



# STUDENT PUBLICATIONS/ CENTER FOR STUDENT MEDIA

Student Fees Advisory Committee (SFAC)  
Program Questionnaire for FY 2013-2014



**STUDENT PUBLICATIONS/CENTER FOR STUDENT MEDIA**  
**FY2014 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.**

**Overview**

Student Publications is poised to undergo a rapid and cutting-edge transformation, from a print-focused news and advertising program to a multi-platform, student-driven and high-tech educational media center. This report will address the previous and current state of Student Publications but also outline the proposed realignment that will establish a new student activity center at the University of Houston.

**Student Publications**

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.

Student Publications currently accomplishes this mission by facilitating the production of The Daily Cougar, Transitions magazine, Houstonian magazine (formerly the yearbook) and other student-run publications. Specifically, the department handles the advertising, business and production operations that enable the daily newspaper to function. Advertising sales fund the majority of the budget.

The SFAC allocation enables the department to cover critical costs such as the printing of the Cougar and the salary of a business support staff member, ensuring a consistent and reliable product is delivered every day.

**Student Media — Proposed**

Grounded in professional ethics and best practices, the Center for Student Media will support and empower student-driven expression, publishing and broadcasting.

Pivoting toward an expanded advisory and support model for multiple media organizations, the center will accomplish its mission by emphasizing training and development in all media activities. The center must make sure the students we work with have the technical, ethical and leadership skills to deliver high-quality media and serve their communities. The center will set high standards for content, production and delivery, while also respecting and affirming the independence of student media organizations.

The request will fund the center's advisory and educational mission by adding a broadcast-oriented coordinator to the center's professional staff. With a student-centered staff, the center will address the development of the estimated 400-700 active students involved in three media organizations. Through these organizations, the center will impact thousands of readers, viewers and listeners in the campus community, the city and beyond.

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, advisor, etc.), note this on your chart. Student employees should be cited on the chart and identified as students.**

See attached:

- Current organization (Student Publications)
- Proposed organization (Student Media)

**3. List the objectives you identified for the 2011-2012 academic year. 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. Stabilize our advertising revenue stream and possibly turn around the decline, while adapting to the changing media landscape.

*Ongoing:* In FY 12 the department experienced an increase in national print advertising, but despite increased efforts, saw declines in campus and local ads. A website redesign in the latter half of FY 11 and the launch of an email edition helped increase annual online ad sales from \$14,000 to \$18,000. The email edition reached 2,200 subscribers by the end of FY 12. Magazines such as Look Learn Lease, Hot Spots and the Cougar Calendar all helped shore up revenue and make up for some of the losses experienced in other areas. The Houstonian yearbook was reconfigured into a magazine product, garnering more than \$20,000 in revenue and salvaging a publications tradition.

In Fall 2011 we launched Overtime, a football special edition that was distributed at every home football game. The sections were entered into a statewide college newspaper competition, winning 2<sup>nd</sup> place for Best Special Edition.

- B. Maintain a strong core print product (The Daily Cougar). Put an emphasis on staff training and development to improve the quality of the editorial content and the experience gained by our students.

*Achieved:* The print edition was reduced from five days to four days per week in FY 12, resulting in significant cost savings of \$44,000. Revenue from those “lost” Fridays was not a significant factor, since it was an overall loss to print on Fridays in FY 11. A new print vendor was identified and the transition was smooth. Cancelling print on Fridays also allowed us to incorporate more intentional development opportunities. In FY 12, workshops in section editing, copy editing and writing were held. In addition, a three-day editors’ training session dubbed “EditCamp,” was established in Summer 2012 that will become an annual tradition. Involving professionals from the Houston Chronicle, ESPN, the Texas Tribune and the Jack J. Valenti School of Communication, the camp was directed at developing the new editorial board. The camp focused on ethics, management, the role of the paper on campus, visual and digital storytelling, editing and other skills critical to a successful newspaper staff.

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

*Ongoing:* Alumni were included in the aforementioned workshops and EditCamp. Department leadership has contacted the Houston Alumni Organization to be advised on the process of establishing a formal Daily Cougar Alumni Network, and this idea has been put forward as a potential area for fundraising in coordination with UH Advancement.

- D. Reclassify Daily Cougar Editorial Board to stipend student leader classification.

