

Quote of the week
“People can cry much easier than they can change.”
— James Baldwin

We must protect student media, because student media protects us

STUDENT MEDIA STAFF EDITORIAL

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No faculty oversee The CT. It is purely written, photographed, illustrated and edited by students. The Indiana Daily Student did not have that same luxury. Last month Indiana University fired Jim Rodenbush, the director of student media and advisor to the century and a half old student newspaper. IU directed the paper to stop printing news coverage. While the university claimed the decision came down to addressing financial deficits, Rodenbush and the co-editors-in-chief of the Indiana Daily Student, Mia Hilkowitz and Andrew Miller, argued the move constitutes blatant censorship. Thankfully, weeks of bad publicity and criticism from across the country put immense pressure on IU, and the Indiana Daily Student announced their printing capabilities have been restored. The restoration of IU’s print edition is a victory for student media organizations nationwide and is a bright light of hope in an otherwise bleak landscape of censorship and suppression.

The situation at IU was a small-scale example of a larger issue plaguing journalism and free speech in the U.S. and around the world. The global state of press freedom in 2025 was classified as a “difficult situation” for the first time in the RSF World Press Freedom Index history — with the U.S. specifically being classified as “problematic” — citing both physical attacks against journalists as well as economic attacks. Publicly funded outlets like Voice of America and the Public Broadcasting Service have faced grave cuts under the current administration. Journalists have been barred from the White House, the Pentagon and other vital sites of operations. President Donald Trump’s policies are blatant acts of censorship — intimidation tactics being carried out by Department of War Secretary Pete Hegseth and White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt. Trump has a famous hatred for the media, having brought the phrase “fake news” into our lexicons. The widespread disdain for journalism is not only concerning, but dangerous — especially for small-scale news outlets; student-run publications like The CT and the Indiana Daily Student. Student media is the heart and soul of journalism. Most reporters get their start in a mass

communications class, their college newspaper or their campus radio station. It offers students an opportunity often untethered by a budget to pursue diverse perspectives and uncover the stories of their communities. Our coverage of events that directly impact the classmates we see every day — such as VCU’s pro-Palestine protest movements, stripping of academic freedoms and controversies over free speech rights — offers intimate perspectives rare to find elsewhere. Furthermore, student media outlets operate as forums for individuals who are either silenced or not taken seriously by society. As more and more institutions cave to the Trump administration’s demands, as more cash-strapped universities fall in line with the president’s fascistic policies, the threats to student media are only becoming more frequent. If we truly want to protect our First Amendment rights, we must first start by protecting the training ground for those who exemplify it: student media. Our future depends on it.

Editor’s Note: Staff editorials by The Commonwealth Times are written and edited by all members of staff. The content of editorials is voted on by staff members and must be unanimously agreed-upon ahead of publication.