

Jacksonville State University Department of Communication Student Media Policy

Faculty Ratified: September 9, 2026

Introduction

Jacksonville State University's student media outlets serve as vital platforms for student expression, professional development, and community engagement. These outlets provide essential opportunities for students to practice journalism and media production in a real-world environment while serving the information needs of the Jacksonville State University community.

This policy manual establishes the framework for the operation of Jax State's student media outlets within the academic program of the Jacksonville State University Department of Communication, with emphasis on safeguarding student editorial independence and fostering professional growth. The Department of Communication recognizes that protecting students' First Amendment rights is essential to the educational and civic mission of student media.

Mission Statement

Jacksonville State University's Department of Communication provides student media outlets to:

- Allow students to provide accurate, fair, and comprehensive information and entertainment to the Jax State campus and surrounding community
- Offer students practical experience in journalism, broadcasting, and media management
- Foster students' critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and professional skills development
- Serve as a student-led forum for open dialogue among a variety of perspectives.

Editorial Independence

Statement of Principles

Jacksonville State University's Department of Communication is committed to upholding the First Amendment rights of student journalists and media practitioners. The department acknowledges that editorial independence is essential to the educational value and civic purpose of student media.

Student media outlets are educational laboratories operated by students, not public relations or marketing channels for the university. Neither the Department of Communication nor the university directs, approves or exercises editorial control over student media content.

Editorial Authority

- **Student Decision-Making:** All decisions regarding the content of student media outlets shall be made exclusively by student staff members. WLJS programming, however, should adhere to Federal Communication Commission licensing requirements.
- **No Prior Review:** The Director of Student Media, faculty members, administrators, and other university officials shall engage in no prior review of content before publication or broadcast, except at the request of student media leaders.
- **Professional Guidance:** The Director of Student Media may offer advice on journalistic standards, legal considerations, and ethical practices but shall not mandate changes to content.

Protection from Interference

- **Administrative Non-Interference:** University administrators should not attempt to influence editorial decisions or programming choices based on the content's portrayal of the university or any other concern.
- **Protection from Retaliation:** No student staff member shall face academic penalties, loss of position, or other forms of retaliation from the Department of Communication for content decisions made in accordance with professional journalistic standards.
- **Facility Access:** Access to student media facilities, equipment, and resources should not be restricted as a means of censorship or editorial control.

Relationship to Academic Programs

Media Workshop Courses

Media workshop courses provide academic credit for practical work with student media outlets.

Assignment of Work: Student media leaders (Editor-in-Chief/Program Director) should assign work to workshop students based on outlet needs and students' interests and abilities.

Evaluation: The Director of Student Media shall grade workshop students based on:

- Regular participation and meeting of deadlines
- Quality of work
- Professional growth and development

Other Communication Courses

Course Assignments: Instructors of other Jax State communication courses are encouraged to assign work that could be published or broadcast by student media outlets. This approach can help connect academic work with real-world industry standards and serve the needs of real audiences.

- Faculty are free to coordinate with student media leaders to determine needed content types and topics. The decision to publish or broadcast such work is solely at the discretion of student media leaders.
- Faculty review of student work to complete a course assignment shall not constitute prior review.

Organizational Structure

The Chanticleer

The Chanticleer is Jax State's student-run news outlet, publishing original reporting covering campus and community news, sports, culture, and opinion.

Student Media Leaders

- **Editor-in-Chief:** The top student leader who oversees all editorial and operational aspects of The Chanticleer
- **Additional Editorial Positions:** May include News Editor, Sports Editor, Features Editor, Multimedia Editor, and/or other positions as determined by the Editor-in-Chief

Correspondents/Contributors: Students who report, write, photograph, or otherwise contribute content for publication

WLJS 91.9 FM

WLJS is Jax State's student-operated radio station, broadcasting music, news, sports, and other programming to the campus and surrounding community.

Student Media Leaders

- **Program Director:** The top student leader who oversees all programming and operational aspects of WLJS
- **Additional Director Positions:** May include Music Director, News & Talk Director, Audience Director, and/or other positions as determined by the Program Director

On-Air Hosts/Presenters: Students who serve as DJs, reporters, producers, or other contributors

Shared Resources

- **Student Media Business Manager:** Supports both outlets by managing advertising sales for The Chanticleer and developing relationships with charitable financial supporters for WLJS and providing other non-editorial support as needed.

