



## Can we talk?

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It's no surprise that a great deal of business conducted by the University, student groups and eating clubs occurs over email and listservs — the ubiquity of which will soon sink in for over-eager freshmen who signed up for dozens of lists at Friday's Activities Fair. And, of course, we have our own listservs at The Daily Princetonian.

But one integral part of what the 'Prince' does has no place in email — interviewing. Interviews are meant to be genuine, spontaneous conversations that allow a reporter to gain a greater understanding of a source's perspective. However, the use of the email interview — and its widespread presence in our News articles — has resulted in stories filled with stilted, manicured quotes that often hide any real meaning and make it extremely difficult for reporters to ask follow-up questions or build relationships with sources.

In response to this trend, and effective immediately, the 'Prince' News section is ending its policy of allowing sources to comment over email. Exceptions will only be made in extraordinary circumstances, as determined by News Editor Teddy Schleifer and Associate News Editor Luc Cohen. We believe this change in the News section is in the best interest of reporters, sources and, most importantly, you, our readers.

We see the idea of an "email interview" as a contradiction. There is no opportunity to ask follow-up questions or to engage with sources.

There is no opportunity to clarify the complicated issues we cover every day, from scientific discoveries to nuanced University policies. In fact, we often receive requests from administrators for closer relationships with reporters so that reporters can develop a certain knowledge base in specific areas. Those kinds of relationships simply cannot be achieved through dry email correspondence.

We realize that, for some sources, this is a substantial change in their relationship with the ‘Prince,’ and we want to emphasize that this decision was not taken lightly. Beginning in the early summer, we began developing different policy options to address the prevalence of email quotes. On the one hand, we considered leaving the current policy intact. On the other hand, we considered enforcing a complete ban on all email quotes. Ultimately, we came to the decision that extraordinary circumstances can exist when an email quote is the only viable option, and because of these exceptions, we were reluctant to enforce a rigid blanket policy.

The policy in operation today is also the result of consultations with major national news organizations’ senior editors and reporters who strongly supported our choice to reduce the frequency of email quotations.

Sources contacted by ‘Prince’ News reporters will now have the option to speak over the phone or in person. We always prefer in-person interviews, but we understand phone calls may be the only possibility in many cases. We appreciate that our sources are often exceedingly busy, but we do not believe interviews in person or over the phone will take up more time than email correspondence. If a source declines to comment except via email, and the News editors

determine the circumstances are not extraordinary, the article will include that the source “declined to be interviewed.”

We understand that not all sources will initially feel comfortable speaking directly to reporters. We will continue the practice of sending quotes back to sources upon request. Our policy on this remains the same — quotes will only be changed if there is a question of factual accuracy, a determination made by Managing Editor Andrew Budnick and myself.

We welcome your questions and concerns about this new policy, and we look forward to welcoming a new class of staffers onboard the ‘Prince’ and continuing to provide the kind of strong journalism the campus community deserves.

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