

Gazette Publications Committee

Minutes of the *Gazette* Publications Committee meeting on Dec. 1, 2016

In attendance

Voting members

Jay Menard (chair)

Mark Farfan

Nicole MacAdam

Ravi Amarnath

Regrets: Paul Benedetti

Non-voting members

Hamza Tariq

Katie Lear

Bradley Metlin

Greaves Greaves

Carrie Ferguson

Motion to call to order, moved by Tariq, seconded by Menard

Motion to adopt the agenda, moved by Tariq, seconded by Greaves

Motion to move publication schedule discussion to now, moved by Greaves, seconded by Lear

Publication Schedule

Tariq

- \$60,000 in advertising revenue last year to \$34,000 in revenue this year so far
- Prepares the incoming Front Office for a changed publication schedule

Greaves

- If we had been doing one issue/week in the fall, we would have covered expenses and had \$5,000 in the bank
- This is a move motivated by advertising cost concerns

Menard

- Are there any obligations based on student fees?

Nick

- No

MacAdam

- Do you think you'll see any feedback from advertisers? Will you see further decline?

Greaves

- I don't think so; we don't see a tonne of advertising pre-booked in
- Most advertisers were only placing an ad once a week right now
- About three classified advertisers who booked for the year; they will need a bit of a refund but that's fine
- Ad revenue has been on a steep decline; we lost three key advertisers

Amarnath

- Who is twice a week?

Greaves

- We're the only one that's more than once-a-week in Canada
- Even some newspapers in the United States who were five times a week have been cutting production

MacAdam

- Any advertising on digital platforms?

Greaves

- It has increased; it's a bit of a bright spot this year
- We have explored advertorials, for example, Masonville was a test for this model
- The problem with digital, is it's hard to figure out what to price it at in order to stay competitive

Amarnath

- What kind of paper would we be able to come out with once a week?

Tariq

- We're looking into a 16-pager.
- In terms of content production, we're not changing any targets in that regard and still hope to work on a digital daily schedule

Menard

- Devil's advocate; Why even have a print edition?

Greaves

- Advertising is one thing but that's not a strong argument these days
- Having a print product sets you apart from just having a digital product; it lends some credibility to the organization

Tariq

- Print pick-up this year has been phenomenal, we've seen copies in the UCC disappear at good rates
- Students are paying for a student newspaper so there is an obligation to provide one

Menard

- It's important to have data in place to justify the print product

Greaves

- Pick-up rate has improved when we've gone down to twice a week
- At first, I thought they were stolen
- Robert has gone to take some out some of the copies in Social Science that are sort of obscured to put them in the UCC

Menard

- It's important to train journalists for the future

Tariq

- The *Gazette* has released its first documentary that was 14-minutes long; it's available on social media
- Projects like this, do take people away from print

Farfan

- Could the drop in advertising be a result of moving away from 4 times a week?

Greaves

- I don't think so, usually people would place just one ad a week
- A lot of people are trying to explore experiential advertising like going into the UCC atrium

Menard

- The internal cannibalization of advertising; as the *Gazette* advertising goes down, the UCC atrium advertising goes up

Amarnath

- How many people are still in the office?

Tariq

- The majority of the work is still done in the office
- The creative sections need the equipment and software that's available in the office
- The writing sections still conduct their interviews and write their stories within the office

MacAdam

- Create an editorial plan for what a weekly *Gazette* is going to look like
- What kind of content is going to be in that issue

Tariq

- That's the reason I want to do it in January so we can begin to create a plan of action
- It also sets the future front office up for success

Greaves

- The paper has already begun to move toward more long-form in the past year

Metlin

- In terms of social media numbers, the evidence seems to say that people are reading breaking news stories online rather than in print

BE IT RESOLVED that the *Gazette* will move down to a once-a-week print publication schedule in January — Passes unanimously

EIC Report - Mid-Year Report

Tariq

- It gives a brief look about how first semester has gone
- It will hopefully also give future front offices an idea of how things have gone in the first semester
- 14 features and investigate pieces over the past term
- We've crossed a million views on the website
- We've grown on all social media platforms
- Generally, we have some of the highest Facebook engagement in the country, rivaled by *Ubysey* but they have 10,000 Facebook likes
- Western TV has integrated well into the *Gazette*, they've grown 70% on Facebook this year and have hit over 60,000 video views
- Graphics has been one of the strongest sections this year
- Merging the photo and video sections into multimedia was not one of the most successful changes but they have been better
- Community section in Opinions have been good

