

**STUDENT FEES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**FY 2011**

Program Questionnaire

Prepared by

**DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT PUBLICATIONS**

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

## **STUDENT FEES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SFAC)**

### **FY2011 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**

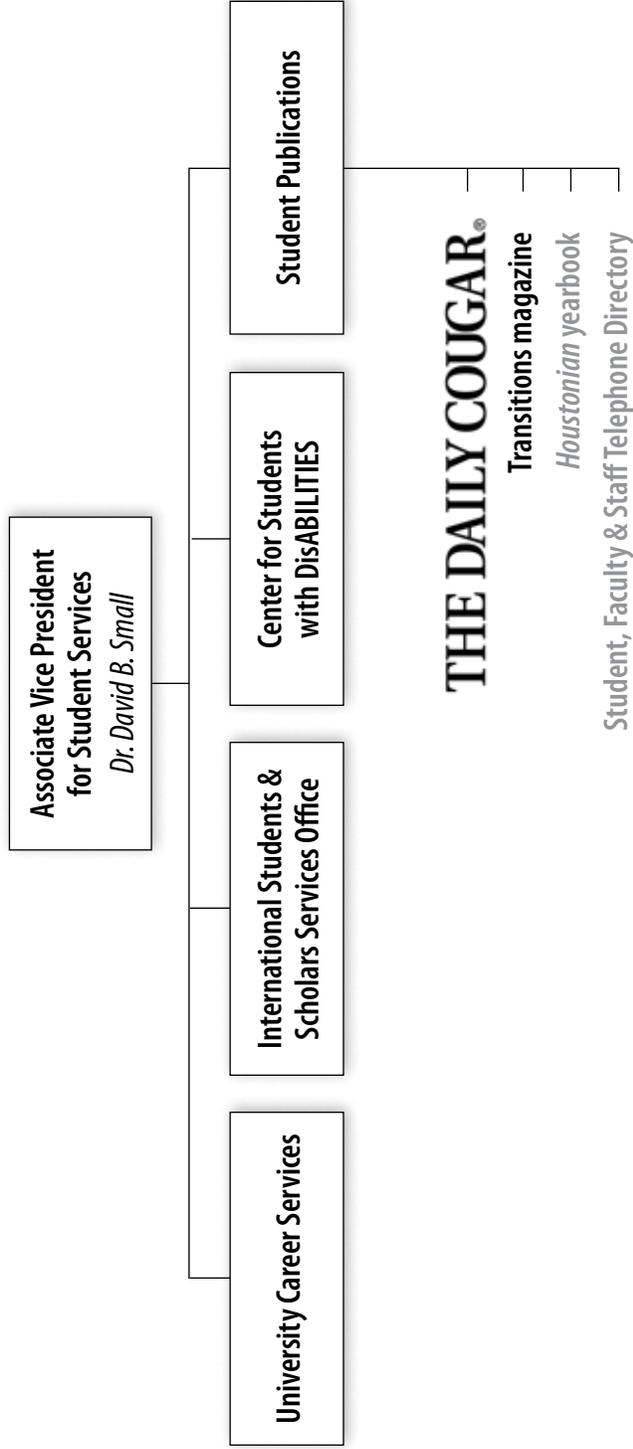
We strive to foster an open and objective environment among The Daily Cougar student staff that provides a public forum for viewpoints and opinion in order to teach them that a news medium is a conduit for the flow of free speech and the clarification of public issues and ideas. We also strive to work 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**

