

Student Media Annual Report 2002-2003

Introduction

The Student Media Authority at North Carolina State University is a student-fee-funded enterprise created to facilitate the production of the yearbook (*Agromeck*), two newspapers (*Technician* and *Nubian Message*), a radio station (WKNC), a magazine (*Windhover*) and two Web sites (*Technician* online and *Americana*).

As a public forum for free expression, the student media at North Carolina State University exist to inform and to entertain, first and foremost, the students followed by members of the surrounding community and peers in the journalism profession. Working in student media gives participants hands-on experience in the mass media which will assist them regardless of their career goals. By upholding the highest standards of journalistic ethics, the student-run media will help students become competent as ethical and responsible adults, who are enthusiastic about their future involvement in human affairs and optimistic about their future.

I. Programs

Americana

The online literary magazine successfully hosted its Open Mic Nights, bringing hundreds of people to Caldwell Lounge to listen to everything from live music to poetry. Led by editor Nathaniel Horner, the staff also successfully published new issues online approximately every two weeks. <http://americana.ncsu.edu/> drew in hundreds of readers and viewers, particularly after special issues such as the War issue or the interview with the chancellor issue. In April, *Americana* broke its record for the most number of "unique visitors" with more than 1,700. In March, as a relatively typical month, *Americana* had 2,030 visits from 1,203 unique visitors.

Agromeck

The yearbook, edited by Lucy Tatum, probably made the greatest strides. The 2001 book was delivered in November of 2002. The 2002 book, which should have been delivered in August of 2002, was completed in February of 2003 and shipped in May of 2003, nearly eight months late. However, the 2003 edition, due for delivery in August of 2003, was completed in May of 2003, right on schedule. Printed by Taylor Publishing Company of Dallas, the book will have 232 pages. The D.H. Hill Library put out an extensive exhibit of 100 years of the *Agromeck*.

Technician

Edited by Matt Pelland and Jerry Moore, the *Technician* remained the flagship publication for student media. With a circulation of slightly more than 15,000 each day, the *Technician* successfully published every school day even when snow forced the closure of the campus. The Society for Collegiate Journalists named Jerry Moore the national collegiate journalist of the year. Mark McLawhorn won second place in for entertainment page design in the international design contest sponsored by the student chapter of the Society of News Design at the University of Missouri. The biggest challenge for the publication was staying within budget. Advertising revenue was down significantly yet expenditures continued to be as high as they had been in the past few years when advertising revenues were up.

Nubian Message

The *Nubian Message* faced another challenging year. In the fall, the editor, Keon Pettway and the SMA board had to deal with allegations of plagiarism by staff writers resulting in some staff members being formally reprimanded. The publication did not come out on a regular schedule during the fall semester, but did better in the spring semester. The hiring of Jerry Blackmon as

editor caused some controversy in the African-American community. A letter from Natalya Rice, chair of the African-American Student Advisory Council said, "We are writing to the Student Media Authority to express great concern and discontent over the selection of Mr. Jerry Blackman (*sic*) as the 2003-04 editor-in-chief of the Nubian Message student publication." The three-page letter continued with "Jerry Blackman (*sic*) is an undesirable candidate for the position of editor-in-chief...." Thushan Amarasiriwardena, summer chair of the SMA board, Jerry Moore, a member of the 2002-2003 board and Bradley Wilson met with the AASAC group May 1. Although the group was very unreceptive to the comments, they did point out some weaknesses in the SMA structure and selection process that need to be dealt with and will be dealt with when the board is re-structured. All SMA representatives, including Jerry Blackmon, who was not invited nor allowed to speak until Bradley Wilson invited him and requested that he be allowed to speak, stressed their support for Blackmon who was voted in unanimously by the SMA board knowing that he was going to have a difficult year ahead of him building relationships with the AASAC members and building a staff that can produce a quality publication on time and on budget.

Windhover

Edited by Sarah Timberlake, the *Windhover* again compiled the best in literary and artistic work this campus had to offer. Emmett Byrne designed the spiral bound book, including CD. Last year's book again received a Pacemaker from the Associated Collegiate Press.

WKNC

WKNC stayed steady this year. The station, with Arielle Menges, was named best station for local music and best station for cutting edge music according to the Independent/Spectator. Led by consulting engineer Will Patund, the station moved ahead with plans to increase to 25,000 watts. The construction authorized by this permit must be completed by Sept. 20, 2004 and it's going to be close. The number of listeners was down apparently part of a decline over the past few years. Sponsorship revenues were down.

