



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

### MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chair, Continuity Rep	Oumar Salifou
Editor-in-Chief	Andrew McWhinney
Continuity Rep	Lee Craig
Volunteer Representative	Nana Andoh
Students' Union Representative, Treasurer	Luke Statt
Director of Marketing & Outreach	Pia Co
Online Editor	Tina Tai
Director of Finance & Administration	Piero Fiorini
Student-at-Large Representative	Navneet Chand
Editors' Representative, Secretary	Adam Lachacz
Guest, Former Editor-in-Chief	Josh Greshner
Guest, Opinion Editor	Payton Ferguson
Guest, Arts & Culture Editor	Ashlynn Chand

### MEETING MINUTES:

Meeting called to order by Chair Oumar Salifou at 5:34 p.m. on November 8, 2019.

#### **1.0 Approval of the minutes**

**1.1** *Motioned by Andrew McWhinney*

**1.2** *Seconded by Nana Andoh*

**1.2** 7/0/0

## 2.0 Approval of the agenda

2.1 *Motioned by Nana Andoh*

2.2 *Seconded by Luke Statt*

2.3 7/0/0

## 3.0 Reports

3.1 *Editorial*

**McWhinney:** Things are moving really smooth. Production is going along schedule. The magazine is well ahead of schedule at this point and we hope it stays that way for the remainder of the year. Online numbers are strong and we are seeing great work being done by staff.

3.2 *Online*

**Tai:** Page views were really strong over September. News section views generated the most top-page articles. We are getting better views since 2018 and 2019. Our social media engagements are also increasing.

October 2019 saw just under 94,000 page views total. There was a massive spike in page views after October 23 to 25 because of our 2019 Alberta Budget coverage. We had over 26,000 views alone on our breaking article from budget look-up.

3.3 *Business and Ads*

**Fiorini:** There are outstanding payments to the Students' Union from 2018-19. They have been reflected in our accounts payable this year. We should begin to clear some of this balance.

There have been three invoices from last year for the magazine that have not been paid as well for circulation (3 months). They have given us final warning, no interest, but they've been paid off now. We are coming to our budgeted amount for circulation but that is only because we are paying off the amounts from last year.

Our new bookkeeper is working out great. We pay less than half the amount we used to pay with Preferred Client Services. Year-end has just finished and we should have our audit starting soon.

Our professional fees were a high expense. We had to call our lawyer for some professional advance.

**McWhinney:** For context, the News section published an article about a former U of A physician who was tried for assaulting one of his students and he lost his medical license. We wrote an article about this and were reached out to by his lawyer and sent us a letter asking us politely to remove the article on his behalf. We had a quick

conversation with our lawyer about our rights in this situation and double checked our response with them. Our lawyers cleared it since this was just a courtesy request, not defamation or any other legal mechanism. We wanted to be safe rather than sorry.

## 4.0 DFU proposal presentation

### 4.1 *Presentation given by Andrew McWhinney*

**McWhinney:** This is to give the board some ideas and context for if we were to bring the DFU to Students' Council. The deadline to submit a question to bylaw is November 15.

Some ideas we think would be good to use as context for the DFU increase:

- Journalism is Changing
  - 62 % of young Canadians get their news from social media everyday and 76% of young Canadians get their news from both social media and websites combined.
  - Print readership is declining.
  - Advertising revenue across Canada is declining; ad-media share in Canada has gone from 30% to 13%.

Therefore, journalism and the business landscape around it are changing so *The Gateway* must adapt as well.

We would ask for an increase from \$3.54 a semester to \$5.00 a semester for Fall and Winter, indexed to CPI as before. Increase Spring/Summer to \$1.00 from 0.54. Fee would be opt-outable.

Most of our DFU fee comes from full-time students. If the same amount of students paid the fee as the past few years, we would see an increase of about \$60,000 to *The Gateway*. Even if there was a 10% opt-out of students, we would still see an increase in revenue of \$29,000. For 20% opt-out, we would have to charge \$5.05 per semester to not lose revenue. If we are looking at a more extreme case, 30% opt-out rate the DFU would have to be \$5.75 to not lose out. With a \$5 fee and 30% opt-out we would lose out on about \$32,000 in revenue.

We would propose the following ideas to students on how *The Gateway* would improve its value to students:

- Increase magazine page count
- More investigative journalism projects, including through FOIP requests
- Better online content
- Professionalized staff training
- More opportunities for Gateway outreach to ensure students hear about opportunities to gain experience in journalism with us
- New video tech for multimedia journalism
- Live-streaming events and live-reporting at events

- Revamped website with proprietary back-end (eg. parallax scrolling for features)
- Volunteer appreciation
- Stipends for professional speakers
- Subsidy fee for professional conferences like NASH for volunteers and staff
- Hiring more staff
- Better sports coverage

The digital era is changing journalism rapidly and we have to adapt to remain relevant to student wants and needs. We could also preserve Gateway autonomy by not having to rely on sponsored content like other mainstream outlets are doing.

