

Stetson University  
Student Media and Publications Board  
Constitution

*Amended March 28, 2022*

**ARTICLE I: The Organization**

- Section 1. This organization is known as the Student Media and Publications Board of Stetson University, referred to hereafter as “the Board.”
- Section 2. This constitution provides formal organization for all student media at Stetson University, referred to hereafter as “the University.”
- Section 3. The phrase “student media” refers to the student-run organization and the content it produces, which may include *The Reporter* (a newspaper/newsmagazine), *Touchstone* (a literary journal), and *WHAT Radio* (an online radio station). This phrase is neither encompassing nor exclusive (i.e., the Board can expand to include new forms of student media at the University, and student media may choose to produce new forms of media and/or distribute its work in new ways.)

**ARTICLE II: The Purpose of the Organization**

- Section 1. The purpose of the Board will be to establish or alter the policies and procedures, which govern the short- and long-term functions of the student media.
- A. The short-term functions and policies of the student media shall be the responsibility of the editor-in-chief.
  - B. The short-term decisions and actions of the editor-in-chief are subject to the review and consideration of the Board.
- Section 2. The purpose of the Board will be to represent the interests of student media at the University.
- Section 3. The purpose of the Board will be to review student media and ensure that the actions and publications of the student media reflect responsible and ethical choices.
- Section 4. The purpose of the Board will be to protect and promote freedom of the student media at the University.
- Section 5. The purpose of the Board will be to serve as a liaison between student media and the university community.

**ARTICLE III: The Role of Student Media at the University**

Section 1. The Board and student media at the University are programs designed to provide a public forum for student expression. They provide information and entertainment and/or provide public forums for creative expression, as defined by the following:

- A. Student Media exists to disseminate and democratize truthful and verifiable information (whether positive or negative), and provide a public forum for opinions and debate.
  - 1. The phrase “truthful and verifiable information” identifies content classified as news, feature, or sports articles. Student media and its staff shall be held to standards of truthful and verifiable evidence by the Board for this content (i.e., content containing facts or quotes that can be attributed to external sources, documentation, or forms of empirical verification). The editor-in-chief shall assume responsibility for the verifiability of this content.
  - 2. The phrase “opinions and debate” refers to cultural, opinion or review content selected for publication by the editor-in-chief and/or their designees. They shall not be held to standards of truthful and verifiable evidence for the substantiation of individual arguments or opinions. The individual author(s) and/or creator(s) of such content will be held responsible for the contents of the piece. The editor-in-chief assumes responsibility for the selection and publication of the piece if it is determined to be libelous or obscene.
- B. Student media exists to provide public outlets for creative expression of students at the University.
  - 1. Student media is a forum for creative material. The editor-in-chief and/or their designees have full authority to determine what is “creatively acceptable” and “creatively unacceptable” according to the standards of the genre.
  - 2. The editor-in-chief shall not be held to standards of truth and verifiability for creative material, but shall assume responsibility for all content.

Section 2. Student media publications and outlets act with full editorial independence, and student editors and managers make all decisions about the content of their publication and/or production.

Section 3. Student media exist to both meet the benchmarks of excellence that are well-established by professional media and to provide an arena in which student staffs can develop and strengthen the skills necessary to produce publications that meet those standards. As stated by the CMA Code of Ethics, student media shall provide “an ethical and educational environment in which excellent communications skills and sound journalistic practice will be learned and practiced by students.” In keeping with the University’s primary mission of quality education, publications and other outlets should also offer students a chance to learn; to sharpen their skills as writers, photographers, poets, designers, managers, and business people.

- Section 4. Student media at the University are not permitted to discriminate against individuals or groups on the basis of sex, disability, race, age, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, physical characteristics, or any other category protected by federal, state, or local law, or other groups as identified in the University's official nondiscrimination policy.
- A. "Discrimination" in this case is defined as unfair hiring practices or unfair judgment/selection of submitted materials.
  - B. Student media are not forbidden, however, to publish materials, which defend or challenge any of these particular characteristics of groups or individuals.

