

**SUNY** Cobleskill  
**Communications Guide**

**Policies and procedures for  
consistent high-quality communication**

***Office of Communications and Marketing***  
**January 2019**

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## Introduction

The Office of Communications and Marketing advocates for SUNY Cobleskill. The office's mission is to enhance the College's public image, increase awareness of SUNY Cobleskill's accomplishments, and assure consistency of image and quality in all College communications. The Office of Communications and Marketing works to build and strengthen relationships with local media outlets and other organizations; answers outside inquiries; assists the campus community with the process of providing information; promotes the SUNY Cobleskill brand by effectively implementing communications strategies; and provides creative services and guidance.

Institutional image is the sum total of all information and experiences that stakeholders have with an institution. Every contact between institution and stakeholder builds that image, for better or worse, and will influence stakeholder willingness to either provide or withhold support for the institution – as a prospective student, prospective employee, donor, corporate partner, or legislator.

The reputation of SUNY Cobleskill depends, in part, upon how the College is perceived, thus it is critical that identity be consistently communicated to all stakeholders and constituents. SUNY Cobleskill's Office of Communications and Marketing are charged with:

- assisting the campus community with the process of providing information;
- influencing opinion and promoting understanding of the mission and programs of the College;
- promoting the SUNY Cobleskill brand by consistently and effectively implementing communications strategies;
- providing creative services and guidance.

In order to enhance SUNY Cobleskill's reputation and image, the Office of Communications and Marketing is responsible for assuring consistency of image and quality in all College communications. The office's goal is to assist constituents in communicating their messages to intended audiences in a professional and cost-effective manner.

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## **Media Contact Policy**

The Director of Communications and Marketing serves as spokesperson and conveys the official College position on issues of general College-wide impact or significance, or that are of a controversial or sensitive nature. Inquiries from the media regarding such issues should be immediately referred to the Director of Communications and Marketing. Depending on specific circumstances, the President or Director of Communications and Marketing may designate another College representative to serve as spokesperson.

Members of the faculty and staff may receive requests from the media regarding their research, scholarship, teaching or professional expertise. In such cases, faculty and staff are asked to notify the Director of Communications and Marketing at the time of the request and before responding. Notification allows for a coordinated response and assists the Office of Communications and Marketing in building relationships with various media and highlighting the College's notoriety.

Should a member of the media contact an employee and ask to speak about SUNY Cobleskill or anything pertaining to the manner in which SUNY Cobleskill has, plans to, or currently conducts its business, the inquiry should be referred to the Office of Communications and Marketing. The authorized spokespersons for SUNY Cobleskill is:

Jim Feldman  
Director of Communications and Marketing  
518-255-5631

## **When a Reporter Calls**

Guidelines for communicating with the media when the issue is non-controversial and limited to the faculty/staff member's area of expertise:

- Consult with the Director of Communications and Marketing prior to answering any inquiries. We are here to help.
- Obtain the name of the person calling, the media organization, and contact information if possible. Notify the Director of Communications and Marketing with applicable information to determine if you will respond or if the Office of Communications and Marketing will respond.

- Do not feel compelled to conduct a phone or in-person interview. You may ask the reporter to e-mail specific questions. Consult with the Director of Communications and Marketing prior to answering questions.
- Do not speculate. It's ok to not know the answer to a question. Avoid "no comment," as it often has a negative connotation.
- Make sure the reporter understands your answers. In many cases, you are the expert educating the reporter and, in turn, the media outlet's audience.
- Remember that you are representing SUNY Cobleskill. Personal opinions should be clearly and carefully identified as such.
- Do not say anything you would not want published, even if you think you are speaking "off the record."
- Issues that should not be discussed with reporters include: legal issues, personnel issues, matters of university integrity, campus crises or emergency situations. Refer all such inquiries to the Director of Communications and Marketing.
- Any inquiries involving specific students are subject to FERPA regulations (see following page) and should be directed to the Office of Communications and Marketing.
- Any inquiries involving specific faculty or staff members should be directed to the Office of Communications and Marketing.

## **Press Coverage**

Help the Communications & Marketing Office get the story out about exciting developments at SUNY Cobleskill. Use the information in this section to make the most of C&M's media distribution services.

We consider the same news values taught to every reporter and editor. The ones that most concern us are:

- **Timeliness**
  - Something upcoming, that just happened, or is happening now.
  - For us, it means we need to know in advance so we can get the word out to appropriate media outlets and get reporters here if appropriate and possible.
  - If something newsworthy is about to happen, please let us know as far in advance as possible.
- **Impact**
  - Addresses the question, "Who is this important to?" The more people affected, the more newsworthy.
  - For us, it means capitalizing on trends like farm-to-table and STEM, highlighting initiatives or events that have community or regional implications, or addressing state or national issues.
  - Note: It is our job to view this from the eyes of reporters and editors. We know

there are lots of reasons more people *should* care about lots of things — and sometimes we can make that case. But we need to be realistic with our expectations and pitches.