Photography

The photography staff, coordinated by photo editors Matt Huffman and Dave Kuzdrall, continued the move to digital, converting one of the darkrooms to a studio/office. Carl Hudson and Rob Bradley participated in a spring break photography project with students from Kansas State University. Tim Lytvinko and Matt Huffman assisted with the Association of Texas Photography Instructors conference in Austin. Five staff member, Tim Lytvinkenko, Carl Hudson, Rob Bradley, Karen Hill and Austin Dowd did the photography for the national NACURH conference at N.C. State in the spring producing an audio-visual show each day of the conference.

Business

The business staff was re-organized after April 1 to reflect its independence from the editorial side of the publications. Coordinated by a student general manager, the advertising staff will coordinate all advertising for the *Technician*, the *Nubian Message* and WKNC. They will also be in charge of all circulation issues. During the next school year, a full-time professional staff member will be hired to coordinate the business staff.

II. Compact Plan

A. Initiative Supporting University Goals

GOAL #1 Building a diverse and inclusive campus community, fostering demographic and intellectual diversity

1. To develop better systems of covering the University community for all student media. PROGRESS: Some progress was made this year with the inclusion of more photos and articles of and about more people in the yearbook and newspapers. We have a long way to go in this area, but nothing is more critical to our readers' perception of the publications than increasing coverage.
2. To improve the quality of the Nubian Message and to consider its format. PROGRESS: Little progress has been made in this area during the spring semester.

GOAL #2 Fostering new partnerships, both internally and externally

3. To provide research data to the media groups on readership, circulation and listener demographics. PROGRESS: No listener/reader studies have been done in the last few years.
4. To make contacts with media professionals in the community to speak to our students, teach workshops, and provide hands-on training. PROGRESS: The photography staff this year had several training exercises with outside people coming in to show off their photos and talk about photography. Other staffs plan to do this extensively next year.
5. To become actively involved in media organizations such as the College Media Advisers, the Associated Collegiate Press and the Society for Collegiate Journalists as well as professional organizations such as the North Carolina Press Association. PROGRESS: This is related to many of our goals and objectives for 2003-2004, bringing students to workshops as well as having students and professional staff teach workshops.

GOAL #3 Adopting a new business model that embraces efficiency and accountability.

1. To continue to explore new web applications for Student Media use, such as online mail forms, online timesheets, and online surveys and results. PROGRESS: With a new technical support staff, our main mission has been getting things organized. Until late in the fiscal year, we couldn't even figure out how to access some of the student media sites. Most of those obstacles have been removed and now we can begin improvement.

B. Initiatives Contributing to the University's Planning for "Student Learning in a Technology-Rich Environment"

GOAL #1 Getting cable into the newsroom and other media outlets

1. To get cable installed in the Witherspoon Student Center in cooperation with student government and the other tenants of the center. PROGRESS: The number one goal of the Witherspoon Facelift Committee was to get cable in the building for access in the theatre, the student media offices and other areas. Telecommunications is exploring estimates for the project, and it's one student media's top initiatives.

GOAL #2 To develop a technology plan and maintain equipment.

1. To develop a three- to five-year technology plan. PROGRESS: This is also one of our goals for the 2003-2004 school year.
2. To fix major problems with current technology. PROGRESS: Work has only begun on creating a backup system for the server as well as redundancy. We're also only beginning work on upgrading the hubs but have switched all but a few of them to switches which has improved performance noticeable. The network is also more reliable now that we've hooked into the

building system instead of running our own system on top of the building's network. Red Hat Linux has been upgraded to close security holes and a plan is in place to keep Linux upgraded. Problems regarding access to the server have not all been fixed.

C. Initiatives Supporting Unit-Specific Goals and Aspirations

GOAL #1 Meet deadlines.

1. To educate students about the importance of time management and meeting deadlines. PROGRESS: The 2003 yearbook was completed pretty much on schedule although the staff consistently missed deadlines by several days. The newspaper staff consistently finished the paper after midnight. Next year, the staff is working towards a midnight (or earlier) deadline. The business staff for *Technician* has backed up the deadline for ads so they should be in earlier, allowing production to begin earlier. The *Nubian Message* consistently missed deadlines and did not come out with a final issue. WKNC had some problems not broadcasting some games they had committed to broadcasting and went off the air more often than we would like due to technical problems. Americana came out on schedule. *Windhover* basically came out on schedule, but was too late in the year to distribute.

GOAL #2 Create a policy handbook for all media outlets.

1. To create a comprehensive policy handbook for all media outlets that encompasses all policies necessary for staff members to run their operations. PROGRESS: No progress has been made in this area.
2. To create a comprehensive stylebook for all student media. PROGRESS No progress has been made in this area.

GOAL #2 Create a true advisory board for student media.

3. To work with student government and student media leaders to create a true advisory board. PROGRESS: No progress has been made in this area except beginning discussions with various people around campus. By the end of July, we will have completed a research endeavor to get comparisons of similar schools and the structure of their boards.

