

STUDENT FEES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FY 2010

Program Questionnaire

Prepared by

DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

STUDENT FEES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SFAC)
FY2010 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

Our mission is to encourage editorial focus on the complexity of the UH community and its impact on students, staff, faculty and other groups, including the general public. We focus on the demographics and activities of our diverse campus population. 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. Fifty-three percent of the student staff come from academic majors other than journalism.

Accomplishing our mission

We strive to foster an open and objective environment among The Daily Cougar student staff that provides a public forum for viewpoints and opinion in order to teach them that a news medium is a conduit for the flow of free speech and the clarification of public issues and ideas. We also strive to work with students in a learning environment where the canons and ethics of journalism are practical matters. We make great efforts to continue upgrading our computer system, ensuring students the opportunity to practice their craft using the latest publishing technology available and affordable to us. We recruit students from across campus through our Web site, promotional materials and classified and display employment ads in the newspaper.

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

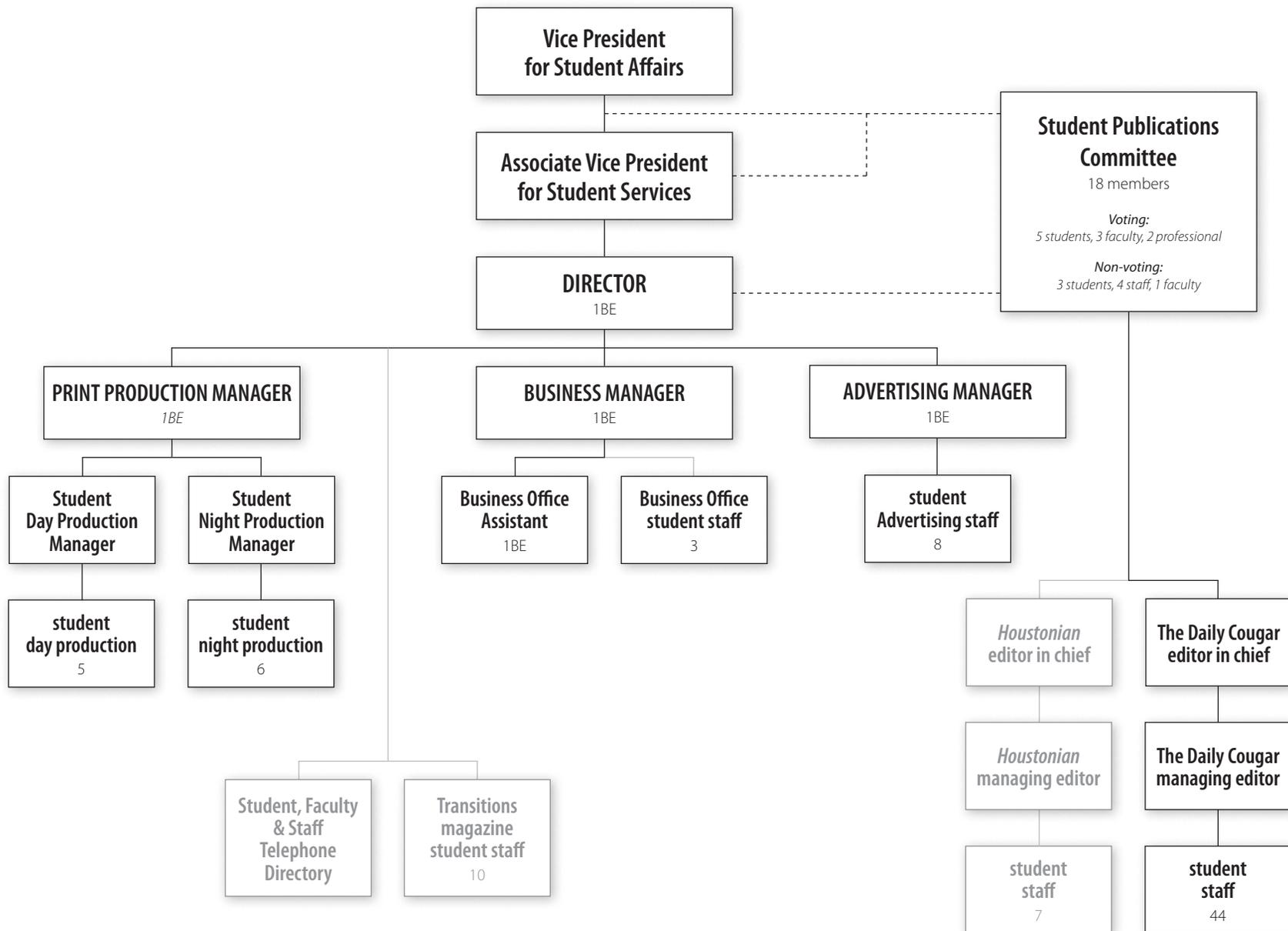
Our goal is to allow students to work in a very real newspaper and online environment providing relevant news and information to students, faculty and staff in the most timely and accurate manner possible. Our goal is to have both the online edition and the print edition of The Daily Cougar delivered by 8 a.m. The print edition is delivered to approximately 65 locations around campus on each of the 164 days The Daily Cougar is published.

