

The Gateway Student Journalism Society — Board of Directors

March 19 2025

Lily POLENCHUK
Nathan THIESSEN
Leah HENNIG
Dylana TWITTEY
Stephanie SWENSRUDE
Omar HABIBZAI
Katie TEELING
Anna RUDGE
Lee CRAIG
Isabella YUE

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m..

2. Approval of the Agenda

. POLENCHUK motions to approve the agenda, HENNIG seconds. The motion passes unanimously.

3. Approval of the Minutes

January: Leah, Nathan. passes. The board approves the notes for the January. February: Lily, Leah. Nathan and Anna abstained. The notes passed.

HENNIG motioned to approve the minutes for the January GSJS meeting. THIESSEN seconded. The board approved the notes for January. POLENCHUK motioned to approve the notes for February. HENNIG seconded. THIESSEN and RUDGE abstained from voting. The minutes passed.

4. Reports of Officers and Standing Committees

a. Editor-in-Chief

POLENCHUK says that hiring for the 2025-26 staff is complete. HENNIG will be the next editor-in-chief. POLENCHUK says every position received two or more applicants which she says is good. Planning for the transition day at the end of April will begin soon, she says. The next print edition will be on stands April 1. She adds that election coverage went really well and student engagement was high. Additionally, The Gateway has a new contact rep at BMO would should be able to help with the transition. They are still waiting on their checks.

b. Executive Director

HABIBZAI says marketing and outreach promoted Gateway to Cinema on Instagram. He is in the process of making the transition report for the next executive director. The Gateway has gotten the credit card from ATB and received a DFU check for \$50,000. There was a minor issue with Stripe, which is the platform through which The Gateway receives donations. They were required to do a verification of the board members and the organization. He says he thinks he has it figured out. For the April print edition, he has acquired five ads; the Old Strathcona Farmer's Market with half a page and 1/8th of a page; U of A graduate studies has half a page; New Music Edition has 1/8th a page; and CJSR Radio has a quarter of a page

c. Managing Editor

TWITTEY reiterates that elections went really well and everyone worked really hard. Hiring is completed and the April print is in progress. As well, The Gateway received a lot of strong applications for The Gateway Volunteer Scholarship, which is exciting as it means people are interested.

d. Finance Committee

The Gateway's most recent DFU check was deposited. He adds that banking unresponsiveness was due to an internal change with the operations at ATB. Their previous contact rep is no longer employed by ATB. Ordering checks has been difficult but the checks will be received in two weeks, he says. Currently rent is being paid by the BMO account which means both a BMO and an ATB account are active. He says that hopefully the accounts will be consolidated for the transition. He adds POLENCHUK will follow up to ensure that the transition is smooth. He adds HABIBZAI is working on the Stripe issue. As well, THIESSEN says he will not be able to continue as the treasurer after April as he will no longer be a councillor with the UASU.

POLENCHUK adds that the issue with Stripe is not too much of a concern as The Gateway does not receive a large amount of donations.

e. Governance Committee

HENNIG says that Gov Com is meeting tomorrow and will be finalizing changes to the operating policy. They will work to get these changes approved at the April board meeting.

f. 5 Year Strategic Plan Committee

HENNIG says their upcoming meeting is next week but that they have met and hammered out what they want the strategic plan to look like. It will be presented to the board in April.

g. HR Committee

TEELING says that HR has not met.

5. Presentation: Readership Survey Report

YUE says that the Readership Survey had 514 respondents — a 17 per cent increase from the previous year. Most of the respondents came from the Students Digest as the Readership Survey was featured for three weeks. She noted that as a great form of outreach. Outreach was also done through Instagram, posters, and posts to eClass. She says they did not do outreach through the Perks App as the Perks people were unresponsive. YUE says there is no reason to believe that any bots answered the survey, as there was a feature to prevent this.

Consistent with last year, the majority of respondents were women. In terms of ethnicity, white, European, and Asian were the most consistent responses, which is on par with previous years. There was also a mandatory question of involvement with the U of A community. Undergraduate students were the majority of respondents, although an increased number of graduate students responded compared to last year. No faculty members responded. As well, a lot of responses came from first and second year students. She says this is good because it acts as outreach for The Gateway. In terms of faculty, the majority of respondents were from the faculties of science, arts, engineering, business, or education. Previously the agricultural, life, and environmental sciences (ALES) faculty placed fifth.