GOAL #3 Hiring of additional professional staff.

1. Student Media will explore the possibility of hiring an assistant coordinator of Student Media Advising. PROGRESS: No progress has been made in this area.

GOAL #4 Research additional sources of funding and support.

1. To look outside the University community for additional sources of funding. PROGRESS: No progress has been made in this area.
2. To create a database of student media alumni who can be contacted when future needs arise for funding, reorganization or reunions. PROGRESS: We have committed to doing a student media reunion during homecoming in the fall of 2004. Otherwise, no progress has been made in this area.
3. To reorganize the business staff. PROGRESS: On paper, this reorganization has been completed. However, in practice, it's not yet fully functional. WKNC is not integrated into the mix at all. Nubian Message is only partially integrated. A single rate card that was supposed

to be completed by June 1, 2003 is weeks behind schedule. A marketing plan for the 2004 yearbook is in place, which will allow the yearbook publisher to handle all the direct sales to students' parents rather than to students.

D. Initiatives to Improve Performance

GOAL # 1 Improve the quality of the publications through training and critiques.

1. To enable students to produce award-winning publications and broadcasts. PROGRESS: While we have made an endeavor to enter more contests, the students still do not that producing quality publications leads to awards. Awards are not the goal. They are a result of quality work. They are also a motivating factor.
2. To critique publications on a regular basis. PROGRESS: We have had regular critiques by the adviser of the *Technician* and the *Nubian Message*. There is no critique system in place for WKNC, *Americana*, *Agromeck* or *Windhover*. The students are not at all used to having their work edited or critiqued and, with *Technician* being the exception, are not very receptive to it.

E. Initiatives Supporting Enrollment Targets

Goal #1 Increase the number of students involved in student media

1. To increase the number of students who are involved with Student Media through distance education, e-mail distribution lists, and Web-based video programs. PROGRESS: No progress has been made in this area although we seem to have a plan in place to be visible at orientation which should help increase awareness of the media.

III. Diversity

Student staff members have continued their commitment to diversity, in all its meanings, by covering a variety of activities on this campus. Further, they have a very diverse staff of writers, photographers and designers.

One of the goals for next year is to complete an assessment of the *Technician* – a Time Out for Diversity study. This study, modeled after one conducted by professional newspapers for the last three years, will give us a better handle on how well we're doing in terms of covering a diverse array of students, our primary audience.

The *Nubian Message*, a weekly publication targeted at the African-American community at N.C. State continued publishing despite continued problems. Questions remain about the viability of the publication in its current format and more questions remain about whether the publication is serving its primary audience. However, just by asking those questions and seeking answers to them that reflect our idealism and reality, we'll be better able to serve the campus community.

IV. Staff

The most significant addition to the staff was, well, the addition of a new staff. During this fiscal year there has been a complete turnover of professional staff.

For over one-third of the year, the administrative assistant, Minionette Jolly, functioned as the only professional staff member due to the resignation of the coordinator last spring and other staff members this past fall. Mini did a great job holding the place together and she continues to handle all the payroll and accounting functions efficiently and effectively.

In December, Bradley Wilson was hired as the new coordinator of student media to advise the staffs of WKNC radio station, *Technician* newspaper, *Windhover* literary magazine, *Nubian Message* newspaper, Americana online literary magazine and Agromeck yearbook. He came to N.C. State from Kansas State University where he was an *assistant* professor, teaching classes in Web communication, editing, design and photojournalism. He is the co-author of a journalism textbook and editor of two national journalism publications and is a frequent speaker at national conferences and workshops.

To fill the gap in our technical services previously filled by Scott Fulton, Joel Ebel, a recent N.C. State graduate and employee of ResNet was hired. He oversees all the technical aspects of the student media operation, including everything from network administration to telephone service. Joel's expertise and experience on campus will help him serve the student media and all the tenants of Witherspoon effectively.

So, at the end of the school year, the operation consisted of three full-time staff members and approximately 150 student staff members. Clearly, this is not nearly enough professional staff. In the upcoming year, we'll be hiring a full-time business manager and advertising director whose primary responsibility will be training the ad staff and assisting with billing of advertisers/sponsors.

According to the results of the fall 2001 online survey of students involved in the student media operation

- 78 percent of students involved in the student media operation would like to see the advising staff give more advice on insuring media ethics;
- 68 percent of the media students would like more input to insure the quality of the media; and
- 73 percent would like to receive more objective criticism and advice.

V. Recommendations and concerns for the future

All of our initiatives during the next year center around three general philosophies:

- Meeting deadlines to provide timely information to the University community;
- Improving the quality of the publications; and
- Increasing the coverage of the student publications.