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.*

STUDENT SERVICES DIVISION ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

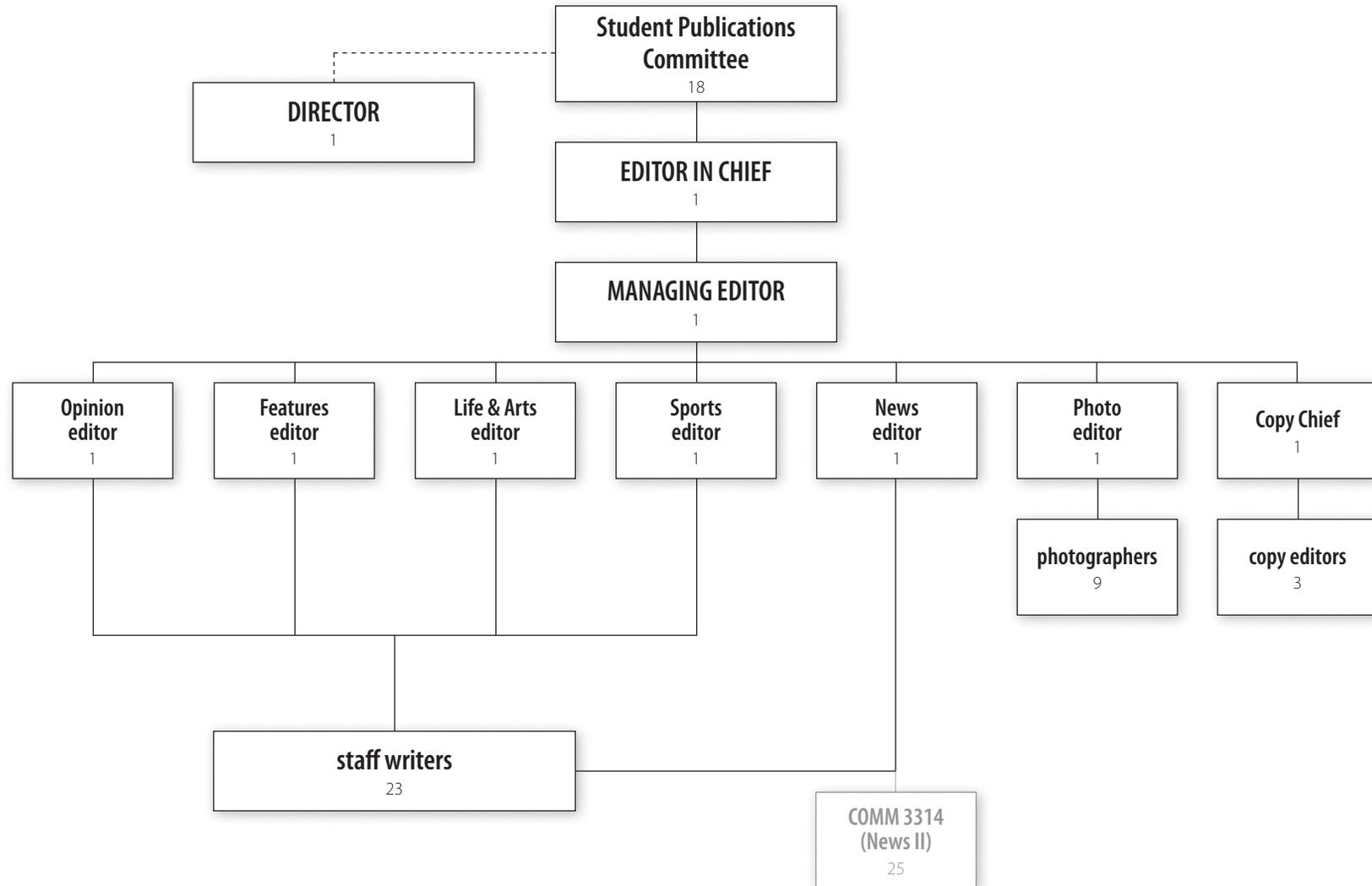


DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT PUBLICATIONS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

THE DAILY COUGAR EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT



3. *List the objectives that you provided with your 2008-2009 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. To foster an open and objective environment among The Daily Cougar student staff that provides a public forum for viewpoints and opinion; to teach that a news medium is a conduit for the flow of free speech and the clarification of public issues and ideas; and to work with students in a learning environment where the canons and ethics of journalism are practical issues.

Comment: When funds permit, editors are sent to conferences that promote ethics of journalism, newsroom management, sales techniques and strategies and serve as forums where they may share ideas with their peers from other schools.

- B. To ensure that information printed on the pages of the daily newspaper is accurate, factual and delivered to the University community in a timely and professional manner. The Daily Cougar editorial staff adheres to The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) Code of Ethics when researching, writing and editing stories. The Associated Press (AP) Stylebook is used as a reference to assure consistency.

Comment: All editors in chief are responsible for all editorial content of The Daily Cougar and are required to take journalism courses that include law and ethics to better prepare them to carry out their assigned editorial responsibilities. Normal checks and balances are in place such as managing editor, news editor, copy editors, sports, entertainment and opinion editors. The Daily Cougar is critiqued daily by professional journalists, and workshops are held for the newsroom and advertising departments as often as possible.

- C. To recruit and retain quality students with the curiosity, energy and desire to work long and demanding hours required to publish The Daily Cougar's print and Internet versions, ensuring quality publications for our campus community.

Comment: Recruiting qualified students has become more and more difficult as the economic climate has reduced the print publishing career pool. However, we have been fortunate in being able to recruit capable students from many different areas of study to all departments within Student Publications. We encourage all full-time students attending the University of Houston to apply for employment in the editorial, advertising, business and production departments.

- D. To continue the process of upgrading our computer system, ensuring students the opportunity to practice their craft using the latest publishing technology currently available and affordable. The process of upgrading our computer system is ongoing throughout the year.

Comment: The Daily Cougar updated its page layout software in the past year to the most recent version available at the time, Adobe Creative Suite CS3. These tools were used to produce ads and layouts for The Daily Cougar and Transitions magazine. The department has since upgraded its server technology to allow the entire department to share files and information more cohesively. It has also upgraded its online Content Management System provided by College Publisher. The department will continue to evaluate its technology to make the best tools available to the students to prepare them for the workplace.