#### **ARTICLE IV: The Activities of the Organization**

- Section 1. The Board will meet at least once per semester when school is in session or when called by the chair of the Board.
- Section 2. The Board is the only university entity that has the authority to mediate, evaluate, judge, and officially respond to controversies, complaints, disputes, or problems with student media. It shall review complaints as outlined in Article X.
- Section 3. The Board has the authority and responsibility to hire and fire the editor-in-chief of the student media. The Board may use appropriate actions within its authority and at its discretion to ensure that student media staff fulfill their responsibilities.
- Section 4. The operation, policies, and procedures of any University recognized student media are under the authority of the Board.
- Section 5. The Board has the responsibility for recommending and endorsing budget proposals constructed by the incoming editor-in-chief and incoming business manager. The Board has the right to review and evaluate the expenditures of all student media and to recommend to the appropriate administrative officer increases or decreases in the yearly budget. The Board has the right to request and review an itemized financial statement, which shall be presented to the Board on request by the business manager or editor-in-chief.
- Section 6. The Board has the responsibility for finding a meeting time, which is available for a voting majority of the Board. Members who are unable to attend these meetings are required to send in absentee votes to the chair, according to the procedure set by him or her, even if those votes are "to abstain." These members must also contact and receive the approval of the chair to miss a particular meeting.
- Section 7. All meetings of the Board are open to the public. The Stetson community is defined as staff members, employees, students, faculty, and administrators. The Board is required to make these meeting times known to the Stetson community by posting them on the Stetson Today calendar. The only exclusion to this rule is during the selection or expulsion of managerial staff. The latter meetings are closed to the public, as are those agreed upon by a majority vote of the Board.

Section 8. The Board reserves the right to review and make recommendations concerning contractual agreements between the student media and other businesses for such matters as printing, photography, et cetera.

Section 9. The Board has the ability to provide, create, structure, and supervise training programs among all student media throughout the academic year. The editor-in-chief shall be responsible for determining which of their staff members must attend each training program. These training programs shall improve the development of tangible skills necessary to write, create, edit, design, and produce their publications or broadcasts, as well as provide a working knowledge of legal issues surrounding journalism, creative writing, and radio production. These training programs, with the consent of the editor-in-chief, may include sessions involving professional standards and ethical decision-making. Funding for these training programs shall be procured from a designated budget line from each student publication.

Section 10. The Board shall, once per academic year, conduct a review that shall consist of (1) a written performance self-review completed by the editor-in-chief, and (2) an anonymous survey of members of the student media organization about the activities of the organization and its leadership. Both shall be designed and administered by the Board mid-academic year. The Board shall review and discuss the results of these evaluations, and may make recommendations per its responsibilities and obligations as specified in this Constitution.

#### **ARTICLE V: The Structure of the Organization**

Section 1. The Board shall consist of the following positions: (see Article VII)

- The editor-in-chief of student media (1)
- One member of student media's editorial board (1)
- One representative from student media (1)
- One at-large student representative appointed by the Student Government Association (1)
- One at-large faculty representative. (1)
- One Stetson alumnus, either a working journalist or alum of student media (1)
- The faculty adviser to student media (1)
- The Campus Life and Student Success department staff adviser to student media. (1)
- The Assistant Vice President of Campus Life and Student Success (0)
- The Student Media Coordinator (0)

The parenthetical notations (i.e. '1') designate how many votes that particular position has, except as specified in Article XIII.

- A. Should an individual act as two positions on the Board, that individual shall have one vote. Students may not occupy more than one position on the Board.
- B. The at-large student representative from the Student Government Association may not be actively, directly, or indirectly involved with any student medium. Occasional submissions do not constitute "involvement." The Board shall have the ability to determine what constitutes "occasional submissions."

C. Article XIII outlines voting rules and procedures.

Section 2. The Board shall elect a chair from the membership.

#### **ARTICLE VI: Members and Their Duties**

Section 1. All student members of the Board are required to be free of disciplinary and academic probation and must have a cumulative and semester GPA of at least 2.5.

Section 2. All Board members must attend all meetings unless the chair has approved their absence at least 24 hours in advance. The chair has the responsibility of ensuring that absent members cast their votes for particular issues or items by absentee vote.

Section 3. All Board members must adhere to this constitution and, by agreeing to be a member of the Board, agree to uphold the constitution and all of its text.

Section 4. The editor-in-chief of the student media is responsible for (1) submitting, by the second meeting of the Board, a list of all personnel who have been hired, including job titles and job descriptions; (2) informing the Board of any changes in staff personnel immediately after these changes have taken place; (3) remaining educated and updated about federal and state laws governing libel and obscenity; (4) submitting budget proposals with the business managers; (5) hiring editorial staff for the publication; and (6) appointing a faculty adviser.