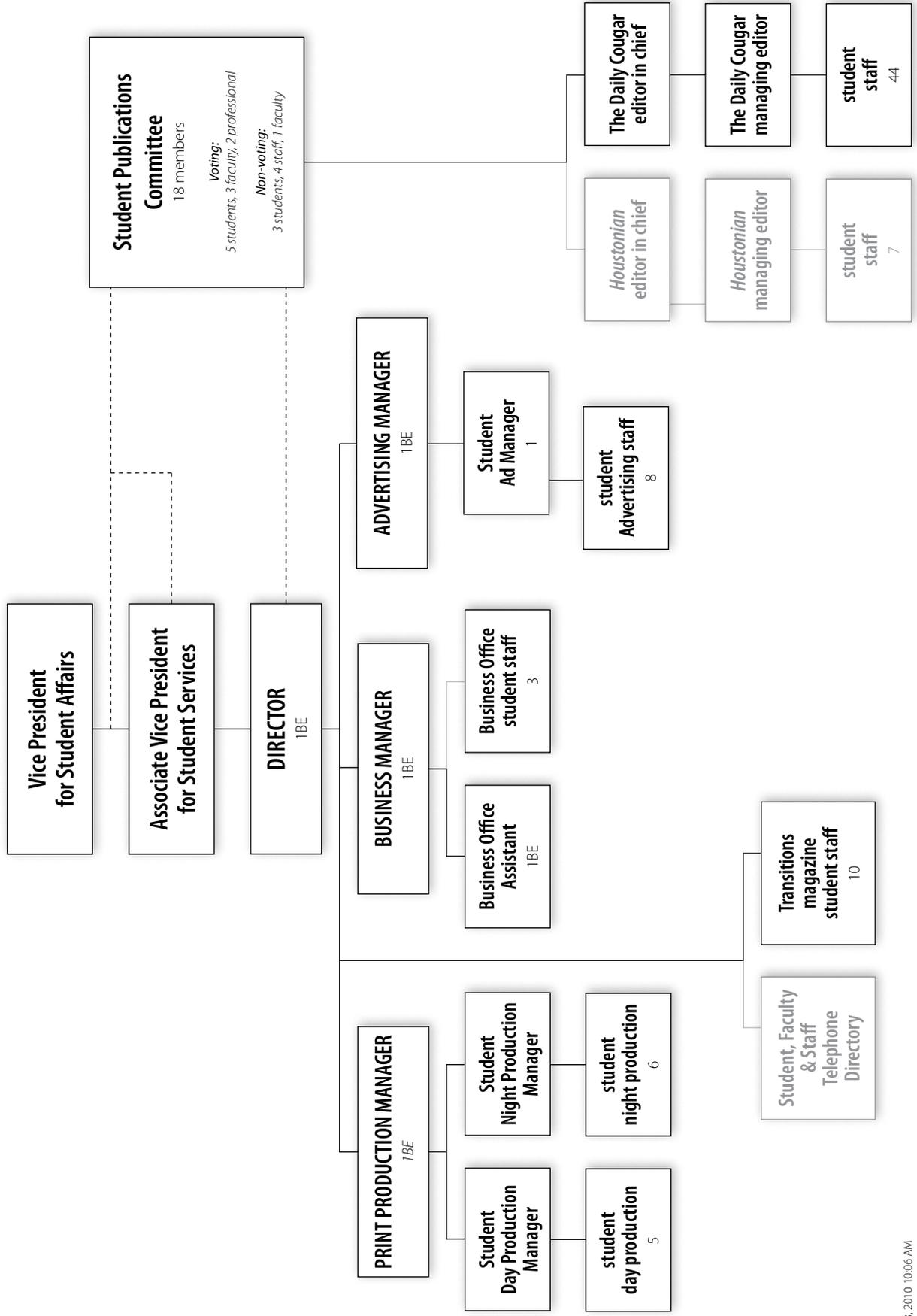
Our goal is to allow students to work in a very real newspaper and online environment providing relevant news and information to students, faculty and staff in the most timely and accurate manner possible. Our goal is to have both the online edition and the print edition of The Daily Cougar delivered 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