In terms of answers to questions, YUE says that very few people responded in the negative. The ranges for the questions were; very negative, somewhat negative, neutral,

somewhat positive, very positive. In response to the question regarding overall opinion of The Gateway the vast majority of respondents replied somewhat positive or very positive. She says this is a huge improvement from five years ago.

Regarding the question about whether or not The Gateway is an important part of campus. The majority of the answers were positive or neutral for this question. YUE compares the results of the Readership Survey to the past three surveys. She adds that she choose to only compare the past three surveys as before the rating system was skewed towards positive. She says in 2022 negative perception of The Gateway was at 13 per cent and now its at less than one per cent. Negative perception has consistently shrunk over the years, she says. She adds that she thinks The Gateway is in a really good position to continue this trend.

For the question regarding transparency about operations, most answers were neutral, a trend amongst the questions in the Trust and Transparency section. She says this is unsurprising. Similarly, most respondents felt neutral about The Gateway's fiscal responsibility but there were still more positive responses than negative. She added that although all staff salary information and the budget are public information that typically people do not seek out that information. She says the results were an improvement from previous years. Since The Gateway has not made any changes in terms of transparency, she thinks the overall shift in perception towards The Gateway likely influenced the results.

There were several questions gauging awareness. Most respondents were aware that The Gateway is autonomous from the UASU. She added that since the survey was conducted before the UASU elections, she wouldn't be surprised if more people are now aware of The Gateway's autonomy. Majority of respondents were aware that they could volunteer with The Gateway, no experience required, although a good chunk of respondents were not aware. She added that volunteer opportunities were linked at the end of the survey. A majority of respondents were aware The Gateway consistently publishes online with around 75 per cent aware. For the Instagram accounts, most respondents were aware of the account. She added that the account received a lot of new followers. Majority of respondents were not aware of The Gateway's workshops, which is not surprising as the workshops began this semester.

A good amount of people were aware of The Gateway's weekly newsletter. There was an opportunity to sign up for the newsletter at the end of the survey. For this year YUE says she added a question about awareness around Bill C-18. She hopes this will help explain why The Gateway is not as active with posting news on Instagram. She also added a question about awareness around Metro Cinema. A majority of respondents were aware of Gateway of Cinema, but a decent chunk were not aware. She added that these people were likely just not aware of The Gateway in any capacity, as it is consistently promoted on Instagram and in Students' Digest. She added that she hopes for a good turnout for March's Gateway to Cinema as the movie was decided by a student vote.

There was also a question asking respondents how they found out about The Gateway. The most popular answers were Students' Digest, posters, newspapers, and the survey itself. Social media, Week of Welcome, and general tabling were also common answers. Through the Perks App was not a common answer, as the Readership Survey was not featured on the Perks App.

The survey found that a lot of people had never engaged with The Gateway but she does not think this is cause of concern as a lot of people are apathetic. Some respondents

replied they read The Gateway a couple times a year, once a week, two times a week, and a very small amount of people answered 'once a day.' She says these answers are consistent with the previous year. In terms of how people access The Gateway, the number one response was that they do not read The Gateway. The second most popular response was through the website. She notes that a lot of people responded through Instagram, which is not possible anymore unless they're accessing The Gateway through Linktree. Printed papers were also a popular answer. Another top answer was through Reddit, and YUE noted that The Gateway has begun more consistently posting on Reddit. Fewer respondents accessed The Gateway through Twitter/X. Through BlueSky was another smaller portion.

Regarding the platforms people would use to read The Gateway, TikTok, Reddit, and Youtube were the top answers. She noted The Gateway has increased posting on Reddit and that The Gateway has posted on YouTube before, although she's not sure if staff would want to revisit this. A decent amount of people still responded they still would not read The Gateway through any of these platforms. People are also not interested in Discord.

Regarding written feedback respondents mentioned making The Gateway more accessible and that the newspaper is easy to find. She also mentioned that a lot of the written responses did not make sense, often showing a lack of awareness for what The Gateway does or suggesting things that The Gateway already does, like two print editions each semester or creating a weekly newsletter and promoting it through Students' Digest. One respondent suggested sharing Gateway articles through the Students' Digest, which she thought was a good idea and that its worth inquiring about. Some respondents suggested getting other student clubs to repost Gateway posts, but the concern is that this would prevent The Gateway from remaining unbiased. She also touched on some positive comments The Gateway received, such as with covering all the bases for accessibility. She added that she will try to submit articles to Students' Digest this week.

