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NPR's Standards and Practices -

When There's News Involving the University or Institution That Holds an NPR Member Station's License

The University Station Alliance (USA) serves or is actively involved with 260 NPR stations across the country. The USA Board unanimously endorsed the following comments:

The integrity of Public Radio news is important to the public, to NPR, and to all NPR stations. When an NPR member station's university, college, school system, or state agency becomes newsworthy, there should be no preconceived prejudice or bias by NPR against the station covering the story. Often, station reporters may be the very best sources for NPR to use due to the familiarity they have with the institutional system, assuming there is no history of undue influence by officials at the institution. It is reasonable for NPR editors and the station management to discuss if adequate firewalls are in place and if there is a mutual level of comfort in pursuing the story. To the degree possible, first consultations should be with the institution's NPR member station's news department. There should be consultation with no discrimination or assuming that the local station cannot cover the story without a high degree of impartiality and integrity. Just as NPR has firewall protections in place, so have stations evolved professionally to ensure firewall protection from undue licensee influence. When NPR makes news, the NPR media reporter has firewall protection and that is acknowledged in the story. Stations likewise deserve the opportunity to show NPR that they have established similar robust protections. If the story *involves* or is *about* the station's institution, NPR should add a disclosure to notify listeners.

The USA Board stands ready to assist with clarification and insight. Please feel free to contact USA's Executive Director Craig Beeby to assist with this topic. Thank you!

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