

Student Journalists Get No Respect

Contributed by Victoria Staples--Black College Wire
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We're just trying to report the news

One day I was going through a stack of News Argus issues, and all I could do was shake my head in frustration as I thought about the trouble The News Argus senior staff and reporters go through to produce the paper.

It is probably safe to speculate that many in the WSSU community have ever wondered or cared about what it takes to get the paper out twice monthly. We [The News Argus] are the official student newspaper and we have rights, and they are being ignored. I cannot understand why we reporters are consistently being sent here and there by the faculty and staff of the University as we go on our quest to collect accurate information for our news assignments.

I recall a story I was assigned.

If only I had known what I was getting myself into, I would have never taken the story.

I contacted source after source and received more information online than I did in person.

When I finally found someone to interview, that person was told not to tell me anything.

A day later, I managed to pull together a story to meet my deadline, but it did not contain enough information to make it newsworthy.

Does the staff or faculty have something to hide?

The News Argus is not a controversial newspaper.

We have no intent to harm anyone's reputation.

We are simply attempting to report the truth.

It seems there is always something hindering our progress. There was a time when we could not get access to the Campus Police Crime Blotter, but we persevered and now we publish it regularly.

In another instance, at least two staff reporters attempted to write a story about the 10-year suspension of the campus chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. No one was willing to talk on record.

After multiple attempts, we had to turn the DST incident into a picture story. [Oct. 19 issue]

We understand and respect that some topics are taboo, but we also need others to understand that under the First Amendment, we have rights. And we deserve respect as well as cooperation.

We are student journalists and we have deadlines.

We are writing and reporting stories to earn a passing grade in our class. Missing deadlines due to lack of communication or information places us further from our goals.

We are polite and respectful when we attempt to make appointments for interviews, and we try to accommodate our sources' schedules. We understand that many of the persons we want to interview have busy schedules, but if we ask for something as simple as an e-mail response, it would be nice if our e-mails are not deleted or ignored.

We go through great lengths to make the award-winning News Argus successful.

We hope that the WSSU faculty and staff will be more friendly, more flexible, and more willing to assist us as we write stories that are accurate, fair, balanced and newsworthy.

Victoria Staples writes for The News Argus, the Winston-Salem State University student newspaper, which originally published this article.

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