

**NC State Student Media Board of Directors
September 2022 meeting minutes**

Tuesday, September 13, 2022 • 7 p.m.

*Witherspoon 356 (African American
Cultural Center Conference Room.)*

Members present: Nate Shorter, Makenna Edgerton, Juliana Lopez, Dean Phillips, Christa Gala, Tyler Dukes, Jake Seaton, Maddie Jennette, Ugonna Ezuma-Igwe, Shilpa Giri, Bran Poster, Tim Werner, Krishna Patel, Ryley Fallon, McKenzy Heavlin

Absent: Robbie Williams

Others present: Jamie Lynn Gilbert, Martha Collins, Zanna Swann, Ray Black III, Jaz Bryant, Hannah Morris, Ethan Robinson, Patrick Neal

CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, ELECTION OF BOARD OFFICERS AND APPOINTMENT OF RECORDING SECONDARY

In the absence of a chair Patrick Neal called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. with a quorum of voting members present. After the members introduced themselves, Nate Shorter offered to serve a second term as board chair for 2022-2023. Dean Phillips made a motion in support of his appointment, with Tyler Dukes seconding it; the board voted unanimously in support. Makenna Edgerton offered to serve as vice-chair. Nate made a motion in support of her appointment, with Jake Seaton seconding it; the board voted unanimously in support. Patrick Neal offered to serve as recording secretary for this first meeting of the year.

APPROVAL OF APRIL 2022 MEETING MINUTES

Tyler moved that the minutes from the board's April 12 meeting be approved, with Dean providing a second; the board voted unanimously to approve them. Those minutes were included in the meeting package and are made part of these minutes by reference.

2021-2022 FISCAL YEAR REVIEW

Jamie Lynn Gilbert reviewed how Student Media ended the 2021-2022 fiscal year and noted where the current budget was adjusted in light of last year's results. Overall, Student Media ended the year \$95,326.04 in the black when it was originally budgeted to end the year \$78,080 in the red. Specifically:

- Agromeck ended the year \$16,700 in the black. This was due to not spending \$10,200 (about half on leadership development/travel and the rest on printing). Leadership

development was budgeted at its historic levels for FY2223 and the printing budget was adjusted for FY2223 to be more accurate. Payroll ended at 101%, about \$300 over budget. Fixed charges were about \$400 over budget, mostly because we paid our CSPA membership for both 2022 and 2023 this fiscal year. Agromeck also had an additional \$4,800 in non-fee income from contract ad sales and Lifetouch portrait commissions. The ad sales budget remained the same (\$11,000), but Lifetouch was officially added into the budget for the first time to even out the overage for FY2223.

- Nubian Message ended the year \$16,400 in the black. This was due to not spending \$7,500 (\$3,400 on leadership development, \$2,100 in personnel and \$1,210 in current services). Nubian also had \$8,100 in additional non-fee income, thanks to high kiosk ad sales.
- Roundabout ended the year about \$11,800 in the red. This was due to the \$17,800 in printing for the summer 2022 Roundabout being paid for in FY2122 along with the summer 2021 issue. Moving forward, Roundabout's summer issue will be paid in June. Payroll ended at 157% of the budget, but as noted that is because of lots of commission on summer 2021 sales. Roundabout was about \$1,000 short of its non-fee income goal and receives no student fees.
- Technician ended the year \$58,000 in the black. This was due to \$37,800 not being spent, mostly in payroll. Payroll spending was only at 66% but is being treated as an aberration rather than something that needs to be adjusted for future spending. Non-fee income was about \$15,800 more than budgeted, thanks to high kiosk ad sales.
- Windhover ended the year \$600 in the red. This was primarily due to book printing costing \$13,300 while only budgeted to cost \$10,000. Printing costs were increased to \$12,500 for FY2223.
- WKNC ended the year \$20,200 in the black. While WKNC was about \$5,000 shy of its non-fee income goal, it didn't spend about \$23,000. \$18,400 of this was payroll and another \$4,000 in leadership development/travel.
- General Administration ended the year \$3,500 in the red when it was budgeted to go \$82,400 in the red. GA had \$17,500 in unbudgeted income from its kiosk share and housing guide ad sales. This is now budgeted for FY2223. There was also \$43,000 in unspent money in other categories; \$13,000 of that was in temp payroll, \$5,500 was in leadership development/travel and \$6,300 in capital outlay.
- The Student Media Enhancement Fund had \$13,900 (including \$8,500 in Foundation Grant money being held there for WKNC's tower painting project) and the Technician Century Fund had \$45,700 at the end of the fiscal year.

