



**CODE OF ETHICS AND PRACTICES  
FOR EMPLOYEES AT  
WUWM MILWAUKEE PUBLIC RADIO**

*As individuals, ethical standards are part of our core personality and guide us throughout our lives, especially when we think that no one is paying attention.*

*As employees of the University of Wisconsin System, all WUWM staff members must comply with policies on conflicts of interest and ethical standards. They are available at [www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/uws/uws.html](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/uws/uws.html)  
Click on Chapter 8 (Unclassified Staff Code of Ethics)*

*In addition, WUWM has separate codes for journalists and fund raisers. This document is intended to outline how the University codes apply to all employees and our work at a public radio station. It draws liberally from the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents policies as well as the work of the "Editorial Integrity for Public Media" project which engaged hundreds of executives and senior staff of public broadcasting organizations, faculty from schools of journalism, and advisers in the areas of philanthropy, community engagement, and new media.*

Adopted November 2013

## **THE PRINCIPLES OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE PUBLIC TRUST**

Public media organizations contribute to a strong civil society and active community life, provide access to knowledge and culture, extend education, and offer varied viewpoints and sensibilities.

The freedom of public media professionals to make editorial decisions without undue influence is essential. It is rooted in America's commitment to free speech and a free press. It is reflected in the unique and critical media roles that federal, state, and local leaders – of both major political parties – have encouraged and respected across the years. It is affirmed by the courts.

Trust is equally fundamental. Public media organizations create and reinforce trust through rigorous, voluntary standards for the integrity of programming and services, fundraising, community interactions, and organizational governance.

These standards of integrity apply to all the content public media organizations produce and present, regardless of subject matter, including news, science, history, information, music, arts, and culture. These standards apply across all public media channels and platforms – broadcasting, online, social media, print, media devices, and in-person events.

Public media, individually and collectively:

Contribute to communities' civic, educational, and cultural life by presenting a range of ideas and cultures and offering a robust forum for discussion and debate.

Commit to accuracy and integrity in the pursuit of facts about events, issues, and important matters that affect communities and people's lives.

Pursue fairness and responsiveness in content and services, with particular attention to reflecting diversity of demography, culture, and beliefs.

Aim for transparency in news gathering, reporting, and other content creation and share the reasons for important editorial and programming choices.

Protect the editorial process from the fact and appearance of undue influence, exercising care in seeking and accepting funds and setting careful boundaries between contributors and content creators.

Encourage understanding of fundraising operations and practices, acknowledge program sponsors, and disclose content-related terms of sponsor support.

Maintain respectful and accountable relationships with individual and organizational contributors.

Seek editorial partnerships and collaborations to enhance capacity, perspective, timeliness, and relevance and apply public media standards to these arrangements.

Expect employees to uphold public media's integrity in their personal as well as their professional lives, understanding that employee actions, even when "off the clock," affect trust, integrity, credibility, and impartiality.

Promote the common good, the public interest, and these commitments to integrity and trustworthiness in organizational governance, leadership, and management.

## **OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES**

Employees are free to engage in outside activities, whether or not such activities are remunerative or related to staff members' fields of academic interest or specialization. However, no employee may engage in an outside activity if it conflicts with his or her public responsibilities to WUWM. When it appears that a material conflict may arise between the personal interests of a staff member and his or her public responsibilities to the university, the staff member shall notify supervisor by submitting a written statement describing the nature of the possible conflict. All outside activities must be reported annually.

## **EMPLOYEE'S ACTIVITIES BEYOND THEIR PUBLIC MEDIA WORK**

The actions of our employees, even when "off the clock," affect public trust in our integrity, credibility, and impartiality. We expect employees to uphold our integrity in their personal and well as their professional lives.

We respect the active personal lives of public media employees and their many interests, activities, and relationships. We are mindful, though, that employees' activities beyond their public media work can affect our reputation and public trust. We therefore ask employees to integrate the principles and values of public media editorial integrity into their personal lives.

All public media employees should:

Aspire to high standards of integrity and ethics in their personal lives, including dealings with friends and associates, public behavior, and use of social media.

Be alert and sensitive to conflicts of interest between personal interests (including family members) and their professional public media responsibility.

Make a distinction between communications that are part of professional public media responsibilities and all other communications.

Exercise careful judgment about, limit, and in some cases forego, engaging in partisan activities or advocacy regarding controversial issues of public importance.

## **POLITICAL ACTIVITY**

WUWM employees may not engage in any political activity at work unless it is directly related to their job duties. WUWM employees vote. This is a private matter, but because members of the public, donors and others regularly visit the department, we do not display political cartoons, stickers or posters at our work stations and offices.

## **USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media sites are being created on a regular basis. Some like Facebook and Twitter are becoming a part of everyone's daily life. But, activities that we intend to be private may impact the image of WUWM as viewed by members of the public. Anyone who has access to the Internet may be able to access communications. All employees are free to express their personal views in a private setting, but need to be careful as the definition of 'private' is evolving.

Because WUWM is a department within a public institution, any email or other communication sent on a University computer may become public if there is a request for public records.

## **PERSONAL GAIN ASSOCIATED WITH WUWM EMPLOYMENT**

No member of the unclassified staff may, in a manner contrary to the interests of the University of Wisconsin system, use or attempt to use his or her public position or state property, including property leased by the state, to gain or attempt to gain anything of substantial value for the private benefit of the staff member, his or her immediate family or any organization with which the staff member is associated. No employee may solicit or accept from any person or organization anything of value pursuant to an express or implied understanding that his or her conduct of university business would be influenced thereby. No employee may intentionally use or disclose confidential university information in any way that could result in the receipt of anything of value for himself or herself, for his or her immediate family or for any other person or organization with which the staff member is associated. Nominal gifts (such as coffee mugs, T-shirts and books) may be accepted by an employee as long as it does not impact any action or decision by the employee.

## **PAYOLA AND PLUGOLA**

According to the Federal Communications Commission, any broadcast station employee who has accepted or agreed to accept payment for the airing of program material, and the person making or promising to make the payment, must disclose this information to the station prior to the airing of the program. Similarly, the FCC strictly prohibits 'plugola' or the illicit practice of endorsing a product or service on radio or television for personal gain. Violators may be subject to the loss of employment, substantial fines or imprisonment.

### **NEPOTISM AND EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS**

No employee may participate, formally or informally, in the decision to hire, retain, promote or determine the salary of a member of his or her immediate family.

### **OWNERSHIP OF WORK PRODUCT**

As employees of the University of Wisconsin System, all work product is owned by the Board of Regents.

### **THE COMMON SENSE PRINCIPLE**

It is not possible for a document like this to address all possible situations that may occur. When an issue arises employees should discuss the matter with their supervisor. The supervisor should seek guidance from the general manager. The general manager may seek the guidance of others with expertise in journalist ethics. The decision of the General Manager is eligible for review by the Dean of the College of Letters and Science at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. UWWM employees who do not comply with the Code may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Additional information on the UW System Code of Ethics may be found at:

[www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/uws/uws.html](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/uws/uws.html)

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