

The Bulletin

The newsletter for student journalists and advisers across Georgia



March/April 2012

Volume 83, Issue 3

www.gspa.uga.edu

Important Dates:

Friday, March 16

Postmark Deadline

General Excellence Newspaper, Broadcast, Literary Magazine (Round One) and ALL individual entries

Friday, March 30

Postmark Deadline

Achievement Awards
Georgia Junior Journalist

Saturday, March 24

Broadcast News Digital Workshop
Grady College,
Athens, Ga.

Thursday, April 26

GSPA Awards Ceremony
The Classic Center,
Athens, Ga.

June 10-16

Georgia Journalism Academy
The University of Georgia
Athens, Ga.

Saturday, June 30

Postmark Deadline

General Excellence
Yearbook (round one)
Literary Magazine (round two)

Schools must be a 2011-12 GSPA member to participate in GSPA contests and events.

From Athens to Chile to New York Young journalist to keynote GSPA

by Jessica Johnson & Elayna Rose

ATHENS — This May, Grady alum Mandi Woodruff will take some time off from her current job as a reporter at Business Insider in New York City to serve as the keynote speaker for the 83rd annual GSPA Awards Ceremony.

Woodruff graduated in 2009 with a degree in print journalism. During her time at UGA, she worked as an associate news editor and reporter at the award winning student newspaper, The Red & Black. "Amanda Woodruff is a talented journalist who excels by never being satisfied until the entire story is told," said The Red & Black's editorial adviser, Ed Morales. "There is a certain tenaciousness to her, she refuses to give up on any situation and will always come through with a thorough and smart telling of any issue at hand."

Woodruff held several internships as an undergraduate, including a prestigious American Society of Magazine Editors internship with the Reader's Digest Association. She also spent time in Salta, Argentina working



WOODRUFF

as an intern for a local website. Following graduation, she freelanced for The Athens Banner-Herald before returning to South America to work as a news editor at The Santiago Times. She moved back to the United States after five months in Chile and has since worked at several publications, including Reader's Digest, Skirt! Magazine and Business Insider. Woodruff also runs a blog called The Bike Writer, where she publishes here personal tips on biking in New York City. The blog boasts more than 2,000 monthly readers.

"We're excited to have Mandi return to Grady and share her experiences with high school journalists," said Joe Dennis, director of GSPA. "She's an excellent role model for students looking to carve out their own career in journalism."

The 83rd annual GSPA Awards Ceremony will be held at the University of Georgia on Thursday, April 26 at noon. Tickets are \$20 per person and includes a southern lunch.

Winners of the GSPA General Excellence contest will be recognized, as well as the individual award winners, Achievement Award winners and the Junior Champion and Georgia Champion journalist. The event will be held at the Classic Center in downtown Athens, Ga.

See registration form on page 5.

Yearbook contest opens

GSPA is now taking entries for the 2011-12 Yearbook General Excellence critique service and competition.

Entries will be taken in two rounds, with the first deadline as June 30 and the second deadline Sept. 29.

Entry forms are available on pages 6-8 of *The Bulletin* and online at www.gspa.uga.edu.

Director's Corner



Inspired at SIPA

It's easy to lose hope in scholastic journalism.

In tight budget times, tales of journalism programs being cut are widespread. Staffs are forced to do more out of class time as precious in-school hours are taken away. And even those staffs that produce outstanding journalism begin to feel the heat from principals who do not want the hassle of dealing with a competent student press. As GSPA's membership numbers — like most scholastic press associations — continue to decrease, I often wonder just how important our work is in the current environment.

Last weekend at the annual conference of the Southern Interscholastic Press Association in Columbia, S.C., I was re-invigorated. The importance of scholastic journalism was reinforced to me many times, and in many ways. It started with the energetic 22-year-old keynote speaker, freelance photojournalist Steve Johnson, who told stories of how he always attempts to find the stories beneath tragedies. During the 2010 Gulf Oil Spill, while most photographers were shooting the barges and recovery efforts, Johnson turned his lens on the community, building bonds with local residents and business owners who were seeing their livelihood destroyed.

