



Minutes: Student Publications committee meeting, March 24, 2011

Voting members present: Irving Rothman, David McHam, Andrew Taylor, Travis Hensley, Reyes Ramirez, Casey Wooten, Jeff Syptak

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

The meeting began at 4:10 p.m. with Wehman presiding as chair. He welcomed Interim Vice President for Student Affairs Michael Lawrence. Everyone in the room introduced themselves.

Yearbook Report

Estrada reported that 48 pages had been sent to the printer, totaling two signatures. She said 14 student organizations had reserved their page in the book, and efforts by email, phone and Facebook were underway to collect more. She said in mid-April another three or four signatures would be complete, and was looking forward to getting the book finished on deadline.

Production Report

Dulin said his department was working well and was getting ready for a busy April month full of special projects, including Transitions magazine.

Advertising Report

Crawford reported that the NCAA Final Four was helping generate some buzz and get some local ads. She developed a bracket contest and sold sponsorship ads, and secured prizes from the Houston Rockets. Next project on her agenda was the Wedding Guide. She said she would be getting information soon from a student she hired to look into circulation problems, such as rack locations and possible new racks to set up. She said the goal of these efforts was to increase readership overall, which she said affects her advertising clients directly.

Editorial Report

March was the most successful web traffic month yet, Wehman said. The staff was doing a good job covering the campus and said overall he was pleased with how everyone was performing.

Syptak asked if student organizations were taking advantage of the “free ad” offer that was discussed at the Student Fees Advisory Committee in November. Crawford said a few organizations have taken this offer, where their event gets a free eighth-page ad in exchange for distributing the Cougar at their event.

Financial Report

Littleton said the department had reduced expenses over last year by more than \$146,000, or about 30%. Much was attributed to reduced payroll and utilities. Projected to the year-end, cuts over last year’s expenses could total \$179,000.

New business

Estrada presented proposed revisions to the bylaws. Corrections were made and the amendments were adopted without dissention. A final, revised copy of the bylaws showing the changes would be presented at the next meeting.

Crawford presented printing estimates from UH Printing & Postal and Southeast Media, showing the possible savings by investigating other printing companies. The costs shown were estimates based on the current printing bill and numbers from Southeast. The chart also showed the savings gained by reducing the weekly print schedule from five days to four days, dropping a Friday edition, for example. The savings on printing in both cases was significant, she said, between \$50,000 and \$80,000.

McHam said a reduction to four-day printing could be hazardous to maintaining quality, as he has observed at other campuses. Wehman agreed and said it would make the newspaper less fresh, but pointed out that the Web site could be updated regardless.

Wehman also said that any savings gained by switching printers or cutting Fridays should be directed toward newsroom training, development and equipment.

Rothman suggested the Cougar utilize scholarship money rather than its own revenues to pay student wages, so for example, an editor in chief would automatically earn a full scholarship for his time in office.

The committee agreed to study the information and discuss at the next meeting. Small emphasized that a new strategy to cut costs and build revenue was needed, as the print advertising revenue picture was down across the board and nationwide.

Old business

The appointment of a second professional representative was put on hold because of time constraints.

The editor election timeline would be set at the next meeting, scheduled for April 7. A second April meeting was tentatively set for April 28 to allow time for elections.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.