in 1930, *The Elm* has been a resource for campus news and student opinion. *The Elm* prints about 24 issues a year, depending on budgetary restraints. The newspaper is a tabloid-style, 12-page publication with five content sections: News, Opinion, Student Life, Lifestyle, and Sports.

The Elm office is located at the Sears Publishing House on Washington Avenue.

OUR MISSION

The Elm strives to inform its audience about campus news through print and online forms as accurately and consistently as possible. The staff is dedicated to upholding ethical journalistic principles, enhancing skills as writers and editors, uniting the Washington College community, and serving as a voice for the student body.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

The following positions and descriptions illustrate the primary responsibilities for editors and managers on *The Elm* staff. These are NOT the only duties associated with a given staff position. The EIC and advisor reserve the right to negotiate positions and revise job descriptions and salaries before positions are offered and contracts are signed, and on a semester basis.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The Editor-in-Chief is responsible for the overall operations of the newspaper. It is the EIC's job to ensure that all tasks are completed on time and that *The Elm* is an accurate, balanced representation of the Washington College student body. Specific duties:
- Plan and execute staff meetings, training, and other events
- Recruit and hire editors when needed
- Work closely with the advisor and Board of Publications to inform them of progress and any problems or concerns
- Understand *The Elm's* budget for the school year and work with the Board of Publications on financial decisions
- Motivate and encourage the staff by assisting editors, writers and managers to facilitate and an open and inviting working atmosphere
- Help plan Publications Boot Camp and ensure that editors and writers are as prepared and knowledgeable in their duties as possible
- Oversee all editors and staff members to ensure that the paper is published in an orderly, timely fashion
- Be an available resource for the staff
- Stand as responsible for content, publication and social media of newspaper
- Plan content of newspaper with staff
- Oversee writing of any staff editorials
- Writes stories as needed
- Review all material prior to publishing and prepare the designed pages for print
- Serve as student spokesperson for the newspaper, attending faculty, staff, alumni, and Board of Visitors and Governors meetings as needed
- Turn in time sheets on time and follow through with any missing or incorrect payment to ensure that the staff is paid accurately and consistently
- Send PDF pages to the printer at Chesapeake Publishing, as well as communicate with Chesapeake Publishing on a regular basis

ADVISOR

The Elm advisor assists the staff in making decisions regarding content, operations, and policies. Amount of involvement varies depending on the advi-

sor and EIC, but typically, the advisor attends budget meetings and layout nights to answer questions and assist in the publication process.

Although the EIC makes all final decisions regarding content and newspaper policy, the advisor should provide his or her input and advice. He or she is not responsible for the final product.

The advisor's office is located on the third floor of the Rose O'Neill Literary House.

ALL SECTION EDITORS

- Attend Monday news meetings, prepared with story ideas for the following week
- Help recruit and train new staff
- Assign stories to writers
- Correspond with the photo editor to ensure appropriate coverage of all events
- Be an available and helpful resource for writers
- Provide constructive criticism and tips for revision for writers
- Impose and maintain deadlines. Contact writers immediately after a missed deadline
- Use as many available resources provided as possible, such as story planner guides, style guides, and handouts and sheets on journalism skills
- Edit material for more clear and concise writing, appropriate coverage of the topic, properly verified information, word choice and grammar, and overall content
- Write stories as needed
- Lay out stories on inDesign, ensuring that their section is as clean and effective as possible
- Fill out time sheets on a weekly basis
- Check *The Elm* website and edit the design of their content online as needed through the WordPress account

NEWS EDITOR(S)

News Editors are responsible for brainstorming news article ideas, staying aware of campus activities, and planning approaches for covering stories. They should communicate regularly with their writers to ensure they are approaching their assignments appropriately and effectively.

Along with the regular duties assigned to section editors, News Editors are required to attend a separate, earlier news meeting with the EIC before Monday budget meetings to discuss upcoming story ideas.

OPINION EDITOR

The Opinion Editor is responsible for recruiting columnists and regular opinion writers. He or she reviews contributed Letters to the Editor prior to publication.

He or she should edit columns for content, specifically looking out for potentially libelous and offensive commentary. To the best of his or her ability, the editor return work to columnists for revision before any major edits are made.

STUDENT LIFE EDITOR

The Student Life Editor is expected to be continually aware of campus activities and club fund raisers/events in order to assign stories to writers. He or she should encourage writers to compose unique approaches to regular campus events in an effort to make the section as lively and appealing as possible.

LIFESTYLE EDITOR

The Lifestyle Editor should keep his or her section as varied and entertaining as possible. Past editors have had writers who specify in: Movie/book/theater/music reviews, sex advice, and humor columns.

SPORTS EDITOR

The Sports Editor should keep track of all sporting events on campus and maintain communication with athletics officials. As much as possible, he or she should balance the section, rotating between sports events to evenly cover all activities. The section should strive to be as interesting and varied as possible, with profiles, graphics, and photos along with basic coverage of wins and losses.