I was re-invigorated when I judged contests Saturday morning, reading several in-depth articles about bullying in high school and how it affects individuals and the student body as a whole. It reminded me of the rare power of scholastic journalism. When used properly, it can bring an issue to the forefront of a student discussion unlike any other medium can.

I was re-invigorated by the "SIPA's Got Talent" show, which featured a dozen staffs showcasing their non-journalistic skills, some outstanding and others not so good. Regardless, the bonds and staff unity created by scholastic journalism is evident. A staff is a team, and students take great pride in being part of something bigger than them.

I was re-invigorated at the adviser's luncheon, when Student Press Law Center executive director Frank LoMonte discussed how a North Carolina school, with the help of the SPLC, uncovered a principal's diverting of donated funds to a cause only he deemed appropriate.

I was re-invigorated at the session I taught about judging. Despite being the last session at the conference, a packed room joined me and my co-presenter with endless questions about how to make their publication better.

Scholastic journalism is alive and well, and in an era of challenges it may even be getting stronger. Thank you for re-invigorating me!



Joe Dennis
GSPA Director

GEORGIA scholastic
PRESS
association
2011-12

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*Want to help shape GSPA?
Join the Advisory Board.
Contact Joe Dennis at
jodennis@uga.edu for more
information.*

The Bulletin

Editor: Sophia Griesenauer

Writers: Joe Dennis, Jessica Johnson, Elayna Rose, Amber Thomas

The Georgia Scholastic Press Association was founded in 1928 by the faculty of the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at The University of Georgia.

Membership is open to school-sponsored newspaper, yearbook, literary magazine, radio/television and online publications or productions in middle and high schools in Georgia. The GSPA Bulletin is published by the University of Georgia five times annually as a benefit of membership in the Georgia Scholastic Press Association.

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Letter from the Editor



The Georgia Journalism Academy

I've heard it described as "a week of hell." It's been compared to a week at boot camp and criticized for its harsh curriculum. The counselors yell, the directors are mean, and the members can't get along. But don't worry, those are just rumors.

I've had first hand experience at what the week is really like. In reality, it leaves you wishing one week would turn into two, looking for more ways to challenge yourself, and having more fun than you've had at any other camp in your life.

More than four years have passed since my first year as a camper, yet every summer since, I've looked forward to arriving to the University of Georgia's campus and spending the week walking the halls of Grady. This up-coming summer will be my fifth summer at camp. My first three summers were spent as a camper, and my most recent was as an office assistant and counselor.

Every summer left me with a unique experience. My first summer at the academy, I felt nervous and out of place - I had just finished my freshman year in high school and hadn't even started as a staff writer on my high school's newspaper.

I took Feature Writing with Mary Jessica Hammes, who proved to be one

of the most influential teachers on my writing. Because of her, I fell in love with feature writing and everything about it. She gave me a foundation on which to build my writing skills when I had none. She has remained one of my favorite teachers. But I didn't just learn about journalism during this week; my first summer at the Georgia Journalism Academy left me with memories that I will never forget and friends with whom I still keep in contact.

My second summer at the Academy I participated in Cecil Bentley's Editorial Writing class. I learned how to express my opinions in print writing. Bentley's class taught me the importance of having an opinion and making it your own. Again, I didn't just learn writing techniques the entire week. This summer my younger sister participated in the camp with me as well.

My final summer as a camper, I took photojournalism. During the past summers I watched the photography students have so much fun going out and shooting that I wanted to have that same experience. It was one of the best of my life. I have never been great with a camera, but after that week I found I could better understand aperture, lighting, and even shutter speed. I fell in love with another side of journalism

that I had previously been afraid to tackle. It helped me to become a better journalist.

Last summer, I was an office assistant and counselor. I experienced a completely different side to the camp than ever before. I learned about the 7:30 a.m. meetings every morning (for the professors and camp directors), the strategizing that goes into every event during the week, and all the fun that happens behind the scenes.