- *Examples:*
  - **Fermentation Science** got national coverage via the Associated Press – brewing is big (yes, it is more than that — but that’s why it got covered).
  - Our **water monitoring** work on the Mohawk River gets coverage for its broad implications for many communities in the region.
  - **START-UP NY** news always gets coverage because it is a hot-button issue at the state level
  - **Institute for Rural Vitality** involves regional partners and has regional implications
- **Prominence**
  - If it involves a well-known public figure, it is more likely to get coverage.
  - For us, that could be a visit by a government official, but it also includes things like Chef Yono participating in our Culinary Extravaganza.
- **Novelty**
  - First. Only. Best. Unusual.
  - Our Therapeutic Horsemanship is an excellent example of novelty because it is new to most people.
  - We were the first in SUNY to implement an Applied Learning requirement.
- **Human Interest**
  - These are just good, person-focused stories.
  - *Examples:*
    - Anthony Yevoli overcomes leukemia to return to the lacrosse field.
    - Alexis Halstead wins national timbersports championship

Other News Values of Less Concern for Us:

- **Proximity.** Readers care about news that is geographically close to them. The bigger the news, the farther it can reach.
- **Conflict.** This covers things like crime, politics, war, natural disasters, etc.
- **Currency.** This refers to trends in news and culture. They can be long-term trends (like the farm-to-table trend) or cyclical things like back-to-school season, summer fashion, etc.

### Press Releases or Blog Posts

If a story fits one or more of those criteria really well, a press release may be appropriate. We have a variety of curated distribution lists for different topics to get the news to the most receptive audience.

If the event/news item has already happened or is mostly of interest within the SUNY Cobleskill community, we will write it up as a blog post and push it out via social media.

## What We Need to Know

- Advance notice of an event or activity
- Basic details: who, what, where, when, why
- A quote or two from organizers or prominent participants
  - These should add some personality to the release and give some “insider” context for why it’s important. They should be 2-3 sentences at most. C&M can help craft quotes if needed.
- Photos
  - Should be as high resolution as possible
  - Should be horizontal/landscape orientation
  - Should have basic caption information: WHO is doing WHAT

## How to Tell Us

- Use the *Communications & Marketing Request Form* on our office webpage to make a formal request and initiate the discussion.
- For upcoming news stories and events, email or call Jim Feldman, Director of Communications & Marketing

## Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)

College students’ rights or privacy and access regarding their educational records are articulated in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), commonly known as the Buckley Amendment. The Act helps protect the privacy of student records by requiring that institutions limit the disclosure of information from these records to third persons, notify students (or their parents, if dependency has been established) of the rights to review the student educational records and the right to seek correction of information contained in the records.

The Buckley Amendment deals only with educational records. Its provisions extend protection to students enrolled or formerly enrolled in higher education institutions regardless of whether they are 18 years old. Except in the case of dependent students, parents have no access to the records of students in post-secondary institutions. Although FERPA provides students the opportunity to challenge the accuracy of their educational records, it does not permit students to challenge grades or other evaluations of academic performance.



Institutions must allow individuals to inspect their transcripts and other educational records, but they are not required by FERPA to issue to students certified copies of students' transcripts. Institutions also may withhold copies of the transcripts of students who have defaulted on college loans or who have not met their financial obligations to the institutions. Harmful and improper university disclosure of a student's record may sustain a claim of violation or privacy rights in states whose laws extend the right of privacy to student records. Inquiries regarding this policy and requests for a complete policy statement are to be directed to the Office of the Registrar, Knapp Hall 101, 518-255-5521.

SUNY Cobleskill has designated directory information, according to FERPA as Amended, to be the student's: 1) full name; 2) campus or local address; 3) local telephone number; 4) home address; 5) major; 6) department; 7) dates of attendance; 8) date(s) of graduation; 9) degree(s) awarded; 10) awards; 11) full-time/part-time status; 12) birth date; and 13) e-mail address. This information can be released with prior written consent from the student. All other educational records will be released only under compliance with FERPA. Students currently enrolled at SUNY Cobleskill may object to the release of certain categories of "directory information" pertaining to them by providing written notification to the Office of the Registrar, Knapp Hall 101, within 14 days following the first day of classes each semester.

Emergency situations will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

## **Freedom of Information Law (FOIL)**

New York State's Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) pertains to the public's right to review certain government records. The Committee on Open Government is an office of the New York State Department of State, and it oversees all aspects of FOIL across the state.

Some information may be downloaded directly from the SUNY Cobleskill website, or information can be requested via the United States Postal Service or via email. Whenever possible, SUNY Cobleskill will supply electronic records in response to email requests. All record requests should be as specific as possible so that the College may easily identify which records maintained by SUNY Cobleskill are responsive to the inquiry.