Section 5. The duties of the managerial staff are:

A. The **editor-in-chief** shall be responsible for assuming control and responsibility for the production, content, and finances of all of student media, including (1) all content and distribution of that content, including writing, photography, proofing, headlining, layout, design, and marketing; (2) **creating an annual strategic plan, to be approved by the Board per Article VIII, section 2, and then meeting the benchmarks the plan establishes for content production and distribution;** (3) hiring and maintaining an editorial board of at least four editors and/or managers to whom responsibilities can be delegated, including, but not limited to, editorial, business, marketing, production, and design; (4) training and supporting members of the editorial board and their staffs; (5) managing and monitoring student media's budget; (6) managing, maintaining, and, when appropriate, enhancing student media's resources, both physical (e.g. office space, archives) and virtual (e.g. software, e-mail accounts) (7) maintaining professional standards of journalistic and media excellence; and (8) maintaining Board policies.

B. Members of the **editorial board of student media** are hired by the editor-in-chief, and are individually responsible for (1) a component or unit of student media's operations, with responsibilities and duties defined by the editor-in-chief (2) hiring and training staff members to assist in those duties; (3) maintaining professional standards of journalistic and media excellence; and (4) maintaining Board policies.

C. The **chair of the Board** shall be responsible for (1) convening Board meetings as necessary; (2) taking minutes of all Board meetings; (3) communicating with the

Board about issues related to student media; (4) disseminating copies of the minutes after each meeting to the members of the Board and one for a permanent file; (5) sending notices to each Board member before each meeting; (6) defending the interests of the student media; (7) presiding over and directing all Board meetings; (8) attending to any necessary correspondence for the Board (9) preparing an agenda for each meeting and permitting individual Board members to submit items for this agenda; (10) advertising and promoting the monthly Board meetings on the Stetson master calendar and (11) following the guidelines and procedures outlined in this Constitution.

Section 6. The **advisers to the student media** are responsible for (1) serving as liaisons between the student media and the University administration; (2) acting as resources to provide evaluation, guidance, feedback and expertise on professional issues about the publication on an as-needed basis; (3) aiding in developing governing documents and administrative guidelines that foster a free and open atmosphere for the students involved in the student media; (4) protecting student media from all forms of external interference designed to regulate the publication content and operation of the student media; (5) acknowledging ethical prohibitions against interference in content; (6) remaining aware of the obligation to defend and teach members of the student media without censoring, editing, directing, or producing the various publications; and (7) remaining keenly aware of the potential for conflict of interest between their advising/teaching duties and their roles as university staff/faculty members and private citizens. *[This information was adapted and summarized from College Media Advisers' Code of Ethics, the professional code for advisers to student media.]*

- A. The faculty adviser to student media will be the director of the journalism program and/or their designee.
- B. The Campus Life and Student Success department staff adviser to student media will be appointed by the Assistant Vice President of Campus Life and Student Success.
- C. The level of involvement of each individual student media adviser shall be agreed upon by that individual and the editors-in-chief with the understanding that the Campus Life and Student Success department staff adviser to student media has final financial authority and the editor-in-chief has final editorial and managerial authority. Faculty advisers do not have financial, editorial, or managerial authority; rather, they serve in an advisory capacity.
- D. The Student Media Council of Advisers shall be an informal organization of advisers to student media, defined as people with relevant experience who have agreed to, when requested, be available as 1) mentors, coaches, and/informational resources (when requested by any member of student media or the Board), and 2) contributors to training, coaching, and teaching sessions (when requested by the faculty adviser and/or editor-in-chief).

The Student Media Council of Advisers members should include, but are not limited to, Stetson faculty, media professionals, and former editors of Stetson student media. The Board shall designate a chair among that group to coordinate its availability and activities, and who shall also serve as a member of the Board.

**ARTICLE VII: Application and Elections for Organizational Positions**

Section 1. The qualifications of applicants for the editor-in-chief and editorial board members of student media shall be the following criteria unless the Board approves of a waiving of the requirements by a two-thirds vote:

- A. They shall have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.7, unless waived by a majority vote.
- B. They shall have at least a semester of college-level experience in the field for which the applicant is applying (or equivalent experience).
- C. They must not serve in student government leadership during the term of employment.
- D. They shall have a working knowledge of the standards of their genre as outlined in Article VI, Section 5.
- E. They shall complete online training identified by the faculty adviser in areas such as, but not limited to, media law, journalistic ethics, and media best practices.