I saw how many students were just as inspired as I had been during my first summer at GJA. I heard all of the positive feedback from the campers and saw the disappointment on their faces as they left the morning of the last day. I heard the "thank you's" and the "hope to see you again next year!'s."

This camp leaves you with something more than journalism skills and friendships. It leaves you with an impression. An impression of what it's like to do what you love everyday. Working as a counselor made me realize this, and I understand now - that's what happened to me too. I was left with an impression that made me realize that journalism is what I want to do for the rest of my life - because I love it.

 **Sophia Griesenauer**

VISIT WWW.GEORGIAJOURNALISMACADEMY.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER FOR THE 2012 CAMP



The Georgia Journalism Academy offers students a chance to learn skills such as photography (left), graphic design (top) and broadcast journalism.

Photos by Joe Dennis



Digital news workshop offers training for broadcasters

The University of Georgia's annual Digital News Bluejeans Workshop will be held on Saturday, March 24, at the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

"Although the workshop is targeted to college students and medium market professionals, in the past we've had high school students participate and it really energized them and provided them with valuable tools that they took back to their staff," said Joe Dennis, director of GSPA. "It's a rare opportunity for high school students to interact with top-tier professionals."

The 2012 casual, low-cost workshop will open with a panel discussion about what journalists need for the new age. Panelists will include four experienced media professionals including Heather Allan, Al-Jazeera, English; Bob Duncan, National Public Radio; Samantha Hayes Fisher, WKRN-TV, Nashville; and Ben Mayer, WXIA-TV, Atlanta.

The panel will be followed by skills workshops with participants rotating through each session.

Samantha Hayes Fisher, former CNN political

correspondent and current co-anchor at WKRN Nashville News 2, will focus on reporting and anchoring. Social media as a news gathering tool will be addressed by Ben Mayer, social media director for WXIA-TV Atlanta.

Heather Allan, head of global newsgathering for Al-Jazeera English in Doha, Qatar, and Bob Duncan, director of foreign desk operations for National Public Radio in Washington D.C., will provide insight into international reporting.

The final session of the day will consist of a wrap-up and critique session where participants will have the opportunity to have their stories on DVD reviewed.

The Bluejeans Workshop is designed for everyone involved in news and is not limited to any age group or experience level.

Each year, support from CNN allows for a low cost registration fee. Registration is \$35 before Monday, March 19, \$50 after March 19. Lunch is included in the registration fee. Register online at www.grady.uga.edu/bluejeans. For additional information, contact Diane Murray at murrayd@uga.edu, 706-542-5038.



Digital News: Bluejeans Workshop

...A casual workshop short on philosophy but long on helpful, practical information for improving coverage and broadcast news storytelling

When: Saturday, March 24th
Where: Grady College
Time: 8:30a.m. - 4:30p.m
Cost: \$35 before March 19th;
 \$50 after*

*Cost includes lunch

<p>Social Media as News Gathering</p> <p>Danielle Dellorto Producer-CNN</p> <p>Ben Meyer Social Media Director, WXIA, Atlanta</p>	<p>International Reporting</p> <p>Heather Allen Head of Global News, Al Jazeera English</p> <p>Bob Duncan Head of Foreign Operations, NPR</p>
<p>Reporting and Anchoring</p> <p>Samantha Hayes Anchor-WKRN, Nashville</p>	

Special thanks to CNN for a donation that helps us keep your cost low.

Register online at www.grady.uga.edu/bluejeans



2012 Awards Ceremony

April 26 at Noon • The Classic Center
Athens, Ga.

Celebrate the achievements of Georgia scholastic journalists at the 83rd annual GSPA Awards Ceremony. Mandi Woodruff of Business Insider (New York) will be the keynote speaker. Awards will be handed out in more than 50 categories recognizing individual and staff excellence in broadcast news, literary magazine, newspaper, newsmagazine, websites and yearbook.

A southern buffet lunch will be served.