All FOIL requests may be addressed to:

**Jim Feldman**

Director of Communications and Marketing

Knapp Hall

SUNY Cobleskill

Cobleskill, NY 12043

518-255-5631

[feldmajs@cobleskill.edu](mailto:feldmajs@cobleskill.edu)

### **FOIL Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What happens to requests when received?**

Requests are date stamped and recorded for our records and the department or office responsible for the records sought is notified of a request for those records. The department or office will then identify and locate the records requested. These are reviewed responsiveness to the request and compliance with the Freedom of Information Law. The materials are duplicated and sections that are determined to be non-releasable are blacked out. Dated or lengthy records may take some time to assemble.

#### **How soon can I expect an answer?**

The records access officer will mail or email the requestor an acknowledgement within five business days of receipt of the request and advise that the requestor may expect a response within 20 business days. If notice of completion of the request has not been received within 20 business days, the requestor should contact the records access officer listed above.

#### **What items are exempt from disclosure?**

Article 6 of the Public Officers Law, Section 87, includes nine conditions for denial of access. Some of the most common requests that involve exemption from disclosure are:

- Anything that may result in an unwarranted invasion or personal privacy. For example: home telephone numbers, home addresses, and Social Security numbers;
- Trade secrets – records that if released could cause harm to the competitive position of a business or enterprise;
- Information gathered for law enforcement purposes which, if disclosed, could interfere with due process;
- Lists of names and addresses which would be used for commercial or fundraising activities.

Please be advised that the Freedom of Information Law pertains to access to existing records. SUNY Cobleskill is not required to create a record containing information sought when one does not exist, or to compile existing records.

**What if I want to appeal a determination that some or all of the records that I have requested are being withheld?**

Where SUNY Cobleskill does not timely respond to a FOIL request, or if a request for access to records has been denied in whole or in part, an appeal may be filed with the FOIL Appeals Officer. An appeal should be sent in writing to the following address:

FOIL Appeals Officer  
State University of New York  
State University Plaza  
Albany, NY 12246  
Phone: 518-473-1825

Once an appeal is received, the FOIL Appeals Officer will mail an acknowledgement of its receipt to the individual filing the appeal. The FOIL Appeals Officer will conduct an independent review of the records that were withheld.

The FOIL Appeals Officer will issue a final determination. If the determination is to release records, the individual filing the appeal will be notified of the cost of reproducing the records and, alternatively where he or she may review the records.

## **Social Media Policy**

The State University of New York and SUNY Cobleskill encourage the appropriate use of social media as a method for communicating ideas and information, and as part of the educational mission. This policy governs employees of SUNY Cobleskill and the behavior of individuals as they utilize a variety of social media technologies and is not limited to any specific media format.

Social media is defined as internet or mobile digital tools and systems used to share and/or receive information or conversation.

Personal use of social media on personal time is not governed by this policy. However, individuals may not make statements or take actions at any time on social media that violate applicable law or SUNY policy. Violating actions or statements over social media with a nexus to State employment may be governed by SUNY policy.

Personal use of social media on State time is governed by the New York State Public Officers Law and other federal, State and Local laws; the State University of New York Acceptable Use Policy as issued by the Office of Administrative Systems; and SUNY Human Resources policies.

Unless specifically authorized by the Office of Communications and Marketing, no SUNY Cobleskill employee may create an “official” SUNY presence on any form of social media, now in existence, or created in the future, or represent themselves as a spokesperson or authorized representative of SUNY Cobleskill. Faculty or staff using a SUNY Cobleskill email address to create or post comments to social media platforms, or who reference their professional affiliation to SUNY Cobleskill, should include the following disclaimer: *The comments and/or postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily reflect SUNY Cobleskill's opinion, strategies or policies.*

SUNY Cobleskill's Office of Communications and Marketing utilizes various social media platforms to present information and content to the public and receive feedback from the public and the SUNY Cobleskill community. Content and information released on social media is equivalent to content and information released to the press and the public in any other format, including press releases, letters to the media, open letters to the public, etc. Care must be taken that content and information released over social media is accurate, does not violate applicable laws (including, but not limited to, copyright, trademark and defamation law) or SUNY policy.

Official SUNY Cobleskill social media may allow members of the public to comment or react to posted content and information. Employees of SUNY Cobleskill acting in their personal capacity may post or comment anonymously or identifiably.

SUNY Cobleskill invites discussion of important ideas and issues through social media. However, SUNY Cobleskill reserves the right to remove posts or comments that are obscene, defamatory, offensive, contain threats of violence, abusive, spam or advertising, or unrelated to the content or information. SUNY Cobleskill also reserves the right to remove posts or comments that violate applicable laws including, but not limited to, copyright and trademark, or those that violate the use policies promulgated by the applicable social media provider.

SUNY Cobleskill's use of social media is governed by Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which provides a safe harbor for Internet Service Providers and websites for activity that takes place on said sites, provided that the site or domain takes certain actions when legally required.

