

NCSU Student Media, Annual Report, 2009-2010

I. Programs:

Wolf TV

Perhaps the biggest change in our operation this year was the addition of Wolf TV, previously housed as part of Student Services (MSS), a unit of the Office of Information Technology (OIT). We spent the end of last year working to get everything settled including transfer of equipment and writing a mission statement.

Mission statement: Wolf TV will provide a variety of high-quality programming primarily by and for the students at North Carolina State University and will supplement the newspaper with instantaneous, broadcast coverage. Wolf TV will give students interested in broadcast media hands-on experience in creating new, informative and entertaining programming online and through a campus cable outlet. Students will have the final say over content and will uphold the highest standards of journalistic ethics.

Ryland Clark served as the station manager this year. While continuing to provide the Web site — ncsu.edu/wolftv — with content, he also worked with the *Technician* and other media outlets to provide video coverage.



In addition, we contracted with a designer to produce a new logo for the station that was printed on T-shirts for the staff and will become a critical part of the Web site to be finished this summer.

The Brick

Last year, Matthew Rust, assistant director of the First Year College, and Nancy Gustke, a visiting professor in history, approached the Student Media to take over *The Brick*, a publication that was started as part of academic classwork in 2007 and distributed to all incoming freshmen to help foster a sense of identify for the freshman class and to increase awareness of campus traditions.

Our students agreed to work with the First Year College on the project as a team effort. This year, the project moved forward with leadership from the First Year College, Cody Williams, assistant director of marketing and business relations for the Alumni Association, the *Agromeck* yearbook staff (Bryant Robbins), and Sam Dennis, a junior in biological sciences, and Chandler Thompson, a junior in economics, from Student Government. Using a model from the University of Florida and from the University of Nebraska, as well as others, we hope to make the publication more interactive, less expensive to produce and hope to make it a publication students will want to keep, not just visit once and discard.

The publication will cost about \$7,000 to print (down from more than \$10,000 of previous issues). We'll spend about \$2,000 in student payroll in production of the book, a natural extension of the freshmen directory the Student Media used to produce.

Career Center Job & Internship Guide

For three years, we have produced the University Career Center's *Job & Internship Guide*. It was coordinated by a student in the yearbook office who helped edit copy, designed the book and produced it all at no cost to the Career Center. The Student Media contracted with the same person who sold national advertising for the yearbook to sell ads for the *Guide*. Then we paid the student workers and split any additional revenue with the Career Center.

Because of a decline in national advertising, the book was printed on a lower budget this past year. So when an outside company came in promising the Career Center lots of money, the staff jumped on the opportunity. The Center staff will have to negotiate with local printers, coordinate the

design work and handle all the aspects of production that we had handled in the past. While this came as a surprise to us, it also was a loss to our student staff who looked forward to the partnership and to producing a quality product. It also meant a lost contact with potential advertisers.

Keeping campus informed/entertained

It continually goes without saying, but shouldn't, that the students in the NCSU Student Media are some of the hardest working and dedicated on campus. They don't just have "a season." Their season is all 12 months of the year. They can't just skip an issue because they have a test or family problems.

- The *Technician* published 155 issues and despite a decline in advertising revenue maintained a balanced but with \$255,379 in expenditures as of May 1 and \$260,675 in income. Income for the paper was budgeted to be \$359,034, down from last year's budget of \$381,645. Actual income was lower than anticipated due to a significant and largely unanticipated decline in campus advertising.

The *Technician* faced two major challenges this year. The first was an unsubstantiated story published online by Editor Ty Johnson. This followed concern from the Student Media Board of Directors about corrections not being published online at all or not consistently.

As documented in the minutes of the Student Media Board of Directors, Editor Ty Johnson published a story on the *Technician* Web site Aug. 28, "Legal Services Vice Chancellor Asked to Resign." The unsubstantiated story was inaccurate and Ty took the story down after several days when he received notice from Keith Nichols saying, "the story was false." Ty said no other staff members were consulted in the publication of the story. The Board required Ty to formally apologize to Chancellor Jim Woodward in writing and in person as well as to University attorneys David Drooz and MaryBeth Kurz and to NCSU spokesperson Keith Nichols and required him to develop a training for the entire staff that

includes all the steps that should have been taken.

The second challenge was when Editor Ty Johnson was suspended from his position as editor after the fall semester because he was no longer in compliance with University regulation 11.55.6. The Board did not terminate him from his position and he remained on staff in an entry-level position. The Board hired Kate Shefte, Lauren Blakely and Russell Witham to be co-editors. In the spring, initially no one applied by the first deadline to be editor. However five individuals applied by the second deadline, including three candidates who had not worked on staff. The Board hired Amanda Wilkins, a sophomore in horticulture, to be the editor for the following year.

