

Gateway Student Journalism Society (GSJS) Board of Directors Meeting — August 2019

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chair, Continuity Rep	Oumar Salifou
Editor-in-Chief	Andrew McWhinney
Continuity Rep	Lee Craig
Alumni Rep	John Kmech
Students' Union Rep, Treasurer	Luke Statt
Community Representative	Robyn Paches
Director of Marketing & Outreach	Pia Maxine-Co
Managing Editor	Christine McManus

MEETING MINUTES:

Meeting called to order by Chair Oumar Salifou at 6:30 pm.

1.0 Approval of the minutes from July 2019 Board of Directors meeting

- 1.1 Motioned by Kmech
- 1.2 Seconded by McWhinney
- 1.3 *Motion tabled*
- 1.4 8/0/0

2.0 Approval of the agenda

- 2.1 *Approved*
- 2.2 8/0/0

3.0 Salifou introduces basic speaking rules to Gateway board

- 3.1 **Salifou:** One of our problems at the Board is we tend to go over time and do not cover material that is important. It is about time *The Gateway* either moderated its meetings more through the chair or adopted something like Robert's Rules or something in order to cut down on speaking time. Andrew and I talked about this and settled on 2 minutes of

speaking time. If you want more, you can ask and we can figure something out. Just please make sure everything is concise please. For reports 5 to 7 minutes is a good cap.

4.0 Reports

4.1 Editorial

McWhinney: I am very excited to get into the swing of things; to see the first issue of the Magazine on stands and get into regular production. Staff retreat was great for everyone who went.

A) In-House Ads Settled

This goes for online and the magazine. Ad Butler successfully integrated with our site now. We have total control now for that. We are hoping to make sure online ads are more visible so our future clients can see them and place more. We have also made new ad spaces giving us more options to sell.

B) Staff Updates

We hired our new Arts & Culture Editor Ashlynn. She has been a really great fit into the team and has been learning things really quickly.

Adam will be coming back on the 28th of August, he has let me know. So we will be spending some time with him and Khadra to get a News Strategy for the year figured out while also making sure everyone is up to speed.

C) Online Content

Has been going well over the summer. There has been a lot of exploration happening over the summer with embeds and using more photos inside articles. Going forward there needs to be a push for shorter content. Full production will be starting soon.

D) Magazine

McManus: The first issue should be circulating and hitting stands this week. We are aiming for tomorrow. Unfortunately there was a slight delay. Not of our in-house ad stuff was up and running. We resolved that issue by having Peter do in-house ads advertising write for us or volunteer for us. Makes sense for September to have that as we want people to join our team. It is going to be 4,500 copies going all over campus. As for October we are in the design and layout phase. We are proceeding with the magazine on schedule so far. It is still 40 pages.

E) Volunteers

McWhinney: Had a good final work week to get us ready for the year. Lots of good content has come up.

In terms of our deputy editorships, I created a google form and sent it to former volunteers and staff to gather feedback as to what the position should look like. I have not gotten too many responses yet. Would encourage those on the board who know previous editors or were so themselves to send the form in the editorial report. Hopefully we can get more feedback and get them up and running by October. That also gives us a chance to get new volunteers to have them up to speed and be able to apply for those positions.

4.2 *Marketing & Outreach*

A) Week of Welcome

Maxine-Co: Week of Welcome is next week. We got most of our swag, all that is left is shot

glasses. I will be at the booth everyday, except for when I am in-class. If you want a premium piece of swag you have to follow us on social media. If you already do that you will need to create a post or story and use a hashtag sharing our booth. If you come to our Open House on September 10 you will be entered into our draw for a \$150 gift card to the bookstore. There will be a sign up to get emails for that at our WoW booth. I will use SUTV this year. Peter is designing an ad to use there and on our social media. Helen has made a video for class talks. The goal is to get a lot of class talks done for the bigger classes like PSYCH 104, as well as Art, Design, and English classes. Hopefully all this will help our volunteer numbers, but also readership and overall awareness of *The Gateway* as a whole.

B) Print Machine Merch

We will be using Print Machine like we did last year for *Gateway* merch for our new designs in October once we are more settled in.

