

# **NC State Student Media Board of Directors**

## **October 2024 meeting minutes**

*Tuesday, October 8, 2024 • 7 p.m.*

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

*Members present: Dean Phillips, Christa Gala (via Google Meet), Jake Seaton, Robbie Williams, Tyler Dukes, Julianna Lopez, Emma Scott, Allie Gervase, Alianna Kendall-Brooks, Rose Kelley, Bran Poster, Kate Denning, Josie Headley, Patrick Neal*

*Members absent: Caleb Twigg, Madeline Renneker, Sydney Robbins, Garrett Gough, Scarlett Taylor*

*Staff and guests present: Jamie Lynn Gilbert, Abi Barefoot, Ray Black III, Layla Faith Batts*

### **CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Board chair Julianna Lopez called the meeting to order after a quorum was established at 7:09 p.m.

### **APPOINTMENT OF RECORDING SECRETARY**

Alianna Kendall-Brooks agreed to serve as recording secretary for the meeting.

### **APPROVAL OF APRIL MEETING MINUTES**

Dean Phillips made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 10, 2024 meeting, Tyler Dukes seconded the motion, and the board unanimously approved them. Those minutes were included in the meeting package and are made part of these minutes by reference.

### **OCTOBER 2024 BUDGET UPDATE**

Jamie Lynn Gilbert reviewed the October 2024 budget update, which was included in the meeting package and made part of these minutes by reference. She noted the following:

- The DASA Shared Services charge for Student Media has been posted, totaling \$101,300 across all groups.
- No non-fee income has been posted yet for Agromeck. Payroll is at 13% and we are 25% through the fiscal year.
- The Nubian Message's non-fee income is at 58%, with \$610 coming from ad and merchandise sales (31% of the goal) and \$6,300 coming from The Nubian's share of kiosk revenue. Student payroll is at 18%.
- Roundabout's non-fee income is at 81%. Student payroll is at 30%.
- Technician's non-fee income is at 39%, with \$12,900 coming from ad sales (33% of the goal) and \$6,300 coming from kiosk revenue. Student payroll is at 15%.
- Windhover's student payroll is at 24%.
- WKNC's non-fee income is at 29%. Student payroll is at 25%.
- General Administration's non-fee income is at 71% of its goal. Student payroll is at 14%.

- The Student Media Enhancement Fund is at \$10,900, WKNC Enhancement Fund at \$8,300 and Technician Century Fund at \$51,100.

## **RECOMMENDATION FOR 2024-2025 STUDENT BUSINESS OFFICE GENERAL MANAGER**

On behalf of the Student Business Office Advisory Board, Robbie Williams recommended that interim Student Business Office General Manager Allie Gervase be hired as General Manager for the remainder of the 2024-2025 academic year. Jake Seaton moved to accept the advisory board's recommendation, with Dean seconding the motion. It passed unanimously.

## **PROFESSIONAL STAFF ANNOUNCEMENT**

Patrick Neal announced that Abi Barefoot, who previously served as Student Media's Student Employment and Finance Associate, had been hired to succeed Zanna Swann as adviser to the Student Business Office. Abi's official first day in her new position was the day before the meeting, Monday, Oct. 7.

Patrick said the Employment and Finance Associate position would not be filled immediately due to budget constraints (see below). That being the case, he said Abi would continue to handle some tasks from the position with the assistance of two temporary student workers.

## **COMMUNITY ISSUES FOR 2024-2025**

As part of Student Media's assessment plan for 2024-2025, one goal is to identify a number of community issues that are newsworthy to our audiences and to cover those issues regularly throughout the academic year. To that end, Jamie led a brainstorming session at Student Media's Fall Training Day on Sept. 21 to identify such issues. A summary of the issues identified for coverage was included in the meeting package and is included in these minutes by reference. Jamie said she would update the board in January and again in April as to the various outlets' coverage of the issues identified.

## **BUDGET DISCUSSION**

Patrick and Jamie gave an overview of Student Media's participation numbers, revenue and printing costs over time. The presentation also summarized various cost-cutting and revenue-generating initiatives over time, as well as a 15-year history of Student Media's student activity fee funding. Finally, it included scenarios showing the budgetary impact of continuing unchanged with current operations versus scenarios based on a reduction in the print schedules of both Technician and The Nubian Message. (The presentation is included here and made part of these minutes by reference.) In short, Patrick said Student Media was on an unsustainable fiscal course that would lead to a negative cash balance by the end of the 2025-2026 fiscal year absent significant operational changes or a significant increase in revenues.