PHOTO EDITOR

The Photo Editor is in charge of distributing photo assignments as well as properly editing and filing photos. Specific duties:

- Attend weekly staff meetings, receive new assignments for the coming week's issue, and collaborate with section editors to brainstorm photo and image ideas
- Help recruit and train new staff in proper photojournalism techniques and operation of the flickr account
- Assign events to photographers, detailing time/

locations, contact information, and any specific information the they will need to know

- Send out reminders to the photographers as needed
- Ensure that all photos are turned in by deadline. If photos are missing, the editor is expected to do his or her best to either reassign the photo or take the photo him or herself
- Before editors arrive on Wednesday layout nights, have all photos edited and appropriately saved and filed
- Appropriately attribute photographers to the photos selected for publication
- Identify persons in photos for cutlines and assist section editors in writing cutlines as needed
- Ask permission of non-staff photographers before using their work and ensure they are properly credited. Student photographers who work for the school, but not necessarily *The Elm* will be compensated for any photos of theirs that are printed as long as they have a pay pack on file with Human Resources. *The Elm* does not pay college staff or any non-students.

COPY EDITORS

Copy Editors read and edit all copy that appears in the publication for errors of grammar, punctuation, wordiness, clarity, accuracy, fairness, and completeness. They are also encouraged to write articles. Specifically, they are expected to:

- Be extremely familiar with all the rules of AP and *Elm*-specific style
- Ensure that all writing uses proper grammar and punctuation
- Identify libelous or potentially libelous stories to the proper editor
- Be prepared to answer any style or grammar questions
- Constantly refer to reference materials to verify facts and spelling errors
- Identify stories that need major revision, sometimes recommending that they be held
- Bring the editor's attention to consistent problems, such as a writer who keeps making mistakes or a style rule that is repeatedly violated
- Attend required staff meetings

WEB MANAGER

The Web Manager has overall responsibility for online design, content planning and production. He or she leads long-term planning for site design and development. The Manger decides, with the Editor in Chief, which non-print stories should run. The Manager also is in charge of uploading stories and photos to the website after layout. The Web Manager has until 7 a.m. on the Friday of distribution to put stories and photos on the website.

Decides, with the EIC, what content will be put on the website before publication.

Works with the EIC on keeping *the Elm* Twitter and Facebook accounts fresh.

BUSINESS MANAGER

The Business Manager communicates with advertisers and prepares ads for layout. He or she also communicates with subscribers and is required to attend Monday budget meetings with all ads for the upcoming week.

DISTRIBUTION MANAGERS

Distribution Managers distribute copies of *The Elm* around campus and in town. Copies must be distributed by 11 a.m. on Fridays.

EDITORIAL CARTOONISTS

Cartoonists are hired by the Opinion Editor.

Assignments are given out on a weekly basis. Cartoonists must attend Monday meetings so they can compose their artwork to appropriately accompany whichever editorial the Opinion Editor chooses. They should read the article which their is accompanying before turning in the cartoon for print.

STAFF WRITERS

Staff writers must attend Monday meetings. Unless they have an excused absence through their respective section editor, writers will not be assigned stories.

Writers are expected to comply to deadlines, follow AP and *Elm* style as much as possible, familiarize themselves with the staff manual and training guide, and collaborate with editors to produce quality work.

When staff writers do not comply with *Elm* policies, or continually miss deadlines, they are subject to termination from their respective section editor or the EIC.

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS

Staff photographers must also attend Monday meetings unless they have an excused absence.

Along with following basic *Elm* policies and guidelines, staff photographers should submit their photo assignments on time through the Flickr account. They are also required to include cutlines with their photos.

When staff photographers consistently miss deadlines or fail to comply to *Elm* procedures, they are subject to termination from the photography editor or EIC.

BEATS

Washington College is a small enough institution that *The Elm* generally does not need to assign reporters beats. However, there are a few areas which are useful to have reporters assigned specifically to.

Beat reporters are expected to inform their section editors of any news related to their sections and cover events appropriately. Useful beats include:

• Drama beat: Faculty-directed drama productions are featured in the News Section, while senior thesis productions are generally featured in either Student Life or Lifestyle. Play articles should be less of reviews than feature stories. Writers should interview directors and actors, focusing on the rehearsal process and accomplishments rather than the writer's personal opinion.

The Elm does not take photographs of drama productions because of copyright issues and an effort to avoid interrupting the rehearsal process. Instead, official drama department photographer Paul Gillespie includes *The Elm* on his email list, and the newspaper has permission to use his photos.

Drama articles are published the week after the performance weekend. Included is an "If you go" box for the following production. For the first production of the semester, *The Elm* creates a house ad advertising the show dates and time.

• Lit House: Lit House events are published at the beginning of the school year. Visiting writers need at least two weeks notice to schedule an interview, so the assigned reporter should contact Literary House Director Jehanne Dubrow as early as possible to schedule official interviews.

• SGA/SEB: The SGA/SEB beat should attend all SGA/SEB meetings and inform his or her section editor of any potential stories.

• Sports: The Sports Editor should delegate beats for various athletic events among his staff writers as he or she sees fit.

• Campus Voices: One or two interested staff members choose one question a week and record student responses. An edited video should be featured on the Elm's website and Facebook wall before each issue to keep online interest.

