University Board for Student Media
Annual Report
2016-2017

MEMBERSHIP

Voting Members

Dr. Erik Ugland  Representing Digital Media (Chair)
Dr. Nathan Gilkerson  Representing Strategic Communication
Dr. Pamela Nettleton  Representing Journalism and Media Studies
Rev. William Kurz, S.J.  Representing Jesuit Faculty
Dr. Jack Winters  Representing Marquette Faculty
Mr. Greg Borowski  Representing Marquette Alumni
Mr. Dale Kaser  Representing Office of the Provost
Mr. Keith Rocheck  Representing College IT Staff
Ms. Alison Trovato  Representing MUSG
Mr. Pedro Bonnin  Representing MUSG
Mr. Pravin Dhakal  Representing GSO (fall only)

Non-Voting Members

Mr. Mark Zoromski  Director of Student Media
Ms. Kimberly Zawada  Student Media Business Manager
Mr. Patrick Thomas  Wire Executive Director
Ms. Amy Elliot-Meisel  Tribune Managing Editor
Ms. Stephanie Harte  Journal Managing Editor
Ms. Hannah Kirby  MUTV General Manager
Ms. Lily Wellen  Marquette Radio General Manager
Ms. Kate Larkin  Advertising Director

ACTIVITIES

This was a very active year for the board. Members met in person twice in the fall and three times in the spring while also regularly consulting online. Some of the key activities and accomplishments are noted below.

New Funding Model

After considerable discussion over the past several years, and after extensive consultation between the board, the dean of the College of Communication and the provost, the board approved a plan that will allow student media to move to a non-profit model (or, more precisely, a non-revenue-generating model) under which it will receive a smaller but fixed subsidy from the university. This will give some much-needed stability to student media, free it from some of the difficulties of raising revenue, and give it some immunity
from irregular year-to-year budget cuts. It will also give the university some budget predictability while also reducing the university’s overall contribution to student media.

Under the current model, the university provides an annual budget for student media salaries and operations but requires that all revenue generated from ad sales or other sources be returned to the university. The university sets a revenue target each year, which, for the past several years, has been $160,000. It has been a long time since that goal has been met, despite the exceptional efforts by students and staff in the ad department to not only maintain ad sales but also implement new revenue-generating strategies. The downturn in ad revenue has been persistent and precipitous over the past decade, and student media finally reached a tipping point where it was spending more on advertising sales and operations than it generated in revenue.

This downturn in revenue is certainly not unique to student media. It is an industry-wide phenomenon. Nevertheless, the declines forced the university to cover the gaps each year and therefore increase its overall subsidy to student media. This had become unsustainable so the board, college and university agreed on a new model that will go into effect in 2017-18.

The biggest change is that student media will no longer have a separate ad department, which will significantly reduce the salary budget and will also save some operating expenses. Under the new model, student media can still sell ads and any revenue generated can be folded back into student media operations, so there will still be some opportunities for students interested in advertising. But this will likely be just a couple of positions focused on managing some of the longstanding accounts rather than a larger group seeking to develop new revenue streams, marketing, client services, etc.

New Director of Student Media

This was the first year of the director of student media position. Prof. Mark Zoromski was hired last year to assume this role, which is principally focused on directing the administrative aspects of student media and serving as an expert adviser. Prof. Zoromski also serves as a faculty member in the journalism and media studies department and teaches one class per year.

Prof. Zoromski has done an outstanding job this year, helping guide the students on a number of important projects, providing professional advice and mentorship, and serving as a macro-level manager of all aspects of student media operations.

New Tribune Printer

The Marquette Tribune’s printer ceased operations in the middle of the year, forcing the staff to scramble to identify a replacement. Fortunately, Marquette alumnus Bill Schanen, who owns Port Publications, a third-generation family owned business in Port Washington, is now printing the paper, and Schanen says he is “ecstatic” about working with Marquette students.
**Donation for the Marquette Journal**

Two years ago, budget cuts forced the staff to move the Marquette Journal to a digital-only publication. Last year, there was enough money in the operating budget to print one issue. This year, with help from MU advancement, Prof. Zoromski and Wire Executive Director Patrick Thomas procured a donation from alum Mike Delzer of Delzer Litho in Waukesha who offered to print the spring edition as an in-kind donation.

**Student Media Reunion**

On March 3-4, 2017, the College of Communication hosted a reunion of all alumni of Marquette student media. The event was not technically a board activity, but the idea was first proposed and discussed by board members, some of whom also participated in the planning of the event. More than 200 alumni returned to campus for a weekend of activities, which included a reception and open house in Johnston Hall, a pre-game gathering at the Newsroom Pub, a Marquette basketball game (v. Creighton) and a dinner at the Wisconsin Club.