Overall, Student Media ended the year by spending \$855,300, which was 89% of its \$956,300 budget. The \$101,000 not spent breaks down this way:

- \$9,700 in FTE salaries and benefits due to Ellen's departure
- \$69,200 in temp payroll. Payroll calculations were revised for FY2223 to better reflect actual spending.
- \$1,400 in supplies
- \$19,500 in leadership development/travel which has already returned for FY2223

- \$2,500 in contracted services due to the consulting engineer not submitting invoices. This figure is recalculated for FY2223.
- \$6,300 in capital outlay due to the equipment reservation system project being delayed one fiscal year and savings on the AudioVAULT server.

The following categories were over budget:

- \$700 in admin service fees
- \$5,700 in current services (Roundabout printing was paid early)
- \$1,100 in fixed charges mainly due to Buffer addition

Income was at 108% of the budget. There was an additional \$28,200 in student fees and \$40,300 in non-fee revenue. Of the \$40,300:

- \$34,855 in kiosk panels was deposited. The budgeted goal was \$9,000 total so we had \$25,900 extra there. The FY2223 goal is \$33,000.
- Another \$3,900 came from the housing guide and other assorted money in GA (grad cords, mostly). The housing guide was unbudgeted in FY2122 but budgeted for \$3,000 in FY2223.
- Technician's non-kiosk income was about \$5,200 more
- Agromeck had \$4,800 in non-fee income from contract ad sales and Lifetouch portrait commissions.

The year-end budget update was included with the September meeting package and is made part of these minutes by reference.

SEPTEMBER 2022 BUDGET UPDATE

The September 2022 budget update was included with the meeting package and is made part of these minutes by reference. Jamie noted the following:

- Roundabout's non-fee income is at \$21,000, which is 70% of the annual goal.
- Technician's non-fee income is at 14% and we are 17% through the year.
- WKNC 88.1 FM HD-1/HD-2's non-fee income is at \$8,300, which is 25% of the annual goal.
- There is no kiosk money to JV yet, but Jamie said she would do it every month from here on out as she compiles the budget update.
- The Student Media Enhancement Fund is at \$5,200 now that the \$8,500 in Foundation Grant money for WKNC's tower painting project has been disbursed, and the Technician Century Fund is at \$45,700.

STATE OF STUDENT MEDIA 2022-2023

Patrick gave his State of Student Media message; his written remarks are included here as part of these minutes. Patrick then invited board members to ask him any questions they may have.

- Christa Gala noted that the AP Stylebook had recently changed its guidance when it came to sources' pronouns and coverage of trans and LGBTQ matters, and asked what adjustments, if any, our groups had made. Shilpa Giri and Ugonna Ezumaligwe said they generally used last names in place of pronouns on second reference.
- Tyler noted that it was a contentious election year and that all Student Media publications needed to be especially careful in their election coverage, and to be mindful of any threats when covering any demonstrations, protests and other political events.

RECOMMENDATION FOR 2022-2023 NUBIAN MESSAGE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

On behalf of the Newspapers Advisory Board, Ugonna recommended that Jaz Bryant be appointed Editor-In-Chief of the Nubian Message for the 2022-2023 academic year. Ugonna subsequently made a motion to that effect, with Christa seconding it. The motion passed unanimously.

