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The Tartan newspapers were stolen from the Armstrong Complex before The Tartan's delivery drivers picked them up on Feb. 19, where a handful of papers were found in Martin Hall.

Dustin Staples, the usual delivery driver and Station Manager for Radio Free Radford, noticed one of the stacks had been tampered with when he picked up the newsprint at 4:30 p.m. that Wednesday.

After loading the papers into a Radford University golf cart, Staples—accompanied by Michael Aaron Coopersmith, who was being trained as an additional delivery driver—drove across the University Drive bridge and began distributing the newspapers to campus. Their first stop was Martin Hall.

On the second floor of the administration building, Staples noticed about 10 copies of that week's newspaper had already been placed on The Tartan newsstand.

At this point, Staples called Dylan Lepore, The Tartan's Editor In Chief, to notify him of the situation.

Later in the week, Staples submitted a written report of what he and Coopersmith came across in an email to Lepore.

This situation comes on the heels of last semester's theft of 1000 newspapers less than 24 hours before the Highlander Discovery Institute's inaugural campus event—a political discussion between Donna Brazile and Ana Navarro, moderated by Katie Couric.

On Nov. 8, a [letter was hand-delivered to Lepore](#) by Chad Reed, Vice President for Finance and Administration & Chief Financial Officer, written by David Underwood, Chief of Radford University Police, that said, "Based on the results of the administrative review, it was determined that a Radford University employee took newspapers from four newsstands during the evening of Sept. 18, 2019."

The 18 other emptied newsstands remain unsolved.

Lepore submitted a Freedom of Information Act Request to Radford University for the surveillance footage from buildings where The Tartan newsstands are housed on the date the papers were stolen but were never shown any footage.

“Upon the conclusion of the review process, the footage showing the removal of the papers was placed in the personnel file of the employee who took the papers and is excluded from release per Code of Virginia § 2.2-3705.1. 1.,” wrote Karen Castelee, Radford University’s designated FOIA officer, on Nov. 14.

“The other footage was not from areas where newsstands are located. Those files were not retained in the Radford University Police Department’s files and have been deleted in accordance with the University’s standard operating procedure, which is to retain video footage for 30 days,” continued Castelee.

In a letter sent to Radford University President Brian Hemphill, and [published by The Tartan on Jan. 29](#) “Student Press Freedom Day,” Lepore asked “the Radford administration for a letter of apology, a commitment for better communication to its students, staff, and faculty, and to show that they stand behind student journalists and their never-ending fight for the truth, now and in the future.”

President Hemphill has responded to the letter by asking for lunch with Lepore on March 27.

On the third page of The Tartan, under the “who we are” section, it is noted: “The Tartan may be distributed by authorized distributors only. Contact us to be a distributor.”

Taking copies of The Tartan before an authorized distributor distributes them is an act of theft.

**Photo Credit: (Photo by [Bank Phrom](#) on [Unsplash](#))**