Patrick said that to continue current operations and fill the vacant Student Employment and Finance Associate position, Student Media would need an additional \$5 per student in fee funding. He said that Student Media had been invited to make a formal request for such an increase in late September, but he said he ultimately declined on behalf of the unit given the short

notice received for the presentation and his discomfort with making such a significant request without first consulting with the board.

Patrick also noted that while he and Jamie had run the numbers on various scenarios that included the outright elimination of some groups, he did not include those in the presentation because he was unwilling to ask the board to consider any scenario he could not himself support in good conscience. He said a reduction in the newspapers' print schedules was the only scenario he could find that he could reluctantly support given the experience of other student newspapers around the country that had ceased print years ago that nevertheless continued to be viable and vital news organizations for their respective campuses.

Finally, Patrick said that the scenarios presented were meant to serve as conversation starters, and that there would be no immediate changes for any group. He said that the potential "fiscal cliff" was some two to three years in the future, so there should be time to have a long, thoughtful conversation about the best path forward.

A wide-ranging discussion followed. Questions raised and points covered during the course of that discussion included the following:

- There was a general concern that moving from the current print schedules (30 per year for Technician and 15 per year for The Nubian Message) to a schedule of just six issues per year for each was too drastic, and that such a change would fundamentally change the nature of both newspapers.
- The board asked if all units were seeing the same kinds of fee revenue shortfalls as Student Media. Patrick replied that they were, as all DASA units receiving student activity fees were provided the same guidance for the budget process. He said several units were facing even more severe and immediate impacts than Student Media thanks to those shortfalls.
- The board asked how much business had been lost due to the Housing Portal. Patrick said he would gather that information for the board's next meeting.
- For reference, the board asked what other units were receiving student activity fees and which ones were requesting additional funds. Patrick said he would also gather that information for the board's next meeting.
- There was a discussion of augmenting Student Media's funding through donations from alumni. Patrick said that while Student Media currently had three Enhancement Funds – the general Student Media Enhancement Fund to benefit all groups, the Century Fund established as part of Technician's 100th-anniversary celebration in 2020, and the newly created WKNC Enhancement Fund – he said he did not foresee those funds growing enough in the near term to provide significant, sustainable support for the unit's overall operations. It was also noted that a group would need at least \$3,000 to establish a fund specific to that group. Jamie said that she maintained a spreadsheet noting any Student Media Enhancement Fund donation where a specific group was named by the donor; she said that once any group reached the \$3,000 threshold, Student Media could request a new Enhancement Fund for that group, but that no group except WKNC had come close to that amount so far.
- Patrick noted that the budget presentation did not include any increases in hourly wages for any of the groups, but he said the groups themselves could increase their staffers' standard hourly pay from \$10/hour to \$11/hour as soon as the spring semester if they could find a way to eliminate positions and reallocate those funds toward the positions

kept.

- A question arose about the possibility of saving on printing costs by decreasing the number of copies printed. Patrick said most of the costs of web printing are tied up in the initial setup, and thus the cost per 1,000 copies was almost negligible, about \$50 per 1,000 copies. So if the Nubian, for example, cut its press run in half to 1,000 copies per issue, it would only save about \$50. Jamie also noted that decreasing print and circulation numbers would make the newspapers significantly less attractive to advertisers.
- In the end, there was an initial, general consensus that Student Media had a strong case for the \$5-per-student fee increase given the service they provided the campus, the number of students involved and the opportunities Student Media presented for all students.

## **ADVISORY BOARD ASSIGNMENTS**

Patrick quickly polled the board members to confirm their preferred advisory board assignments. Dean and Julianna indicated they would remain part of the Broadcast Advisory Board, Tyler and Christa would remain part of the Newspapers Advisory Board, Robbie would remain part of the Business Office Advisory Board, and Jake would switch from the Newspapers Advisory Board to the Business Office Advisory Board given his current position and experience with digital product sales.

## **ORGANIZATION UPDATES**

Written board reports for the October meeting were included with the meeting package and are made part of these minutes by reference. Addenda to those written reports included the following:

- Alianna reported that The Nubian Message's launch party had been a great success, drawing more than 70 people, including a number of Nubian alumni who spoke as part of a panel discussion.
- Bran thanked Jamie for getting the header ads on Roundabout's website working.

There being no need for an executive session, Dean moved to adjourn the meeting with Tyler seconding. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.