

Minutes of the May 5, 2014 Meeting of the UCLA Communications Board

Board members present: Hossain Albgal, Lauren Ball, Asha Choudhury, Jesse Coronado, Steve Greim, Sofia Haq, Kimberly Horn, Josh Levine, Mojde Mirarefin, Erik Peña, George White, Arvli Ward

Board members absent: Mohammad Ahmad, Nancy Calderon, Cuauhtémoc Ortega

Guests: Jose Hernandez (graduate assistant/yearbook), Jillian Beck (Daily Bruin Editor in chief), Andrew Erickson (2014-15 Daily Bruin Editor in chief), Michael Hirshman (GSA President-Elect), Greg Samples (Friesens representative)

I. Call to order (Peña)

Peña called the meeting to order at 5:47 p.m.

II. Approval of the agenda (Peña)

Peña requested that an additional item introducing the GSA Present-Elect and a discussion item concerning an stipulation of the Advance Agreement (developer contracts) be added to the agenda. Haq moved to approve the amended agenda. White seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous consent.

III. Approval of April minutes (Peña)

Coronado moved to approve the minutes. Ball seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous consent.

IV. Executive Committee Report (Peña)

Peña said the Media Director evaluation process would begin. He said he would email evaluations to the board. He asked that all reviews be submitted by June 2.

Peña said he and Ward attended the BOD Finance Committee meeting, which was organized to bring the boards together. He said that future meetings were planned.

Peña said that he was organizing the awards for newsmagazine publishing and that the editors had submitted articles and visuals. Peña said he would review them and choose winners for each magazine.

V. Operations Committee Report (Ball)

Ball said she was unable to organize a May meeting due to her lack of availability but that she had requested written updates from editors. She received responses from Tessa Nath, who reported that Ha'Am was actively publishing online, and Alison Bader, who reported that BruinLife had a major website redesign. Ball also reported that she had discussed comments made by ASUCLA Board of Directors members at a recent BOD meeting with student editors, who were concerned and upset by the comments. She said the Daily Bruin followed up with an editorial.

VI. Finance Committee Report (Haq)

Haq said the Finance Committee had met several times in the weeks leading up to this meeting to discuss the 2014-15 Communications Board budget. She said the board would discuss the budget in more detail during agenda item XI.

VII. Media Director's Report (Ward)

Ward said that he would discuss current issues during the agenda items in the meeting.

Discussion Items

VIII. GSA President-Elect introduction (Peña)

Peña introduced GSA President-Elect Michael Hirshman. Hirshman told the board that while an undergrad at UCSD he was involved in student media as a staff member on an alternative newsmagazine, which gave him an appreciation for student-run media. He told the board that he would address appointments to the Communications Board when he took office in a couple of weeks.

IX. Daily Bruin Editor's report (Peña)

Erickson said that two months ago the BOD expressed their concern and desire to assist Student Media. Erickson said that they also expressed that they understood how important editorial independence was to the press, including the Daily Bruin. He said in their most recent meeting, two Daily Bruin reporters in attendance heard BOD members made statements that contradicted those earlier positions. Erickson said he was he was disappointed to hear those comments. He said the Daily Bruin would make it a point to attend each BOD meeting going forward. Ward said that the board should remember that the BOD members who support Student Media were in the majority who voted to pass the Advance Agreement. Ward said he'd hoped that the Daily Bruin leadership wouldn't get too discouraged because of a vocal minority.

X. Status of contracts (Peña)

Ward said there was a stipulation in the advance agreement that said we would have to have contracts in place for our relationship with Marpasoft LLC, which provides development and IT support services to Student Media. Ward said that such services were even more necessary today because of layoffs and department restructuring. Ward said he hired Mashood Khan, a former Al-Talib editor, to write the contracts and that they had been drafted. He said that they had also been reviewed by Rich Delia. Ward said that he believed that the contracts could be finished by May 9th.

Action Items

XI. 2014-15 Communications Board Budget and Five-Year Forecast (Ward)

Haq said the Finance Committee lacked a quorum to approve a recommendation for the budget at its last meeting.

Ward began by summarizing the 2013-14 budget results. Ward said that projected revenue would be a deficit of \$22,000. Ward said estimated cash reserves at the end of 2013-14 would be about \$135,000.

For 2014-15, Ward said budgeted revenue for next year would be 6.5 percent less than 2013-14. Ward said this was caused by the Finance Committee's assumption that Daily Bruin print revenues would decline by 17.5 percent. Budgeted expense for 2014-15 is budgeted to be 2.5 percent less than 2013-14. The net loss for 2014-15 is budgeted at \$75,000. Ward said the \$75,000 loss could leave the Communications Board with as little as \$44,000 in the bank.

