



Stony Brook University

Stony Brook Student Journalists

Rights and Responsibilities

What You Need to Know:

It is imperative that you prominently display your press pass when you are on location on a newsgathering assignment.

You must identify yourself in a clear, professional manner and be able to articulate the purpose of your newsgathering clearly and concisely.

It is very important that you inform the appropriate contacts that you will be reporting and/or shooting at their location. **This is not the same as asking permission. It is a professional courtesy.**

It is very important that you contact the person with direct jurisdiction over a given area.

As a General Rule:

Student reporters on a public university campus must have the access and freedom to cover their school so that the public can know how students are being educated, how its tax money is being spent, and what events are taking place on school property.

Newsgathering provides a public service for those in the campus community and beyond.

There is a long line of court decisions recognizing the importance of free inquiry and debate on American college campuses. While there may be specific areas where newsgathering activities can be limited, *such as inside classrooms or administrative offices or dormitory rooms*, the presumption is that all other areas of the campus must be open to lawful newsgathering activities.

Under the law, no special permission for newsgathering is required.

Student journalists cannot be treated differently than any other student on campus.

If an area or scene is open to Stony Brook students, it must be open to student journalists. It is undisputed that the media should have at least as much access as the general public.

Student journalists do not need any special permission to speak with fellow students or professors or to take photos or videotape in public areas where students are normally allowed.

Exceptions:

If newsgathering activities are deemed to create a “material disruption” of the academic environment.

(Administrators cannot stop reporting activities because they *believe* or are *concerned* that disruption might occur. They must make a *fact-specific showing* of why disruption is likely to occur.)

If the newsgathering will create a security or safety risk for the student journalists or others.

In any location where people have a reasonable expectation of personal privacy, such as the office of a faculty member or administrator, a restroom, a locker room, a dormitory room, etc.

For instance, they should not disrupt a class in session for an interview or block traffic in a hallway. Both SUNY and Stony Brook University have Rules of Public Order that are to be followed. They can be found online at:

http://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=351

and

<http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/ucs/order.shtml>

What To Do If You Believe You Are Wrongfully Denied Access:

You should, in a convincing and professional manner, state the reasons that you believe you should be given access.

THIS IS THE STATEMENT YOU SHOULD MAKE:

Under the law, I am permitted to be in this area—to photograph and to interview individuals. A public university campus is open to student journalists engaged in newsgathering activities.

You may suggest that the individual who is denying access call the Campus Police to verify this.

You may want to find another spot close to the scene and stay there until the restrictions are lifted, or until you are able to speak with someone with more authority. If the problem persists, call your instructor or the Dean’s office.

Note: These guidelines were compiled with the assistance of the Student Press Law Center and the NYS Committee on Open Government.

In Addition:

Hospitals and Clinics on Campus: You can shoot the buildings, but we are sensitive to filming people going into and out of healthcare facilities. That doesn't mean people can't be in your shots but that you should avoid shots where individuals can be identified. We do many stories where shots of the university hospital are necessary and campus security may not stop you from shooting the exterior of the building. As above, if you are challenged, suggest the individual call Campus Police for verification.

If you need to shoot inside the hospital, **you are required to ask permission in advance** from hospital media relations.

Crime/Accident Scenes: Generally, you are free to shoot as long as you are behind the police tape or outside the areas from which the public is restricted.

You do not have the right to block traffic or endanger bystanders or officials by your actions (setting up a camera in the middle of the street) but you should not be treated any differently from any other citizen at the scene. Police may not order you to stand farther away than any bystander. Police may ask you to not film a witness to a crime with whom they are speaking.

No police officer has the right to confiscate your camera or equipment, no matter what you have shot and under no circumstances should you allow your camera to be taken. You do not have to surrender your camera without a court order. If the officer insists, ask to speak with a police supervisor and call your instructor or the School of Journalism immediately.

You cannot be arrested for covering a crime scene, unless you cross police lines or interfere with an investigation.

If you feel that you are being treated unfairly by a police officer (for example: you are being singled out because you have a camera) or that the officer is attempting to intimidate you, it is important to continue to record. You can point the camera away or even take it off the tripod but do not stop rolling. You will be getting audio and this can be extremely important evidence.

Most authorities will treat you fairly but you may run into an officer who does not. No matter what happens, act professionally, clarify instructions ("Officer, are you saying I can't shoot the scene at all or just not from here?") and always keep rolling.