Our recommendations have been detailed in the assessment plan for next year as have our goals and mission. In short, those objectives are:

1. *Professionalism* • To create and maintain professionalism, integrity, and a code of ethics based on the First Amendment and socially acceptable journalistic practices as outlined by the Society for Professional Journalists and other professional media organizations.
2. *Technology* • To better utilize the technology to which students have access, including digital photography, increasing our online presence and increasing the presence of multi-media in the newsrooms.
3. *Coverage* • All media will increase their coverage and appeal to a wider variety of student groups.
4. *College journalism* • To increase our presence in the collegiate journalism community.
5. *Training* • To increase the number of training opportunities available to students locally.

6. *Income* • To decrease dependence on student fee monies for day-to-day production and to increase reliance on advertising/sponsorships.
7. *Advisory board* • To change the make-up of the board to include elected students that have no direct involvement in the media, students appointed by outside groups, media professionals and academics that can give true advice to the managers of the media. The new Student Media Advisory Board will be in place by the end of the 2003-2004 school year.
8. *Timeliness and planning* • To produce an annual (school year) calendar of deadlines and publication dates for all media while (1) educating students about the importance of meeting deadlines; (2) establishing consequences for failure to meet those deadline; and (3) learning how to plan so that major deadlines are broken into manageable pieces that can be delegated among staff members.
9. *Recruitment and campus awareness* • To recruit additional staff members with a diverse array of experience and backgrounds so that a variety of viewpoints on campus are naturally represented.

A few highlights of the specific objectives include

- Students working for the *Nubian Message* will demonstrate an increased awareness of the importance of doing interviews and using original material rather than material obtained from other sources as evidenced by the use of original and direct quotations obtained by staff writers. When non-original material must be used, the writer will obtain appropriate (and written) permissions from the copyright holder. Such written permissions will be kept on file in the office for inspection at any time.
- Student Media, under the guidance of the professional staff, will develop a five-year technology plan outlining the technology goals of the organization including everything from computers to servers to printers to telephones. Joel Ebel will write this plan by Aug. 15, 2003 and update it annually.
- The general manager and staff of the student-run radio station currently a schedule a variety of music, shows and talk radio that appeal to various demographic groups on campus. However, the number of listeners is very low. By the end of the 2003-2004 school year the general manager will coordinate a listener and student survey to see how the radio station can increase the number of listeners with recommendations for changes in programming made as a result.
- The editors and general manager will attend at least one national college media convention each year. Other students may attend by paying for their own travel, meals and hotel. After attending the convention, they will write a summary of each of the sessions they attended and what they learned. That summary will be distributed to each of their staff members and reviewed to ensure that the trips are learning experiences as well as networking opportunities.
- The administrative staff will maintain a database of media alumni, a database that will be started and available for online additions by the end of the summer in 2003. Contact with N.C. State media alumni will help us build a pool of people that can do training and otherwise support the media. Student media leaders will coordinate a reunion of media alumni in the spring of 2004.
- Additional full-time staff will be hired as the budget and needs of the media permit with the primary objective being to provide additional training for the student staff members. A full-time business manager will be hired in the spring of 2004 to assist in training the advertising/business staff as well as to assist with accounting needs.

Other goals related to specific budgetary needs, motivating staff members and increasing coverage. Perhaps the biggest challenge will be the culture change. Without an active adviser for the better part of last year, the students took charge and began handling physical plant, budgetary and equipment issues that should be coordinated by professional staff members in

conjunction with student staff members. Defining everyone's job descriptions, working to maintain accountability and oversight will be an ongoing challenge.

Budget

One of the biggest challenges any organization faces is staying within budget. At the beginning of this year, even obtaining accurate budget, income and expenditure information was difficult if not impossible. However, all of the student leaders came together to adopt a budget that reflects accurate income and expenditure projections. Over time, the media will increase reliance on advertising and sponsorships and decrease reliance on student fee money.

	<i>Income</i>	<i>Expenses</i>	<i>FY03 allocation</i>	<i>FY04</i>
Agromeck	\$ 75,248.00	\$ 75,248.00	11.32%	10.46%
Americana	\$ 9,728.00	\$ 9,723.92	2.05%	2.56%
Nubian Message	\$ 26,962.05	\$ 26,962.05	7.10%	6.80%
Technician	\$ 331,574.00	\$ 332,638.20	14.74%	11.73%
Windhover	\$ 30,400.00	\$ 30,400.00	8.16%	8.00%
WKNC	\$ 83,132.71	\$ 83,130.28	17.17%	11.99%
General Admin.	\$ 184,148.00	\$ 184,148.00	39.47%	48.46%
	\$ 741,192.76	\$ 742,250.45	100.01%	100.00%