Ward said despite all the layoffs and aggressive cost-cutting, reducing Daily Bruin revenue by 17.5 percent would not keep the organization ahead of deficits. Ward said that under current conditions, the Communications Board would not be able to support the program. Ward said at that point the board would have to begin looking more broadly at solutions. Ward said that more cuts could compromise the department by cutting core services and activities. Ward said the board should begin to consider additional fee support, as well as addressing costs currently outside of the board's control.

Erickson requested that the board at least consider part-time advising to support the Daily Bruin. Ward said that the budget provided almost 600 hours of advising for the year.

Ward said that the budget included a capital budget request for \$33,500, including \$20,000 to replace aging computers in key areas, \$3,500 for servers and digital camera equipment, and \$3,000 for office upgrades. White said that capital needs might be a focus for student-led fundraising.

Ward said that the board's recovery strategy called for the budget to be balanced by a combination of cost-reduction and new revenues. He said that Communications Board expense has been reduced by almost \$600,000 over the last five years. Ward said the second leg of the strategy was to create a new way to deliver advertising to our readers to replace the newspaper's fading ability to do so. The third leg of the strategy was to prepare students to create new value for the organization.

Greim asked why Operations Wages had increased by 17 percent. Ward said most of the increase was for student tech support. Ward said that some of the budget's anticipated savings that couldn't be achieved since contingencies occurred during the year. Greim asked about Comm Board stipends. Ward said there were savings this year because there were empty student seats. The budget for Communications Board stipends in 2014-15 is higher to reflect a full board with all members attending every meeting. Greim asked about postage. Ward said most of the increase in postage was for BruinLife for promotional mailers. Greim asked about increased internship costs proposed for next year. Ward said that the internships were an important piece of all of strategic efforts since they were how the organization recruited and developed student talent.

Ball said a newsmagazine editor in chief mentioned to her that they don't receive any stipends. She said they put in so much work and they are getting no monetary compensation. Ball asked why newsmagazine stipends couldn't be paid. Ward said editors used to receive a stipend which were subsidized by Daily Bruin revenues. Since the newsmagazines were self-funding, the organization had to find other ways to support stipends. Albgal asked if newsmagazine editors understood the current financial situation. Ward said that he thought they did but that they were somewhat unaffected by the current financial climate because they are self-funded, spending only what they raised primarily through grants. Newsmagazines had total discretion in how to spend any money they raised, including applying them toward stipends.

Ward said that he was developing a proposal that might improve and fund the newsmagazine model. Ward said that it concerned sponsored content that would end up supporting the university's strategic recruitment efforts. For instance, Nommo content could be used to power university-supported publications like the "Black Book" and if a commitment could be secured to sell numbers of these books to the university, which may use them to attract admitted African-American students in this case, it might provide a stream of income that could be used to pay participating newsmagazine editors.

Ward said another key area for the 2014-15 budget was Bruin Life. He said that yearbook income has been on the increase over the last five years. Ward said that Jose Hernandez, who was hired as a limited appointment employee after editing the yearbook for three years, was responsible and asked Hernandez to talk to the board about his current work as Bruin Life's marketing manager.

Hernandez said that a primary focus was the e-commerce capabilities of the Bruin Life website. Hernandez said another focus was the ability for Bruin Life to serve students who wanted their portraits in the yearbook but for a number of reasons were not able to get them through ASUCLA's photo studio. For instance, instead of requiring that appointments in person like the Campus Photo Studio, Bruin Life offered the ability to make appointments online which was more convenient to busy students. Another ancillary benefit was the fact that students typed their name and majors into the Bruin Life system, thus preventing the frequent mistakes made by the Campus Photo Studio which still relied on the transcription of hand-written forms.

Ward said that a new yearbook printer might be able to lend the resources needed to take the yearbook to the next level. Ward introduced Greg Samples from Friesens, a yearbook publisher and printer from Canada. Friesen's proposed to fund all marketing and printing for the yearbook in return for a revenue share of \$20 per book. White asked if the board had to make an immediate decision. Ward said no because he hadn't received a contract from Friesens yet. He wanted to introduce Samples to the board and have the board hear his proposal.

Ward reviewed the mobile strategy, which will see less expense in the 2014-15 budget. Ward said that he believed that developing mobile was critical to the future of Student

Media. Ward said that if the Communications Board killed mobile development, it would save only \$30,000.

Greim said the Finance Committee put a lot of time into the budget and that he supported it but the \$75,000 deficit concerned him. He said if the budget was passed it would be a priority to figure out how to sustain itself in the future whether it is a subsidy from ASUCLA BOD or student registration fees. If the board resolved to seek a fee, questions as to the amount and if would it would be sought independently or in partnership with ASUCLA would have to be figured out, Greim said. Ward said he agreed with Greim.

Ball moved to approve the 2014-15 Communications Board Budget and Five-Year Forecast. Coronado seconded the motion. The motion passed by a hand vote of 11-0 with no abstentions.

XII. Adjourn (Peña)

Ball moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 p.m. White seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous consent.

Submitted by Doria Deen