Making the fee opt-outable not only gives students choice but prepares us for VSUs, if they were to ever become a reality in Alberta.

The Canadian Press interviewed many student publications in Ontario post-VSU implementation. There is a range between 17% and 56% opt-out rates in that province. The highest one was at Ryerson where it was 56% opt-out. Their fee is \$5.65. *The Varsity* is sitting at around 27% opt-out. This gives us some context, while obviously with the caveat being these are different campus contexts completely.

## 4.2 Discussion

**Greshner:** I think if you are going to introduce an opt-out option, which is a one-time strategy for *The Gateway* we should increase the fee instead of to \$5, to \$6.

**Lachacz:** I think we have to be cautious about how high we raise the fee. If we raise to high we may inadvertently cause more students to opt-out. Especially since tuition is already going to be increasing by seven per cent next year. During the referendum campaign I am sure the first question students will ask is, tuition is already increasing. Why is *The Gateway* also rising and becoming more unaffordable for us.

**Fiorini:** I agree. I believe that we also have to remember that the fee is per semester. So while it may seem like a small difference there is a change in optics when you are asking for \$10 in the year as opposed to \$12 or higher.

**McWhinney:** Adam raises an interesting point. We have already seen this year at an SU town hall students asked them about if they could guarantee their membership fees not rising to help preserve affordability as the U of A raises tuition. I understand organizationally the SU can't make that commitment, but we would have to grapple with that as well.

**Statt:** I think it is important to note that most students opt-out not because of cost but because they have a problem with that organization, whether perceived or in actuality. At a risk management perspective, I think \$6 is a manageable risk to take on — especially since an opt-out is the greatest hat trick you can pull out.

I also want to add that many student councillors that I have spoken to and friends enjoy the magazine. It's fun and informative. But what they really miss is real investigative journalism that examines issues and campus experience. That is the key and returning to that will really allow students to see good value right away. It also builds up *The Gateway's* credibility as a journalistic institution.

**Lachacz:** Remember as well that the U of A has been hinting at increasing enrollment and that the fee will be indexed to inflation. I say there is no reason to get greedy and ask for anything higher than \$5.

**Salifou:** The opt-out adds an interesting layer. A regular plebiscite next year will not have that luxury. It will have to defend *The Gateway* on its own merits, which isn't to say there are none but there will definitely be lots of controversy. The opt-out provides that vehicle for students to get out of supporting us if they really have problems with us. It would be hard for students not to vote yes for this case. Vote yes, approve the fee increase and get an opt-out option. I don't think many people will say no to this. It seems like an opt-out is what students want.

We have to show that *The Gateway* needs more financial resources in order to get better. The campaign will have to make that clear, just how precarious our funding situation is where a \$200 FOIP — as much as we'd like it to — can be out of reach when it shouldn't, especially when it is in the student interest.

**Statt:** I think *The Gateway* can expect opt-outs similar to APIRG which off the top of my head is between 10 and 15%.

**Salifou:** We also have on our side that *The Gateway* has not asked for a DFU increase ever since the 2003 original fee.

I also recommend for us to set up a meeting outside of this board meeting as well to nail down what we want to use this new funding for. So that we can show to students exactly what their funds will go towards supporting, whether it be new initiatives, equipment, more staff positions, etc.

**Co:** Could be five new things for five dollars!

**McWhinney:** Both are great ideas. I will set that meeting up right after this board meeting and have that back to the board quickly. Then it could be approved by online vote for the board.

#### 4.3 Motion

The Gateway submits a question to the SU bylaw committee by 15 November to increase the DFU from \$3.54 to \$5.00, with the caveats from the presentation, indexed to inflation with an opt-out option.

Motioned by: Nana Andoh

Seconded by: Luke Statt

6 - in favour

1 - abstention

## **5.0 Alumni Relations updated**

### **5.1 Updated given by Pia Co**

**Co:** Based on the workload and other commitments this year I won't be able to champion all the alumni relations work I started earlier in the summer. Especially with Oumar moving away and now us going ahead with the DFU I think we will have to shelve everything until next year and I can include it in my transition report.

**Craig:** I think its important that for this item we get actual alumni to move it forward as Well. Pia you've started it but now we should get actual alumni engagement and see if maybe Jonn and I can work to get some alumni to organically take this. I don't think Pia should carry this one alone. So I'd recommend after Christmas we put it out to alumni to get this going.

**Lachacz:** We should do a RATT night like they did last year to initiate interest. From there we can launch the actual chapter association.

**Craig:** Great idea. We should talk more about this in the new year.

## **6.0 Board Chair update**

**6.1 Salifou:** With me working in Victoria it can't be an option for me to fly down like last time or be online all the time. So I think it'd be best to have a chair who is in-person and I would be a resource and board member helping still. What I will do is reach out to Andrew, Adam, and Piero to ensure we get this moving, as for the sake of time today. At least the seed is planted today and now we can get people to think about running for chair.

Meeting ended by Chair Oumar Salifou at 7:27 p.m. on November 8, 2019.