



# REGULATIONS

REG No.: 131

## PUBLIC INFORMATION/NOTICES AND NEWS MEDIA CONTACTS

### I. PURPOSE

Provides procedures and guidelines for the creation, design, production, and coordinated distribution of official college information to the general public and the media in order to promote community understanding of, and support for, the college, its programs and activities, its students and employees, through the timely and accurate dissemination of information; and to foster a sound and cooperative working relationship between the college and the news media. More specifically, the intention of this policy and its procedures is to:

- A. present to the public a standard image and identity that furthers the college's mission and reflects positively on the institution and its activities;
- B. produce attractive publications and advertisements consistent with the college's intended image and public identity that are viewed as component pieces of a coherent whole;
- C. designate authority for production timetables that accommodate publications on both a regular and irregular schedule;
- D. determine through the coordination of a single office the best means (whether through on-campus or off-campus resources) for the production and printing of quality materials in a timely and cost-effective manner.

### II. LEGAL REFERENCE

Texas Public Information Act, Tex. Govt. Code §552.000, *et.seq.*; Texas Open Meetings Act, Tex. Govt. Code §551.000;*et.seq.*

### III. BACKGROUND: ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The unfettered search for truth and the free expression of the results of this exploration (i.e., academic freedom) are essential to the educational enterprise in a democratic society. Wharton County Junior College supports such academic freedom and considers it fundamental for the protection of the right of teachers to teach, to conduct research, and to publish the results of research and of the right of students to learn.

- A. Faculty are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject but are not entitled to introduce extraneous material not related to their subject matter. That is, faculty are entitled to search out new and controversial topics and to express them freely. A problem emerges only when such topics are introduced or discussed to the exclusion of the course subject matter or are used to replace the course subject matter or when the faculty member uses the authority of his or her position (for example, in assigning grades) to reward those who agree with the faculty member or to punish those who disagree.
- B. Faculty are entitled to freedom in the conduct of research and the publication of results, subject to acceptable performance of their contractual academic duties.

- C. Faculty are entitled to the freedoms guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and laws of the land to express their opinions as citizens. When they speak or write as citizens, therefore, they are entitled to be free from institutional restrictions as long as they make explicit and clear in their utterances that they are not speaking for or representing Wharton County Junior College and do not expressly use their affiliation with WCJC to lend authority to their opinions or actions as individuals. (This section is not meant to restrict faculty from using their affiliation with the college as a validating credential when issuing statements in their areas of expertise.) Faculty can express opinions, events, or statements on behalf of WCJC only with the prior consent of the President, or in emergency situations, with the approval of the Director of Marketing and Communications.

#### IV. POLICY

- A. All employees as citizens, in their speech, writing, and actions as citizens, have the obligation to indicate they are not college representatives unless they are otherwise authorized by the President.
- B. All employees and offices shall utilize the Office of Marketing and Communications to assure uniform, timely, and accurate dissemination of college information through news releases. Therefore, all publications intended for external audiences, including advertising, shall be coordinated through the Office of Marketing and Communications.
- C. All employees and offices are expected to promote the college and its activities and cooperate with the Office of Marketing and Communications.

(POLICY APPROVAL: 1-18-95, Board of Trustees, amended 3-22-95, amended 2-19-08)

#### V. PROCEDURES

- A. The Office of Marketing and Communications is a clearinghouse to avoid the duplication of materials that are released to the public, to maintain a consistent policy with regard to the standard and quality of publicity, and to ensure contacts are coordinated through one central location. The Office of Marketing and Communications must prepare and release any official College news, which will be sent on WCJC news release letterhead. Media are advised not to use other items.
- B. The Director of Marketing and Communications or a designated representative of the college is the official spokesperson for the College in dealing with the media, unless otherwise designated by the President.
- C. Employees may speak to the media upon receiving an *approved media referral* from the Office of Marketing and Communications. Employees may initiate contact with the media or respond to a media request to promote college activities or programs in their departments or to speak regarding an area of expertise once they have received a referral. When the media contacts an employee for a comment, the employee should refer the media to the Office of Marketing and Communications. Once the Office of Marketing and Communications has spoken to the media regarding the nature of the news story, and has determined that the request is one that does not require an official college response, the employee will be forwarded an *approved media referral*.

- D. Vice presidents are not required to obtain an approved media referral in order to respond to inquiries from the media. Vice presidents are required to notify the Office of Marketing and Communications immediately after they have responded to the media for the purpose of informing the office about the nature of their discussion with the media.
- E. Sponsors or coaches for student associations, organizations, honor societies, intercollegiate sports, and fine arts activities (art, drama, band, choir and speech) are not required to obtain a media referral in order to respond to inquiries from the media as long as the inquiries pertain directly to the students or student groups they sponsor or coach and are not regarding controversial issues. The sponsor or coach is required to notify the Office of Marketing and Communications immediately after they have responded to the media for the purpose of informing the office about the nature of their discussion.