RECRUITMENT

ORIENTATION

During freshmen orientation, the EIC and a few other editors represent *The Elm* at the Rose O'Neill Literary House. Editors set up a table where interested writers can ask questions, pick up an *Elm*, and provide contact information for the future. Editors also provide writers with pay packet instructions and informational material.

OPEN HOUSES

At the beginning of each semester, the staff hosts an Open House at the Pub House. All section editors are required to attend. Potential writers are welcome to provide contact information, rotate to different sections around the house and ask questions of editors, snack on provided food, and check out the layout room.

CLUB FAIR

The Elm hosts its own table at the annual SGA Club Fair at the beginning of the fall semester. Editors sign up for shifts to occupy the table throughout the day.

FALL FAMILY WEEKEND

The Elm sets up a booth at the waterfront during Fall Family weekend to reach out to parents, sell subscriptions, and encourage donations. Participating in the Cardboard Boat Regatta is also encouraged.

NATIONAL DAY ON WRITING

Elm staff members have a table during the spring semester's National Day on Writing. This is an opportunity to not only reel in extra writers for the spring, but also to show off and have fun. In previous years, T*he*

Elm has held a Headline Contest, provided old *Elms* to make clothes out of, played Mad Libs with old issues, and set out bowls of candy.

HIRING & TERMINATION

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Every spring, the members of each publication – *The Elm, The Collegian, Pegasus*, and *WC Review* – will select between one and three candidates to be considered for the following year's Editors-in-Chief.

The Publications Board will only review candidates who have been agreed upon and selected by the members of each, individual publication (with a maximum of three candidates per publication).

If a publication selects only one candidate, that candidate must still submit a letter of interest and two faculty recommendations to the Publications Board and must interview for the position The Publications Board may ask for additional candidates if it appears a candidate has insufficient training or qualifications.

If a publication does not select any candidates for the position of Editor-in-Chief, this publication risks becoming defunct, either temporarily or permanently.

Each candidate will be reviewed and scored using the following criteria:

1. Seniority. Students closest to graduation will be ranked higher than those who still have additional years to apply for the position of Editor-in-Chief.

2. Years of Experience. Students will be ranked based on the amount of time they have worked for the publication.

3. Quality of Application. Each candidate will be required to submit a letter of interest, outlining his/her academic standing, years of experience with the publication, and vision for the position of Editor-in-Chief. Letters will be ranked based on clarity and specificity. Two letters of Faculty Recommendation are also required.

4. Quality of Interview. The Publications Board will interview each candidate. Interviews will be ranked based on each student's ability to articulate a plan for the publication and a vision for the position of Editor-in-Chief.

Once a new Editor-in-Chief has been selected, the outgoing Editor is required to provide a minimum of one month of job training. The outgoing Editor will also provide his/her replacement with written records of managerial practices, in order to ensure that each publication continues to maintain "institutional memory."

More information about EIC selection can be found at the Literary House website: http://lithouse.washcoll.edu/opportunities/board-of-publications/

EDITORIAL AND MANAGER STAFF

The EIC is responsible for hiring all editors.

At the end of summer Publications Boot Camp, each editor signs an employment contract affirming that he or she has read and is familiar with the Staff Manual and is prepared to take on the stated responsibilities. Editors are automatically rehired going into the spring semester unless they inform the EIC otherwise. The EIC also reserves the right to terminate any editor's position on staff if the editor has failed to fulfill his or her responsibilities.

If an editor leaves *The Elm* to study abroad, he or she is not guaranteed the same position on staff when he or she returns. Editors must re-apply upon returning to campus.

If any editor positions are open at the end of the fall semester, the EIC sends out a campus-wide email inviting students to apply. It is the EIC's responsibility to hire new editors in time to train them before winter break. Training should be as thorough as possible, and should include shadowing the outgoing editor and inDesign and AP Style training.

Editors are not automatically rehired each school year. They are required to re-apply for their position or, if they choose, apply for a different position.

At the end of the spring semester, the incoming EIC sends out a campus-wide email announcing that students are welcome to apply for any position on staff but specifying which positions he or she is particularly looking to fill.

NON-EDITORS

Section editors are responsible for hiring their own staff writers. After writers or photographers express interest in working for a certain section, the editor should inform them that they MUST fill out their pay packet information with the Business Office if they

have not already done so. Editors may not assign assignments to writers or photographers who have not filled out their pay packets. They are encouraged to double-check pay packet status with the Business Office before assigning stories.

Once incoming staff members have filled out their pay packets, they are required to sign a contract similar to the ones editors fill out at the end of Boot Camp. Editors can find copies of staff contracts on the Black-Board website. Before students sign an employment contract, their editor should:

- Direct them to a copy of the Staff Manual
- Inform them that they are required to attend Monday staff meetings
- Explain deadlines, responsibilities, and rate of pay

Editors should give signed contracts to the EIC who will properly file them. Once a writer or photographer has officially joined staff, the editor must also give the EIC the new staff member's contact information, including a cell phone number and email address. The EIC will record the new staff member's contact information appropriately.

