

Title: Public information Policy	Number: 2.13.0314.1
Approved by the Board of Governors Date: March 11, 2014	Implementation Date: March 11 2014
History: Scheduled Review Date: January 2016	Origin:

Rationale

The College is committed to the highest standards of excellence and professionalism as an institution that upholds public trust. Employees must avoid situations in which their private interests, whether monetary, personal or otherwise, may be a conflict of interest with their duties to the College.

The College seeks to maintain the highest level of integrity and truthfulness in the provision of information to members of the College community and the public, and to engender cooperative relations with representatives of the media.

Policies governing public trust and confidence at the College are appropriate in order to ensure that information dissemination, advertising, distribution and solicitation activities serve the institution, its students, faculty and staff, as well as the wider community.

Policy

The President (and in the absence of the President, the Vice President, or anyone so designated by the President), and the Director of Communications, Public Relations and Marketing are authorised to act as the spokespersons on behalf of the College.

It is the role of the Office of Communications, Public Relations and Marketing to disseminate accurate and timely information about the College, its personnel, programmes and offerings to the media. Any information to be released to the media must first be reviewed and approved by the Director of Communications.

Students, faculty and staff must be mindful that information transmitted electronically can also become public information and, therefore, should exercise discretion when commenting on College matters in any medium.

Violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

College Web Site, Emails & Blogs

The Office of Communications, Public Relations and Marketing posts press releases and information on registration, programmes, classes, schedules, lectures and performances on the College web site for access by College constituents and the public.

To ensure the highest possible accuracy and quality, all new and unique postings to the web site must first be approved by the Director of Communications. Final approval of content is given by the President.

While the College encourages electronic dialogue, students, faculty and staff should acknowledge that statements appearing on their College blogs and emails represent the opinions of the senders only, and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the College.

College Television Station

Where possible, the College's television station is used to disseminate information about the institution and its programmes and offerings. Creation of programming and approval of content to be aired on the television station is the responsibility of the Director of Communications. Government programmes, as well as other programmes which are of benefit to the wider community, are also aired on the television station.

Student Government and the Media

Information released by the Student Government Association is first reviewed by the Director of Student Life and Special Events and thereafter the Director of Communications before being released. Interviews and other media contacts shall be arranged and scheduled by this Office on behalf of the Student Government Association.

Emergency Response

To maintain the accuracy and consistency of information released during emergency situations, faculty, staff and students are to refrain from giving interviews or otherwise disseminating opinions by email or other electronic methods.

If approached by the media during a crisis, members of the College community must refer all such queries to the President or to the Director of Communications.

Advertising and Use of Logo

The Office of Communications, Public Relations and Marketing is responsible for the ethical use of the College name and any representation thereof.

All proposed uses of the name and logo by outside advertisers, sponsors, or community groups must be coordinated with this Office. The use of the logo for branding College products and

publications may be overseen at the departmental level, for example, the Manager of the Bookstore, with initial approval from the Director of Communications.

The Website and Publications Department and Department Heads are required to seek approval from the Office of Communications and Public Relations regarding content design and layout. The Office, in turn, consults and seeks approval from the President.

Procedure

The following guidelines should be followed when working with the Office of Communications, Public Relations and Marketing for the release of information to the public:

- Information should reach the Office of Communications and Public Relations by email well in advance of the event. The minimum timeframe would be one week before the deadline for the newspapers for that week.
- The safest deadline for each of the three weekly newspapers' deadlines is Tuesday of each week, both for paid advertising and press releases, or bulletin board announcements. Information sent to the newspapers by the Tuesday of any week typically comes out by earliest Thursday of that week.
- Press releases and bulletins are usually sent to all the local media, as well as the Daily News in the United States Virgin Islands and, in some cases, the regional media. There may be occasions when, due to the nature of the information, the international media will also be included.
- The Director of Communications provides coaching in terms of content for faculty, staff or students being interviewed, and also for appearances in the case of television interviews and photographs.
- All requests for photography should be sent to the head of the Website and Publications Department, preferably at least two days before the assignment. Photo releases are done from the Office of Communications.
- As a general rule, free publicity is preferred, which would include use of the College's television station and the website. However, depending on the urgency of the information, there are times when both paid advertising and free publicity are generated. In embarking on paid advertising, discussions are usually held between the Head of the Department for which the advertisement is being placed and the Director of Communications.
- All requests for paid advertising must be approved by the Director of Communications, who is the principal Budget Holder for advertising funds. Although some departments also hold advertising funds, all advertisements are sent from the Office of Communications and Public Relations, after having been appropriately approved.

Commitment

With a view to earning public trust and confidence, the College will adhere to the following commitments:

- Conduct all activities of the College in a responsible and responsive manner intended to earn public confidence,
- Ensure that the public has full access to information concerning programmes and services, policies, administrative procedures, and activities of the College,
- Maintain an atmosphere that welcomes and nurtures public involvement and participation in College affairs,
- Be sensitive to public reaction to programmes, services, policies, and administrative actions of the College,
- Cultivate open, professional and effective relations with the mass media,
- Encourage participation and involvement of College employees in the community,
- Maintain continuous liaison and cooperative relations with other public and private educational institutions and appropriate governmental bodies,
- Uphold standards of professional conduct and ethics.

HLSCC also fully endorses and upholds the following “Code of Ethics” adapted from the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations, of which the College is a member:

- practice honesty and integrity, adhering to the highest standards of accuracy and truth,
- observe all laws and institutional regulations pertaining to the practice of public information,
- provide requested information that is legally deemed public information, avoid knowingly disseminating false or misleading information, and promptly correct erroneous information that has been distributed or published,
- preserve confidentiality and privacy rights of all individuals, including faculty, staff and students and members of governing boards,
- avoid permitting personal interest to conflict with obligations to the institution, without full disclosure of such interests to all involved,
- not accept gifts, fees or any other considerations that could be deemed a conflict of interest,

- avoid utilizing public funds for the benefit of elected or appointed public officials or for the endorsement of legislative acts except as provided for within the structure of local laws and regulations,
- uphold this Code of Ethics in all professional activity and use the College's name only for purposes that are authorized and which fairly represent the organization and its professional standards.