Sponsors or coaches may mention their student group's affiliation with Wharton County Junior College. However, they may not provide information specifically about the college to the media, for example, enrollment figures, operations, programs, and procedures. The media should be referred to the Office of Marketing and Communications to receive information about the college.

Sponsors of student associations, organizations, and honor societies are responsible for preparing and distributing press releases and promotional materials for their student groups. Copies of such materials should be provided to the Office of Marketing and Communications in conjunction with or prior to their release to the media.

Press releases for the college's intercollegiate athletic teams and fine arts activities (art, drama, band, choir, and speech) must be submitted to the Office of Marketing and Communications for approval and release.

- F. Employees should not respond to media inquiries requesting them to explain, clarify, describe, or react to an *institutional* policy, action, or position. Employees should refer the media to the Office of Marketing and Communications for these types of inquiries.
- G. Employees are not to provide College documents, student information, or employee information to reporters. These types of inquiries must be requested formally as a *Request for Public Information* via the Office of the President.
- H. In cases of public record involving injuries, the nature of the injuries should not be discussed by college personnel. Media representatives requesting such information shall be referred to the appropriate medical facility or agency. (Even in public-record cases, information about *individuals* is restricted. Media representatives may be told, for example, that, yes, an ambulance was on campus; but further inquiries should be directed to the medical agency.)
- I. In writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper, magazine, or other publications, college employees are not to use their college titles or otherwise identify themselves as representatives of the college without authorization from the Office of Marketing and Communications; and employees should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the college. (See section III.C for the statement on academic freedom for faculty.)
- J. College administrative meetings concerning the policies and operation of the college are usually closed to the media in order to encourage the free and open exchange of ideas and opinions. Material and documents related to such meetings or produced in conjunction with such meetings are considered internal documents and are not released outside the college except through the Office of Marketing and Communications. College Board of Trustees

meetings are open to the media to the extent allowed under the Texas Open Meetings Act. Media are not permitted in board executive sessions.

- K. This regulation does not govern actions in response to requests for official college records. See Reg 132, Release of College Information and Public Access to Records. See also Texas Public Information Act.
- L. Upon the approval of the Director of Marketing and Communications, the Office of Marketing and Communications provides design, writing, and photography services for the creation of marketing materials, including but not limited to press releases, advertisements, brochures, posters, flyers, signage, invitations, programs, advertising specialties, postcards, schedules, catalogs, and specialty items. Employees who wish to request services from the Office of Marketing and Communications should follow the procedures established in the document titled *Steps for Requesting Marketing Services* on the WCJC website's Office of Marketing and Communications homepage.
- M. All print advertisements promoting the college, except for those pertaining to employment and public notices, must be created by the Office of Marketing and Communications. Employees are encouraged to plan six months in advance for their advertisements.
- N. The Office of Marketing and Communications may at any time create standardized templates, approved by the college President, for the production of advertisements, brochures, flyers, and posters. These standards may not be deviated from unless approved by the Director of Marketing and Communications.
- O. Employees who wish to post material on the college's website should follow the procedures established in the document titled *Steps for Posting Material on the WCJC Website* which is found on the WCJC intranet site.

## VI. GUIDELINES

- A. To promote a consistent image of the college, to enhance the recognition value of college publications, and to create and sustain an easily recognizable identity for the college, all printed materials intended for internal *or* external consumption (including but not limited to fliers, announcements, brochures, advertisements, news releases, and posters) should contain and prominently display the college name by use of the college graphic logo and accompanying lettering in one of the approved forms (see Reg 133).
- B. The college seal should *not* be used in printed materials or displayed without the authorization of the Office of Marketing and Communications operating under the direction of the President or his/her Cabinet designee. (The college seal should be reserved for certain official institutional documents and events and should be treated as the college's legal symbol, the use of which is under the direction of the college's presiding officer and the Board of Trustees. It should not be used indiscriminately on fliers, brochures, newspaper ads, etc., for which the college logo is the appropriate symbol.)
- C. The Office of Marketing and Communications is responsible for coordinating and advising on the use of the college logo and the seal.

## VII. DEFINITIONS

- A. *News Media:* on- and off-campus print and electronic media, including but not limited to radio and television stations, newspapers, and magazines.
- B. *Public Record Cases:* those cases reportable by law to public authorities such as police or other law-enforcement agencies, the coroner, public-health officers, or governmental agencies.

FRV/FRV  
1-18-95  
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2-19-08