Regarding the suggestions and comments on making The Gateway more accessible to volunteer with, respondents suggested working with other clubs and student groups, more print editions, set up tables for people to interact with Gateway staff and volunteers, bring back Letters to the Editor, and make a more accessible process for volunteering. With tabling, Isabella says it is difficult to find availability to table in high traffic areas, and for this reason The Gateway did not table this year. She has heard from friends that some buildings are revamping their tabling systems so she may look into tabling for next year. She also said she could look into working with other student groups, although it may be difficult to establish that this would not be a partnership. She said she is unsure how feasible bringing back Letters to the Editors is and regarding making volunteering more accessible, she mentioned The Gateway is going back into the Students Digest this week.

With regards to quality of news content, 50 per cent of people felt neutral but the majority of the rest of the respondents felt positive. Forty four per cent of respondents felt neutral about the statement "opinion pieces are thoughtful and cover important topics" and the majority agreed.

In terms of the comparative value of the content, most people valued campus news. Arts and culture reviews were second. Opinion content was third and Students' Union coverage was fourth. Newspapers/multimedia were ranked lower. In regards to the question "What do you find the least valuable" the first answer was "not applicable" and the second was multimedia, and

opinion/editorial, followed by coverage of the Students' Union elections. Arts and Culture content and campus news were ranked the least valuable. YUE said this is a consistent breakdown compared to previous years. She says it is positive that people indicate they still find campus news valuable. Additionally, YUE created a wordcloud. This wordcloud did not feature any outright negative word clouds.

THIESSEN says he loves to start his day off with a coffee from the Daily Grind and a Gateway newspaper.

BROOKS agreed that there is value in the physical copy, as it makes The Gateway more visible on campus. He mentioned that brand recognizability and visibility on campus was an issue during the years The Gateway lost DFU funding. As well, if all the ads are sold out then the papers should pay for themselves.

YUE says although less people indicated seeing value in the papers, many respondents indicating finding out about The Gateway from the papers. She says it is a good form of outreach.

POLENCHUK added that the ads for the print editions typically pay off half of the costs of printing but usually there are a lot of leftover papers. She suggested the next years staff could print less pages and get more ads so the papers are cheaper if they are interested.

6. For Discussion: Board restructuring

HENNIG says that often the Managing Editor Report and the Editor-in-Chief report are similar as their roles are very similar. The main difference is that the managing editor provides analytics. She says it would be possible to get much of the same information, and likely even more information such as around social media, from the Marketing and Outreach Coordinator. She suggests that it could help with tracking progress on long term goals once the 5-Year Strategic Plan is implemented. HENNIG suggests that the MO sits on the board, potentially taking the spot of the Managing Editor. The MO would be a non voting member. She says this is not an official motion but that it could be good to talk about and get peoples thoughts on it. She also mentioned that its possible to add additional information from the MO to the EICs report as well.

POLENCHUK says she doesn't know if it would be feasible to expand the EICs report as it takes a lot of time to compile and the MO would have better access to that information.

BROOKS proposes opening the position up to all editors. He says there are two issues — board makeup and maintaining a good governance structure and reporting. He says it is important to bring people to the board who have good decision making abilities. He also said that any staff could submit a report. The MO could provide information for the managing editor to show the board. The work would not have to be transferred to the EIC. He said analytics from the MO would be valuable for the board to have.

HENNIG said that even if the managing editor is removed from the board they would still be able to come to the board and speak if they wanted.

TEELING added that the managing editor could occupy the spot of staff representative on the board.

POLENCHUK said it is a good idea for the MO to create the report for the EIC to present. HENNIG agreed that that might be the way to go and said that there's already a little collaboration on the managing editor report, as the managing editor is not able to access the pitch email information on their own.

BROOKS said it sounds like it would be useful to have an analytics database such as a spreadsheet which everyone could contribute analytics to. This would provide a holistic view of how The Gateway is doing, he said.

7. Announcement

POLENCHUK says she would like to announce the staff for next year. She reminds the board that hiring for the MO, the staff reporters, and the sports reporter will take place in August as usual. Gabriella Menezes, current staff reporter, was hired as the next executive director. Peris Jones, current News Editor, was hired as the next managing editor. Katherine Johnson, current staff reporter, was hired as the next news editor. Liam Hodder, a volunteer who assisted with the news team for the 2025 SU Elections, was hired as the next Arts & Culture editor. Breckyn Lagoutte, current deputy opinion editor, was hired as the next opinion editor. POLENCHUK said she is very excited about the next team

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m..