C) Events

We will have a bar night the night of the Open House as well as one later in the month to get volunteers and staff acquainted with one another. We will have a *Gateway* Oscars Party as well in February, which will be cohosted with the SU.

I am working on as well the events calendar for throughout the year. For workshops and things to set them formerly. I am also thinking about more volunteer and staff hangouts as well.

D) Focus Groups

Have a form that will be disseminated to faculties which can be sent through their own internal newsletters. This is just so people who want to be part of a focus group or have their ideas heard can participate. This way *The Gateway* is more transparent. I reached out to Lister to see if they can help us get first-years aware of us right away.

I will be meeting with STRIDE. STRIDE will be letting me do a workshop with them, like *The Gateway* is not your enemy. The program has a day dedicated to student journalism and how to react to it. It is structured in a way to make it seem like *The Gateway* is your enemy and that things like coverage and poster slam will be biased towards women and participants of STRIDE. Which I am not going to say is not true, however this has changed. Like in the past year I do not think this was an issue. This perceived hostility comes from some truth. So along with Christine, Payton, and Khadra we are talking about how we can posit the role of *The Gateway* allowing people running for positions to be accountable but things like Poster Slam will be categorized as *Getaway* content, or a joke. To see that from a person who works at *The Gateway*, as a queer person of colour, might be comforting to STRIDE participants. I would really prefer if people do not talk about *The Gateway* in that way.

E) Discussion/Questions

Salifou: I think your initiative to go to STRIDE is a big step in the right direction.

Maxine-Co: You might say, STRIDE in the right direction.

Salifou: Yes, yes it is. Wow... A quick word of caution. I do not think this is something that will happen. But, generally there is a reason why student politicians care about the coverage they receive from *The Gateway* because it can directly affect their chances of winning. Strike the balance between being completely fair and objective but also keeping people accountable.

Maxine-Co: I think the underlying message is that women and people of colour have really great ideas, if you express those, run a really great campaign then *The Gateway* will cover you favourably. But if you don't, that won't be the case. Its towing that line. Also, I think we have to take into account that misogyny should not exist while also towing that line. We have been thinking about that really deeply. The main goal is to reduce hostility.

4.3 *Business*

McWhinney: I will be doing it on behalf of Piero. Largest expense for July was paying for our creative cloud subscription which is yearly and is about \$1,350. We also renewed our patent and trademark, which was \$800. We have some office expenses as well buying printer cartridges, CP Style Books, also paying for our office phone. Our new extended balance to the SU stands at \$41,164.53. It also includes our payment discrepancies and scholarship fees. Accounts receivable is down to \$450.

Piero reached out to F-Media about the ad from January which still wasn't paid for. It was an error on their part. They are sending us \$463. That will be something we get in

August. The budget comparison will be included in reports to show month to month how spending is going and overall budgeting.

We are beginning to get more clients book ads with us and getting multiple ads throughout the year.

4.4 *Ads*

McWhinney: Our foundation is pretty much set. There are templates for orders and invoices

Ready. We have a mailchimp created for potential clients with 30 emails right now. We hope to expand that later. We also have booking sheets to keep track of ad sales and also to help the production team to see how much space they have to work with and which months ads will be in.

We have set monetary goals for each month we publish. Currently that sits at \$4,500. In ads reports moving forward we will have the booking sheets for all the month sales.

We also have had Pia reach out to Student Group Services to tell them about our 1/16 and 1/8 page ads which are more accessible to student groups. Pia has finalized a partnership with El Cortez/Have Mercy. We are following up with Cafe Mosaics, e-cigarettes and vaporizer stores. It is going to be great.

We will be reviewing our Chianti's contract. They expressed some dissatisfaction as to how that was handled in the past. In one year we didn't put an ad in that they paid for. This was like in 2017 and they are still mad about it. We will be in the midst of speaking with them and if they are that dissatisfied we will make sure it is addressed September or October. That way it is ready for staff holiday dinner in December. Lots of specialty ad money could be made in October with Halloween stores. So we are looking into that right now. There is a physical media kit that Pia made.