*In progress:* The rationale for this objective was to align the department's student leaders with the rest of the fee-funded student organizations as prescribed by the Compensated Student Leader Task Force report from Summer 2011. This will help ensure Daily Cougar leaders are connected with the student leadership community at UH and have access to the same opportunities afforded to this set of students.

- E. Begin process of advising Student Video Network and COOG Radio.

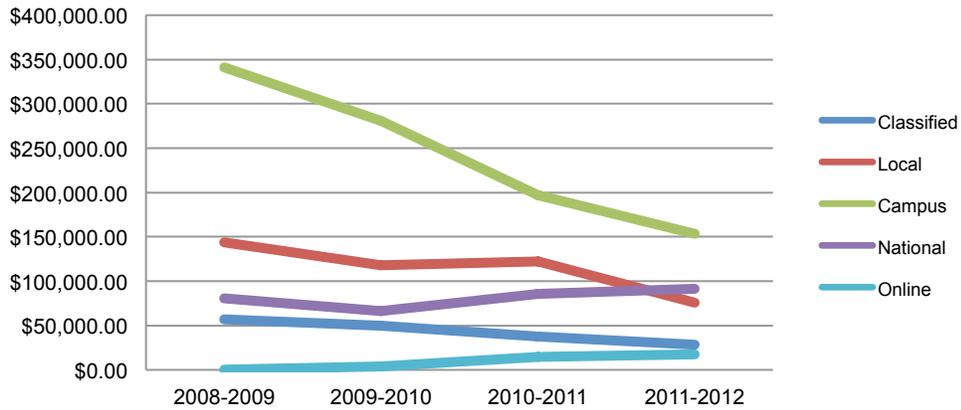
*In progress:* In September, the director of Student Publications began advising the Student Video Network and COOG Radio. He now has regular contact with their student leaders and moving forward will be more engaged with them to facilitate a smooth transition into the Center for Student Media.

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 any assessment measures used to evaluate program success. Please provide the method for collecting these data.

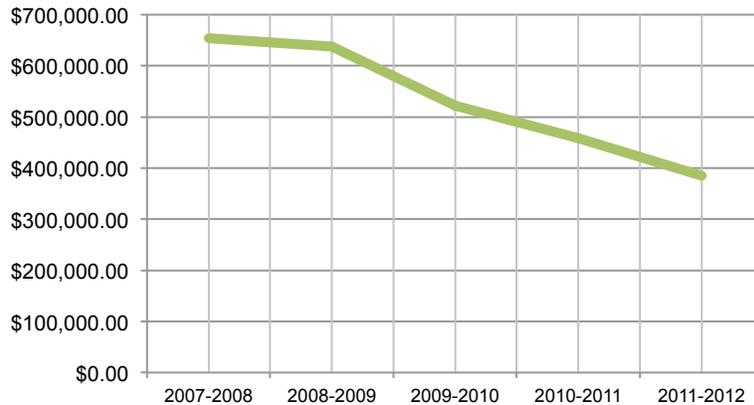
REVENUE

Revenue is mission-critical and is logged daily by our financial system and reported monthly across the main categories of local, campus and national sources, but is also tracked by client and type of ad (print or online). These charts look at our FY 12 performance in historical perspective. Clearly, the biggest drop has been in campus-based advertising, which we believe is due to budget cuts and a shift toward email marketing and other forms of advertising.

**4-year revenue trend by type**



**5-year overall revenue trend**



Internal reports show the department had 102 campus clients in 2008-2009 and 100 clients in 2011-2012. The decline isn't limited to one department or another; Student Publications is experiencing a campus-wide reduction in advertising through the student newspaper and magazines.

READERSHIP

**Print:** Pickup of The Daily Cougar is tracked daily after each paper delivery. The number of papers placed in the rack is known; therefore the remaining copies are counted to determine the pickup rate.

Day of week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Overall
Spring 2012 average	82%	83%	82%	85%	82.3%

This equates to roughly 700 copies left over on any given day (we circulate 4,000 per day). The cost savings of reducing the print run by that amount would not be significant; moreover, accurately reducing distribution across 81 stands would not be practical.

In FY 12, the department increased the number of campus news racks or delivery locations from 70 to 81. In the process, low-performing racks were relocated or removed completely.