## **CobyNow**

*CobyNow* is SUNY Cobleskill's daily e-newsletter for faculty and staff. Distributed by the Office of Communications and Marketing, *CobyNow* includes college-related news and notes for members of the campus community. To submit information for *CobyNow*, please use the link at the bottom of any *CobyNow* issue.

## **Sharepoint Policy**

SUNY Cobleskill's Employee and Student Sharepoint is to be used exclusively for the posting of College-related events, activities, programs and news sponsored by academic or administrative departments. The College also offers a Community Events section on Sharepoint dedicated to promoting events sponsored by not-for-profit organizations or government/state agencies supporting community enhancement initiatives.

SUNY Cobleskill reserves the right to deny any posting deemed inconsistent with the College's mission and will not promote political or illegal activities. Access to Employee Sharepoint and other electronic resources of SUNY Cobleskill is contingent on the use being in accordance with the policies of the College. Failure to adhere to the stated policy may result in access being denied in the future.

## **Route 7 Electronic Sign Policies and Procedures**

The electronic message center located at the main campus entrance will be used to welcome visitors to campus (for example, "Welcome Accepted Students"), publicize events which are open to the public (concerts, gallery shows, special events, Homecoming Weekend, etc.), and provide brief instructions to those arriving for events ("New students check in at your residence hall"). The sign may only be used for publicizing college-related events.

The Office of Student Affairs is responsible for editing requests and placing announcements on the sign. Requests should be submitted by e-mailing [THORINSL@Cobleskill.edu](mailto:THORINSL@Cobleskill.edu) at least seven days prior to the dates on which the message will run. Please provide all information about the event you wish to promote.

Format and phrasing of the message will be determined by the Office of Student Affairs. Use of animation must be limited due to memory restrictions and will, therefore, be determined by the Office of Student Affairs. Not all requests can be honored. When there are conflicting requests, the Office of Student Affairs will determine postings.

## **Print Shop**

The SUNY Cobleskill Print Shop provides the following services:

- Two-color printing (ex: business cards, brochures, campus letterhead)
- Wide format printing up to 42 inches in width. (NOTE: Ink is not weather resistant and will fade even if laminated). Printing is available on canvas, photo gloss, high gloss, heavy weight paper and scrim.
- Two-, three-, and four-fold brochures
- Newsletters (folded/saddle-stitched)
- Invitations and Response Cards (no envelopes)
- Event programs, tickets, raffle tickets (un-numbered)
- Certificates
- Transparencies
- Postcards
- Hang Tags
- Laminating up to 22 inches in width.
- Scanning
- High Volume Copying
- Foam Core Mounting
- Drilling/Hole Punch (2 & 3 hole)
- Plastic Comb Binding
- Folding
- Perforating (score one direction/full sheet only)
- Collating/Stapling

For Print Shop pricing or additional information, contact the Print Shop at 518-255-5655.

## **Advertising Policy**

All print, broadcast or digital advertisements for SUNY Cobleskill, its programs and events, must be approved in advance by the Office of Communications and Marketing.

Departments/individuals wishing to place advertisements are responsible for contacting and working with the Office of Communications and Marketing, which will provide consultation, copywriting, design, reproduction files and photography/videography produced internally if required. Departments/individuals are responsible for reserving advertising space and processing payment. Final submission of the advertisement will be done by the Office of Communications and Marketing in conjunction with the requesting department/individual. The department/individual placing the advertisement is responsible for proofreading and fact-checking the content prior to submission.

## **Non-Discrimination Statement**

For printed or electronic publications regarding student recruitment or employment (i.e. booklets, large brochures, magazines, newsletters, job postings and large advertisements):

*The State University of New York College of Agriculture and Technology at Cobleskill is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution that subscribes to all federal, state and SUNY legal requirements and does not discriminate against applicants, students or employees on the basis of race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, age, disability, or marital or veteran status.*

For small printed or electronic publications regarding employment when space is limited (i.e. stationary, small advertisements, one-page brochures, fliers, etc.):

*SUNY Cobleskill is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.*

For advertisements and bulletins regarding events sponsored by the College, the following line should be added to one of the above statements:

*SUNY Cobleskill provides reasonable accommodations for the disabled with adequate notice. Please contact (add name and number) at least (insert number) days prior to the event date.*

## **Editorial Style Guide**

SUNY Cobleskill's Office of College Relations/Communications and Marketing follows *The Associated Press Stylebook* (AP). This guide is a reference for the SUNY Cobleskill community to ensure consistency, clarity and accuracy among print and online publications directed to external audiences. The style guide is not meant to govern academic publications or everyday internal communications (i.e. email messages, syllabi, class or department handouts, etc.). Its purpose is to help the campus community present unified and consistent external messages. The most common issues related to higher education are noted here.

