



## POLICY

Title: PRINCIPLES OF EDITORIAL INTEGRITY IN MILWAUKEE PBS	Code: 10200
Authority: Board Minutes, 6/28/88; 12/16/08; 12/18/18	Original Adoption: 6/28/88 Revised/Reviewed: 10/26/18 Effective: 12/18/18

The mission of Milwaukee PBS is to use television and related media to bring to our community the highest accomplishments of our society and civilization in all of its rich diversity, to permit talented individuals to fulfill the potential of public media to educate and inform, and to provide opportunities to diverse groups of citizens to benefit from content unavailable from other sources.

The men and women of the MATC District Board are custodians of the college's fiscal reputation, a currency necessary to acquire support from those whose taxes and donations make public broadcasting possible. They are also the final guardians of public broadcasting's editorial integrity and its reputation in the marketplace of ideas, where reputation is legal tender.

Editorial integrity in public broadcasting means the responsible application by professional practitioners of a free and independent decision-making process which is ultimately accountable to the needs and interests of all citizens.

In order to assure that content meets the standards of editorial integrity the public has a right to expect, the following five principles and guidelines establish a foundation for trustee action. The principles and guidelines also form a basic standard by which the services of Milwaukee PBS can be judged. At the same time, they form a basis for evaluating all aspects of our stations' governance, from enabling legislation to the policy positions of the MATC Board. The ultimate goal of the principles and guidelines is to assist public broadcasting trustees in fulfilling their vital role in this important public service.

### I. We Are Trustees of a Public Service

Public broadcasting was created to provide a wide range of content of the highest professionalism and quality which can educate, enlighten, and entertain the American public, its audience and source of support. It is a noncommercial enterprise, reflecting the worthy purpose of the federal and state governments to provide education and cultural enrichment to their citizens.

As trustees of this public service, part of our job is to educate all citizens and public policymakers to our function, and to assure that we can certify to all citizens that station management responsibly exercise its editorial freedom and actively seeks the public input necessary to achieve public broadcasting's mission effectively. We operate Milwaukee PBS as part of the public service



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mission of MATC; as such we intend for citizens and community leaders to think well of the college because our stewardship of the stations ensures content that is of integrity and quality, and is responsive to the public's needs.

## II. Our Service is Content

The purpose of public broadcasting is to offer its audience public and educational content that provides alternatives in quality, type, and scheduling. Content is defined as all materials, whether produced for television, printed, developed for the Internet, or other emerging media platforms, that are produced through the stations' journalistic processes for developing materials, including program specific underwriting materials. Content does not include materials developed by Milwaukee PBS related to academic programs of MATC such as course descriptions, material regarding educational/occupational programs of MATC and general fundraising activities. All Milwaukee PBS materials shall contain a reference to MATC as the operator of the stations. All activities of a public broadcasting licensee exist solely to enhance and support excellent content. No matter how well other activities are performed, public broadcasting will be judged by its content and the content's value to the audience.

As trustees, we must create the climate, the policies, and the sense of direction which assure that the mission of providing high quality content remains paramount.

## III. Credibility is the Currency of the Stations' Content

As surely as content is the purpose, and the product by which audiences judge our stations' value, that judgment will depend upon their confidence that our content is free from undue or improper influence from public policymakers, funders, non-broadcast college staff, and individual members of the District Board. Our role as trustees includes educating all citizens to the importance of this fact and to assuring that our stations are able to meet this challenge in a responsible and efficient way.

As trustees, we must adopt policies and procedures that enable professional management to operate in a way which will give the public full confidence in the editorial integrity of our content. Undue or improper influence on content, or on the employment or contracting of those who develop or select content for WMVS and WMVT, is to be avoided as an erosion of editorial integrity, and such interference is to be reported to the College President or President of the MATC District Board.



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The Milwaukee PBS General Manager shall be responsible for selecting all members of hiring committees appointed to consider the hiring of content related employees. For purposes of this policy, the content related employees shall be those occupying the position of producers, directors, program directors, on-air talent, promotional/ marketing staff and the managers that oversee these positions. Hiring committees shall consist of diverse members which are reflective of the broad composition of the College. The hiring committee shall take every reasonable step to ensure that a diverse pool of candidates is recruited, reviewed and considered for employment opportunities.

The Milwaukee PBS General Manager shall ensure that all operations of the Stations are informed by broad and diverse community input.

IV. Many of Our Responsibilities are Grounded in Constitutional or Statutory Law

Milwaukee PBS is subject to a variety of statutory and regulatory requirements and restrictions. These include the federal statute under which licensees must operate, as well as other applicable federal and state laws. Public broadcasting is cloaked with the mantle of First Amendment protection of a free press and freedom of speech.

As trustees we must be sure that these responsibilities are met. To do so requires us to understand the legal and constitutional framework within which our stations operate, and to inform and educate those whose position or influence may affect the operation of our licensee.

V. We Have a Fiduciary Responsibility for Public Funds

Public broadcasting depends upon funds provided by individual and corporate contributions; and by local, state, and federal taxes. Trustees must therefore develop and implement policies which can assure the public and their chosen public officials alike that this money is well spent.

As trustees, we must assure conformance to sound fiscal and management practices. We must also assure that the legal requirements placed on us by funding sources are met. At the same time, we must resist the inappropriate use of otherwise legitimate oversight procedures to distort the content development process which such funding supports.