EDITORIAL ADVISER SEARCH PROCESS AND UPDATE

Patrick updated the board on the search for Ellen Meder's successor as Editorial Adviser for Nubian Message and Technician. He said that the position had been posted at the beginning of the month and that it would remain live through the end of September, at least. Once the application window closed, he said a search committee composed entirely of students would be empaneled to winnow down the applicant pool, interview semifinalists and identify finalists to invite for on-campus visits and interviews. Patrick said that neither he nor any other DASA administrator knew of any previous instance when a search committee comprised solely of students had been employed to hire a full-time professional staff member, but he said he was grateful that he was able to convince his supervisor to support the idea, as he believed students would do a far better job than a traditional committee of professional staffers from other units. Patrick noted that while Jamie was nominally listed as the chair of the committee, her role would be to serve as scheduling coordinator and administrative support for the student committee. With this in mind, Patrick asked all of the student leaders to look at their respective staffs (including themselves) and identify students who would make good committee members for this task. Ideally, he said he'd like to get two members each from Nubian and Technician, and one member each from the other organizations for a final committee numbering six to eight members.

Dean asked how far and wide the interest had been among the applicants who had responded thus far. Patrick said that they'd seen a wide-ranging response, and noted that he'd augmented the university's posting by advertising the position in *Diverse Issues In Higher Education*, a periodical with a large readership and a robust section devoted to various higher-ed positions posted nationally.

The board was supportive of the approach. Ray Black noted that when he had been

interviewed for the Photo Mentor's position, the interview panel was composed solely of Ellen and a group of students, and that he'd never been to an interview where he'd been asked better, more relevant questions. Similarly, Tyler said that when he had gone through the traditional interview process when he'd served as adviser to the newspapers, the portions of the day-long process devoted to Q&A from students had constituted some of the only truly salient questions he'd been asked over the course of the day.

OCTOBER TRAINING DAY

In an addition to the agenda, Patrick spoke briefly about the day-long training set for Oct. 1 at Witherspoon. He thanked Martha for spearheading the effort, thanked the board members who had agreed to lead sessions, and urged the senior leaders to make sure all their members were aware of it.

TRAVEL EXPENDITURE FROM TECHNICIAN CENTURY FUND

In another addition to the agenda Patrick noted that all of the various national conventions would be coming up in October, and notified the board that he would be authorizing a disbursement from the Technician Century Fund to send three extra students to the ACP/CMA conference in Washington, D.C. He said that he'd spoken to Student Media's development representative at DASA over the summer, and that she had confirmed that Technician could begin spending Century Fund money before it reached the \$50,000 endowment threshold so long as it was spent in accordance with the established purpose of the fund, i.e., augmenting Technician's travel and leadership development efforts. With that in mind, he said Technician had tapped six students to travel to Washington even though it had budgeted for only three. He said this was a good year to do it, as air fares would be lower than usual for this trip, and he said he anticipated some volume-related savings on lodging as well. He said he believed donors to the fund would appreciate seeing a return on their investments now rather than waiting for until the fund surpassed \$50,000 and disbursing only interest proceeds from it. He said the fund should still reach that level eventually so long as disbursements didn't outstrip donations in any given year. Patrick said that even though he had been designated the sole authority to authorize disbursements from the fund, he assured the board that he would not do so without informing them beforehand so that they could voice any concerns they might have.

REPORT ADDENDA

Patrick said he had neglected to solicit board reports from the student leaders for this first meeting, but thanked those who'd submitted written reports anyway. (Those were included with the September meeting package and made part of these minutes by reference.) In lieu of those reports, Patrick invited the senior leaders to give brief remarks on what was happening at their various organizations:

- Krishna Patel said Agromeck's first deadline of the academic year was Oct. 3, and that work nights had been scheduled for the next two Wednesdays.