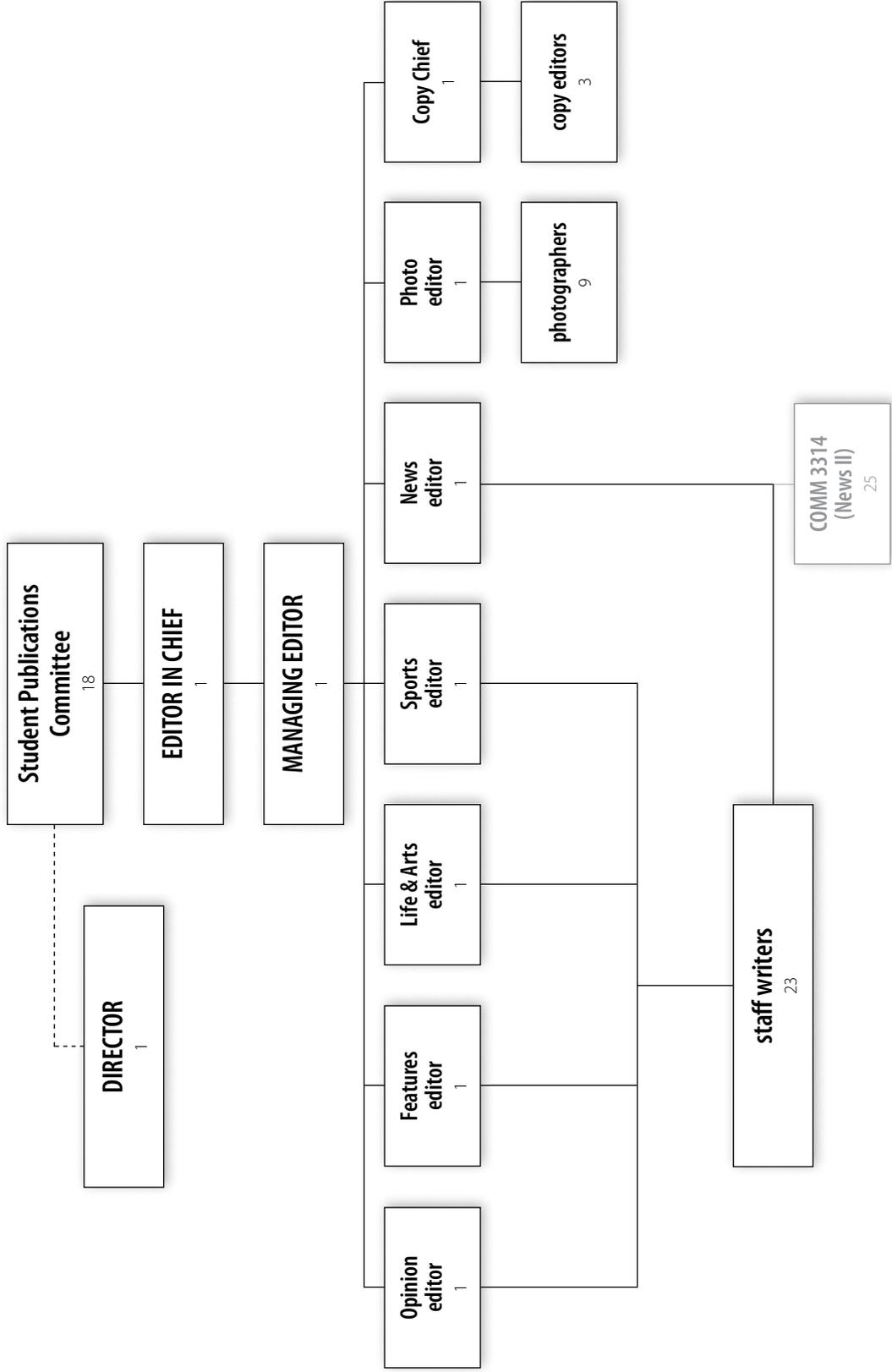


# DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT PUBLICATIONS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



# DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

## THE DAILY COUGAR EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT



3. *List the objectives that you provided with your 2009-2010 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 the practical issue.

**Comment:** Our primary objective remains unchanged: to foster an open and objective learning environment that provides practical experience to student journalists, graphic artists, salespeople and businesspeople, while also providing a practical service to the University community as a news medium and open forum for public issues and ideas.

- 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. The goal is to do this with existing resources and will not require new equipment or software. It will, however, need more training time for students and adding or reassigning staff to Web development. This project is in its beginning stages.

**Comment:** We are continuing to expand online revenue potential. We recently launched an online classifieds service powered by CampusAve, a fast-growing online advertising service targeting university communities. A relaunch of our Web publication, [thedailycougar.com](http://thedailycougar.com), will include more inventory that we can sell to campus, local and national clients.

