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## **Urban School Statement of Artistic Expression**

### **Criteria for Student-Published Work**

Urban encourages students to publish their work primarily through the Urban Legend newspaper, Urban Journal literary journal and Urban Yearbook. In all cases, we require students to exercise discretion and good judgment in choosing their subject matter, keeping in mind that they are presenting their work in the public environment of the school. While we encourage myriad forms of expression, we also acknowledge that some student work may not be appropriate for publishing. It is not appropriate for student work to humiliate, dishonor or insult anyone in the community.

Publishing work at Urban is a privilege. All published work must meet the school's criteria for high quality, be approved by the faculty advisor before being published and meet any other guidelines established by the faculty advisor for that publication.

Advanced work dealing with controversial issues must be more than a mere reflection of the controversial content as it exists already. With the mentoring of an Urban faculty member, students must push into what is controversial, to critique it, transcend it, express their ideas and expand the viewer's understanding.

### General Guidelines for Published Work

1. Any work that moves in these directions will invite further conversation and possible revision:
  - Hate crimes or slanderous stereotypes
  - Vulgarity
  - Celebration of violence, brutality and/or use of weapons
  - Depiction of illegal substances (drugs, alcohol, etc.)
  - Sexually explicit text and/or images
2. Any work depicting transgression of school rules needs a context for debrief, clarification and dialogue. Depictions of students blatantly breaking school rules are not appropriate.
3. These criteria apply as well to student performing arts and written publications.

## The Urban Legend Guidelines<sup>1</sup>

The Urban Legend is protected by the [Student Journalist Press Freedom Restoration Act](#) and the First Amendment of the Constitution.

1. Students who are on The Urban Legend staff learn how to do independent research, report, interview, write journalistically, edit stories and design pages.
2. Editors-in-Chief (EICs) and the faculty advisers make all editorial decisions for The Urban Legend; such decisions must not violate the tenets of The Urban Legend or the Urban School of San Francisco's policies. Other staff members must abide by the decisions of editors; editors must abide by decisions of the co-editors-in-chief, but we welcome discussion and are transparent about our decision-making process.
3. Writers and editors are charged with ensuring The Urban Legend is a responsible media member, pursuing important stories while following appropriate journalistic guidelines and traditions. Anonymous articles will not be published.
4. Student reporters, writers and editors working for The Urban Legend have the right to conduct research, including interviewing sources, for stories they are pursuing. Students are expected to appropriately source stories, email and communicate professionally ([email template here](#)). Students are expected to recognize and respect the time people are giving them and must email interviewees afterwards to thank them.
5. Anonymous sources – The Urban Legend strives to use unnamed sources sparingly and only when it is journalistically appropriate to do so. The decision to use an anonymous source is shared by the reporter, section editors, EICs and the adviser. Staff members cannot grant anonymity without approval. If a reporter believes it is important and appropriate to grant anonymity, they must go to an EIC for approval. The EIC and adviser must know of the decision as well as the identity of the source. When granting anonymity, make the interviewee aware of who will know their identity. The names of students who are involved in disciplinary proceedings at Urban will not be published unless the school releases the names to the media.
6. The Urban Legend has a positive and open line of communication with Urban's administration. The faculty adviser and Assistant Head of School for Student Life meet once The Urban Legend topics have been decided to check in about what will be covered in the newspaper/magazine that cycle. Topics that may require extra meeting time with the administration or the sharing of rough drafts include sex, drugs/alcohol and discrimination (but are not limited to these), but we happily seek the counsel of the Assistant Head of School for Student Life with general questions, for perspective on quotes we are using, etc. Staff members are also encouraged to get advice from and run ideas by the Assistant Head of School for Student Life where appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup>Some materials adapted from The Gazette Handbook and [The SPJ Code of Ethics](#) with permission.