Maxine-Co: Piero and I had a really hard time getting things in on time for September. So I was helping him do business ads this month. We just reduced the prices for the smaller ads and informed SGS. I think the prices are doable for some of the bigger student groups on campus. It is already a lot better for October. A lot of places are also interested in online ads. Ads should be incoming. It wasn't too pretty in September but we have a pretty good foot in the door for October.

4.5 *Online*

McWhinney: I will give the report on behalf of Tina. We had a total of 25,919 page views in

July. Our top articles were the main page, what's with millenials obsession with tattoos,

Netflix review, emoji of the week red balloon, and the Remedy Express opening up in CCIS. In June we had 36,397 views. Last year in July 2018 we had 19,545 views. Part of that is there might be still the issue of page view counting last year at that point. I think we are still averaging the same page views.

5.0 Discussion Items:

5.1 Scheduling Bylaw and Policy update retreat

Salifou : This is something we have been talking about for a really long time, since last summer. While very dry, bylaws are extensive and great documents. There are a lot of things such as hiring, firing, and volunteer policies that need tweaking. Robyn suggested that we meet sometime last year to update them. We just never got around to doing it. So let's just pick a day or a weekend where we can get together and talk about them.

Paches: We have everyone come into the room, having read the policies and bylaws, put them on the board and go through page by page, section by section. Make sure to read ahead of time, otherwise it won't go well.

Salifou: I completely agree with that. What we can do then is I can sit down with Andrew and pull up all of our policies and bylaws, put them into one or a couple of documents, send them to everyone, and say give this a glimpse. Note any red flags of things that should be changed or added in.

Paches: I think it would be a good idea to do this as a non-mandatory meeting. That way if folks aren't into it they aren't forced into it. Just have interested people come out and participate.

Craig: I think it would be good to ensure you are able to make it Robyn or to have it on a date that works with his schedule since he has been chair for awhile.

5.2 Creating *Gateway* priorities and goals

Salifou: This is something I think is extremely important as it focuses the organization onto a set list of things that are done properly. These should align with making *The Gateway* stay around for as long as possible. This is open ended. If anyone has any immediate thoughts, please share.

Statt: I think *The Gateway* should create a strategic plan, like a three year document.

Paches: Then you can take that and create priorities and goals right out of the strategic plan. Similar to how you can make policies and bylaws a subgroup of the board, you can make - or the board as a whole - an intensive plan focused meeting.

Statt: I think a strategic plan solves one of the issues that was mentioned in a previous meeting when students were complaining *The Gateway* should be non-partisan. Because then you can start writing mission, values, and direction. As a DFU I think it is a really responsible thing to do and I wish more did it.

Salifou: It is good we are talking about this now. I think as soon as next summer happens they will already be thinking about the DFU campaign. Like March 2021. The sooner people know, the better.

I think one thing that ties into this as well, is the types of content produced. This would give some direction to each section, or at least have some targets/goals a section should be doing. That is something left up to the line editors and the editorial team, but I think it would be nice to have some external input.

McWhinney: I think editorial precedence can be set by the board, especially setting some kind of direction or boundary. It is important to have bigger overarching goals set out so the line editors and editorial team have some guidance as to how we get there.

Salifou: I think each line editor comes into a position and tries to define it as their own. That can be sometimes a confusing process, especially for the audience. If every year you come back to school and *The Gateway* has a different tone, it can be kind of jarring in some ways.

McWhinney: Maybe there should be direction on what types of things should be covered but how they are covered is left up to the editor/editorial team. It also makes it easier for staff coming into a position as it gives them a better idea of what the section should look like.

Salifou: This should also be tied in some way to metrics and analytics. That is a big reason why I think bringing in more social media metrics makes sense. Just to see what do people actually engage with. Publishing more of what people like, as opposed to what they don't like is hard. But, if staff actively engages with the numbers and sees what the trends are, it will become clearly very quickly.

Maxine-Co: I am hoping the focus group can also be a tool in which we can use to supplement this, to some degree, maybe next year.

McWhinney: I think the more data we have, the better.

The good thing about goals and mission statements, is that they can change as time moves on. But at least we'll have those clear and documented so we can see how they are changing and developing.