Tickets: \$20 per person

Registration Deadline: Monday, April 16, 2012

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE DIRECTLY ON PDF FORM

Name of Publication or Broadcast Program: _____

Media Type: Newspaper Newsmagazine Broadcast Literary Magazine Yearbook

School Name: _____

School Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Phone: (____) _____ ext. _____ FAX: (____) _____

Adviser Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Number of Advisers/Chaperones Attending _____ Number of Students Attending _____

Total Number of Tickets Requested _____ X \$20 = Total Cost \$ _____

Please send completed form with payment to:

GSPA Awards Ceremony
Grady College / UGA
120 Hooper St.
Athens, GA 30602-3018

Completed forms may also be faxed to 706-542-7931 or e-mailed to jodennis@uga.edu.

Payment may be made at Ceremony registration.

A confirmation with directions to the Tate Center and parking information will be sent upon receipt of registration. Questions? Contact Joe Dennis at jodennis@uga.edu or 706-542-5022.

Due to strict deadlines with the caterer, no changes to registration are allowed after April 16, 2012.

2011-12 General Excellence Competition

Literary Magazines & Yearbooks

Guidelines for literary magazine entries

Literary magazines are judged for General Excellence.

Judges consider the overall artistic impression, theme, effectiveness and content of the magazine. Superior-rated books from both rounds will be eligible for the General Excellence competition in spring 2013.

All magazines entered in the General Excellence category will also be considered for the "Best Layout" Competition. Layout judges consider how design elements (cover, artwork, placement of literature) contributes to the flow of the magazine.

To submit entries:

All entries must be postmarked by **June 30, 2012**.

No late entries will be accepted.

Staffs competing in this contest must be 2011-12 members of GSPA.

Complete contest entry form (page 7).

Complete a media information form (page 8).

Submit the \$40 critique fee for each contest.

Submit two copies of one issue printed during the 2011-12 school year. If you plan to enter more than one issue, you must submit two media information forms, two contest entry forms and you must pay the \$40 critique fee for each issue.

Guidelines for yearbook entries

Yearbooks from the 2011-12 school year will be judged in two rounds. Books published in the 2011-12 school year can be entered in either round. The postmark deadline for the first round is June 30, 2012, and is designed for yearbooks published in the spring. Critiques and scores from the first round will be returned in September so next year's staff can benefit from the judge's comments.

The postmark deadline for the second round is Sept. 29, 2012 and is meant for yearbooks delivered in the fall, though spring delivery books are still allowed to enter the second round. Critiques and scores from the second round will be returned in November.

Superior-rated books from both rounds will be eligible for the General Excellence competition in spring 2013.

Yearbooks will be evaluated in four categories: concept and organization, coverage, photography and design, and copy. Each category will represent 25 percent of the total evaluation.

Guidelines for the yearbook contest:

Round one entries must be postmarked by **June 30, 2012**.

All other entries must be postmarked by **Sept. 29, 2012**.

Staffs competing in this contest must be 2011-2012 members of GSPA.

Complete contest entry form (page 7).

Complete a media information form (page 8).

Submit the \$40 critique fee.

If you would like your yearbook returned after judging, submit an \$8 postage and handling fee. All returned yearbooks will be shipped via UPS.

Official Entry Form GSPA General Excellence Contest 2012

Please attach this form to your contest entry materials. Use a copy of this form for each contest you intend to enter. Individual student entries require a separate form. **Type or print neatly.**

School Name: _____ Adviser's Name: _____

Publication Name: _____

School Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ ZIP: _____

School/Staff Room Phone: (_____) _____ School/Staff FAX: (_____) _____

Adviser or Staff E-mail Address: _____

Please indicate which contest(s) you are entering:
(NOTE POSTMARK DEADLINES -- NO LATE ENTRIES ACCEPTED!)