Section 2. The qualifications of the at-large board representatives shall be as follows:

- A. Student at-large members must have a minimal overall (cumulative) GPA of 2.5 and must maintain that GPA throughout their tenure with the Board.
- B. Students must be enrolled for the entire academic year.
- C. Faculty at-large members must be regular, full-time teaching faculty.
- D. The at-large student representative may not be actively, directly, or indirectly involved with any student media. Occasional submissions do not constitute “involvement.” The Board shall determine what constitutes “occasional submissions.”

Section 3. The election of the editor-in-chief shall occur in the following manner:

- A. All candidates shall complete an application.
- B. Candidates shall undergo an oral interview by all present members of the board on the designated board meeting time, permitted student members of the board outweigh voting faculty and staff members of the board.
- C. Election of the editor-in-chief should occur at the end of the fall semester or the start of the spring semester, in order for the incoming editor-in-chief to be mentored by and shadow the outgoing editor-in-chief during the spring semester.
- D. The Stetson community shall be made adequately aware of the availability of all positions, the availability of applications for these positions, application requirements, and the time scheduled for the oral interviews.

- E. Applications must be disseminated to the Board at least one week prior to the oral interviews.
- F. The candidates shall be selected as outlined by Article XIII.
- G. The Board will notify the candidates of their appointments (or lack thereof) within two business days of the oral interview process by letter. A copy of these letters shall be sent to the Adviser to the Board as well as the adviser of the publication (when applicable).

### **ARTICLE VIII: Organizational Bylaws**

Section 1. All student media shall abide by standards appropriate to their genre, and they shall not permit the dissemination of libelous, slanderous, obscene, or illegal materials.

- A. The phrases “libel” and “slander” refer to written and spoken defamation, respectively, as determined by current media law.

Section 2. An annual strategic plan for student media that establishes benchmarks for content production and distribution will be created by the editor-in-chief and approved by the board. The plan shall include (1) an outline delineating the types and forms of content that will be produced, (2) a timeline for the distribution of that content, and (3) policies regarding advertisements (in accordance with the University policy on advertising).

- A. By May 1, a draft of the plan shall be submitted to student media’s advisers for feedback. By Sept. 1, the final plan shall be submitted to the Board for review and approval. Approval shall be by majority vote.

Section 3. All expenditures, which need to be charged to the accounts of the student media by the Board, must be approved in writing by the editor-in-chief. The written and express approval of the editor-in-chief is necessary to charge Board expenses to their account.

Section 4. All contributors to student media, retain copyright to their copyrightable work, which may include, but is not limited to, writing, reporting, drawing, design, illustration, photographs, and/or performances. Contributors agree to sign a contributor agreement that grants all licenses necessary to the student media and the respective outlet for the purpose of the inclusion of their contributions in print and electronic media publishing efforts, including without limitation the right to reproduce, distribute, display, perform, and electronically transmit the content.

### **ARTICLE IX: Review and Expulsion of Members**

Section 1. According to the voting measures outlined by Article XIII, the Board may suspend or remove a member only if there is evidence of malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance. The Board may remove a member if that individual’s GPA has dropped below 2.5.



- Section 2. If a Board member accumulates more than three unexcused absences, that Board member may be subject to dismissal.
- Section 3. Any at-large member or managerial staff member of the Board may be brought before the Board for an expulsion hearing at any time by any other member of the Board, with a second from another member of the board. The member of the Board calling for the expulsion shall present a petition to the Board stating the reasons for dismissal.
- Section 4. The Board shall give all parties sufficient time to air their respective arguments before any vote is cast.
- Section 5. A two-thirds majority of the Board is necessary for the approval of a vote for dismissal from the Board. Votes for dismissal shall be conducted by secret ballot. Dismissal shall take place immediately following the affirmative vote.
- Section 6. The Reviewing Subcommittee has responsibilities outlined in Article X which may make it necessary for it to recommend the expulsion of Board members.
- Section 7. In the event that a paid student publications staff member has a grievance regarding dismissal by the Student Publications Board, that individual always has the option of following the university's student employment grievance procedures.