Salifou: Like Luke said, having those front and centre as soon as possible will just give campus a bit more confidence in what is happening.

Maxine-Co: It might even be helpful to have that for marketing this year.

Craig: That way you can always turn to it, refer to it, and tell students about it when they want to know what you are all about and how they can get involved. This helps as well because we you have groups or people who come in and try to change how things are done, and this has happened before, where they just change everything. This would really make that harder to do.

Salifou: One thing that really is important is training. A lot of what we do at *The Gateway* is learn by doing or by what previous editors have done. There is a lot more room for formal training, so it is not just off-the-whim. Staff can start building some kind of training mechanism which should not wholly rely on staff. That can hopefully bring in alumni, journalists from other publications. That way we can actually learn how to do journalism properly.

It is tough to see how this will be done. Would this be a week long boot camp form?

Statt: I think *The Gateway* would benefit if it could reach out to other journalism societies in the city to see if they can collaborate on learning together. A day-long or two-day long retreat with another journalism society might be an interesting idea. This would help lead to a culture of collaboration as well.

McWhinney: I like the idea of a retreat. I think it is a good way, even for other student journalism societies to just meet each other. Making those connections and stronger professional relationships with those papers really would help too.

I think another thing that is easier, is bringing back section guides so that there are training references available for staff and volunteers.

Maxine-Co: I would love to see *The Gateway* become ubiquitous. I find it sort of surprising that some people do not know what it is. Is it too ambitious for every undergrad to be able to identify *The Gateway*.

I would like to see in the strategic goals as well, that there is a way to market to students the professional development side of volunteering or contributing to *The Gateway*. Anyone who writes a *Gateway* article, wherever they end up going, can get something out of it.

Salifou: I think having everyone know about us is too large of a goal. The age of the internet has pushed people to areas they only want to be. If we get to a point where we have enough of a budget we can push online ads to directly target undergrads at the U of A to at least be somewhat aware of what we do. I think the best way to get people aware is to produce good content. I think when the magazine hits stands it will get attention because it is a really good product. Hopefully through just simply seeing the magazine and word of mouth will spur more awareness, interest, and readership.

Maxine-Co: We also need to put something in there about online journalism. I think that is the biggest area of improvement. How do we equip ourselves to succeed there? Even if people only know of us through the website, hopefully that will lead them to pickup a magazine. Or vice-versa.

Salifou: You need to tie *The Gateway* to the U of A. It can't be just a free standing publication because then we are no different than anything else. People are all here because they are students at the U of A, if we aren't directly tying ourselves to things people know on campus or saying like google u of a meal plan a *Gateway* article should pop-up. If you google anything related to the U of A hopefully *The Gateway* article will be one that pops up at the very top. That requires some pretty intentional online editing so you have to be good with keywords, SEO, tapping about what people on subreddits are talking about, or what the general student population are thinking about. Looping people back to the basics of why are people here, they are students at the university, so that should be our entire focus and premise. We need to cater to their needs.

Statt: I have never really understood where *The Gateway* stands on off-campus opinion articles and news articles. Advanced Ed puts out an important bill, so *The Gateway* writes about it. Is there a balance struck between covering strictly campus-related or post-secondary and general interest? Or is this something the Ed board will need to determine?

McWhinney: From my standpoint, and what the stance has been before, there should be a priority on what is ongoing on campus. The golden rule should be, if it is of interest to students and relevant, then it is justifiable that we cover it. If that ends up being postsecondary policies then so be it. I don't think we have ever set up a ratio or some kind of numbers to it. That could be a good place to start.

Salifou: I think that could be a great place for the editorial board to step in. When it comes to that, my first idea is you have to go back to what your readers are: undergraduate students. What do they do? A lot like to party, have a good time, eat at

restaurants, and things like that. How do you tie content to peoples lifestyle here on campus? That is the focus. Things that are relevant to what people do and what they do here. People want to know about student groups, sports, all these things should be things we are targeting. That will at least resonate with people directly as opposed to shooting things in the dark and hoping something sticks.

