



Gateway Student Journalism Society (GSJS) Board of Directors Meeting — March 2020

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chair, Continuity Rep	Oumar Salifou
Editor-in-Chief	Andrew McWhinney
Continuity Rep	Lee Craig
Students' Union Rep	Alana Krahn
Community Representative	Robyn Paches
Ediors' Representative, Secretary	Adam Lachacz
Volunteer Representative	Nana Andoh
Student-at-Large Representative	Navneet Chand

MEETING MINUTES:

Meeting called to order by Chair Oumar Salifou at 7:05 pm on May 7, 2020.

1.0 Approval of the agenda

1.1 *Approved*

1.2 8/0/0

2.0 Reports

2.1 *Editorial*

McWhinney: My final report as Editor-in-Chief at *The Gateway*! April is transition month at *The Gateway* so most of my time was making sure the team was all set up to do interviews and that hiring occurred. Hiring went very smoothly as it was online — first time we have done that. We endeavoured to get feedback from candidates about the process so we could learn. Majority of the feedback was quite positive. This means we will be basically ready if we ever have to do online hiring again.

Adam and his team have done a pretty good job at hiring a solid team for next year. All positions have been hired. Wish them the best of luck with everything they do! It will be a challenging year ahead with COVID and the plebiscite but I hope they take this all in stride.

I would like to flag to the board that I would be willing to stay on at the board, as per GSJS bylaw, as continuity representative. However, I would have to resign my position at the end of August in order to balance my academic requirements which are taking me to Ontario. Until then I'd be happy to sit on the board.

2.2 *Online*

McWhinney: Due to some complications we did not receive the full online report prepared by Tina. However, we have year-end numbers.

A) Total Page Views for the Year

We had 625,621 views total. The most viewed page on our site was the home page with just over 68,000 views. The biggest article of the year was the U of A approving extraordinary measures for grading due to COVID-19. That had 46,500 views. The second most viewed article was the breaking Budget 2019 coverage article with 31,500. Below that was offensive comments by U of A lecturer spur backlash article 14,000. Millennials with tattoos was fourth most viewed around 10,000. Then the next articles followed: U of A proposes new program-based tuition model for international students with 7,700; Ottawa introduces grace-free period for student loans due to COVID-19 with 5,000; Moratorium for Alberta student loans due to COVID-19 with 4,500; 43 professors condemn SU president for statement regarding Holodomor-denying lecturer with 4,500; and then emoji of the week: red balloon at 4,200.

Compared to last publishing year 2019-20, we had 607,813 page views. So we increased our page views overall. That is pretty significant and exciting. The largest hitting article was nearly double that of the one last year which is really great to see.

Especially given the difficulties with a slower restart of publishing in January and COVID-19, these numbers are really encouraging. We managed to do pretty well for ourselves. This was also a really busy and hectic news year with a lot happening on campus.

2.3 *Magazine*

McWhinney: Because of COVID-19 the situation with March and April magazine remains largely unchanged. March mags are still on stands and the April ones are in storage and unable to circulate for safety reasons. April magazines have a place to stay for now and can be circulated easily once restrictions loosen.

2019-20 bound editions are in the office. Outgoing staff received their personal copies and the two archival editions are now on the shelf as well.

2.4 *Business*

To be presented next board meeting

2.5 Discussion

Paches: I think it is really cool to see those stark numbers of comparison between the top articles of 2018-19 and then 2019-20. It really shows the importance of breaking news and topics that are specifically relevant to the U of A campus as a whole. We need to make sure the organization continues to focus on those topics and continues to break those — we already knew that *The Gateway* is a leader in those — but now it is good to see for everyone.

Paches: On another note I think it is great bound editions are happening again. I think this could be something we could open up eventually to the general public for purchasing. I have one and I love it.

3.0 Officer Positions for GSJS Board Next Year

Salifou: Thank you to Andrew for all you did as EiC in your year. I would also like to thank all the board members who participated with us this year. This is our last meeting for these board positions so thanks for your work and time with us. Now we will talk about next steps and introduce the board officer positions so that people can start thinking about if they want to nominate themselves for one or nominate someone else at the next board meeting.

