

Ethics & Standards — The Berkeley Beacon

Balance, fairness, and truth

As the primary source of campus news at Emerson, The Beacon has a responsibility to produce unbiased, informative reports. These ideas, of course, have many interpretations. For The Beacon, they mean that reporters will write without interference from their own opinions, and will always seek alternative views to an issue. Any question of balance should be discussed with your editor.

Without a team of fact-checkers, Beacon reporters and editors must verify each fact we publish. We do this by (CQ)ing each fact in copy—an indication that a fact, spelling, or number has been affirmed from multiple sources. For example: “Jane Smith(CQ), 19(CQ), is a sophomore journalism major(CQ) at Emerson College(CQ).”

Conflicts of interest

Emerson is a small school and The Beacon is not a full-time job; so we can't abolish all forms of conflict. However, there are a few absolutes:

- Reporters may not interview their friends, close acquaintances, family, current/past professors, or roommates.
- Reporters can participate in the Student Government Association but are not allowed to report on SGA matters.
- Reporters may not work on stories covering organizations or groups they participate or have participated in.
- Reporters may not accept gifts from sources.
- Reporters may not comment publicly on issues they are reporting on. This includes posting on social media.

Generally, steer clear of topics or sources that you would be involved with of your own will. If a source crucial to your report sits behind you in class but you never talk, it's probably fine to interview them. Any question of conflict should be discussed with your editor.

Deadlines and attendance

Deadlines are not suggestions. Deadline schedules are set by section editors. If a story is not turned in on time, and arrangements with an editor have not been previously arranged, the section editor can cut or reassign the piece. Unresponsive sources are not excuses for lateness. There are other ways to get a piece reported and written on time.

If a reporter is aware that they will not make a deadline—or if they believe a story would be better suited to an alternative deadline—discuss with the section editor in advance.

It is mandatory for reporters to attend critiques of issues in which they are published.

Interviews

Interviews should be done in person whenever possible, though interviews over the phone or on Zoom are acceptable. *Do not conduct an interview over email, text, Facebook message, or any other online method.* Occasionally, the Beacon will accept written statements from the College or governmental agencies. If a source will only send a written statement, discuss this with your editor. If permitted, be sure to attribute that information as a written statement in your article.

Reporters are not permitted to send their questions to sources before an interview. If a source requests this, tell them it is against Beacon policy.

Reporters should take written notes on each interview. These notes are best supplemented with a recording, but reporters should not rely on recordings. *In Massachusetts, it is illegal to record people without their permission.* Ask sources at the beginning of interviews if recording is okay.

Beacon reporters should identify themselves as such whenever an interview is conducted. Misrepresentation or “undercover” reporting is not permitted.

Sources

Sources must be fully identified. Every reporter should ask for full names, job titles, years, majors, and pronouns. *The Beacon does not assume gender—every reporter should ask for their source’s pronouns.* When applicable, ask for the source’s age.

Be cautious of sources who ask to be “off the record,” as this phrase has many interpretations. If a source requests this, ask for their meaning. The Beacon does not permit anonymous sources except in extremely rare circumstances. Requests of anonymity should be discussed with the section editor, managing editor, and editor-in-chief.

Reporters should have contact information (phone and email) for every source they interview. Editors may ask for that information at any time.

Attribute all information not gathered through interviews to the original source. Include links for online.

Independence

When it comes to content, the Beacon is completely independent. Any work a reporter has published in The Beacon cannot be published elsewhere, or vice versa. This includes class assignments and other campus publications.

We also maintain our independence by only allowing the eyes of Beacon staffers to see unfinished drafts. *Reporters should not show drafts to sources before publication.* Any exceptions must be made by your section editor, managing editor, and editor-in-chief. This also includes professors and mentors outside of The Beacon. While it is fine to ask others for advice (this is, after all, an institution of learning), all actual edits to drafts must be done by The Beacon’s editing staff.

Inclusivity

Each person has biases and privileges. *It is important for reporters to be aware of their personal biases and to watch how they affect their work.* If a reporter thinks a bias may not allow them to fairly report a story, then they should bring it up with their editor.

Discrimination, in the newsroom and in copy, is not tolerated. Any act of discrimination against coworkers, sources, or within the broader community can result in removal from staff. This includes acts of discrimination in person and on social media.

Non-tuition credit

To receive a non-tuition credit, as stipulated in the Beacon's constitution, a correspondent must write **five** stories, take **five** photos, or any combination of the two. Correspondents must also attend critiques for issues they have been published in. Beacon staff members will automatically receive credit, unless otherwise decided by the editor-in-chief and managing editors.

Plagiarism

The Beacon does not tolerate plagiarism of any kind. Discovery of plagiarism will result in removal from any position a reporter may hold, and a ban on the reporter from future participation on the Beacon.