**The name of the College is State University of New York College of Agriculture and Technology at Cobleskill. SUNY Cobleskill is the only acceptable abbreviation. At no time should the College be referred to as "Cobleskill" or "Cobleskill College."**

### **ABBREVIATIONS**

**Before a name:** Abbreviate the following titles when used before a full name outside direct quotations: *Dr., Gov., Lt. Gov., Mr., Mrs., Rep., the Rev., Sen.* Spell out all except *Dr., Mr. and Mrs.*, when they are used before a name in direct quotations.

**After a name:** Abbreviate *junior (Jr.)* or *senior (Sr.)* after an individual's name. Abbreviate *company (Co.), corporation (Corp.), incorporated (Inc.)* and *limited (Ltd.)* when used after the name of a corporate entity. Do not precede by a comma.

**With dates or numerals:** Use the abbreviation A.D., B.C., a.m., p.m., when used with the day or the month (NOTE: upper and lowercases, as well as inclusion of periods). The abbreviations are correct only with figures. *In 450 B.C.; at 9:30 a.m.; in room No. 6; on Sept. 16.*

**Months:** Capitalize the names of months in all uses. When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec. Spell out when using alone, or with a year alone. *Jan. 5; January; January 2012.*

**Addresses:** Abbreviate *avenue (Ave.), boulevard (Blvd.)* and *street (St.)* in numbered addresses. *He lives on Pennsylvania Avenue. He lives at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.* Always



use numerical figures for an address number (ex. 9 Morningside Circle). Spell out and capitalize First through Ninth when used as street names.

## **ACADEMIC DEGREES**

**Capitalize** the title of degree. For example: Bachelor of Science; Master of Arts. But **lowercase** when generally referring to degree. For example: a bachelor's degree or a bachelor's.

**If mention of a degree is necessary to establish credentials, the preferred form is to avoid an abbreviation and use instead a phrase such as:** *John Jones, who has a doctorate in psychology.*

**The standard reference to degrees is: associate degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree or doctoral degree. There is no possessive in Bachelor of Arts or Master of Science.** Use abbreviations only after a full name; never after only a last name. When abbreviating degrees, use the following:

- Bachelor of Arts – B.A.
- Bachelor Business Administration – B.B.A.
- Bachelor of Science – B.S.
- Bachelor of Technology – B.T.
- Associate of Applied Science – A.A.S.
- Associate of Arts – A.A.
- Associate of Occupational Studies – A.O.S.
- Associate of Science – A.S.
- Master of Education – M.E.
- Master of Science – M.S.
- Master of Arts – M.A.
- Master of Fine Arts – M.F.A.
- Doctor of Philosophy – Ph.D.
- Doctor of Divinity – D.D.
- Doctor of Education – Ed.D.
- Doctor of Humane Letters – L.H.D.

**When used after a name, an academic abbreviation is set off by commas:**  
*Amelia Smith, Ph.D.*

**Do not precede and follow a name with a courtesy title for an academic degree. Using both Dr. and Ph.D. is redundant.**

**Correct:** Dr. Sam Jones      **Incorrect:** Dr. Sam Jones, Ph.D.

## **ACADEMIC TITLES**

Capitalize and spell out formal titles such as professor, dean, president, chancellor and chairman when they *precede* a name. Lowercase elsewhere. *Marion Terenzio, president of SUNY Cobleskill; President Marion Terenzio*

## **ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS**

Use lowercase except for words that are proper nouns or adjectives; *the department of history; the history department; the department of English; the English department*, or when *department* is part of the official and formal name: *SUNY Cobleskill Department of Plant Science*

## **ALUMNUS, ALUMNA, ALUMNI, ALUMNAE**

- Use **alumnus** when referring to a man who has attended a school (**alumni** is the plural)
- Use **alumna** for similar references to a woman (**alumnae** is the plural)
- **Alumni** is used when referring to a group of men and women
- John Smith '75 (NOTE: closed apostrophe)
- The class of '75 (NOTE: closed apostrophe)

## **ALMA MATER**

alma mater

## **AMPERSAND (&)**

**Use the ampersand when it is part of a formal name:** *Baltimore & Ohio Railroad*. The ampersand should not otherwise be used in place of *and*.

## **BUILDINGS**

Alumni Hall

Beard Wellness Center (2<sup>nd</sup> reference: wellness center)

Walton A. Brown Presidential Atrium (2<sup>nd</sup> reference: Brown Presidential Atrium)

Iorio Gymnasium

Bouck Auditorium

Bouck Ballroom

Brickyard Point

Champlin Dining Hall

Cobleskill College Child Care Center (2<sup>nd</sup> reference: child care center)  
Crittenden Athletic Fields (2<sup>nd</sup> reference: athletic fields)  
Curtis Mott Hall  
Dairy Complex  
Dow Agricultural Complex  
Equestrian Center  
Frederic R. Bennett Recreation Area & Ski Lodge (2<sup>nd</sup> reference: ski lodge)  
Frisbie Hall  
Hodder Hall  
Holmes Hall  
Home Economics  
Knapp Hall  
Neal Robbins Field House (2<sup>nd</sup> reference: field house)  
Old Gym  
Prentice Dining Hall  
Ryder Hall  
Warner Hall  
Wheeler Hall

## CAPITALIZATION

In general, avoid unnecessary capitals. Use a capital letter only if you can justify it by one of the principles listed below.