While it is difficult to judge how many people see each paper copy, we know from a previous reader assessment that 60% of the respondents representing students, faculty and staff reported reading print or online at least once week, representing a potentially wide audience.

**Online:** Visits and pageviews are tracked by Google Analytics. From 2008-2009 to 2011-2012, the number of overall readers has increased by more than 160%. When isolating the audience to Houston-area visitors, we are still seeing more than double the readers as four years ago.

Metric (total for the year)	Total Unique Visitors	Houston-area Visitors	Total Pageviews
2008-2009	100,885	47,753	433,331
2011-2012	263,470	101,667	778,184

A readership survey was not conducted in FY 12 but is planned for FY 13.

5. Please discuss any budget or organizational changes experienced since your last (FY2013) 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 FY2012 with a Ledger 3 Fund Equity balance, please describe the conditions that caused the fund balance.

**Personnel/reorganization**

The department director, formerly the editorial/production manager, was promoted to the position in January of 2012. The director covered the responsibilities of both positions from January until June while the process of hiring a new Production Assistant took place. The Production Assistant was hired in June.

Also in January 2012, the Student Publications unit was reassigned to the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs – Student Life, Keith Kowalka. Since then, the department has been working toward closer integration with Student Life business services — the financial coordinator was physically reassigned to that office to help facilitate that transition — as well as with Student Life information technology staff to take on maintenance of internal systems moving forward.

As of September 2012, the director began advising Student Video Network and COOG Radio. The transition of these responsibilities took place over the summer of 2012 to ensure there was no lapse in support to these student organizations.

**Fund equity**

Overall income and expenditures of Student Publications/Center for Student Media SFAC request for FY 12 decreased by \$51,064 as explained below. These decreases had no adverse effect on Student Publications/Center for Student Media to fulfill its mission to students.

A. Income

Overall income decreased from the amount on the SFAC request form by a total of (\$51,064) as follows:

Decrease in student service fees-base request	(\$85,471)
Dedicated fees-base budget	(\$43,789)
Increase in SSF 2012-2013-one time allocation	\$130,559
Decrease in usage fees	(\$88,000)
Increase in other income	\$27,840
Increase in Fund Equity	<u>\$7,797</u>
	<b><u>(\$51,064)</u></b>

B. Expenses

Overall expenses decreased from the amount on the SFAC request form by a total of (\$51,064) as follows:

Decrease in salaries/benefits	(28,554)
Increase in benefits/other	831
Decrease in utilities/adm charge	(6,241)
Decrease in editorial salary	(13,000)
Decrease in training	( 9,000)
Decrease in tele/equipment/supplies/misc	( 5,550)
Increase in postage/printing	10,300
Decrease in travel	(500)
Increase in subscriptions,dues, membership,trainging	2,300
Decrease in insurance	(150)
Decrease in on-line hosting pub	<u>(1,500)</u>
	<b><u>(51,064)</u></b>

Student Publications/Center for Student Media concluded FY 2012 with a Ledger 3 fund balance carry forward of \$37,376 and an equity balance of \$184,731. The balance is a result of savings and carry over from previous years.

6. **The terminology for responding to this item has been amended to be consistent with the strategic planning framework. Therefore, SFAC requests that you report your success measures in terms of strategic initiatives and action steps versus goals and objectives as previously requested. To this end, please list your 2013-2014 strategic initiatives and action steps in priority order. Larger units may wish to group responses by subprogram. Under each strategic initiative, please state the specific action steps (programs, activities, services, policies/procedures, etc.) you intend to implement to accomplish your stated initiative.**

The Center for Student Media aims to support the Division of Student Affairs' strategic plan. In its first year, the center sees an opportunity to reinforce the division's effort to:

- Create new opportunities for student success through learning, engagement and discovery.
- Actualize and leverage the fiscal, human, technological and facility resources that enhance the student experience.
- Create and engage in strategic partnerships.