If you look at the GSJS bylaws and policies, we have different officers and then representative positions. I will be working with Adam as incoming EiC and the board to make sure as many of these are filled and in the correct way. Some require engaging the editorial staff, engaging the public, and Students' Council.

A) Chair

I am currently chair of the board. The position basically is someone to organize the meetings, gathering documents from the staff editorial team to distribute to the board, and being the first liaison between the staff and EiC. So if there is information to be passed on or steps needed to resolve conflict you are there for that purpose. You also play an advisory role to the EiC. Being chair takes time and is a responsibility that is essential for the health of *The Gateway*. If you are interested definitely put your name forward to me.

I am willing to stay on as chair and on the board. But if anyone has any more time or is really excited to lead the direction of the board I would be more than willing to cede the position.

B) Treasurer

This is a person who deals with the financial side. Now that we have a Business Unit in place it may function a little differently. You work with them to ensure everything is accurate in the way it should be. You will also be a signing authority in a situation where there is conflict. This is important as we have another set of eyes keeping tabs on the financial side of *The Gateway* other than staff.

C) Secretary

Primary role is to take minutes of the meeting. This is an integral part of the board and is crucial to have our ducks in a row.

Now lets talk about all the representative positions and if people will be staying on or what their plans will be for the year ahead.

A) Editors' Representative

Adam will be staying on the board as EiC, so this position will be voted on and filled by the staff of the new team for 2020-21.

B) Continuity Representative

Andrew, you indicated that you are interested in this position. This goes automatically to you until you decide to leave in September.

Lee, you were a continuity representative this year. She has expressed interest in continuing with the board.

C) Volunteer Representative

Nana, as volunteer representative your term ends today. This position will have to be re-opened and you are more than welcome to re-nominate yourself or re-apply to the position. Adam will organize a meeting between volunteers to select two new volunteers for this position.

D) Community Representative

Robyn has expressed he is happy to stay on as a representative of the community. Robyn was chair before me, so if you want more information you can contact him. He is incredibly knowledgeable and has a lot of experience.

E) Alumni Representative

Jonn has expressed interest in staying on so he will retain this position.

F) Student-at-Large Representative

For this position we have to open it up again. Navneet you are more than welcome to re-apply for the position.

Chand: I will not be able to stay on the board.

Salifou: Okay, thank you very much for your time on the board. We will have to open this up when we do with the rest of the positions.

Paches: Have we had our AGM yet?

Salifou: No, we haven't.

Paches: That's okay. Service Alberta has pushed back the requirements for societies to hold AGMs and the deadlines for filing annual returns due to COVID-19. What that means is we have more time in filling these positions. We need to have these positions filled when we renew our annual society paperwork. Last I heard there is no determined date for a need for AGMs. We can also have virtual AGMs. Whatever the board decides. It will be up to Adam to take the lead on this and have Andrew or I help.

4.0 New EiC Goals and Priorities

Salifou: It's only been seven days since Adam has officially taken on the role of EiC but I wanted to offer him some time to speak to the board and present his goals or update us on what has happened so far.

4.1 Updates

Lachacz: Hiring is fully complete. Welcomed all members of staff to the team. Right now biggest priority is staff training. With COVID-19 this has forced us to adapt our traditional model of in-person production weeks and office hours at *The Gateway*. All of our training is being done online. Our new Managing Team has developed a brand-new curriculum of workshops which will happen twice a week for the next three to four weeks. I really want to highlight and thank the management staff who have been hired on and in their roles for only seven days formally but have been working tirelessly to create these workshops for training. Topics range from history of *The Gateway*, legal things like defamation and the five defences against it with regards to media publications, how to use Wordpress, and how to write articles. We are training all of our staff how to write an article for any section so we can build-up their skills and not silo people. Obviously our Business Unit personnel's main focus will not be writing articles, but if they are so inclined they can help out with production too — like going to a basketball game and doing a photo story or writing a review of a film they watched. Our brand new Business Unit will be undergoing extensive training with Piero online as well to bring them up to speed.

In terms of budget planning, once the B-Unit is up to speed and ready, we will begin planning for this.