Editors are allowed to hire as many staff members as they think they need to fill their section on a weekly basis. Writers should have the opportunity to have an article published every other week. The photography editor usually needs a larger pool of photographers to complete assignments each week.

TERMINATION

The EIC and section editors may terminate any staff member's position if the staff member fails to comply with *Elm* procedures.

The Elm has a warning system: If a staff member is neglecting to follow *Elm* policies, the EIC or section editor must send him or her an email explaining why he or she is at risk of termination.

If the staff member does not improve, editors may send him or her an email stating that he or she has been removed from staff.

Once a staff member's position has been terminated, he or she may no longer receive assignments from section editors. He or she may still send in letters to the editor.

PAYMENT

RATE OF PAY

Rate of pay is determined by the EIC in collaboration with the Board of Publications and is based on the upcoming year's anticipated budget.

Pay rates for the 2012-13 school year are:
Editor-in-Chief: $90/week
News Editor: $50/week
Opinion Editor: $40/week
Student Life Editor: $40/week
Lifestyle Editor: $40/week
Sports Editor: $40/week
Web Editor: $40/week
Photography Editor: $40/week
Business Manager: $40/week
Copy Editor: $30/week
Distribution Manager: $30/week
Writers: $5/article
Artists/Cartoonists: $5/Image
Photographers: $5/photo

Editors are not paid an additional $5 per story published. *The Elm* does not pay college staff for contributions.

PAY PACKETS

The EIC must submit an SEA for each new member. If a student has never worked for the school before, he or she must complete a pay pack BEFORE given an assignment.

A pay pack consists of Form I-9, current State & Federal withholding forms, MW 507 State Tax Withholding Form, W-4 Federal Withholding forms, confidentiality agreements and direct deposit authorization forms. All items can be found on the Student Employment portion of the HR website: http://hr.washcoll. edu/studentemployment.php.

SEA's can be accessed by going to the WC homepage.

Students must complete their own pay packs. They also have to go to HR to submit their forms and show a certain combination of forms. One option is they can either show their U.S. passport, or they can show a Driver's license AND their Social Security Card. Photocopies and scans of these documents are NOT

accepted. They also have to take a voided check or savings deposit for automatic payroll deposit.

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

At each Monday staff meeting, section editors must fill out a pay sheet listing which writers/photographers contributed in the previous issue and how many articles/photos were published.

Based on these forms, the EIC fills out a pay sheet with students' ID, name, and amount they are being paid for the week. Pay sheets must be turned in to the Business Office by 3 p.m. two Mondays before the pay date.

Staff members can access the calendar of pay dates on the human resources website. If they are not paid on the scheduled date, they should contact the EIC.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

THE PUBLISHING HOUSE

All editors are given keys to the Pub House at the beginning of the school year. They have full access to the building and are expected to treat it with respect.

During the academic year, the staff of *The Elm* may use the House and its facilities (including the kitchen) for the purposes of work, study, and relaxation. During the summer months, the Editor-in-Chief and occasionally other editors may be given special use of a key to access the House; during the summer months, use of the House's facilities (including the kitchen) must be formally requested. The Director of the Board of Publications is the contact for such requests.

If someone is going to use the building for anything other than *Elm*-related business, he or she is expected to be courteous; staff should clean up before leaving, leave the computer desktops and work areas as they were found, and give up their space if another student needs to use it for *Elm* business.

Students should not loan out their Pub House key. At the end of the year, editors are required to turn in their key to Public Safety. Public Safety will fine students who fail to turn in their key.

The Elm cannot ensure the security of personal equipment, such as textbooks, library, laptops, books, purses, book bags, or other personal belongings.

It is the individual staff member's responsibility to keep his or her work area clean. This is particularly important when it comes to food. The Pub House is old; in the past, there have been pest and mold problems, so cleanliness is crucial.

The last staff member to leave the Pub House should turn off all lights, close the *Elm* office door, wash all dishes he or she has used, and put away all food.

PARKING

Public Safety does not permit parking in the driveway attached to the Pub House. Staff members may park in the Minta Martin parking lot, the lot at the old Board of Education building, or any place elsewhere on campus.

SUPPLIES

When staff notices any supplies running low (printer paper, ink cartridges, coffee, other supplies) they should contact the EIC. The EIC will forward the information to the Board of Publications and restock the material as soon as possible. Expenditures for supplies come out of *The Elm* budget.

Computer equipment repair and maintenance questions should also be directed to the EIC.

If a staff member is unfamiliar with the equipment, he or she should not attempt to use it without completing a training session first.

SECURITY AND SAFETY

Sometimes, late nights run really late. If a staff member is walking back to his or her dorm room after a late layout night, he or she should find someone to walk with. Public Safety is also available to escort staff back to their rooms; Public Safety officers are more than happy to come over at any time.

COMMUNICATION

Aside from weekly meetings, communication between editors and writers is mostly done via email. Staff members are expected to check email daily during the school year and at least every other day over breaks. They should respond as quickly as possible.

Often, editors will need to make last-minute phone calls during layout nights. Writers and photographers should have their phones on them in case of questions. The EIC will have a log of all staff members' contact information for such purposes.

