

Texas Student Media
Board of Operating Trustees Meeting
September 25, 2015 at 1:00 p.m.
Belo Center for New Media
KUT Community Room (BMC 1.108A)
300 W. Dean Keaton Street, Austin, Texas 78712

Voting Members Present: Jan Ross Piedad, William Smith, Arjun Mocherla, Pauline Berens, McKay Proctor, Matt Eastin, Heidi Toprac, Todd Ross Nienkerk

Voting Members Absent: Forrest Wolfe, Robert Quigley, Jeff Cohen

Non-Voting Members Present : Claire Smith, Jack Mitts, Blake Gentry, Christian Young, Christy Zhang, Joshua Brenner, Shannon Geison, Peter Flynn

Non-Voting Members Absent: Gerald Johnson, Andrew Serice

Guests Present: Frank Serpas, Robert Zimmer, Peter Chen

Meeting Opening

The Texas Student Media Board of Operating Trustees meeting on September 25, 2015 was called to order at 1:06 p.m. by Arjun Mocherla. Arjun asked everyone in the room to introduce themselves.

Update and discussion regarding changes to Declaration of Trust and TSM Handbook

Frank Serpas distributed updated copies of the TSM trust and Handbook to each member of the board, demonstrated how to access the documents through the TSM website, and gave a brief history of each of the TSM outlets. He then went on to a guided reading of the Constitution.

Frank then led the board in an examination of the TSM declaration of trust. He explained the composition of the board, the necessity of open meetings training, and the employment structure of University of Texas employees that were loaned to the TSM outlets.

Frank provided a history of TSM's transition from Student Affairs to the Moody College of Communication.

Heidi Toprac made a motion to form a committee to examine and update the Trust and Handbook, Todd Ross Nienkerk seconded the motion. The motion then passed vote. Arjun Mocherla appointed Heidi Toprac, Todd Ross Nienkerk, Gerald Johnson, Claire Smith, Jan Ross Piedad, and himself to the committee.

Arjun Mocherla stated his priorities for the coming year. He said his goals were to resolve the board's questions of sovereignty, improve the TSM Handbook and Trust, protect editorial freedom. He expressed a desire to examine how other boards across campus handle their responsibilities and how we can learn from them. Heidi Toprac agreed with Arjun's goals, but reminded the Board to always protect students. Arjun then asked the members of the board what their goals for the year were.

Todd Ross Nienkerk posited that the Board has a lot of power, but a limited amount of time to act on it with its meeting structure. He expressed a desire to turn power over to TSM staff to allow them to act more like a business. He approved at the idea of studying other boards across campus.

Jan Ross Piedad explained her desire to have greater interaction between the properties, specifically through a social event, a sort of "TSM Block Party." Heidi Toprac added that such an event could be a recruiting event for the properties. Jack Mitts said that the Daily Texan has a Public Outreach Coordinator for that purpose who wants to have an event like Jan described.

Discussion and appropriate action regarding the selection of members of the Executive and Election Committees

Arjun Mocherla summarized the responsibilities of the Executive committee. Arjun moved to appoint Jan Ross Piedad to the committee. Pauline Berens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Pauline Berens moved to appoint Arjun Mocherla to the Executive Committee. Heidi Toprac Seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Arjun then explained the responsibilities of the Election Committee, and added that he thinks the Election Committee reviewing and amending the election code for TSM would be a productive goal for the semester. He appoints Heidi Toprac, McKay Proctor, Pauline Berens, William Smith. There is one faculty voting member yet to be appointed to the Election Committee. Pauline Berens was appointed the Committee's point of contact with the Office of the Dean of Students, and the Election Supervisory Board.

Approval of minutes from the April 24, May 19, and August 28, 2015 meetings of the Texas Student Media Board of Operating Trustees

Peter Chen's name had been misspelled in the minutes, which was amended. McKay Proctor moved to approve the minutes. Heidi Toprac seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Preliminary year-end financial report for fiscal year 2014-2015

Frank Serpas summarized the report at length.

Heidi Toprac expressed a desire to examine the transitional funding TSM had received in depth. She claimed that even though the financial report showed an improvement in

financial station, when accounting for the transitional funding, the board was actually worse off by \$100,000. Frank responded by saying that greater stability had led to hiring a full TSM staff for the first time in several years.