- **Proper Names:** *John, Mary, Boston, General Electric*
- **Proper Nouns:** Capitalize common nouns such as party, river, street when they are an integral part of the full name for a person, place or thing: *Delaware River; Main Street, the Democratic Party*
- **Lowercase** the common noun elements of names in all plural uses: *the Democratic and Republican parties; the Schuylkill and Delaware rivers; Montgomery and City Line avenues; Delaware and Chester counties*
- **Derivatives:**
  - Capitalize words that are derived from a proper noun and still depend on it for their meaning: *American; English; Shakespearean*
  - Lowercase words that are derived from a proper noun but no longer depend on it for their meaning: *french fries; herculean; venetian blind*
- **Do not capitalize** the words association, building, center, club, conference, college, committee, department, division, office, hall, board, trustees, etc., when used alone to refer to a specific place or group. *The college is nearing its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary.*

- **The word “College”** should only be capitalized when referring specifically to SUNY Cobleskill or when part of another institution’s official name (ex: Boston College)

## CITIES AND STATES

**Cities** – The following domestic cities standalone (do not need to be accompanied by a state) in datelines and basic copy:

Atlanta	Milwaukee
Baltimore	Minneapolis
Boston	New Orleans
Chicago	New York
Cincinnati	Oklahoma City
Cleveland	Philadelphia
Dallas	Phoenix
Denver	Pittsburgh
Detroit	St. Louis
Honolulu	Salt Lake City
Houston	San Antonio
Indianapolis	San Diego
Las Vegas	San Francisco
Los Angeles	Seattle
Miami	Washington

**States** – Spell out state names in body copy. Abbreviate in captions, bylines, lists, etc.

Ala. (AL)	Md. (MD)	N.D. (ND)
Ariz. (AZ)	Mass. (MA)	Okla. (OK)
Ark. (AR)	Mich. (MI)	Ore. (OR)
Calif. (CA)	Minn. (MN)	Pa. (PA)
Colo. (CO)	Miss. (MS)	R.I. (RI)
Del. (DE)	Mont. (MT)	S.D. (SD)
Fla. (FL)	Neb. (NE)	Tenn. (TN)
Ga. (GA)	Nev. (NV)	Vt. (VT)
Ill (IL)	N.H. (NH)	Va. (VA)
Ind. (IN)	N.J. (NJ)	Wash. (WA)
Kan. (KS)	N.M. (NM)	W. Va. (WV)
Ky. (KY)	N.Y. (NY)	Wis. (WI)
La. (LA)	N.C. (NC)	Wyo. (WY)

Eight states are not abbreviated in copy or datelines: Alaska (AK); Hawaii (HI); Idaho (ID); Iowa (IA); Maine (ME); Ohio (OH); Texas (TX); Utah (UT)

## COMMAS

**In a series:** Use a comma to separate all elements in a series (the Oxford comma rule).

For example:

**The flag is red, white, and blue.**

I had orange juice, ham and eggs, and toast for breakfast.

He would nominate Chris, Pat, or Terry.

**Use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases:** The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.

**With equal adjectives:** Use commas to separate a series of adjectives equal in rank. If the commas could be replaced by the word and without changing the sense, the adjectives are equal: a thoughtful, precise manner; a dark, dangerous street.

**Use no comma when the last adjective before a noun** outranks its predecessors because it is an integral element of a noun phrase, which is the equivalent of a single noun: *a cheap fur coat* (the noun phrase is fur coat); *the old oaken bucket*; *a new, blue spring bonnet*.

**With introductory clauses and phrases:** A comma normally is used to separate an introductory clause or phrase from a main clause: When he grew tired of the mad pace of New York, he moved to Philadelphia.

**The comma may be omitted after short introductory phrases if no ambiguity would result:** *During the night he heard many noises.* But use the comma if its omission would slow comprehension: *On the street below, the curious gathered.*

**Introducing direct quotes:** Use a comma to introduce a complete, one-sentence quotation within a paragraph: *Catherine said, "She spent six weeks in Italy and came back speaking English with an Italian accent.*

**Do not use a comma at the start of an indirect or partial quotation:** *He said his victory put him “firmly on the road to a new season record.”*

**With hometowns and ages:** Use a comma to set off an individual’s hometown when it is placed in apposition: *Mary Richards, Minneapolis, and Rhoda Morganstern, New York, where there.* However, the use of the word “of” without a comma between the individual’s name and the city name generally is preferred: *Mary Richards of Minneapolis and Rhoda Morganstern of New York were there.*

If an individual’s age is used, set it off by commas: *Mary Richards, 48, Minneapolis, was present.* Again, the use of the word “of” will eliminate the need for some of the commas.