- c. Streamline production workflow. The first change will be implementing a central server that everyone involved in the production cycle can access and collaborate. This includes editorial, advertising and the productions departments.

**Comment:** We successfully deployed a central server that unifies Editorial, Production and Advertising materials and manages computer account access for those departments.

- d. Standardizing 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.

**Comment:** We successfully consolidated many of our customer-facing marketing materials with a consistent design and packaging.

- e. Continue training – We continually train employees on all facets of the PeopleSoft system and keep them updated regarding payroll, accounting, human resources,

**Comment:** We are continually monitoring technological changes and will investigate upgrades when they become necessary to provide the optimal workflow and the best learning environment for our students.

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 Daily Cougar is critiqued every day by our diverse readership base and by a retired journalism professor, because it is vital for us to know the quality of our product. We always want our readers to know The Daily Cougar is a credible, relevant and important information source for the University community. Our readers never fail to let us know about our shortcomings whenever they write, call or visit us when they have a concern about the stories they read in the Cougar. The retired professor not only critiques the paper but also conducts workshops for the editorial staff of the Cougar.

The online edition of The Daily Cougar benefits from extensive reader tracking tools provided by Google Analytics. Data from Google Analytics tell us that thedailycougar.com received 168,638 pageviews from 38,489 unique visitors for the Fall 2009 semester. Close to 80 percent of those visits came from off campus, suggesting the site is a popular way students as well as alumni and community members to stay in touch with the campus. Most visitors are from the Houston area. Although pageviews are down compared to last year (which we attribute to deficiencies in College Publisher's archive system, making hundreds of articles largely inaccessible at one point), one area of growth has been extending the Cougar's presence to popular social networks Twitter and Facebook. Between the two, more than 1,200 users are following regular updates from the newspaper, and referrals from the two networks accounts for almost 10% of visitors to the site.

5. *Please discuss any budget changes from your last (FY2010) 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 FY2009 with a Ledger 3 Fund Equity balance, please describe the conditions which caused the fund balance.*

We usually end 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.

This year we are also experiencing a shortfall meeting our revenue expectations and will be requesting a one-time allocation from the Student Fees Advisory Committee. That request has been submitted separately in a letter to the committee.

6. *Please list your 2010-2011 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.*

We need to do all we can to cut back on expenses that are not absolutely critical to the successful operation of our department. We also must do all we can to increase our revenue base so that we can cover our expenses with no shortfall. These goals are essential to ensure the viability of the department of Student Publications.

- A. To put us in line with industry trends and make our product more accessible to more people, 2010-2011 will be a year of innovations to our online approach. By going independent with our Web hosting and content management, we will be able to exploit an open field to explore new strategies and tools for disseminating news, information and opinion produced by students.

**Comment:** We will offer blogs to our community members to help them share their news and information with us, with the goal of developing a community of UH-centric bloggers from the University's students, faculty, staff and alumni. We will explore the potential for niche sites that target a specific audience, such as new students or job-seekers — sites that synergize with existing UH programs to help students succeed while giving our students expanded opportunities for publishing experience in different formats. We will put more emphasis on multimedia production, adding video and audio to our set of storytelling tools.

- B. We will maintain a strong core print product to serve the campus community. We will strive to balance the need to increase revenues, keep costs low and still produce high-quality content that makes the paper a valuable asset to the community.
- C. We will help foster an alumni organization with the aim of supporting Student Publications with guidance, mentorships for students and possibly financial support for SP initiatives or scholarships.
- D. We will improve our department's approach to recruiting and outreach. We will contact high school journalism programs to inform them of opportunities at SP and will look to build a presence in the orientation program on campus.
- E. Training of professional staff and students will continue to be a priority to keep everyone productive and engaged in the process of innovating.

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 have been supporting approximately 75% of our revenue base through the sales of advertising with approximately 22% from SFAC funding. Approximately 3% comes from other sources such as the Student, Staff and Faculty Telephone Directory.

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.