Editors should have their writers' cell phone numbers and email addresses on hand at all times. They should also have the editorial staff's contact information.

TRAINING

The Elm requires attendance at yearly orientation sessions and quarterly and weekly training updates.

The purpose of these meetings is to provide fundamental training in the skills required of newspaper management, ethics, writing, computer production, layout and design, photography and advertising.

This training also permits clear discussion of policies, goals, and social activities.

BOOT CAMP

Boot Camp is held the week before classes begin. Boot Camp is mandatory for all editors to attend. Staff writers and photographers are invited to attend as well.

Boot Camp is a week-long training opportunity to prepare staff members for the upcoming year. Training workshops and topics include, but are not limited to: InDesign training, AP and Elm style, news reporting and writing, editing, photojournalism and editing, ethics and libel, interviewing, and sports and feature writing.

As well has hosting workshops and sessions throughout the week, Boot Camp culminates in a back-to-school issue of The Elm. The issue will be published and distributed in time for arriving students read.

WORKSHOPS

The EIC is in charge of planning and hosting all training workshops throughout the semester. Depending on the nature and subject of the workshop, they may or may not be mandatory for editors, writers, and photographers. The EIC will make his or her best efforts to plan workshops around staff members' busy schedules.

Workshops should be used to further training in subjects covered in boot camp, including design, reporting, editing, and style.

EDITORIAL POLICIES

PEN NAMES

The Elm prohibits pen names (or fake names) because they are threats to credibility. A reporter needs to be willing to put his or her real name on a story and stand by it.

ANONYMITY/CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidential sources must be used with care and only when absolutely necessary. Whenever possible, information given by a confidential source should be confirmed by at least one other credible source.

Reporters must not promise confidentiality to a source for any reason without the consent of the editor in chief.

Confidential sources should be used only in stories of vital public interest. Confidentiality should only be granted if there is a real danger of physical, emotional or financial harm to the source should the source reveal his or her name. The reporter and editor should have the facts and the source's name before confidentiality is granted.

EDITORIAL BOARD

The Elm Editorial Board consists of the EIC and section editors. The Board, as well as the weekly editorials it publishes, provides The Elm staff as a whole with its own voice.

During Monday editor meetings, the board will discuss issues and the stand the newspaper will take on these issues, news value, and future stories. A topic(s) will be selected each week, with one person writing for the majority opinion on a particular issue. These editorials will be the newspaper's official stand on the issues considered by the board.

A disclaimer explaining the purpose and planning of the editorial should be included on the page.

Writers may not write editorials or columns regarding a subject upon which they reported themselves. This will compromise the unbiased nature of the original article.

COLUMNS

Columns are opinions of only the columnist. They do not reflect the views of The Elm, but instead offer a differing viewpoint.

Once a column is published, the columnist may not retract his or her article. Articles will not be removed from the website after publication.

Columnists should strive to be as objective and fair as possible in their writing. They should support their arguments with research, not personal attacks or expletives.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Elm welcomes letters and viewpoints from readers and will print as many as possible. To be eligible for publication, letters should address a recent campus issue or *Elm* story. Priority will be given to Washington College students, faculty, and staff.

Elm staff members may not submit Letters to the Editor.

Students are not paid for published Letters to the Editor.

Letters should not exceed 500 words. Editors reserve the right to edit letters for brevity, content, and clarity.

Submissions must be made by Monday at 5 p.m.

The Elm will not publish anonymous letters, personal attacks, or libel.

READER RESPONSE

No letter to the editor should appear in *The Elm's* print or online editions (excluding reader's comments) before it is verified by the EIC and Opinion Editor.

The Elm accepts, and in fact encourages, reader and listener feedback in all forms. *The Elm* reserves the right to review any feedback before publishing or posting and may also remove comments made to articles on the website if they do not meet the standards set by the guidelines on the Web site.

Non-editors are discouraged from responding to reader feedback, even if it is through personal email. Writers should forward all responses to the Opinion Editor for further review.

In most cases, only the EIC or section editor should respond to feedback.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Staffers may not cover a campus organization they belong to, or participate in any editorial decisions regarding that organization. Staffers may provide story leads about the organizations to which they belong to other staffers. Staffers should report their memberships to their supervising editor.

Political involvement, holding off-campus public office and service in community organizations should be considered carefully to avoid compromising professional integrity and that of the publication. The notion of the journalist as an independent observer and fact-finder is important to preserve. A staffer involved in specific political action, especially in a leadership role, should not be assigned to cover that involvement.

Staffers must declare conflicts and avoid involvement in stories dealing with members of their families. Staff members should not cover — in words, photographs or artwork — or make news judgments about family members or persons with whom they have financial, adversarial, romantic, sexual or closely personal relationships.

Other employment should not conflict with the staffer's first responsibilities to the publication. The staffer must report any other employment to the editor to avoid any conflicts of interest with assignments or other staff editorial or business responsibilities or influences.