**With Yes and No:** Yes, I will be there.

**In Large Figures:** Use a comma for most figures greater than 999. The major exceptions are street addresses (1234 Main Street), broadcast frequencies (1600 kilohertz), room numbers, serial numbers, telephone numbers, and years (1916).

## COMMITTEES

In the United States, a committee is an “it,” not a “they.” Committee *members*, on the other hand, are “people on a committee” or “they.” The same applies to a board, a department or an office. Therefore, *“The committee gave its recommendation.”* *Committee members recommend.”* Capitalize the names of committees.

## COMPOSITION TITLES

Use italics for titles of magazines, newspapers, books, movies, TV shows, lectures and speeches. Do not use underlines or quotation marks.

## COURTESY TITLES

**In general, do not use the courtesy titles** Miss, Mr., Mrs., or Ms., on first reference. Instead, use the first and last names of the person.

**Do not use Mr. in any reference to couples unless it is combined with Mrs.:** *Mr. and Mrs. John Doe.* If you are unaware of the marital status of a woman, use Ms. rather than Mrs. Always try to use a woman’s first name: *John and Jane Doe* is preferable to *Mr. and Mrs. John Doe.*

## CURRICULUM

**Capitalize the name of a course, but not a generic field of study:**

*He is taking Real World Mathematics.*

*A student needs a strong background in mathematics to become a physician.*

## DASH

Denote by typing two hyphens with a space on either side in all uses except the start of a paragraph. Follow these guidelines:

**Abrupt Change:** Use dashes to denote an abrupt change in thought in a sentence for an emphatic pause: *We will fly to Paris in June – if I get a raise. Smith offered a plan – it was unprecedented – to raise revenues.*

**Series Within a Phrase:** When a phrase that otherwise would be set off by commas contains a series of words that must be separated by commas, use dashes to set off the full phrase: *He listed the qualities – intelligence, charm, beauty, independence – that he liked in a woman.*

**Attribution:** “Who steals my purse steals trash.” – Shakespeare

## DATES AND TIME

**Always use Arabic figures for dates, without st, nd, rd or th:** *Nov. 1, 1998*

**Use figures for times except for noon and midnight.** Use a colon to separate hours from minutes. It isn’t necessary to indicate a time “on the hour” by typing :00. Avoid redundancies like 12 noon; 10 p.m. tonight.

**If the current year is implied, it isn’t necessary to write it out.** Use the year in text if it refers to past or future years. *Our January 2000 meeting. Our December 20 party.*

**Lowercase a.m. and p.m., with periods:** 9:30 a.m., 1 p.m., noon.

**Spaces between the hyphens with times:** 9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

## DAYS OF THE WEEK

**Capitalize. Do not abbreviate, except when needed in a tabular format:** Sun, Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat (three letters, without periods, in tabular composition).

## **DOLLARS AND CENTS**

**Use numerals and the word cents (all lowercase) for amounts less than a dollar:** 5 cents, 12 cents.

**Use the \$ sign and decimal for larger amounts:** \$1.25 million, \$2.55

**For whole dollar amounts, drop the decimals:** \$2, \$15, \$155

**For dollar figures greater than 999 a comma should be used:** \$12,000; \$500,000

## **ELLIPSIS (...)**

Use an ellipsis to indicate the deletion of one or more words in condensing quotes, texts and documents. Be especially careful to avoid deletions that would distort the meaning. In general, treat an ellipsis as a three-letter word, constructed with three periods and two spaces as ...

Punctuation guidelines: If the words that precede and ellipsis constitute a grammatically complete sentence, either in the original or in the condensation, place a period at the end of the last word *before* the ellipsis. Follow it with a regular space and an ellipsis: “*I no longer have a strong enough political base. ...*” (**NOTE:** There should be a period and then an ellipsis.)

When the grammatical sense calls for a question mark, exclamation point, comma or colon, the sequence is word, punctuation mark, regular space, ellipsis: *Will you come? ...*

**NOTE:** Avoid the use of an ellipsis except in the circumstances described above. An ellipsis should never replace a period, comma, or colon.

## **EMAIL**

Lowercase with no hyphen: *email*

## **FACULTY**

The word “faculty” pertains to a group of people, not one person. One person should be referred to as a faculty member.

## **GPA**

GPA is acceptable in all references for *grade-point average*



## HYPHENS

Hyphens are joiners. Use them to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words.

**Avoid Ambiguity:** Use a hyphen whenever ambiguity would result if it were omitted. *He recovered his health. He re-covered the leaky roof.*

**Compound Modifiers:** Use hyphens to link all the words in the compound except the adverb very and all adverbs that end in ly: *a full-time job; a part-time student; a better-qualified applicant; a know-it-all attitude; a very good time; an easily remembered rule. A fulltime student **but** the student attends full time.*

**Compound Proper Nouns and Adjectives:** *Italian-American; Mexican-American.* No hyphen, however, for *Latin American* or *French Canadian*.

