



WORKSHOP ETHICS

INVESTIGATIVE Reporting Workshop

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

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PREAMBLE

High-quality journalism devoted to providing oversight of powerful public and private institutions is vital to a free society. We define “high-quality” to include not only excellent tradecraft, but also excellence in decision-making that reflects the ideals of transparency and accountability to all our stakeholders.

ACCURACY

Our highest value is accuracy. This does not merely mean that we get our facts straight, but that we also expect our work to provide context, meaning and understanding. We reject the notion that “fairness and balance” require us to simply give equal weight to two “opposing” sides. Instead, we seek to fairly represent the full range of ideas and opinions that exist around complex matters in public affairs. We promise to correct documented factual and contextual errors in a timely, public manner that, to the extent practicable, is as prominent as the presentation of the error.

TRANSPARENCY

Just as we seek to shed light on the activities of powerful institutions, we believe that we must be willing to share information about ourselves. To that end, we pledge to provide:

- Access to data and documents that support our stories.
- Explanations of calculations, formulas, etc.
- Contact information for the journalists who report and edit our work.
- Biographical information for all Workshop journalists.
- Information regarding sources of funding.
- An annual report substantively equivalent to IRS Form 990

JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE

As an organization that seeks to establish new standards and

models for the conduct of investigative journalism, we must also create an environment in which our journalistic practices are above reproach.

- We will not tolerate fabrication or plagiarism.
- We will avoid real and perceived conflicts of interest:
 - We will not permit our funders to exercise editorial control over content.
 - We will not publicly participate in electoral politics, including making political contributions, displaying evidence of support of one candidate, volunteering in a political campaign.
 - We will not lobby legislators or agencies. (This does not preclude us from joining with others in the journalistic community to express opinions about issues of common professional interest, such as access to information.)
 - We will not accept gifts from sources.
 - We will pay our own way.
- We will avoid deceptive reporting practices:
 - We will clearly identify ourselves as journalists to sources and potential sources.
 - We will not use surreptitious audio and video recording devices without a finding by the Executive Editor that all other means of obtaining the information have been tried and exhausted and that the information is vital to a story of high public interest and value.
 - Because of our values of transparency and accountability, we will seek to limit the use of unidentified sources. It is our goal to have every source in every story fully identified. No story quoting unidentified sources will be published unless at least one editor is aware of the identity of the sources.
 - In deciding whether to grant confidentiality, the Executive

Editor may ask to meet with the source and may seek advice from legal counsel.

- When a grant of confidentiality is made, all Workshop personnel will be bound by its terms and may not be released from its terms without clear consent from the source involved.

DATA COLLECTION AND MAINTENANCE

As part of our efforts to be transparent and to bring transparency to powerful institutions, we will collect and make available to our audiences large amounts of data. We understand and accept the challenges this may pose in some instances to personal privacy. In order to mitigate those risks: We will, wherever possible, limit the collection of data that contains clearly identifiable personal information.

- We will, wherever possible, limit the collection of data that contains clearly identifiable personal information.
- When we obtain data with clearly identifiable personal information, we will protect it from unwarranted disclosure:
 - If a database contains clearly identifiable personal information (such as Social Security numbers), we will use technical means such as passwords and other methods to limit access.
 - We will not share clearly identifiable personal information with partnering organizations without an agreement that the organization will use and enforce substantially equivalent data protection policies.
 - Where feasible, data holdings with clearly identifiable personal information will be segregated after analysis so that records not deemed of journalistic interest are not co-mingled with records deemed of journalistic value.
 - Data holdings will be periodically reviewed to determine whether they need to be updated in order to meet stan-

dards of accuracy and completeness. Data holdings that do not meet the standards will be destroyed in a manner that preserves protection for clearly identifiable personal information.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENFORCEMENT

A code of ethics is no stronger than its enforcement. We intend to assure compliance with this code in a variety of ways:

- All employees will be given a copy of the code prior to employment and will agree to abide by the code as a condition of employment.
- We will hold periodic training and discussion sessions on issues relating to journalistic ethics.
- The code will be posted on the Workshop's website.