FREE TRAVEL

To remain as free of influence or obligation to report a story, the journalist, in pursuit of a story, should not accept free travel, accommodations or meals related to travel. For convenience, sports reporters may travel on team charters, but the publication should pay the cost of the transportation and related expenses. The same pay-as-you-go policy should apply to non-sports reporting as well, including businesses and governments. Free travel and accommodations that are non-coverage related and provided by a vendor may be accepted if the primary purpose is for education or training and is related to the fulfillment of an agreement or contract.

GIFTS

Gifts should not be accepted. Any gift should be returned to the sender or sent to a charity. If the gift is of de minimis (no significant) value, such as a desk trinket, small food item or pen, the staff member may retain the gift. As a guideline, if the value is under $10, the gift may be kept. More than one gift in one year,

even if under $10, from the same giver, may not be accepted.

FREE TICKETS, PASSES, DISCOUNTS

If money is available, staffers assigned to cover a sporting event, lecture, play, concert, movie or other entertainment event should pay for admission. Free tickets or passes may be accepted by staff members assigned to cover an event or by those attending for legitimate news purposes. Press facilities at these events may only be used by staff members who are assigned to cover the event. Free tickets or passes may be accepted by staff members for personal use only if tickets are available on the same complimentary basis to non-journalists.

ALCOHOL POLICY

Even though a staffer may be able to drink legally, no drinking in a social setting such as a dinner or reception is allowed to avoid any suspicion by a source or the public that the staffer's judgment, credibility or objectivity is impaired by alcohol.

CONTENT

PLAGIARISM & FABRICATION

Plagiarism is prohibited and is illegal if the material is copyright protected. For the purposes of this manual, plagiarism is defined as the word-for-word duplication of another person's writing or close summarization of the work of another source without giving the source proper credit. A comparable prohibition applies to the use of graphics. Information obtained from a published work must be independently verified before it can be reported as a new, original story. This policy also forbids lifting verbatim paragraphs from a wire service without attribution or pointing out that wire stories were used in compiling the story. Material that is published on the Internet should be treated in the same way as if it were published in more traditional broadcast media. Because plagiarism can significantly undermine the public trust of journalists and journalism, editors should be prepared to consider severe penalties for documented cases of plagiarism, including dismissal from the staff.

The use of composite characters or imaginary situations or characters will not be allowed in news or feature stories. A columnist may, occasionally, use such an approach in developing a piece, but it must be clear to the reader that the person or situation is fictional and that the column is commentary and not reporting. The growth of narrative story development (storytelling devices) means that reporters and editors should be especially careful to not mix fact and fiction, and not embellish fact with fictional details, regardless of their significance.

PHOTOGRAPHY GUIDELINES

Before selecting photos for publication, the question of privacy and the public's right to know should be considered. Photos should receive the same amount of scrutiny as copy. Photographs and graphics must inform, not mislead. Any attempt to confuse readers or misrepresent visual information is prohibited.

In photographing news, *The Elm* does not stage or reenact events. Photographers may direct subjects of portraits, fashion shoots, studio work, or humor photos.

The Elm does not add color, remove objects, or flop images for news photos. It does not digitally alter images beyond making minor adjustments for color correction, exposure correction, and removal of dust spots or scratches required to ensure faithful reproduction of the original image. Exaggerated use of burning or saturation is not permitted.

Photo illustrations that use altered photographs are exceptions to the above rules. They should be credited as Photo Illustrations, not photographs.

PHOTO ATTRIBUTION

Photo credits are written vertically on the left-hand side of the photo. Photos take by staff members are credited "Photo by." Photos from contributing photographers are credited "Photo courtesy of."

Editors should avoid using photos from the Wash-coll.edu website. As much as possible, they should use photos taken by staff photographers, even if they are poorer quality than the website's. The only exception to avoiding website photos is when a photographer failed to cover an event and the image is necessary for the design of the page. If website photos are borrowed, the editor should email college relations letting them know they borrowed it for the issue. If website photos

are uncredited, the photo credit should say, "Photo courtesy of WC website." Otherwise, it should attribute the correct photographer.

Editors should also avoid using Google images as much as possible. Instead, they should anticipate possible file photos in advance and plan graphics with the photography editor.

Photos that were taken by previous staff members may be reused in future issues. They are considered property of *The Elm,* and are attributed as "Elm Stock Photo."

PRIOR READING/REVIEW

A reporter should never agree to let a subject read a story before publication, regardless of arguments from the subject. A reporter should refer all such complaints to his or her editor. Reporters are allowed to read/send back quotes, however.

If there are any questions about the story or facts, the reporter should check back with the subject prior to publication to confirm the material. If a reporter wishes to audio record an interview, he or she must ask permission of the subject first.

CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS

The EIC will make the final decision on sensitive or controversial matters, taking care to see that issues dealing with libel or obscenity do not make their way onto the pages of the paper. He or she may consult with the advisor to determine if material falls into one of these categories, but the final decision is his or hers.

DECENCY STANDARDS

Staff will occasionally encounter offensive or vulgar language and explicit descriptions in stories, commentary, cartoons, and ads. While often legally safe, staff considers the following:

- Is that language necessary to communicate the message, or will it divert attention from the primary focus?
- Is the author using certain words just for shock value without journalistic justification?
- Is there less offensive language that would communicate the same idea?

