

PLNU Code of Ethics

Preamble

Members of student media at Point Loma Nazarene University believe it is essential to inform, enlighten and entertain the students, faculty and community within the PLNU campus. Being one of the only places on this campus that holds the powerful accountable and exchanges information, the student media strives to ensure truth and accuracy.

PLNU student media declares these four principles as the foundation of ethical journalism on campus and encourages a media that is for the students and by the students.

Seek Truth and Report It

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32

As journalists we must gather, report, and interpret information with honesty and integrity under a certain ethical standard.

Student media should:

- Always authenticate the information before releasing it, no matter the timeliness of a story.
- Update information as it is received and as it changes during the process of writing a story.
- Never reenact a situation for a desired effect, set out to observe and report stories, not to plan-out and distort them.
- Keep an open mind to the views of others and encourage the exchange of them, even if they differ from one's own.
- Remember, give a voice to the voiceless and hold people of power accountable with courage.

Minimize Harm

*“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”
Philippians 2:4*

Ethical journalists will treat every human being with dignity and respect and will consider the repercussions of publishing any story.

Student media should:

- Balance the school's need for information against potential harm or damage to a student or faculty member

- Be aware and sensitive when navigating vulnerable topics and show compassion for those who may be affected by media
- Recognize that just because something is legally publishable does not make it ethically justified
- Weigh the consequences of publishing personal information and realize that private citizens have a greater right to control information about themselves than public figures and those who seek power
- Avoid sensationalizing information in order to make a story more interesting
- Consider the implications of publishing a story before publishing it

Act Independently

“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals’.” 1 Corinthians 15:33

The highest responsibility of ethical journalism is to serve the public without regard for one’s own interests or benefits.

Student media should:

- Avoid definite or potential conflicts of interest. A “Full Disclosure” note must be published at the beginning of a story when unavoidable conflicts arise.
- Avoid political activities and other outside activities, inside and outside of the PLNU community, that could damage impartiality and credibility.
- Refuse preferential treatment in any form — free items, money, gifts, favors — that may damage impartiality and credibility. This includes preferential treatment from campus organizations/clubs, professors, Public Safety, university staff and faculty, university administrators and the Associated Student Body Board of Directors.
- Deny preferential treatment to donors, business partners, advertisers, and any other special interest groups. These groups include, but are not limited to: campus organizations/clubs, professors, Public Safety, university staff and faculty, university administrators and the Associated Student Body Board of Directors.
- Do not pay in any form for access to news. Be cautious of sources offering information in exchange for money or favors.
- Resist pressure to influence coverage from those outside the PLNU community and those within the PLNU community and student media.
- Clearly cite and, if applicable, link content from outside sources. Never plagiarize.
- Discern news from advertising of any kind, and avoid content that combines the two. Clearly label sponsored content.

Be Accountable & Transparent

“For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man.” 2 Corinthians 8:21

Ethical journalism means taking responsibility for one's work and communicating clearly to the student body of their decisions.

Student media should:

- Call out unethical conduct done by one another and find solutions to fix it.
- Wait for authorities to announce unknown facts before releasing any unofficial news.
Stay a reliable source for the public.
- Seek advice from editors, professors, or peers when faced with a predicament one is unsure about.
- Acknowledge mistakes and correct them with an explanation and caution to the audience.
- Act in humility and curiosity when interacting with others, interviewing, writing, etc.
- Explain ethical choices made to the readers and communicate clearly to the public when covering certain processes, news, events, and crises.
- Resist going against a person, company, or organization to get more information or for one's own self gain.
- Do not violate legal rules for the possession of confidential information.
- Use caution and ask whether to use one's name or not in specific cases or circumstances.
- Be honest and communicate the intentions in every step to achieve a story.

The PLNU Code of Ethics is a statement of abiding principles supported by additional scripture and explanations that address changing journalistic practices. It is not a set of rules, rather a guide that encourages all who engage in journalism at PLNU to take ethical responsibility for the information they provide. It is not, nor can it be under the First Amendment, legally enforceable.

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” Proverbs 31:8-9

Additional verses that inform our practice:

- Ephesians 4:14, “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.”
- James 4:17, “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is a sin for them.”
- Ephesians 4:25, “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.”

- Colossians 3:16, “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom ...”
- Colossians 2:8, “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.”