



### **Minutes: Student Publications committee meeting, February 24, 2010**

*Voting members present:* Irving Rothman, David McHam, Travis Hensley, Reyes Ramirez

*Ex-officio members present:* Delores Crawford, Matt Dulin, Jack Wehman, Candy Littleton, David Small

The meeting began at 4:10 p.m. with Wehman presiding as chair. In a review of the minutes, Small pointed out that he did not read aloud the e-mail from Elywn Lee, but in fact then-Chairwoman Patricia Estrada. The minutes were approved with that correction.

### **Yearbook Report**

Dulin gave a short yearbook report, saying they had typical participation rates in the past Photo Week and that their next effort will be focused on the Graduation Fair to promote the book and schedule make-up photo days. Rothman asked what effort was being taken to secure photos of campus organizations, especially Greek and religious groups. Dulin said he would be in touch with the advisers over the Religion Center and fraternity life departments and would coordinate through them to increase their participation.

### **Production Report**

For the Production Department report, Dulin said the newspaper continued to work well under the new workflow, which he said has saved hundreds of man-hours from the payroll since being implemented last fall. He said he was continuing to look for ways to streamline the process to make it easy to learn and less labor-intensive so that editors can focus on content.

### **Advertising Report**

Crawford said that despite being \$40,000 short of last year's revenues, she was optimistic about projects in the near term. Transitions magazine was scheduled for publication in late May, instead of June or July, and would be included in every orientation package. The postal savings would be several thousand dollars, she said. Orientation is now mandatory for all new students, making this strategy possible.

In the Cougar, campus ad spending is “almost zero,” Crawford said. Most growth has come from local accounts. Two of the biggest campus advertisers, Learning Support Services and Bauer College of Business, have both reduced their spending significantly.

Crawford said efforts were underway to revitalize the Cougar’s circulation, marketing and branding. A student has been hired to begin an assessment of circulation racks, pickup rates and locations.

Rothman presented a list of businesses within a three-mile radius of the UH campus and asked why he had not seen ads from none of them in the Cougar. Crawford responded that all or almost all of those establishments had been contacted at one time or another. She emphasized that local clients have pulled business in the past because of lack of response, which she said is tied to a circulation problem.

Rothman suggested that Crawford seek out assistance from Gavin Gerngross, an ad salesman for the Houston Chronicle. Crawford said she already brings in professionals, many of whom are alumni, to provide workshops.

Ramirez agreed that circulation was a concern and that information was needed to help the decision-making process. He asked if some circulation numbers could be presented at the next meeting. Crawford said she would.

### **Editorial Report**

Wehman reported that his staff was doing well and that the newer editors had benefited from training at the beginning of the semester. An SGA debate earlier that day had good turnout, he said. The Life & Arts section was beginning to focus more on campus arts programs and events, something that was missing in the past. He said the Opinion section was in need of more writers. He said there has been a steady increase in social media followers and the website was on track to get record traffic for the month of February.

Ramirez and Rothman congratulated Wehman on the quality of the Cougar, saying both the news and opinion coverage had improved since last semester.

### **Financial Report**

Littleton said the department had cut expenses by \$25,000 over last year but that ad revenue was \$40,000 behind last year. Rothman asked how the bills are covered when there is deficit spending. Littleton said the department starts the year with a set amount from SFAC. In the past, the difference might be covered by fund balance, but that reserve has been depleted.

### **New business**

Small presented the results of a faculty/staff readership survey that intended to find out whether faculty want the Cougar delivered to their staff mailboxes each day. About 62 percent of 500 responses to that question said they would not like to have a mailbox delivery. However, the survey found that about 85 percent of faculty read the Cougar at least once per week in print or

online. The survey also found that most faculty prefer to have the paper by 8 a.m. The survey also suggested more needs to be done to promote the online and e-mail editions of the paper.

The committee agreed that a similar survey of student readership was needed.

### **Old business**

The appointment of a second professional representative was put on hold because of a lack of quorum. The recommendations from the bylaw committee were not present because that committee's chair, Patricia Estrada, was not present.

The meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.