APRIL FOOL'S ISSUE

Released the Friday before or after April 1 each year, the April Fool's edition of *The Elm* is a campus tradi-

tion. It is an opportunity for the staff to poke fun at itself, and has also been an excuse to show off inDesign and Photoshop skills. To avoid offending anyone, *The Elm* follows the following guidelines:

1. AP Style rules still apply. The goal is to be funny, not sloppy.

2. *The Elm's* obscenity policy still applies. Besides being tacky, unprofessional and reflective of poor writing, both could be potentially offensive.

3. Jokes should be considered from the perspective of those they are made at the expense of.

4. No personal attacks. *The Elm* has printed articles singling people out in the past, but only when the subjects are considered public figures on campus. *The Elm* typically alters people's names, but exceptions have included: The college president; Jerry Roderick; well-known members of the administration; professors with senses of humor. Named persons should be asked for permission before using their real names or photos first.

6. The regular libel rules still apply as well. Editors should run prominent and frequent disclaimers that absolutely nothing in this issue is true.

7. No paid, real advertisements are included.

OBSCENITY AND PROFANITY

The Elm makes every attempt to exclude profanity from its articles, columns, and editorials. In order for an obscenity to be printed, it must be in a quote and give added insight into the character of the speaker. The full word is not printed. The first letters are printed, and the rest of the word is replaced with asterisks (*). Words such as hell and damn are not considered obscene.

It is up to the discretion of the EIC and respective section editor to decide whether or not to print an obscenity.

CORRECTIONS

The Elm never publishes inaccuracies knowingly. If any error is found, or if a reader alerts the staff to an error, *The Elm* is obliged to correct it as soon as possible, regardless of the source of the error. Corrections run in the news section, usually on page 2 or 3.

The Elm does not remove any content from its website after publication. However, if there are factual errors in a story, editors will run a correction or update as needed.

Editors and staff members should tell the EIC about any errors they were alerted of as soon as possible.

When a person calls in question a fact published, he or she should not be guaranteed a correction will run. The section editor must first confirm that the fact in question is an inaccuracy.

EDITORIAL PROCESS

DEADLINES

Staff members should email their assignments to their respective editors by 5 p.m. Monday nights. Extensions can be granted at the discretion of the respective editor.

If a writer or photographer misses deadline, editors should contact them before the staff meeting.

EDITORIAL MEETINGS

Editors meet in the layout room at the Publishing House at 5:45 p.m. on Monday nights.

Editors should immediately fill out pay sheets for the previous week if they haven't done so already and give them to the EIC. Before the meeting, the EIC determines a "topic of the week," then prints tip sheets for editors to distribute to writers later.

The EIC leads staff through housekeeping business and a critique of the previous week's issue. Editors should come prepared with comments and suggestions for improvement, both for their section and others.

The Business Manager should come prepared with an idea of how full the issue will be so editors can start planning design.

Next, staff discusses the upcoming issue, including questions, concerns, and editing problems. The staff then compiles a budget for the upcoming issue, decides collectively upon an editorial subject, and determines writer assignments.

STAFF MEETINGS

Writers and photographers are required to come to Monday meetings. If there is a conflict, they should alert their respective editor well ahead of time. Unless a staff member has an excused absence, he or she will not be given an assignment for the following week's issue.

Staff members should gather in the living room for the 6:30 meeting. After their editorial meeting, editors will join them.

Before editors split up into their respective sections, the EIC will announce the article of the week, photo of the week, and MVP for the week. The EIC will decide on the recipients beforehand in conjunction with the advisor. The EIC will also go over any notes on writing, style, or content that may pertain to staff members and discuss upcoming workshops/sessions and general housekeeping business.

Editors then meet with their individual writers. They should address comments and critiques about the previous week's issue, including reminders about style and *Elm* guidelines, positive feedback on improvements and solid work, and constructive criticism. They should also address the tip sheet subject, using it a an opportunity for additional training.

Editors should get progress reports for the upcoming week. They should come prepared with comments and notes for revision if necessary. If a writer is given an article for revision, he or she has until 5 p.m. Wednesday to return it to his or her editor.

Editors then assign photos and stories to staff.

LAYOUT NIGHTS

The Business Manager should submit final JPEG versions of ads to the EIC by noon on Wednesday. The EIC places ads on inDesign pages, changes the date and issue number, and saves pages appropriately.

Editors have between the Monday staff meeting and 7 p.m. on Wednesday nights to place ALL of their copy on their pages. By 7:30, all pages, including every article, must be printed and ready for copy editors. Wednesday nights are for edits and arranging pages, not rushing to make deadline for articles.

Editors should print out three copies of their pages: One for the advisor, one for copy editors, and one for other staff.

The photography editor should have all images properly edited and filed by 7 p.m. Again, he or she may come in any time before then, including all of Tuesday, to prepare for layout night.

Copy editors should arrive by 8 p.m. To avoid crowding the computers, copy editors should stay in the living room area as they work. They can leave once they have initialed all 12 pages and checked out with the EIC.