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.*

We welcome and encourage critiques of The Daily Cougar by our diverse readership base, because it is vital for us to know who our readers are and whether they regard the information they receive from The Daily Cougar as a credible, relevant and important information source. Students, faculty, staff and other readers critique our student newspaper whenever they write, call or visit to let us know their opinions of stories that have run in our publications. Even though the School of Communication is not affiliated with the newspaper, we encourage its interested faculty to evaluate each publication as often as their time allows. We also have a retired journalism professor critiquing every publication throughout each semester and hosting workshops for the editorial staff whenever he is asked by the editor in chief.

The online edition of The Daily Cougar benefits from extensive reader tracking tools provided by Google Analytics. In addition to measuring pageviews, that data also informs the department which sections and articles are most popular, when traffic is the highest and where readers access the site from.

The data tell us that thedailycougar.com received 218,000 pageviews and 57,221 unique visitors for the Fall 2008 semester. Between 75 and 80 percent of those visits came from off campus, meaning the site is a popular way for the community to stay in touch with the campus. Most visitors are from the Houston area, though considerable numbers also come from Great Britain, Australia and India. In addition, the site also has almost 400 registered subscribers who receive daily headlines by e-mail.

The site has built-in feedback features and is designed to encourage reader participation. Readers can post replies to any published material on the site and have easy access to tools that let them inform The Daily Cougar staff about upcoming events and write letters to the editor. Activity generated by these features helps inform editors which content readers most appreciate.

Improving both the raw pageview count and encouraging more community among readers are keys to making any effort to sell online ads succeed.

5. *Please discuss any budget changes from your last (FY2009) 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 FY2008 with a Ledger 3 Fund Equity balance, please describe the conditions which caused the fund balance.*

We have always ended the fiscal year with a fund balance, which we keep as a contingency fund in the event that our advertising efforts fall on hard times, a situation many campus newspapers nationwide are beginning to experience this year.

Student Publications is fortunate to have received all SFAC monies requested last year. We are confident that all the monies received were used efficiently and wisely and that they benefited the many students, faculty, staff, alumni and others who read the print and online versions of The Daily Cougar.

6. *Please list your 2009-2010 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. To foster an open and objective environment among The Daily Cougar student staff that provides a public forum for viewpoints and opinion; to teach that a news medium is a conduit for the flow of free speech and the clarification of public issues and ideas; and to work with students in a learning environment where the canons and ethics of journalism are the practical issue.

Comment: When funds permit, we send editors and advertising sales reps to national conferences that promote law and ethics of journalism as well as newsroom management, sales techniques and strategies as well as serve as a forum for the sharing of ideas with their peers from other universities.

- B. Expand online content and revenue opportunities — In partnership with College Publisher and a third-party online classified vendor to be determined, the production department will open up online advertising revenue opportunities. Our goal is to achieve this with existing resources, meaning that we will not require new equipment or software. It will, however, require more training time for students and adding or reassigning staff to Web development. This project is in the beginning stages.
- C. Streamline production workflow — The first change will be implementing a central server that everyone involved in the production cycle can access and collaborate, including the editorial, advertising and production departments. This has a secondary aim of allowing the department to communicate more effectively about deadlines and expectations. This process is ongoing.
- D. Standardize marketing materials — The production department is leading a redesign of all departmental marketing materials, including advertising rate cards, promotional materials, information sheets and the Student Publications Web site. This project, being achieved with existing resources, not only helps promote the department but also further involves students in the marketing and promotional aspects of the publishing business.
- E. Continue training — We continually train employees on all facets of the PeopleSoft system and keep them updated regarding payroll, accounting, human resources, telecommunications, property management and other relevant topics. The department also works with Pre1, the developers of our departmental accounting system, to keep staff trained.
- F. Upgrade computers — We will continue upgrading our computer systems, ensuring students the opportunity to practice their craft using the latest publishing technology available and affordable to us. This process is ongoing.

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.)?*

We sell advertising to campus departments and organizations, and to clients in the Houston area, to fund nearly 65 percent of our revenue base. National advertising is also sold through national sales representatives; those sales account for about 10 percent of our revenue.

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

There are no overlaps with other units at this time.