- Tim Werner said the Student Business and Marketing Office was fully staffed after hiring eight new media consultants. He also noted that their first group training was set for the following night (Wednesday, Sept. 14).
- After congratulating Jaz again for her appointment as Editor-In-Chief, Ugonna said the Nubian had hired eight new people and was in the process of hiring four more. She said the staff had decided to increase the size of the first print edition of the semester (Thursday, Sept. 8) from eight pages to 12. Finally, she said the staff had continue to see some issues with Adobe InDesign on production nights. Tyler thanked Ugonna for her service as acting Editor-In-Chief and providing outstanding leadership through the interview process.
- Bran Poster thanked Jamie and Patrick for helping him travel to the Formula Sun Grand Prix over the summer, making him the first student journalist to ever cover the event. He said the Solar Pack team from NC State posted the fastest lap in the history of the event. He said he'd already written about it for both Technician and Agromeck, and that it would be the cover story for the fall issue of Roundabout to be published Oct. 20. He also thanked Student Media for sending him to the College Media Mega Workshop. He then thanked those who'd manned the table at the summer Orientation info fairs for their recruitment efforts; thanks to them, he said, Roundabout was fully staffed for the first time in two years. Finally, he said he was working on assembling a working group of content creators interested in focusing on science and research on campus.
- Shilpa Giri echoed Bran's thanks for those who'd recruited for Student Media over the summer, saying Technician had filled all of its editorial board positions and had even created a few assistant positions as well. As another example, she said that Sports – which had lost most of its staff to graduation – had replenished its ranks so well that that its last meeting had been standing-room-only. She also noted that Technician was in the process of instituting a paperless correspondence tracking system similar to the paperless onboarding system implemented at the beginning of the semester. Otherwise, she said Technician had produced four print publications so far this year, the first one being 20 pages with good ad support.
- Maddie Jennette echoed her counterparts' reports with regard to seeing significantly more interest in the station than in years past, noting that WKNC's first interest meeting had drawn 70 students and that the second one had drawn 50 more. As a result, she said they've received five times more DJ applications than they could handle in their training classes, which were capped at 25 people.
- Martha Collins reminded the leaders present that their first monthly informal get-together was set for Friday, Sept. 23

ADJOURN

There being no need for an executive session, Dean moved to adjourn with Tyler seconding. The meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

For the last several years I've taken a few minutes of the first board meeting each year to provide a snapshot of where the program is as a whole as well as challenges to come both this year and beyond. As in years past I want to keep it brief out of respect for our board members' time.

In many of the most important ways, Student Media is in an enviable position. As you just heard, we finished the most recent fiscal year far better than we budgeted for, and we've done that for nine of the last 10 years, so we're on very sound financial footing. That money in the bank allows us to do things like increase our hourly wages 20% year over year. It allows us to travel well, which we'll talk about in a few minutes. It allows us to buy new equipment. Money is a wonderful thing to have, and thanks to some early wins by our sales and marketing team this year, I'm optimistic we can continue to maintain and even improve upon our current "standard of living" so to speak.

That's not to say we won't have some fiscal challenges this year. Inflation is going to hit us pretty hard, especially at our print publications. Windhover already saw it in April when they paid 30% more for the same book, specs-wise, that they printed just one year earlier. Back in February, when Jamie and I were putting the budget together, we increased the printing budgets of both newspapers by 15% thinking that surely that amount would cover any increase. When I received the new pricing grid from our printer a few weeks ago, I learned that printing and delivery costs would actually be going up by closer to 25%, so when you see us going over budget on the Current Services line over the course of the year, that's why. Again, we've got money in the bank, so this isn't a crisis by any means, and it isn't even something unexpected, but it is a concern that will bear watching in the future. Our revenue can always go down for any number of reasons, but these new, higher costs of doing business won't ever go down again, I can assure you.

Another fiscal concern moving forward are student staff wages. Even after moving our base hourly rate to \$10 an hour (which was a 20% increase) and our base per-story/per-photo rates to \$15 per story (which was a 50% increase) we are still just barely keeping pace with some large on-campus employers like Dining and Wellness and Recreation, and we're still squarely behind other on-campus employers like the Libraries. Once you move off-campus, we're not even in the same ballpark. That being the case, starting with next year's budget we're going to take another hard look at wages and hopefully come up with a plan that will allow us to bring those wages up incrementally over time instead of doing these huge catch-up increases every four or five years.

One more note on the money front, on the revenue side of the ledger. It's clear that over time our pricing, like our wages, haven't kept pace with market conditions. We have a newsletter that now goes out to more than 50,000 people each week that has excellent opening and click-through rates. That, in turn, is increasing our overall web traffic, which makes our digital offerings that much more valuable to advertisers. We've already been able to demand a bit more money for our women's basketball and baseball broadcasts on WKNC. To rectify this, Zanna and I this year will be putting together a peer group of student media organizations,

taking a hard look at our pricing compared to those comparables, and making changes accordingly.

There is, of course, more to Student Media than dollars and cents. In fact, at this moment my top three concerns for the program don't have anything to do with money, or at least not directly so.

