

University of Michigan Board for Student Publications

Minutes of the February 19, 2018 Board Meeting

Board members present: Neil Chase (chair), Alan Broad, John Bacon, Jennifer Conlin, Stuart Emmrich, Cindy Goodaker and Peter Mooney

Board members video-conferencing: Kevin Tottis and Terry McDonald

The Michigan Daily was represented by: Alexa St. John, Nathan Gupta, Jordan Wolff, Bob Lesser and Dayton Hare

The Michiganensian was represented by: Matisse Rogers and Claire Bartosic

The Gargoyle was represented by: Jenny Ghose

SHEI Magazine was represented by: Maggie O'Connor and Lauren Ayers

The Student Publications Staff was represented by: Kathy Ciesinski and Lisa Powers

Others Present: Alan Fanger via videoconference

Chair Neil Chase called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

Minutes

A motion to approve the January 15, 2018 meeting minutes was made by Stuart, seconded by Jennifer and passed without dissent.

Public Comments

None.

The Michigan Daily

Alexa reported that the Daily brought home some wins from the ACP Best of the Midwest Conference, including first place for best newspaper. Something that's working well on the edit side is that they have a more advanced class of MEs. Most are juniors. MIC and Podcast teams are tending to be the most innovative. They have voted on their digital initiative for 2018 a couple of weeks ago: the app and push notifications. They will also be focused more on analytics in order to serve more tailored content. With regard to the strategic plan, this class of MEs wants to focus on innovation and diversity. The 2018 State of the Daily has been placed in the shared Strategic Plan folder. Analytics show readers are engaging more with feature-based articles, Opinion and long-form content. Grade guide is still number five on the most read.

Bob Lesser and Jordan Wolff from the web team spoke about the new app. Sent first push notification yesterday. Hoping to have Android version out within the next month. Jordan spoke about the new website that was released earlier in the month and it has been receiving good feedback.

Nathan said the focus of the business department has been on the Daily's brand. The marketing team has been charged with developing a persona of the brand of The Michigan Daily itself. They've also been gathering data about the community and their needs. Working on developing a better sales strategy, which includes an increased focus on client retention. Increased focus on content monetization is also another priority for the business staff.

SHEI Magazine

Maggie spoke about expanding photo content - "Street Style" - has been a substantive edition on the edit side, and integrating it into SHEI's social platforms in order to drive traffic to the website. Working

on building the connection between features and photo to give the magazine a more polished look. This has created a high demand for photographers and they are struggling to meet the need. In order to address this challenge they are planning to add a photo-related position on the board. They will also focus on hiring more photographers for 2018 - 2019.

Analytics for the digital edition (combo January/February) were considerably lower than previous months. Nov = 3,000 reads, Dec = 2,000 Jan/Feb = 1,500 reads. Jennifer offered suggestions as to how the Alumni Association rotates content. Lisa suggested possibly posting photo outtakes and other possible "insider" stuff. Neil recommended looking at release schedule and releasing individual stories separate from promoting the entire digital edition.

Lauren updated the group on the January Work It! event. About 80 people attended the event, as well as the networking events before and after. Guest speakers were pleased with outcome and provided the SHEI team with constructive feedback for future events.

SHEI is also struggling with ad sales. The fall print issue only had one ad. They combined distribution and ad sales teams to go out together for the winter semester. Lauren indicated they have about six leads for this semester. They've also revised their media kit to bring print and online rates in alignment.

Gargoyle

Molly was not present, so Jenny reported on both business and edit sides of the operation. They've received full funding from CSG for issue three that will be delivered to Student Publications on February 20th. They also received a grant from Arts at Michigan that will cover part of issue four. Will most likely use those funds to order extra copies to use for recruiting purposes in the fall. They are planning to host a bake sale at the end of March as both a bonding and fundraising event. Claire shared that her women's water polo team hosted a succulent sale in February in Mason Hall and made \$600 in four hours. Jenny will explore this as a possibility for future fundraising.

Looking ahead to next year: Potential career enhancement opportunities. Last year a few members went to a humor conference, but were not thrilled with the structure. Looking at deadlines dates for the conference at Brown. Jenny and Molly are looking to have a Sales Manager in place to prospect for advertising. Would like to purchase/design/obtain a new website as there is only one student who has any working knowledge of the current site.

For issue four they are looking at 16 pages, but a higher print quantity.