Faculty/Staff Support

- **Communication Department Head:** Provides administrative support and oversight for the student media program
- **Director of Student Media:** Serves as adviser to student media outlets, provides professional guidance, manages facilities and equipment, and serves as instructor for media workshop courses
- **Communication Department Engineer:** Provides technical support and advice to student media outlets under the supervision of the Communication Department Head. Requests may come from the Director of Student Media or from Student Media Leaders.
- **Administrative Associate:** Provides administrative and clerical support for student media outlets under the supervision of the Communication Department Head. Requests may come from the Director of Student Media or from Student Media Leaders.

Student Media Leaders

Editor-in-Chief and Program Director

- **Application Process:** The selection process shall begin with a formal application through the university's student hiring procedure.
- **Selection Committee:** Applications will be reviewed and the selectee chosen by a committee consisting of the Director of Student Media (chair), Communication Department Head and the incumbent student in the role, unless that student is reapplying.
- **Term of Service:** The Editor-in-Chief and Program Director shall serve for one academic year, with the possibility of reappointment, except in cases of resignation or removal.

Other Positions

- **Application Process:** The selection process shall begin with a formal application through the university's student hiring procedure.
- **Review Committee:** Applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of the Director of Student Media and Communication Department Head. The selectees for Editor-in-Chief and Program Director shall choose from the available applicants
- **Selection:** The Editor-in-Chief and Program Director shall choose students for these positions after consultation with the selection committee.
- **Term of Service:** Selectees shall serve from the beginning of the fall term until the end of the spring term, except in cases of resignation or removal.

Removal from Position

Grounds for Removal: Student leaders may be removed from their positions for:

- Violation of the student code of conduct or of any ethics policy adopted by the student media outlet
- Consistent failure to fulfill job responsibilities or extended unauthorized absence
- Academic probation or failure to maintain minimum GPA requirements
- Misuse of funds or resources

Removal Process

- **Initial Intervention:** The Director of Student Media shall first attempt to resolve any performance issues through mentoring and corrective action.
- **Documentation:** Performance concerns must be documented and shared with the student leader in question.
- **Removal:** If issues persist, the Editor-in-Chief or Program Director may remove additional student media leaders on their staff after consultation with the Director of Student Media. The removed leader may appeal the removal to Department Head within 5 business days.
- If the performance issues are with the Editor-in-Chief or Program Director, the Director of Student Media and Department Head may confer and remove the leader. Removal may be appealed to the Dean of the College of Business & Industry within 5 business days.

Acknowledgment

- By accepting a position with Jax State student media, students acknowledge they have read, understand, and agree to abide by the policies outlined in this manual.

Financial Operations

Funding Sources

University Support: The Department of Communication requests and administers direct financial support from the university budget for student media to pay student worker wages, provide essential equipment and tools, maintain work spaces and fund travel, memberships and subscriptions.

Foundation Accounts: The JSU Foundation maintains accounts for charitable gifts designated for The Chanticleer and WLJS. The accounts are managed by the Jax State Communication Department Head. Student media leaders should direct requests for spending from these accounts through the Director of Student Media. The Department Head and Director of Student Media shall confer on spending priorities.

Self-Generated Revenue: Student media leaders should work to generate revenue to support and expand their outlet's resources. This revenue could come from sources including but not limited to:

- The Chanticleer: Advertising sales, memberships, supporter donations.
- WLJS: Charitable sponsorships and underwriting (in compliance with FCC regulations), memberships, supporter donations.

Financial Management

- **Budget Development:** The Director of Student Media, in consultation with student leaders, shall develop annual budget proposals.
- **Revenue Goals:** Each outlet shall develop annual revenue goals with the Student Media Business Manager, and with advice from the Director of Student Media. The advice shall not compromise the outlets' editorial independence.

Amendments and Review

This policy shall be reviewed annually by the Director of Student Media, Department Head, and student media leaders. Proposed amendments shall be discussed with all stakeholders before adoption is proposed to the Department of Communication faculty.