To those ends, the center commits itself to achieving these objectives in 2013-2014:

1. *Establish training and quality enhancement programs for all student media groups, implemented through the new coordinator positions and developed with student learning outcomes assessment at its core. (Supporting DSA Initiative #1)*
  - a. Media coordinators and advertising manager will generate rubrics for media specific-skills as well as broader learning outcomes (e.g. ethics and leadership).
  - b. Then the coordinators/ad manager will develop targeted workshops or training procedures and documents/handbooks addressing those skills and learning outcomes.
  - c. Internal policies vetted by the advisory committee will tie workshop completion to gaining access to center resources (e.g. the ability to check out equipment, gain media credentials, receive payment for services).
  - d. Director will work with coordinators to create assessment instruments to ensure adequate knowledge is captured during the training process and that rubrics are used to evaluate employees and student leaders.
  - e. Coordinators will implement a portfolio review process tied to a center-wide awards ceremony and entry into collegiate competition.
2. *Charge a task force to review the Center's business model and make recommendations for print strategy, advertising policies and procedures. (Supporting DSA Initiatives #2 & #6)*
  - a. Engage the School of Communication and College of Business to provide members to the task force in addition to department staff and industry professionals.
  - b. Using benchmarking, focus groups and campus surveys, determine effectiveness of the daily print model in terms of service to readers and advertisers.
  - c. Determine the resource needs to deliver new digital programs.

- d. Compile recommendations for discussion by the Student Media Advisory Committee.
3. *Migrate all student media to a common web platform and enable advertising across the network to actualize more revenue opportunities. (Supporting DSA Initiative #2)*
    - a. In a project work team, student leaders and coordinators will collaborate to determine goals, content and feature needs of each media group.
    - b. Working with student leaders, the media coordinators will identify best practices, resource budget, and evaluate available options.
    - c. Student Life IT, CSM production team and media coordinators will assist in site design and development.
    - d. Media coordinators will train students within each group on site maintenance and content management.
    - e. Websites should be monitored and reviewed each semester for enhancements and system upgrades. Major overhauls/redesigns/upgrades should be planned every three years.
  4. *Enhance magazine products with mobile and/or web extensions to add value and test the mobile ad market. (Supporting DSA Initiative #2)*
    - a. Make contact with UH Orientation, UH IT and other stakeholders to identify the potential for a first-year experience app and/or website produced by students that extends the usefulness of Transitions magazine.
    - b. Director will identify a student project team to work on app content development as well as vendors or students to provide app framework or development support.
    - c. Develop an implementation timeline for live app delivery in the Summer 2015 orientation cycle.
  5. *Identify and develop new revenue streams through creative services that offer new student learning opportunities and activate a new pool of resources for program expansion. (Supporting DSA Initiative #2)*
    - a. Director will initiate specific market research studies on 1) student portraits and 2) campus creative services (photo/video coverage-for-hire).
    - b. Director evaluates the cost and revenue potential based results of survey.
    - c. If market research is positive and resources are available, media coordinators organize a trial in 2014.
  6. *Facilitate the restructuring of the Student Publications Committee into the Student Media Advisory Committee, charged with facilitating student, faculty, staff, and professional oversight, leadership selection and policy review for all student media. The board will also continue to encourage collaboration with academic programs in digital media. (Supporting DSA Initiative #6)*
    - a. Establish a subcommittee of the SPC to rewrite the bylaws to address questions regarding oversight of COOG Radio and Student Video Network.
    - b. Research peer institutions for guidance on bylaws and implementation.
    - c. Discuss and ratify bylaws by SPC.
    - d. Submit new bylaws to Student Affairs leadership for approval.

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.)? If you receive funds from other sources, please briefly describe the source, purpose, and duration of the funding and report the amounts received in the appropriate rows/columns on the SFAC Spreadsheet.**

The department recognizes the need to diversify its revenue sources. Strategic initiatives #2 and #6 above is intended to identify new sources of self-generated revenue, but it is too early to make even an educated guess on the potential income and costs associated with adding new services to our portfolio.

In 2013-2014 the majority of revenue will continue to come from print and online advertising associated with publishing the newspaper and magazines.

Other revenues indicated on our budget spreadsheet are derived from two major sources: a revenue contract with an advertising company to sell ads in the Houstonian yearbook/magazine and a revenue contract with an online classifieds system called CampusAve. The Baby Grad item represents ads purchased by graduating seniors or their parents in the Houstonian yearbook/magazine.

- 8. Please describe any services that are similar to yours and/or any overlap between your unit and any other unit(s) providing services to students and the rationale for the overlap.**

No overlap exists.

9/2012