7. Pieces that are critical of school programs or people running the programs (students or adults) require nuance and deliberateness. Urban is a small, special, community and student and adult leaders deserve to be treated with respect. Columnists who want to criticize school programs and/or people MUST first conduct an interview with the person or program leader. Failure to do so will result in the removal of the column.
8. Use of Language – The Urban Legend does not publish language that would be considered inappropriate in a general interest, general circulation newspaper. When this language is part of a quote and is contextually relevant, we will use asterisks to convey the word without writing it out.
9. Columns and opinion pieces – Writers have tremendous freedom to express their opinions in The Urban Legend, while still following journalistic standards and The Urban Legend Philosophy.
10. Consider that The Urban Legend content that has been posted online shall remain online indefinitely, including articles you have published under your name. Any inaccuracies will be corrected in the online version of The Legend content. However, the advisers, leadership and EIC of online will consider take-down requests on a case-by-case basis.
11. Articles that contain contentious subject matter (typically drugs/alcohol, discrimination) that Urban would not like associated with the school are sometimes not published on The Urban Legend website.

## The Urban Legend Philosophy

The Urban Legend takes our mission statement, to be “a vehicle of student freedom of expression and a public forum for the Urban School community” as a great responsibility. As journalists, The Urban Legend seeks to report the news fairly and ethically. To do this, we follow [the four tenets](#) of the Society of Professional Journalists.

**Seek Truth and Report It: *Ethical journalism should be accurate and fair. Journalists should be honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.***

*Journalists for The Urban Legend should:*

- Take responsibility for the accuracy of their work. Verify information before releasing it. Use original sources whenever possible.
- Provide context. Take special care not to misrepresent or oversimplify in promoting, previewing or summarizing a story.
- Gather, update and correct information throughout the life of a news story.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable. Seek sources whose voices we seldom hear.
- Be deliberate when approaching articles that explicitly critique people or establishments, especially within the Urban community. When writing an Opinion article, or a piece with heavy criticism, strong and reasonable evidence is required.<sup>2</sup>

**Minimize Harm: *Ethical journalism treats sources, subjects, colleagues and members of the public as human beings deserving of respect.***

*Journalists for The Urban Legend should:*

- Identify the balance between the public’s need for information while avoiding any potential harm or discomfort to groups that may be affected by a story.
- Recognize that legal access to information differs from an ethical justification to publish or broadcast.
- Show compassion for those who may be affected by news coverage. Use heightened care when dealing with sensitive topics and sources or subjects who are inexperienced or unable to give consent. Most, if not all interviewees have greater privacy and a greater right to control information about themselves than public figures do. Weigh the consequences of publishing or broadcasting personal information.
- Be deliberate about approach and treatment, especially when covering complex topics and ensure appropriate understanding of how different identities/groups are affected by particular subjects.
- Consider yourself in the subject’s position: navigate all situations with empathy.
- Be deliberate about using inclusive language in articles. Consider how people want to be named and talked about.

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<sup>2</sup> See guideline 8 about critical pieces

**Act Independently: *The highest and primary obligation of ethical journalism is to serve the public.***

*Journalists for The Urban Legend should:*

- Be transparent with leadership and your journalism advisers surrounding perceived conflicts of interests or biases that may compromise integrity, impartiality or may damage credibility. Regardless if the conflict is avoidable or unavoidable, discuss it with leadership to navigate your best step. If a staff member or an interviewee has any kind of relationship with a person, organization or political campaign that could affect their judgment, notify their section editor and EIC.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or personal gain; be conscious when conversing with interviewees of potential agenda or motivations.
- Stay in cooperative agreement with Urban administrators over Urban Legend news coverage, while simultaneously existing as a vehicle for student expression<sup>3</sup>.

**Be Accountable and Transparent: *Ethical journalism means taking responsibility for one's work and explaining one's decisions to the public.***

*Journalists for The Urban Legend should:*

- Explain ethical choices and processes to audiences. Show your work: find credible, reliable and relevant sources; cite those sources as clearly and accurately as possible; make sure your reader understands why this is important to their view of your topic.
- Encourage honest and thoughtful dialogue within the Urban student body and the broader community about content pertaining to journalistic coverage and news inside and outside Urban. A main facet of The Urban Legend's role is to create a more curious and informed community.
- Acknowledge mistakes, report them to leadership and correct them promptly and publicly. *Remember that neither speed nor format excuses inaccuracy.* Explain corrections and clarifications carefully and clearly. The goal is to correct misinformation or unverified facts before publication, but in the case of a mistake or developing situations that are constantly changing, the writer's first priority is to publicly correct that information over a short period of time.
- All discussions and communication amongst staff should remain confidential between staff members.

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<sup>3</sup> See guideline 6 about working with the administration