

Reporters have claimed for years that the ability to keep the identity of their sources confidential is critical to bringing important stories to the public's attention. In many states, reporters may legally protect the identity of their confidential sources in court and before other government bodies. This article argues that academics should have the same legal right to shield the identity of confidential sources. There are a number of academic disciplines (e.g., criminal justice, sociology, public health), in which the promise of confidentiality to research participants is essential to the discovery of information that is of public or historic importance. However, as this article reveals, academics in many jurisdictions cannot protect the confidentiality of their sources from compulsory processes. A significant portion of this article surveys the current federal and state statutes and case law that allow scholars to protect the confidentiality of their sources. It then suggests the adoption of a uniform statute that would erase the distinction between scholars and reporters in terms of whether they are legally entitled to protect their confidential sources. The article concludes with an assessment of the prospects for achieving reform on this important issue.