Each page should be reviewed, edited for copy,

and initialed by all copy editors, the advisor, the EIC, and the respective section editor. Section editors are encouraged to read pages other than their own when time allows. When someone has finished editing a page, he or she should place it in the "To Be Edited" folder on the *Elm* office door. When pages are finished, they should be place in the "Edited" folder. Editors should regularly check the folder to see what pages are available for editing.

Section editors type in their own copy edits.

Before they leave, editors must check out with the EIC. If there is a conflict for section editors on any Wednesday night, it is their responsiblity to have all copy on the page and as ready as possible by 7 p.m.

The EIC and section editor will review pages together before the section editor leaves. The section editor may not leave for the night until the EIC has saved the page as a PDF file. After leaving, editors should have their cell phone on and nearby in case of any questions.

The EIC is then responsible for making sure all pages are properly sent to Chesapeake Publishing.

MULTIMEDIA POLICIES

THE WEBSITE

The Elm uses WordPress for its website, elm.wash-coll.edu. All editors have password access to the Elm account.

The purpose of the website is to:
- Archive all articles and photos
- Provide readers with a forum for response, interactivity, and additional information
- Supplement print stories with additional text and photos
- Post feature videos to expand on campus life
- Publish previews of articles before publication to increase reader interest
- Publish hard news stories more in a more timely matter

SOCIAL MEDIA

The EIC and Web Manager have access to *The Elm's* Twitter and Facebook accounts.

Social media is an avenue for communicating with campus and fellow publications on a more consistent and informal scale. The EIC and Web Manager should use social media to access campus between issue publications. Facebook and Twitter are used to:

- Keep campus up-to-date on the newspaper's status
- Preview upcoming articles and features.
- Promote current and alumni staff members' achievements and provide links to their work
- Provide the newspaper with a voice in between published issues

OUTSIDE MEDIA

Student journalists working with established student media may consider starting their own blog or digital-media sites to serve their campus communities. Care should be taken to keep in mind the potential consequences of their decision on the student newspaper.

ADS & SUBSCRIPTIONS

ADVERTISING POLICIES

The Elm does not rely on ad revenues for printing and payment costs. Ad sales are, therefore, added bonuses to revenue. Because *The Elm* does not depend on ad sales, it only sells to local business and on-campus clubs and organizations.

Ads are usually run in grey scale, but advertisers should submit a JPEG, full color version of their ad in case there is room to run it on a color page. Advertisers can request that their ads be on specific pages, but the staff reserves the right to overrule their requests.

Advertisers may either send *The Elm* an ad for placement, or *The Elm* will design a simple ad following the advertisers' requests.

The Elm reserves the right to edit ads for content, brevity, and style. Ads follow the same guidelines for obscenity, profanity, decency, and style as are listed earlier in the manual.

Ad requests MUST be submitted by 5 p.m. the Monday before publication in order to be published. Advertisers should email the current business manager or elm_editor@washcoll.edu with their full requests.

Checks should be made out to Washington College, subject: The Elm ad.

Current ad sizes and rates are:
- Half page ad: 8x10 inches, $50 for off-campus

buyers, $30 for on-campus
- Quarter page ad: $30 for off-campus buyers, $25 for on-campus
- Business card ad: $20 for off-campus buyers, $10 for on-campus

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Alumni and friends and family of the college are encouraged to purchase subscriptions for *The Elm* as an opportunity to stay connected with Washington College.

Subscriptions are mailed out every two weeks.

If anyone signs up for a subscription in the middle of the school year, *The Elm* will send the subscriber back issues from earlier in the year.

Subscription costs for the 2012-13 school year are: $50 for about 24 issues

Checks should be made payable to Washington College, subject: The Elm subscription.

CODE OF ETHICS

The Elm follows the Society of Professional Journalist's official Code of Ethics:

PREAMBLE

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility. Members of the Society share a dedication to ethical behavior and adopt this code to declare the Society's principles and standards of practice.

The SPJ Code of Ethics is voluntarily embraced by thousands of journalists, regardless of place or platform, and is widely used in newsrooms and classrooms as a guide for ethical behavior. The code is intended not as a set of "rules" but as a resource for ethical decision-making. It is not — nor can it be under the First Amendment — legally enforceable.

SEEK TRUTH AND REPORT IT

Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Journalists should:

• 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. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.

• Always question sources' motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.

• Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.

• Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.

• Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.

• Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story

• Never plagiarize.

• Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.

• Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.

• Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.

• Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.

• Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.

• Distinguish between advocacy and news report-

ing. 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

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect.

Journalists should:

• Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.

• Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.

• Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.

• Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.

• Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.

• Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.

• Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.

• Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

ACT INDEPENDENTLY

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know.

Journalists should:

• Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.

• Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.

• Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.

• Disclose unavoidable conflicts.

• Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.

• Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.

• Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

BE ACCOUNTABLE

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other.

Journalists should:

• Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.

• Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.

• Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.

• Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.

• Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

The Elm's Staff Manual used the following sources in its construction:

The Sentinel Staff Manual of the Kennesaw State University Office of Student Media, 2009

The Associated Collegiate Press' Model Code of Ethics

The Texan Times Staff Manual

The Elm's Editor-in-Chief Training Guide, by 2011-12 Editor-in-Chief Natalie Butz.