Heidi Toprac accepted Frank's point, but said the Board should see revenue increase along with employee salaries. Frank replied that advertising in media, especially print media, has been in decline, but things will improve with the new staff members.

Jack Mitts asked if there were any other possible revenue streams. He cited TSTV's video production services as an example and said that the other entities could use their design, photography, and writing skills for similar services. Frank Serpas expressed concern with undercutting professionals' prices with student labor, and also questioned whether there is sufficient revenue in these opportunities to justify the change.

Activity reports from TSM Director and student managers

Frank Serpas delivered the TSM director's report in Gerald Johnson's absence. He said that in the past fifteen months every staff member except for himself had turned over. He celebrated that representatives of TSM entities could attend the College Media Association conference because it will be held in Austin.

Christy Zhang provided a report on the Cactus. She said the unifying theme of the yearbook had been established and a publisher had been acquired.

Blake Gentry provided a report on KVRX. He said station recruitment had been a success, with the entire FM slate at capacity and the online stream as full as it had ever been. Local Live Volume 19 would be recorded and released soon. Heidi Toprac asked if the album sales from Local Live Volume 19 generated revenue. Blake said they did not. Heidi expressed a desire to see each entity's contribution to revenue equal the funding they receive. Todd Ross Nienkerk asked if KVRX had any plans to do production work like TSTV had. Blake said he did not know.

Claire Smith delivered the Daily Texan's Editor-in-Chief report. She said the summer had more news than expected. She added that the Daily Texan had successfully launched its Texan Talks, and that the editorial board's social media accounts had gained popularity. Arjun Mocherla added that the Daily Texan had been cited as a source in national conversations about issues at the University of Texas, which he took as a sign that the Texan was representing student voice well.

Jack Mitts provided the Daily Texan's Managing editor report. He explained his frustrations with the state of the Daily Texan website. He said that a committee of some sort might be necessary to remedy the problem. Claire Smith added that the Website currently crashes at 140 viewers.

Todd Ross Nienkerk defended the University's ITS department as an inexpensive, effective option compared to outsourcing. He expressed a desire to see a team devoted to the Texan's web presence. Claire Smith said the Daily Texan has a team for special projects, but it was hard to recruit Computer Science students. Todd replied that Computer science students are not the best targets. He also said that his firm would be able to help with the website, possibly. He said Jack should discuss his long-term plans for the website with Gerald.

Jack added that if the Daily Texan could possibly package a website solution and market it to other media outlets across the country, it would be another possible revenue stream.

Christian Young presented TSTV's activity report. He summarized the entity's successful rebranding effort and an update in equipment. Christian said the production and livestreaming services had been successful. Todd Ross Nienkerk asked about TSTV's relationship with Austin public access now that its management had changed hands to the Austin Film Society. Frank said that the previous owners had not allowed commercialism which had forced TSTV out, but he and Christian promised to inquire with the new management,

Joshua Brenner provided the Texas Travesty's activity report. He said that staff was limited only by the size of the office, not the interest of quality writers. Distribution had increased. He expressed concern at the disconnect between the Travesty's strong Facebook and Twitter presence and its web traffic. Todd Ross Nienkerk asked whether the Travesty could produce sponsored content, much like the Onion's Clickhole. Joshua said that was an interesting possibility that he would look into.

Joshua asked why the Travesty had such low SSBC allocations. Christy Zhang asked why they were low for the Cactus as well. Arjun Mocherla said that there was an opportunity to gain in allocations this year since the Student Government administration is friendly to student media. Frank Serpas said the Travesty's allocation was proportional to its overall size of the budget.

Frank added that there used to be options when students registered for classes to subscribe to the Texan, or buy the year book. Jack Mitts and Christy Zhang expressed interest in seeing those options re-instated for their respective entities.

McKay Proctor reminded the managers of the entities to think about their respective integrated marketing presences. He said that clever merchandising and marketing could help with distribution and revenue while taking some of the onus off the permanent staff.

Heidi moved to adjourn the meeting. Todd Ross Nienkerk seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 2:56 p.m.