Craig: Who is our audience is critical. You can always find a new angle of how you cover something. How does *The Gateway* cover things for our readers specific interest is a good way of looking at this as well. There are always stories, as there should be, about provincial policy on post-secondary education and funding or money issues. We shouldn't think about if we cover it, but how can *The Gateway* cover it? You have the basic information, but there are always ways of making it more interesting to students.

Maxine-Co: Student achievements on campus should be front and centre as well. Anytime someone searches about student achievement they should see a *Gateway* article first. That should be news and prioritized. Our marketing is focused on how *The Gateway* is your voice, and stories that matter to you. That is kind of what we are jivving off of this year. Having it formally in our strategic document would be great.

Salifou: Not just thinking about what staff think is a priority but really trying to think what the ideal student wants is key.

Statt: What does our reader want to read.

McWhinney: I think making sure the editorial board is there is important. That way we can consult and make sure we are trying to meet our mandate. We do not have regular discussions, or at least we should, about circulating ideas for coverage and stories.

Salifou: I think one thing that is in place already, that is situated perfectly for it but is not currently being used in this way, is the editorial meeting every week. We should have those discussions of what our goals are, what are ideas, who we are trying to target, what kind of content do we want to connect with, what are people talking about, what is relevant in the city that can connect to students.

If it comes down to it, I mean you can just tell an editor what to do. Then when it works you can say it was their idea.

That was a long discussion. To just put it in a few points:

- a) Strategic Document
 - i) This needs to be a priority
- b) Training for staff

- i) Making sure staff, at least in the future, have a formalized way of knowing how to do their jobs. That is not what we have now through transition reports and learning on your own.
- c) Editorial Board
 - i) Priority as well. Getting more focused content for students on campus is really important.

I think those three ideas could be done in a subcommittee way or brought to staff to get some feedback and ideas.

5.3 Creating *Gateway* Editorial Board

Salifou: Creating a situation for board members or new volunteers to come out is tough.

I

think we should have this board meet 30 minutes before the board meeting or 30 after. That way anyone who wants to attend can either come or stick around and talk about it. Go through problems, feedback, or ideas in order to focus on content. That is all we would talk about. Giving staff as well to ask questions of board members not involved in the editorial process would be good as well.

Does that sound good with everyone? [everyone responded positively]

[Many members indicated they prefer before the board meets]

McWhinney: So would this be a decentralized board or would we have certain people who sit on it?

Salifou: We are not at the point where we can get those commitments from people. I think keeping it open ended and 30 minutes before is a good idea. Once we have more meetings and formalize it down the line.

5.4 Deputy line Editor jobs

McWhinney: We created a google form that we sent out to previous *Gateway* line editors

and staff, where we asked them if they had a deputy line editor what would you have liked

them to do. What would the scope of the job look like. I sent it out to get a sense of initial answers. I only got minimal responses back. I would implore people to send it to other editors, many people have many connections here, that way we can get more info on how this should be implemented. Fill it out, and then send it out to other people. That way we can start building the position. By October, once we have dedicated volunteers and the position finalized we can begin rolling those out. Hopefully this will get more responses and we can push this forward.

6.0 New items

6.1 A) Alumni update from Pia

Maxine-Co: I spoke with someone from the U of A alumni campus chapter program about

our campus alumni association. Typically there is this process where you pitch who you are to the program to get accepted. We are already in their files so we circumvent all those things. Really important things to know, we need to get at least 6 to 8 people who are alumni so it is a self driven thing. It needs to be alumni driven. They offer the board room and cater these types of meetings often for free. Things to note. There are also grants we can apply for so they can start hosting smaller events. Basically there are a lot of things this program can take care of that we do not have to worry about.

I am a lot less worried about how we can start this up. It is just a matter now of getting alumni onboard to drive this process forward.

Craig: I can send that forward. We can have a casual get together to move this forward.

Maxine-Co: We can really use this to push the professional development side of things in marketing for our volunteers and staff. We have notable alumni and we want to be able to flex that and use that for students. They also have an email list of contacts they are aware of. So we can use that and ours to help.

Meeting adjourned by Chair Oumar Salifou at 7:38 pm.