

STUDENT FEES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FY 2013

Program Questionnaire

Prepared by

DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

October 18, 2011

STUDENT FEES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SFAC)
FY2013 PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

1. *Please provide a one-page executive summary of your questionnaire responses. This summary should include, in brief terms: your unit's mission, how you accomplish your unit's mission, and a justification of your unit's student fee allocation in terms of benefits for students.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our unit's mission in brief

Simply, our mission is to provide the UH community with relevant and timely information as frequently as possible. We also serve as a public forum and we encourage editorial focus on the complexity of the UH community and its impact on students, staff, faculty and other groups, including the general public. Because the Student Publications student staff reflects the academic and cultural diversity of the UH community, coverage of news and events in our publications reflects the issues and concerns of the university community as well.

Accomplishing our mission

We also strive to work with students in a learning environment where the canons and ethics of journalism are practical matters. To accomplish our mission we rely on the work and leadership of students. We recruit students from across all disciplines through our Web site, e-mail blasts, promotional materials, and employment ads in the print edition. To meet the changing needs of students and the community, our operation is increasingly Web-oriented.

How we justify our SFAC money in terms of benefits for students

Our benefits are two-fold: We provide a learning laboratory for our student staff, and we serve a public service role for the University community as a provider of news and information. Our continual goal is to give students a real-world print and online production environment that provides relevant news and information to the University community in the most timely and accurate manner possible. The print edition is delivered to 70 locations around campus on each day The Daily Cougar is published, and the online edition is updated at least five days a week during regular publication.

2. *Provide an organization chart of your unit. Large units may need to have an overview chart and then more specific charts for each program. Where you have multiple staff in the same position (e.g. counselor, custodian, etc), note this on your chart. Student employees should be cited on the chart and identified as students.*

See attachments — (2) pages

3. *List the objectives that you provided with your 2010-2011 SFAC request. Please comment on your success in achieving these objectives. If an objective changed during the year, please note this and explain. Also, list any new objectives, the rationale for the addition, and comment on your success in achieving these objectives.*

- A. Our first priority is to stabilize our advertising revenue stream and possibly turn around the decline, while adapting to the changing media landscape.

Comment: In FY 2011 we brought in more than \$14,000 in revenue from our online edition, the most we have ever earned from that aspect of our program. Unfortunately our overall ad revenues fell by \$73,000 compared to FY 2010.

A readership survey of faculty, staff and students in April 2011 and the results of focus groups with student organizations gave us insight into some of the preferences and opinions of our audience. The results led to the creation of the first-ever Greek section and the successful launch of an advertising-circulation exchange program with student organizations. It has also prompted a review of our circulation plan.

- B. We will maintain a strong core print product to serve the campus community. We will put an emphasis on staff training and development to improve the quality of the editorial content and the experience gained by our students.

Comment: The Editorial/Production Manager has coordinated regular workshops to enhance the fundamental skills of the editorial staff. Topics thus far have included news writing, brief writing, online production, and copy-editing. Students report that these workshops are “indispensible”.

Through an ongoing partnership with the School of Communication, a reporting class allows us to have students assigned to cover various aspects of campus and keep coverage of campus activities high.

- C. We will reach out to alumni with the aim of seeking guidance, developing student mentorships and possibly seeking financial support for SP initiatives or scholarships.

Comment: Alumni have become active participants in our Student Publications Committee as voting professional representatives. Alumni now employed by the Houston Chronicle have given workshops for editorial and advertising staffs. We look forward to building more relationships with our alumni and engaging them with our students as positive role models and mentors.

4. *Please discuss the means that you are utilizing to evaluate both your success in achieving the aforementioned objectives and their importance as compared to other objectives that you might pursue. Where data exist, discuss the number of persons served by each of your programs and the satisfaction level of those served. Please provide the method for collecting these data.*

The production-editorial manager provides ongoing criticism, guidance and training to editorial staff. The performance of the editorial staff is constantly assessed on subjective matters such as quality of writing, editing, photography and design.

Revenue is tracked on a monthly basis comparing against our sales goals and last year's performance. Expenditures are tracked on a monthly basis.

A content analysis has been conducted of the 2010-2011 publishing year and will be conducted every August for the foreseeable future. These will help track trends in coverage and quantify what kinds of stories are being published and their relationship with the UH community.

Separate readership surveys of faculty/staff and students gave us insight into the usage of our service by the community. The surveys were voluntary, distributed via email and administered via SurveyMonkey. It found that 60% of faculty, staff and students read the paper in print or online, with about 90% of those preferring the print edition.

Social networking engagement also helps inform us of usage. Our Facebook and Twitter fans now number more than 4,000, a 100% increase since last year's report. Meanwhile, our Email Edition has surpassed 1,500 subscriptions in its first month of existence.

The online edition of The Daily Cougar utilizes Google Analytics and a WordPress statistics module to measure visitor traffic and usage. By cross-referencing the two, we can confidently say from Aug. 2010 to Aug. 2011, we had almost 150,000 unique visitors and 500,000 pageviews. We use an ad server to track usage of online ads, and according to that metric we served more than 5.2 million ad impressions.

5. *Please discuss any budget changes from your last (FY2012) SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them. SFAC recognizes that some programs did not receive the funds that they requested, that some programs were impacted by additional expenses after the conclusion of the budget cycle, and that some programs may be ahead of or behind their self-generated income projections. In addition, if your unit concluded FY2011 with a Ledger 3 Fund Equity balance, please describe the conditions which caused the fund balance.*

Despite its best efforts, Student Publications endured another significant decline in advertising revenue, as previously noted. Fortunately, wise management of resources minimized the impact on the department and resulted in a Fund Equity balance.

The department realized significant savings (\$48,326) through the retirement of its director in Oct. 2010. More savings were realized through reduced utilities and telecommunications charges (\$5,313).

The suspension of the yearbook program has resulted in its fund balance being merged with The Daily Cougar. These funds will help cushion the department from further declines in ad revenue.

6. *Please list your 2012-2013 objectives in priority order. Larger units may wish to group your response by subprogram. Under each objective, state the specific programs, activities, and/or services that you plan to implement to meet your objectives.*

- A. Seeing declines from on-campus sources most especially, our goal will be to increase off-campus support from local businesses. Growth in online readership and new specialty editions such as Overtime, our new football section, will be leveraged us find and keep new advertisers.
- B. We will continue to investigate new printing options to look for cost savings, including adjusting our printing schedule and printing vendor arrangements.
- C. A review of circulation is ongoing and will continue with the aim of identifying where new stands should be deployed and where existing stands may need to be relocated to maximize readership.
- D. We will continue to emphasize editorial quality through regular, consistent training, review and feedback.

7. *What are the other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them (e.g. grants, donations, etc.)?*

Approximately 65% of our revenue base comes from sales of print advertising. We have made strides to expand online advertising, but print sales will continue to be the main source revenue for our department.

8. *Please describe any overlap between your unit and any other unit(s) providing services to students and the rationale for the overlap.*

There is no overlapping with other units at this time.