**Avoid duplicated vowels, tripled consonants:** *anti-intellectual; pre-empt, shell-like; coop.*

**Listings of Multiple Hyphenated Terms:** *He received a 10- to 20-year prison sentence.*

**With the prefix “non,” hyphenate all except the following words, which have specific meanings of their own:** nonchalance; nonsense; nonchalant; nonsensical; nondescript. Other words and proper names preceded by “non” should be hyphenated: non-traditional; non-credit; non-German.

## INITIALS

**Use periods and no space when an individual uses initials instead of a first name:** *H.L. Mencken.*

## INTERNET REFERENCES

The words **internet** and **web** are lowercase. **Word Wide Web** is capitalized.

**website** is one word and lowercase

**home page** is two words lowercase

## **JUNIOR/SENIOR**

**Abbreviate as Jr. and Sr. only with full names of persons. Do not precede by a comma:**

*John F. Kennedy Jr.*

## **NAMES**

People are entitled to be known however they want to be known, as long as their identities are clear. A nickname should be used in place of a person's given name only when it is the way the individual prefers to be known: *Magic Johnson*

## **NUMERALS**

**In general, spell out whole numbers below 10; use figures for 10 and above:** *He has a fleet of 10 station wagons and two buses. They had 10 dogs, six cats and 97 hamsters.*

Spell out a numeral at the beginning of a sentence. If necessary, recast the sentence:

**WRONG:** 993 freshmen entered the college last year.

**RIGHT:** Last year, 993 freshmen entered the college.

## **PHONE NUMBERS**

Use figures. The form: *518-255-5638*. If extension numbers are needed, use a comma to separate the main number from the extension: *518-255-5638, ext. 2*.

## **POSSESSIVES**

**Plural nouns not ending in "s":** Add "'s": *the alumni's contributions; women's rights*.

**Plural nouns ending in "s":** Add only an apostrophe: *the churches' needs; the girls' toys; the horses' food*.

**Singular nouns not ending in "s":** Add "'s": *the girl's toy; the horse's food*.

**Singular common nouns ending in "s":** Add "'s" unless the next word begins with s: *the hostess's invitation; the hostess' seat; the witness's answer; the witness' story*.

**Singular proper names ending in "s":** Use only an apostrophe: *Achilles' heel; Agnes' book; Xerxes' armies*.

**Special Expressions:** The following exceptions to the general rule for words not ending in “s” apply to words that end in an “s” sound and are followed by a word that begins with “s”: *for appearance sake*. Use “’s” otherwise: *the appearance’s cost; my conscience’s voice*.

**Joint Possession, Individual Possession:** Use a possessive form after only the last word if ownership is joint: *Fred and Sylvia’s apartment; Fred and Sylvia’s stocks*.

**Use a possessive form after both words if the objects are individually owned:** *Fred’s and Sylvia’s books*.

**Descriptive Phrases:** Do not add an apostrophe to a word ending in “s” when it is used primarily in a descriptive sense: *citizens band radio; a teachers college; a writers guide; our speakers bureau*.

**An ’s is required when a term involves a plural word that does not end in s:** *a children’s hospital; a people’s republic*.

**Quasi Possessives:** Follow the rules above in composing the possessive form of words that occur in such phrases as: *a day’s pay; two weeks’ vacation; three days’ work; your money’s worth*. Frequently, a hyphenated form is clearer; *two-week vacation; a three-day job*.

## QUOTATION MARKS

**The period and comma always go within the quotation marks.** The dash, semicolon, question mark and exclamation point go within the quotations marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

*He said, “I am shocked and horrified by the incident.”*

*He said he was “shocked and horrified by the incident.”*

*“I do not object,” he said, “to the tenor of the report.”*

**Quotation within Quotation:** Alternate between double quotation marks (“or”) and single marks (‘or’): *She said, “I quote from his letter, ‘I agree with Kipling that “the female of the species is more deadly than the male,” but the phenomenon is not an unchangeable law of nature,’ a remark he did not explain.”*

**Use three marks together if two quoted elements end at the same time:** *She said, “He told me, “I love you.””*

## SENTENCES

Use only one space between sentences – not two.

## THAT, WHICH

Use **that** and **which** in referring to inanimate objects and to animals without a name.

Use **that** for essential clauses, important to the meaning of a sentence, and without commas: *I remember the day that we met.* Use **which** for nonessential clauses, where the pronoun is less necessary, and use commas: *The team, which finished last year a year ago, is in first place.*

## WHO, WHOM

**Who** is the pronoun used for references to human beings and to animals with a name. It is grammatically the subject (never the object) of a sentence, clause or phrase: *The woman who rented the room left the window open. Who is there?*

**Whom** is used when someone is the object of a verb or preposition: *The woman to whom the room was rented left the window open. Whom do you wish to see?*