**Editorial Accomplishments**

The student media staff did some exceptional work over the course of the year and some highlights are noted below:

**Breaking the Silence**

This was an all-student-media project aimed at encouraging discussion about suicide, the leading cause of death among college students. The project launched with two stories in the Marquette Journal and was followed by news stories and features in the Marquette Tribune and on MUTV. Marquette Radio also produced podcasts and PSAs addressing the issue, and the project culminated with a live, televised town-hall forum on May 3rd in the Weasler Auditorium. Local media coverage of the project included a story on WISN-TV, and a public affairs program on WTMJ-TV.

**Convergence & Election Night Coverage**

Student media staffers worked collaboratively to cover (in real time) the election results in November. They produced a special issue of the Marquette Tribune, which contained extensive coverage of the election results, but also did live broadcasts on Marquette Radio and MUTV throughout election night. This was a great service to the university community but also gave the students that chance to cover a unique event and to work collaboratively across media platforms.

**Radio Newscasts**

In recent years, Marquette Radio has principally served as an entertainment platform with shows focusing on music and entertainment. This year, the staff introduced more news content, mostly in the form of daily headline reports, and they plan to expand this in 2017-18.
**Awards**
Marquette student media staffers won 18 Mark of Excellence awards from the Society of Professional Journalists, 14 from the Milwaukee Press Club, 9 from the Wisconsin Newspaper Association, and 5 from the Midwest Broadcast Journalists Association. The categories included: Best newspaper, best magazine, on-line breaking news reporting, television breaking news reporting, online news reporting, in-depth reporting, best all-around radio newscast.

**BUDGET**

Student media revenue has been declining for much of the past decade, and the decline has been especially steep in the past several years. With about a month remaining in the current academic year, revenue was only $51,633 ($49,133 from Tribune ads, $2,500 from TV), which is down significantly from last year and roughly half the total from two years ago. Changing to the subsidy model, which goes into effect in 2017-18, was a necessary and important step to preserve the stability of student media and to free it from the uncertainties and stress of further revenue declines.

With regard to expenses, there are two broad budget categories: student salaries and operating costs. The salary budget for 2016-17 was roughly $195,000. The staff estimates that it will spend only about $180,000 of that because of some staffing vacancies. By the end of the year, about $100,000 will have been spent on editorial and administrative salaries and $80,000 on advertising department salaries. For 2017-18, the first year under the new funding model, about $115,000 will be budgeted for all student salaries.

2016-17, the operating budget was about $68,529, and it will stay roughly the same in 2017-18 at $70,000.

**SELECTION OF STUDENT MEDIA LEADERS**

The board uses a two-step process to select the student media leaders for the next academic year. The first step is to interview candidates seeking to be the next executive director of the Wire, which is the highest ranking position in student media. The executive director-elect then joins the board in interviewing applicants for the other student media leadership positions.

In February, the board hired Patrick Thomas to serve as executive director in 2017-18. Mr. Thomas held this position in the current academic year but was re-hired to serve a second term after no other applicants came forward. This was an unusual situation but the board was pleased with Mr. Thomas’s leadership in 2016-17 and was happy to reappoint him. This will provide some stability in the coming year and will allow Mr. Thomas, working with Prof. Zoromski, to continue implementing some of the structural and procedural changes they initiated this year.
In the second step of the hiring process, the board interviewed applicants for the positions of Marquette Tribune Managing Editor, Marquette Journal Editor, MUTV General Manager and Marquette Radio General Manager. Mr. Thomas, along with several of the current student media leaders, participated in the interviews but were not part of the deliberations or votes.

The student media leaders selected for 2017-18 were:

Patrick Thomas (MU Wire Executive Director)
Rebecca Carballo (Tribune Managing Editor)
McKenna Oxenden (Journal Managing Editor)
Phillip Pinarski (MUTV General Manager)
Ian Schranck (Marquette Radio General Manager)

**BOARD MEMBERSHIP – 2017-18**

Dr. Erik Ugland has just completed his third year as chair. The Board will have an election in the fall to select a new chair. Dr. Ugland is eligible for a second term.

The Board membership for 2017-18 is mostly set. A replacement will be needed for Mr. Keith Rocheck who has left Marquette, but the rest of the roster is as follows:

Dr. Erik Ugland Representing Digital Media
Dr. Nathan Gilkerson Representing Strategic Communication
Dr. Pamela Nettleton Representing Journalism and Media Studies
Rev. William Kurz, S.J. Representing Jesuit Faculty
Dr. Jack Winters Representing College of Arts & Sciences
Mr. Greg Borowski Representing Marquette Alumni
Mr. Dale Kaser Representing Office of the Provost
Vacant Representing College IT Staff
Ms. Kelly Durkin Representing MUSG
Ms. Bridget Fogarty Representing MUSG
Ms. Rachel Italiano Representing GSO