The first is capacity. Just a year ago I was worried about the dip in participation we saw in 2020-2021 due to COVID. That's why you all heard me say "ABC - Always Be Crootin'" over and over throughout the year. And you guys more than delivered. I thought we'd be lucky to get back to our historically normal participation levels in two years, but we were able to make up virtually all that ground even before the spring semester had ended.

Ironically, in one year's time my worry has gone from one of low participation to one of program capacity. We have a LOT of new students coming in the door every day. I'm not sure if it's just pent-up demand coming out of COVID or whether it's being driven by the overall enrollment increase at the university generally. It's probably a combination of both. But whatever the reason it's happening, and once we get beyond 350 students or so, the professional staff is going to be stretched very, very thin. What happens when we hit the 400-student mark? I think there's a good chance we will blow past that this year. And if and when that happens, we may need to beef up the professional staff if only to keep up with the sheer administrative workload that many additional students will create.

Does that mean anything for our student leaders here in terms of recruiting? Absolutely not. ABC. Always Be Crootin'. Last year, this year and forever. Every fee-paying NC State student who wants to be a part of our organizations should have that chance. You guys keep doing what you're doing. If the time comes when we need reinforcements, that will be on me, not you. I mention it here mainly for people who may be on the board in years to come so that it doesn't come as a surprise to anyone.

My second concern is that the professional staff is short-handed and will continue to be short-handed until we find our next Editorial Adviser. That's a separate item on tonight's agenda, so I won't belabor it here.

My final concern is truly the one that I think of lying in bed at night, and that is that one or more of our groups could find themselves a political football by doing nothing more than the right thing. I'll give you two hypotheticals that come quickly to mind.

When we were interviewing our candidates for the Nubian Message EIC job, I asked each of them a variation of the following question: "What do you say to people who question why we even have a Black student newspaper?" Some people may ask that question in good faith, and many others won't. It's that latter group I'm worried about.

Another example is how LGBTQ-friendly all our groups are, particularly WKNC, where a significant number of the station's most visible and active members are trans or non-binary. This is a wonderful thing, it speaks well of us. It tells us that we provide a space where LGBTQ students can be themselves and feel safe, and I know from both past and present experience that all of our student leaders are serious about preserving that atmosphere. Students who come to work here and don't embrace that attitude don't tend to stay around very long. That's a good thing in one way, but in another way I think it can create an echo chamber where we might forget that many places aren't like Student Media. When I say "Our groups provide safe spaces for LGBTQ students," that's music to our ears here, but in today's political climate, when a certain, vocal segment of the political class has decided to make LGBTQ folk a political punching bag, "safe spaces for LGBTQ students" may not be received nearly as well.

When I think of these things, I think of it in terms of bad, worse and worst-case scenarios. It will be bad if some self-righteous student decides to appoint themselves the morality police and mount some sort of misguided crusade against us. It will be worse if some grandstanding state legislator or other public official decides to do the same thing. The worst-case scenario would of course be a self-righteous student whose dad happens to be a grandstanding state legislator. I've tried to tell myself I'm being paranoid about this, but as I look around at the political landscape, and where things seem to be headed in this state in particular, it just doesn't take much imagination to think how ugly things could get. And while I picked the Nubian and WKNC as examples, I could see it happening to any of our groups.

So what does this mean for our student leaders and our groups? Hopefully nothing. Hopefully I *am* just being paranoid. It sure doesn't mean that the Nubian Message should stop being NC State's Black student newspaper. It sure doesn't mean that WKNC or any of our organizations should stop being less friendly places for LGBTQ students to work and play. What it does mean, though, is that we all need to be vigilant and realize there is a big world outside these walls, and unfortunately that big world is home to a lot of people who are angry, bigoted, ignorant and loud. I hope you never hear from those folks, but if you do, be ready to stand your ground and take the fight to them if necessary. Just as important, remember always that if you're challenged you're not without friends. If someone wants to come at one of us, they should be prepared to deal with all of us.

These are my thoughts for the coming year. As always, I'm honored and proud to be associated with you, and I'm looking forward to another great year. And now I'd like to open up the floor to any questions you may have about literally anything here at the start of the year.