#### **ARTICLE X: Reviews, Complaints, or Critiques Involving Publications**

- Section 1. Any one may, at any time, submit a formal written complaint to the Assistant Vice President of Campus Life and Student Success and/or the chair of the Board about content in student media or the work-related actions of members of student media.
- A. Valid complaints are violations of genre standards or Board rules as defined in Article III; Article VI; or Article VIII, Section 1, or a failure to respond appropriately to a minor consideration, as defined in section (B).
  - B. Minor considerations, such as errors, are not violations of legal or ethical standards, are not valid complaints and the complaint shall be dismissed and the complainant encouraged to contact the student media organization directly to permit them to respond in ways appropriate to the genre.
- Section 2. If the complaint involves an emergency request, as specified in the complaint or as determined by the Dean of Students because of the potential for material harm or damage, the Complaint Review Subcommittee may, by unanimous vote only, act on the Board's behalf to take temporary action until such time as the Board can meet.
- A. The Complaint Review Subcommittee shall consist of: (1) the Assistant Vice President of Campus Life and Student Success, (2) the faculty adviser to the publication or media outlet directly involved, and (3) the chair of the board. If the chair is directly involved with the content of the complaint, and/or named in the complaint, the third member of the Subcommittee shall be a student-at-large member of the Board unaffiliated with the publication involved.

B. If the Subcommittee decides by unanimous vote that immediate action is required to minimize harm or damage, they may, by unanimous decision only, decide upon a course of action to be implemented by the Dean of Students. Any action will be considered temporary and may be affirmed, expanded upon, or reversed by the full Board when it formally reviews the complaint.

- Section 3. The complaint shall be considered at the Board's next regularly scheduled meeting. In the event that (a) the Complaint Review Subcommittee takes emergency action as defined in Section 2, or (b) it does not but the Dean of Students still finds the request to constitute an emergency, the chair of the Board shall convene a meeting of the full Board at the earliest possible time at which quorum is possible.
- Section 4. The chair shall invite the complainant to attend the meeting and state his/her case. Those whose actions are the subject of the complaint will also be invited to attend and state their case(s). After a reasonable discussion mediated by the chair, the Board will render a decision by majority vote of all eligible voting members as defined in Article V, Section 1, but excluding members of the Board who are directly involved in the situation surrounding the complaint, who will not have a vote in any decision regarding the complaint. If there is a question about a Board member's involvement, the Board will first decide, by majority vote, whether or not that individual is directly involved.
- Section 5. If that written complaint has been reasonably substantiated, the Board shall devise a plan of action. If the written complaint has not been reasonably substantiated, the Board shall dismiss it. The Board is the only university entity that has the authority to challenge and correct the actions or content of a student publication or media, and is not bound to endorse any plan of action at all.
- Section 6. The editors of the student media must execute any plan of action endorsed by the Board, which will oversee implementation of the plan.
- Section 7. In the event that a paid student publications staff member has a grievance regarding dismissal by the Board, that individual always has the option of following the university's student employment grievance procedures.

#### **ARTICLE XI: Ratification of this Constitution**

- Section 1. This constitution is eligible for ratification indefinitely.
- Section 2. This constitution shall become eligible for activation upon approval by three-fourths majority of the Board.
- Section 3. This constitution is subject to all of the ratification rules described in the prior constitution of the Board and shall be considered an amendment to the previous constitution.
- Section 4. This constitution shall become activated upon final approval by the Campus Life Committee and approval by the President's staff, in accordance with University policies and procedures.

Section 5. Once approved by the Campus Life Committee and the President's staff, this constitution will take effect immediately.

#### **ARTICLE XII: Further Amendment to the Constitution**

Section 1. The Board has the responsibility to generate ideas for amendments, the amendments themselves, or suggestions for amendment to the Board constitution.

Section 2. All amendments to this constitution will be activated by a three-fourths vote of the Board.

Section 3. All amendments approved and activated by the Board shall be submitted by the chair of the Board to the Assistant Vice President of Campus Life and Student Success with justification and explanation.

#### **ARTICLE XIII: Voting Requirements and Quorum**

Section 1. Official business meetings of the Board require the presence of a majority of voting members. Unofficial meetings may be called by the chair of the Board at his/her discretion.

Section 2. All subsequent percentage requirements for the approval of ideas, the appointment of new managerial staff, the removing of managerial staff, and the endorsement of ideas shall be based on the number of total Board members. Absentee votes are required from all absent members unless the chair was unable to inform absent members of upcoming votes before the meeting.

Section 3. The Board may not meet without first publicly announcing its meeting times in the Stetson calendar and directly informing its members.

Section 4. The chair may convene a vote permitted that student Board member votes outnumber faculty and staff Board member votes by one.

A. The Assistant Vice President of Campus Life and Student Success breaks a tie vote.

B. In order to end debate and call for a vote, a first and a second are required.

C. All non-procedural votes shall be taken using secret ballots, which shall be collected and counted by the chair.