Motion to receive the EIC Report, moved by Metlin, seconded by Greaves

Manager Report - Greaves

- Mostly focuses in on ad revenue
- Hopefully the move down to once-a-week will help with advertising revenues
- We're hoping that we can compete more competitively with Western News now
- We've revamped our webpages for advertising
- Everything has been going well
- Editorial is giving us our pages in good time now
- We're talking with people in the newsroom now which is good in terms of collaboration

Motion to receive Manager Report, moved by Tariq, seconded by Lear

Budget Update - Tariq

- Same that was taken to the *Gazette* working group
- After meeting with the USC, there can be a better picture presented to the committee
- There's still a big staff contingent at the *Gazette* that needs to be considered in order to operate the *Gazette* at its current levels
- Budgets are due Dec. 16

Farfan

- Are there going to be anymore working group meetings?

Tariq

- I think we can have one more working group meeting in January before we take it to council

Motion to Receive, moved by Farfan, seconded by Greaves

Election procedure discussion

Tariq

- One vote per person was moved and created last year
- I thought the method that we had previously with tier voting should be explored again
- Editors and volunteers have very different time commitments and editors are more informed on voting
- Should we consider a hiring process?
- I think having editors have two votes and volunteers have one vote would be beneficial

MacAdam

- What's changing here?

Tariq

- Editors and Front Office would get a vote that's weighed by two while volunteers would get one vote

Menard

- Last year, it was changed to one vote per person

Tariq

- Now that the managing editors have been specified to digital and print, there should be more of a vetting process for the positions

Farfan

- Why should the editor-in-chief be elected whereas the managing editors are not? It's not a democracy, it's a newspaper

Tariq

- The EIC sets the direction the paper

MacAdam

- Is the distinction that the EIC sets the strategic vision of the paper?

Tariq

- I think the tiered vote system can alleviate any concerns

Menard

- Personally, I'm not a fan of the hiring policy recommendation
- I think it's going to be a challenge for students who are in this position to take on a HR role
- It's been an issue that factions have elevated people in the past
- I do like a democratic approach because I think there is value in forcing people together who may not align in terms of strategic visions
- I don't like overvaluing some people over others; I think the threshold for voting was very low for voting
- I am not necessarily opposed to allowing section editors to have a weighted vote
- The idea of proxy voting can be challenging; if you have two qualified candidates for EIC and someone drops down, they could not have been voted for

MacAdam

- Have you considered a ranked ballot?
- Maybe it's also worthwhile to have an HR person in the room during the question and answer session who can get a sense of how they would manage people

Tariq

- There are some issues with the question and answer periods; targeted questions
- Somebody might be a good talker on the day of the election can swing the vote

Menard

- I understand the spirit of the motion

Metlin

- I think there have been cliques and factions in place in the past
- The volunteers are going to be editors next year

Lear

- Editors in the office simply have a better idea of what the jobs are

- It's just making the educated people in the room have a tiered voting

Farfan

- I may be alone in this, but if you want the most qualified person why not hire?

Metlin

- Many student newspapers elect all of their editors, let alone the management positions

Tariq

- It's unprecedented to remove a Front Office so we need to figure out how we can ensure that we have quality people

Menard

- I think we're targeting the symptoms and not the problem in the end
- Maybe the elections are a symptom of poor engagement with volunteers and staff members

Farfan

- If we're going to have a democratic system, maybe we should increase the threshold for allowing people to vote?

Menard

- I want to make sure we're ensuring that people are going into the election with a good idea of what the positions are
- I am a big proponent of the one vote per person system

MacAdam

- I agree with the one vote per person system

Greaves

- I think ramping up the requirement to be able to vote
- Maybe the committee has a ratification process

Tariq

- Maybe there can be a petition to ensure that candidates who win are alright

Metlin

- The ranked balloting is something that could be meaningful
- I think we also need to look at the proxy voting

Menard

- Maybe we can put the EIC candidates on a ranked ballot to ensure that the potential for them to be candidates in the lower two positions

- I think this something that we should decide before January
- Maybe this is something we can't implement this year

Motion to receive election procedure, moved by Lear, seconded by MacAdam

IN CAMERA: HR Matter

Tariq

- In October, we had to remove one of our editors for the board
- We ran it by USC HR to ensure that we were going through the process correctly
- It was one of the most difficult things we've had to do all year
- Another person was put on probation as well
- The person who was let go, did go to HR
- We were supported in our decision making process as well
- I'm working with Carla, the HR manager of the USC, on training Front Office members on HR policy and management
- We are also looking into conflict of interest policies to determine who can supervise who

Call for Adjournment, Tariq, seconded by Lear