- Literary Magazine, Round Two (June 30, 2012)
- Yearbook, Round One (June 30, 2012)
- Yearbook, Round Two (Sept. 29, 2012)

Please indicate what materials you are sending with this entry form:

Contest Entry Materials and Fees:

- Media Information Form
- \$40 Contest Entry Fee
- \$8 Yearbook Return Fee (optional)

Materials to be Evaluated:

- Two copies of a published Literary Magazine.
- One copy of a published Yearbook.

**Return this form, along with a media information form and contest materials to:
GSPA Contests, Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, 120 Hooper Street, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-3018.**

*GSPA is not responsible for entries lost in the mail.
Use of a certified mail delivery service is recommended.*

For office use only:

Date rec.	Check#	Total Amt. Paid/Late fee	Processed?	Initials
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Media Information Form

GSPA General Excellence Contest 2012

A separate media information form MUST be attached to each contest entry. Please type or print neatly.

Name of Publication or Broadcast Program: _____

School: _____ City: _____

MEDIA CATEGORY:

- Newspaper/News magazine
- Broadcast News
- Literary Magazine
- Yearbook

Frequency of Publication/Program: _____ per _____ Total Circulation or Audience: _____

Number of students on regular staff (not including contributors/freelancers): _____

METHOD OF PRODUCTION FOR PRINT MATERIAL:

- Commercial Printer (Printer does all from set type to layout to press run.)
- Commercial Printer
- In-School Offset Press
- In-School Office Duplication Machine
- Other (explain) _____

PRODUCTION INFORMATION FOR BROADCAST PROGRAMS:

What is the purpose of this broadcast? _____

What format do you use? _____ What is the average length of program? _____

Please describe your method of production: _____

FINANCING:

Cost per issue/program: \$ _____ Cost per year: \$ _____

Amount from school/administration: \$ _____ Amount from sales/subscription: \$ _____

Amount from advertising per year: \$ _____ Base ad rate: \$ _____ per _____

Amount from other sources (explain): \$ _____

WORK DISTRIBUTION:

Percentage of work done by students: _____ Percentage of work done by adviser: _____

Percentage of work during class: _____ Percentage of work after school hours: _____

Percentage of photos taken by students: _____ Percentage of photos taken by professionals: _____

PRIMARY SOURCE OF PRODUCTION:

- First-year journalism class
- Experienced journalism class
- Student volunteers/extracurricular

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS (Example: printer errors, etc.)



Georgia scholastic journalism proves strong against regional, national competition



2012 Crown Finalist

Clarke Central High School, The Odyssey (newsmagazine)

Clarke Central High School, Odyssey Online (website)

Henry W. Grady High School, The Southerner (newspaper)

Henry W. Grady High School, Nexus (magazine)

George Walton Academy, Resume (yearbook)



2011 Pacemaker Award

Clarke Central High School, The Odyssey (newsmagazine)

Henry W. Grady High School, The Southerner (newspaper)

2011 Pacemaker Finalist

Clarke Central High School, Odyssey Online (website)

George Walton Academy, Resume (yearbook)

Marist High School, Rapier (literary magazine)

Mount Paran Christian School, Teleios (yearbook)

George Walton Academy, Resume (yearbook)



2012 Scroggins Winner

Clarke Central High School, Illiad (literary magazine)

All-Southern Rankings

Clarke Central High School, Illiad (literary magazine)
Clarke Central High School, Odyssey (newsmagazine)
Clarke Central High School, Odyssey Online (website)
Decatur High School, Carpe Diem (newsmagazine)
Henry W. Grady High School, Southerner (newspaper)
Mt. Paran Christian School, Teleios (yearbook)
Starr's Mill High School, The Prowler (newspaper)
Starr's Mill High School, Pride (yearbook)
Woodward Academy, Phoenix (yearbook)

Superior Rankings

Dawson County High School, Tiger (yearbook)
Etowah High School, The Talon (newspaper)
George Walton Academy, Resume (yearbook)
Henry W. Grady High School, Nexus (newsmagazine)
John's Creek High School, The Chariot (newspaper)
Lee County High School, The Panoptic (newspaper)
North Forsyth High School, Carpe Diem (yearbook)
Whitewater High School, Vision (yearbook)
Woodstock High School, Saga (yearbook)
Woodward Academy, Blade (newspaper)

Decatur student wins First Amendment Essay Contest

by Amber Thomas

ATHENS—Three high school students were selected as the winners of the First Amendment Essay Contest, sponsored by the University of Georgia's Georgia Scholastic Press Association, the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication and the Cox Institute for Newspaper Management Studies.