Planning for the DFU plebiscite is underway. I am happy to report that this will remain an organizational priority and that Emma, our new Marketing & Outreach Coordinator is ready and knows this. She ran our last campaign so she has experience and the lessons learned from the last time. We are drawing up some preliminary marketing and messaging ideas that we want to promote come campaign period. We are going to try to create a brand that is marketable, has a value-added proposition for students that is clear, and push our planning to ensure we are ready. We want to have the bulk of the design work, if not all of it, done before the campaign period so we can have the campaign team take it, use it, publish it, distribute it, and be able ultimately to focus on the ground game and everything else that comes with the campaign proper. This will be a focus and priority for the summer and fall so that when time comes we are ready.

4.2 Goals

In terms of goals for the year here are my priorities:

A) Implement deputy-line editorships

This was something that Andrew envisioned and planned out but was unable to execute due to the circumstances last year. This concept is valuable and I think important in bridging the gap between volunteering and becoming a staff member. The board has seen, heard, and discussed this idea already as well.

B) Create an editorial board

I really want to see this happen. I want to work with the board to create this important body that will help democratize and allow *The Gateway* to be more transparent in how it chooses and approaches story writing and pitching. I think the best form for this would either be a subcommittee or some-kind of institution that operates alongside the GSJS. I want to have a place for staff, former staff, alumni of the U of A, alumni of *The Gateway*, and current students to discuss and create policy that will help formalize and guide our editorial efforts. This isn't to take autonomy away from staff, but rather to give more structure and guidelines for best practices. I think this will actually empower and assist staff and volunteers alike.

C) Create a lasting mission/vision document

Right now *The Gateway* doesn't really have a ubiquitous mission statement. We have a set of values and objectives listed on our about page on our website, bylaw, and operating policy. That is all we have to describe our 110-year old organization. I think we need something better to communicate in a transparent way what are aims are as an organization and what people can expect from us. I want to create something that can be drawn upon for our campaign, operations, and really anyone to communicate clearly who we are, why we are here, and

what we offer that is unique to us and us alone. That we as an organization, by students and for students, create content to inform and entertain readers.

4.3 Discussion

McWhinney: I am really glad that you guys have found a new way to deliver training that also fits with your vision that you Adam expressed in your interview for the position, and some other staff members also wanted to help work toward. As far as delivery of these workshops, is it just the management team delivering them? Could we get some more detail on them?

Lachacz: For sure. Ideally we had hoped for, prior to COVID, to have some workshops given by guest speakers, professionals in the field, and alumni of *The Gateway*. However, current circumstances have made that difficult to do. Right now it is just management who will deliver them. The person who is best qualified or knowledgeable about that theme or topic will deliver that specific workshop. So for the legal aspects like defamation and defences against it, I will do that. For Wordpress knowledge, Pia will. If anyone who is on the board and has been a Gateway staffer before is interested in helping — either in looking over curriculum or giving a session — don't be afraid to reach out!

Salifou: Thanks for the information. In terms of the DFU campaign and Emma's role, is Emma the campaign director or coordinator for the upcoming year?

Lachacz: So right now, we are trying to get Lochlann to be the campaign manager. Lochlann was heavily involved with the campaign last year and helped draft the report of recommendations the board discussed last meeting. The arrangement I am hoping to see occur is that Lochlann will be the campaign manager for the campaign period. He will help is some of the planning and be involved in some of the preparations, but Emma will take the majority of the lead for this part. The development of materials and graphics will be something that should be in place so that Lochlann can then focus on recruiting volunteers, tabling, and plotting the ground game. So it will be the two of them helping but Lochlann as a volunteer while Emma will spearhead campaign efforts now and through the fall. Then once the campaign period begins Emma will fade out. We want as much prepared for Lochlann as possible. We are also starting to identify who we want to volunteer and be involved on the campaign so that we get them committed and locked in sooner rather than later.

Salifou: I think it would be really useful for the board to actually have these people come out to meetings or be accessible so we can get firsthand updates. Not every board meeting will be relevant, but I think it would be useful for them and for us as well in terms of feedback or support.

Lachacz: Absolutely.

Paches: I have no questions, just a comment. All of this sounds great and I am happy to hear that planning is beginning and that there are people who are working to ensure this campaign will be set up for success.

Krahn: I am as well looking forward to hearing updates on the planning. Thank you for thinking this through Adam.

Meeting adjourned by Chair Oumar Salifou at 7:58 pm.