The Michiganensian

Matisse stated that yearbook sales have surpassed what was sold for 2017. Sales of freshman four-packs have tripled over last year. They are working with edit on plans to market the new spring supplement. Matisse also mentioned March Grad Extravaganza, which is March 12th - 16th.

Claire spoke about the new spring publication, "Day in the Life" that the Board previously approved. It's 16 pages. Stories were assigned last night.

Additionally, Claire announced that she was able to secure some compensation for the Ensian's work on the University's Spring Commencement slide show. They will pay \$300 this year and the Ensian will be given a slide for its own branding message. Claire is working with Kathy and Pat on the transfer of funds and writing up an agreement so this continues past Claire's tenure.

Board Nominations

Neil shared results of the application process with the board and explained the process moving forward. Kevin suggested that in the future we broaden our outreach efforts to recruit faculty members at the University.

GM Updates

In the interest of time and to get to the Strategic Plan discussion, Kathy had no specific updates at this time.

Development

In order to spend more time on the Strategic Plan discussion, Lisa created and shared a summary document with attendees at the meeting. Lisa asked the group to help determine the best date for Student Publications' annual tailgate. The alumni committee narrowed it down to September 22nd vs Nebraska, or October 6th vs Maryland, which is homecoming. She presented some pros and cons for each date. Members of the board vocalized support of the September 22nd date for the annual tailgate. Lisa also mentioned there is momentum building for the summer satellite reunions.

Scholarship Committee

Neil talked about the process for establishing the awards committee and was seeking additional members. Concerns about the makeup of the committee were expressed, and whether it was too much board oversight. Neil will send out email soliciting volunteers for this year's committee.

Finance/Budget Schedule

With regard to the standard financial documents, Kathy said she recently discovered some of the linking spreadsheets were not located on the server and that she would be working with IT to see if they are able to give her access to some files that would have been in the documents folder of the former General Manager. She will be working on dissecting the spreadsheets during spring break.

The FY '19 budget schedule will be slightly adjusted for this year. In years past the annual publication budgets were presented and approved by the board at the March meeting. Given the emphasis on the formulation of a strategic plan, the annual budgets for each publication will be reviewed at the March meeting and then the annual/monthly budgets will be reviewed and approved in the April meeting.

Strategic Plan

Kathy shared key takeaways from a webinar "The Big Lie of Strategic Planning", hosted by Harvard Business Review. The slide deck is located in the Strategic Planning folder. Stuart posed the question, "What exactly is the role of the board?" and also asked whether the board is here to assist students when they encounter crises and issues or is it a more proactive approach and giving them a roadmap. Kathy spoke about the previous consulting project that was undertaken in 2013. The report and presentation slides are also located in the Strategic Planning folder.

Terry spoke about orientation of board members and the lack of materials given to them during the onboarding process. In looking at the 2013 consultant report, one of the recommended items was to more clearly define the role of the board. Instead, the post-report focus was on revenue generation and greater visibility for the Daily.

Discussion continued about establishing a framework for supporting ideas and related action items, as well as defining strategies and objectives that state ways in which the board can provide support. Other items discussed during this time included how exactly to allocate some of the expenses. What is

the board's responsibility and guidance around finances, while following the Regent's charge? Board members should have enough information to confidently carry out their fiduciary responsibility. Nathan talked to the group about meeting with local businesses and the challenges they are currently facing, and how that might play into the strategy for the future. What services and ancillary operations can be developed that would be successful in our market?

In order to establish top-level framing for the plan three sub-committees were established and board members volunteered to lead them. They are:
Staff Oversight / Operations - Peter Mooney
Finance / Financial Oversight: Terry McDonald
Strategic Plan Initial Draft: Stuart Emmrich

Neil will send out a follow up email with the overview of our discussion, with the goal of coming back in March with initial committee reports and what information the reports should contain.

The discussion continued with the possibility of establishing advisory boards for each publication.

Kevin asked for an update on the status of the long-ago incorporation of the board, and a conversation ensued.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Peter, seconded by Kevin and passed without dissent.

At 7:54 Chair Neil Chase closed the meeting.

Actions Taken:

Motion to approve the January 15, 2018 Board Meeting minutes: Stuart Emmrich
Seconded by: Jennifer Conlin
The motion was passed without dissent.

Motion to adjourn: Peter Mooney
Seconded by: Kevin Tottis
The motion was passed without dissent.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Ciesinski
General Manager
Office of Student Publications