"Georgia high schools appreciate the value of freedoms and protections provided by The First Amendment," said Cecil Bentley, assistant director of the Cox Institute. "Several talented young writers shared thoughtful insights into how First Amendment freedoms impact their campus and community."

Fikrea Tesema, a junior from Decatur High School in Decatur, won first place in the contest. Tesema will be awarded a \$100 prize and \$100 to her school newspaper, *Carpe Diem*.

Tesema's essay focused on the affect the free press had on her stories and she expounded upon her experience with newspapers when she lived in Ethiopia.

"(In Ethiopia) the newspaper agencies

and magazine staffs could not legally print anything that represented the government in a bad manner."

She also wrote about her new freedom of the press in America. "I wanted to write and have some type of control over what went out into the media. I wanted to exercise a new right that I was never given before and I was hooked."

Finishing in second place was Lauren Bell, a junior from Lee County High School in Leesburg. Bell will receive \$75 and an additional \$75 for her school newspaper *The Panoptic*. Sophomore Jenny Alpaugh from Clarke Central High School in Athens took won third place. She wins \$50 for herself and \$50 for her publication, *Odyssey Newsmagazine*.

In Bell's essay she discusses the First Amendment claiming it as "one of the more powerful clauses in the whole United States Constitution." Bell also highlights many other important dates in US history, for example September 11th.

"Our First Amendment rights still are at jeopardy, especially with the two recent piracy bills in Congress."

Bell notes, "The Software Online Pira-

cy Act (SOPA) and Protect IP Act (PIPA) were written with the good intentions of protecting intellectual work... but the road to hell is paved with good intentions." Bell closes her essay speaking of her personal journalism experience and the importance of a student voice.

Alpaugh's essay was centered on her experience with journalism and the First Amendment. "At a young age, I did not really understand the meaning of the first amendment, I simply knew that it meant that I had the right to say whatever appealed to me."

Now that Alpaugh is in high school and involved in journalism, she now understands the importance of a free press in society. "I feel that because we have freedom of the press, we are properly informing our student body," she wrote.

"Not only are they reading what they want to read, but they are also given the chance to read what they need to read to be well-informed members of the student body."

The winners will be recognized at the GSPA Awards Ceremony, April 26 in Athens.



First Amendment Essay Contest by Fikrea Tesema

Law shapes freedom, responsible press

The First Amendment is arguably the most important amendment given to us by the Bill of Rights. This amendment gives us both the right and responsibility of displaying information. To people born in other countries, this right is rarely available and seldom exercised. That is why I viewed this amendment as a fundamental benefit of being an American.

The idea that everyone has the right to be aware of the things going on around him or her is the message of the American belief. I was born in Ethiopia and when I lived there I remember that people were afraid to discuss anything negative about our government. The newspaper agencies and magazine staffs could not legally print out anything that represented the government in a bad manner. Information that was remotely close to disapproving of government was quickly shutdown or punished.

Yet when I came to America, I saw shows like Saturday Night Live, and Mad TV make fun of presidents and candidates. In fact the comics within newspapers often showed them in a ridiculing manner. This was different to me because I had never seen such a public display of opinion about government. This initial experience in the U.S. affected me so much that I wanted to write and have some type of control over what went out in the media. I wanted to exercise a new right that I was never given before and I was hooked.

The yearning to exercise the right to free speech motivated me into wanting more authority and obligation over media. So I joined our school's feature magazine. There I learned in depth, that although the first amendment is a right, it also teaches you responsibility.

My first story within our magazine was about a girl who had become a teen mom. The story proved to be challenging to me because I thought the readers had right to know what was going on within the student body. I had a responsibility to not bring any harm and harassment onto the person I was interviewing. This challenged me because I had responsibility to not bring harm or harassment onto the person I was interviewing. This challenged me because with the topic of teen pregnancy everyone has their opinions of the mother, and because this girl whom I interviewed did not tell many people about her situation, so the story was going to be the first unveiling of this information and this caused the mother to worry about being teased.

In order to satisfy my job and my emotions I tried to convey the story in a way that did not put the mother in a dark light, but at the same time stayed true to the topic at hand. So within my first entrance to our schools publication I learned the responsible aspects of the freedom of speech.

Throughout the whole process the First Amendment of free press affected the way I conveyed my stories. I learned in depth that the First Amendment not only had the perks of free speech, but also the charge of responsibility as well. For this reason I view myself as fortunate to have come to the U.S. and learn not only exercising my freedom of speech but also controlling it.

Fikrea Tesema is a junior at Decatur High School and writes for their newsmagazine, *Carpe Diem*.

Fighting censorship: A checklist

Reprinted with permission from the Student Press Law Center
by Mike Hiestand

Most censorship battles come down not to what school officials can or must do under the law, but what they should do. And for that, student journalists - much more than media lawyers or judges - can be their own best advocates.

The following checklist is one that I share with students looking to fight and win the censorship battle.

Practice sound journalism

If there is only one bit of advice you take away, make this it: Nothing - nothing - can help you more in your censorship fight than a well-researched, well-written, fair and accurate story. Conversely, nothing can sink you faster than a sloppy, mean-spirited article full of errors in fact, grammar or editorial judgment. Write something you'd be proud to stand and defend publicly - because that is likely what you are going to be called upon to do. Before publishing a story that you know might provoke a censor's pen, take the time to make it "censor-resistant": triple-check all facts, confirm quotes, make sure you have talked to all sides. Ask yourself, "Does it make sense? Is it fair?" Have at least two other sets of eyes review it for grammar, spelling, punctuation and editorial errors. In short, be a good journalist. Do not give censors an easy target.

Pick your battles wisely

Fighting for a free student press is a worthy endeavor. But the truth is, some censorship fights are worthier than others. Do you really want to go to battle over the right to use a four-letter word? Or the right to publish a raunchy, rumor-filled gossip column? Is it worth pulling out all the First Amendment stops when the principal objects to an editorial's description of a curriculum change as "idiotic," but would agree to your calling it "unwise"? There are no hard rules for determining when a fight is worth the time and effort involved, but the question should always be asked.

Do your homework

The law related to free expression in school can be complex - take the time to understand your rights. Every case has its strengths and weaknesses and it is important that you're able to accurately assess where you stand. Sadly, few administrators know - or sometimes, even care about - the law related to student free speech rights. Too often they act without taking the time to figure out what they lawfully can and cannot do. You may need to help educate them. Be prepared to explain the relevant legal standards and to refute the erroneous - but commonly held - belief that public school officials have an unlimited license to censor.

Meet with the censor (with a smile)

As soon as the threat of censorship emerges, set up a meeting with the censor. The purpose of this meeting is to air all sides' concerns and to resolve the situation before it heats up. Confront the threat, but avoid being confrontational. Immediately spouting off about the First Amendment and threatening legal action seldom encourages productive discussion. Rather, hear the administrator's objections. Listen. Be open to small changes or creative

compromises. At all times, be courteous and show the appropriate respect. Offer to answer his questions regarding factual statements made in the story or to provide him with information about the relevant law. If he has questions about the legality of piece you want to publish, for example, offer to consult with a media law attorney to address his concerns. Take time to explain your role as a student journalist. Remind him that the press's goal is not to publish good news or bad news - just the news.

The student staff, preferably a small group of student editors, should initiate and run this meeting. Remember - it is a student publication being censored and it is up to students - not the adviser - to take the lead in any censorship battle. It is essential that school officials immediately understand that if a censorship battle is to be fought, it will be waged with students, acting on their own.

Gather the troops

If it appears a censorship battle is unavoidable it is time to begin identifying your supporters. First, gather the student staff together. Make sure all staffers are briefed on the facts of the conflict. Take time - as a student staff - to discuss your strategy and your reasons for contesting the censorship. Reach a consensus about the main message that you wish to convey in any battle that ensues. Appoint a primary spokesperson to handle future media queries or so that you speak with one, consistent voice. Again, it is important that your adviser's involvement be minimal or nil.

Notify other student leaders, parents, local journalists, press associations, community members and any others that you think would be supportive to seek their input and alert them that you may need their help. Now is also a good time to contact the Student Press Law Center to notify its legal staff of your possible censorship battle and to have any additional questions answered.

Meet with the censor, with a deadline

If, after a reasonable period, the censor has refused to back down, it is time to initiate a formal, administrative appeal. Once again, when meeting with the censor, be courteous - but firm. Be very clear that you intend to contest the censorship both in and outside of school. Let them know, for example, that you are now working with lawyers at the Student Press Law Center in Washington, D.C., and that you have already met with parents, local journalists and others regarding the censorship.

This is the time to start a paper trail, which will be crucial should the matter eventually result in legal action. All contact with administrators and others involved in the censorship fight should be carefully summarized and recorded and copies of all documents preserved. Student staff members should store copies of the censored material at a safe and secure location.

Present the censor with a letter formally objecting to the censorship and asking that she reconsider her decision. If the administrator has previously provided reasons for the censorship, state them in your letter and explain why you believe they do not justify the action taken. Ask that the censor provide her response in writing with a reasonable deadline stipulated. If the censor refuses to provide a written response, follow up with your own confirmation memo to the censor. State your understanding of the facts and request that the censor clear up any

misunderstandings in writing.

Meet with the superintendent

Assuming that the original censor was your principal, your next step will be to appeal the decision to her boss, in most cases the district superintendent. If possible, set up another in-person meeting to present your case and to give the superintendent an opportunity to meet you and your staff and ask questions. Again, courtesy and "professionalism" pays. Explain why you are contesting the censorship and that - while you would like to see the matter resolved quietly - you are prepared to fight the censorship as long - and as publicly - as necessary. At this meeting you will once again want to present the superintendent with a formal, written letter of appeal outlining what has occurred thus far and explaining why you believe the censorship is wrong. Make sure that the superintendent has copies of the censored material and any previous correspondence.

Go public

If the superintendent turns down your appeal, it is now time to kick your publicity campaign into high gear. Unlike the principal and superintendent, school board members are usually elected officials. Public pressure can be very effective.

A good first step is to draft a press release that briefly and accurately summarizes the facts surrounding the censorship, includes a quote about the censorship from your staff spokesperson and perhaps from an expert on censorship or journalism, provides information regarding any upcoming developments and includes contact information for those wanting additional information. Send the press release to your local news media.

Meet with the school board

If the superintendent turns down your appeal, your next and final stop in most administrative chains of command is the school board. Once again, you will need to file a formal written appeal. You will also need to find out what is required to put your appeal on the board's public agenda. Now is the time to encourage supporters to make calls or send e-mail or letters of protest to the school board and local news media. Support from parents and community members can be key.

Plan your school board presentation carefully. Your goal is to show that your staff capably performed its job as journalists and has acted reasonably throughout the controversy. Explain the editorial process for story selection and reporting. Explain what has happened since the censorship occurred and your early efforts to quietly and reasonably work with school officials to resolve the matter. Finally, tell them - in your own words - why you believe a free press is important, why you believe censorship is wrong and why you are taking the stand that you have.

Consider your legal options

If, after appealing the censorship within the school system and making your case in the court of public opinion, school officials still refuse to budge, your next step may be a court of law. Contact the SPLC to further pursue.

Mike Hiestand is an attorney and works as a legal consultant to the Student Press Law Center.

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