- WKNC 88.1FM remained on the air 24/7/365. In addition, staff members, led by General Manager Mike Alson, created a new program, Fridays on the Lawn that brought in local groups to Harris Field to perform for the campus. WKNC staff also produced a very popular CD collection, “Hear Here,” of local band music, with Terpsikhore, Flying Tiger Sound and Kitchen Mastering. Every single copy of the CD containing 17 tracks of music from groups such as Lonnie Walker and The Rosebuds was distributed at WKNC events. Local Beer, Local Band also continued to be a popular event, drawing hundreds of people to hear local bands perform at Tir-na-nog downtown every Thursday.
- The *Agromeck* yearbook, led by Bryant Robbins in the fall and Michele Chandler in the spring, came out two days early in April using a new plan for distribution to graduating seniors. Staff members distributed all 1,000 copies of the 344-page book that were printed. The staff included 567 senior portraits, up from 282 last year, because every senior who got a senior portrait taken got a free yearbook. This proved to be a positive marketing strategy. The NCSU Bookstore continued to sell books and pre-sales were completed online using myyearbooksales.com.

Bryant was suspended from his position as editor after the fall semester because he was no longer in compliance with University regulation 11.55.6. The Board hired Michele

Chandler to be the editor. The staff continued right on with little interruption and met all deadlines but the final deadline which they missed by a week but which resulted in no delay of book delivery.

- The *Windhover* literary and arts magazine, led by Helen Dear, editor, was distributed on time — all 2,500 copies. As of Jan. 11, the staff had 655 total submissions: literary — 195; visual — 446; audio — 14. The magazine used online submissions entirely this year and posted material as it was received online at ncsu.edu/windhover. Still completely reliant on fees, the magazine needs to continue to look for other funding sources.
- The *Nubian Message* came out with 21 of the 25 issues planned. Led by Demi Olubanwo, the biggest challenge the paper continued to face was simply getting a paper out. The staff had almost no advertising revenue and produced several four-page issues because of lack of content. The staff didn't produce any issues in March.
- The business office led by Laura Frey as business office manager, and Charlie Weinfeld, sold more than \$300,000 worth of advertising and donor announcements by year's end.

II. Compact Plan:

- *Recruitment and Retention:* In 2006 more 230 people signed up as interested in working for the media; that was up to 273 in 2007 and up to 382 in 2008. This year, the number of new recruits was up significantly to 399. We reached 240 freshmen during New Student Orientation alone. Overall, 772 unique contacts were made with 399 students (up from 709 contacts in 2008, 481 contacts in 2007 and 304 contacts in 2006). We developed several recommendations as a result of our recruitment/retention efforts all posted online at http://ncsu.edu/sma/board/drop2009-2010-minutes/recruitment_f09/. The primary recommendation was to have a student staff member who has, as part of their paid job description, handling initial contacts of students and then delegating subsequent contacts to the student leaders. Of the people who joined staff in the fall semester, Student Media

retained 33 individuals, down from 40 in 2008 and 44 in 2007. Thirteen students recruited during our 2008 efforts are still on staff – six at WKNC, four with *Technician*, two with *Nubian Message* and one in the business office. Eleven students recruited during our 2007 efforts are still on staff – five at WKNC, four at *Technician* and one each at *Agromeck* and *Nubian Message*.

- **Credibility:** Our graduate student, Meagan Williford, a master's degree candidate in English, surveyed every individual used as a source in the paper every day, inviting them to participate in the online survey by e-mail — 236 individuals participated. The most interesting findings indicated that the individuals used as sources indicated the paper was fair and balanced (87 percent rated very fair or fair). However, they cited “quotations wrong” as the top type of error, almost triple any other type of error cited. In a second question regarding errors, “My quotes were distorted or out of context” was the top type of error present with 26 percent reporting some error in their quotations and 7.8 percent indicating that error was major. Overall, the individuals used as sources indicated the training of reporters needed to be an area of emphasis as did editing when compared to coverage or writing.
- **Deadlines:** The *Technician* continued to set making deadline 80 percent of the time as an acceptable goal with 3.00 sources/story. In the fall semester, the staff met deadline 51 percent of the time, down very significantly from the 77 percent over the last 15 semesters. They had an average of 3.12 sources per story. The staff averaged 10.6 stories/issue in the fall. In the spring semester, the staff met deadline 58 percent of the time. They had an average of 8.90 stories in the paper and 3.18 sources/story. The staff averaged 8.90 stories/issue in the spring with the decreasing story count being one of the most troubling aspects of the paper. We had an average of 1.71 students quoted per story and 16.5 percent of all sources were web sites. The staff produced a podcast in the fall 82 percent of the time. The podcast was discontinued in the spring.

- *Academic progress fall semester:* Of the 239 students working for us in the fall, we had 21 people (9 percent) with perfect 4.0 GPA for the semester and 16 (7 percent) with a 4.0 cumulative. There were 84 students (35 percent) with a GPA of 3.5 or greater. And there were 161 students (67 percent) with greater than a 3.0. The medium with the highest GPA was *Windhover*. There were three students with below a 2.00 cumulative (down from seven in the fall of 2008 and the fall of 2007). The staff of the *Nubian Message* had the lowest grade point average. The average cumulative GPA for all of our students was a 3.215 (range: 1.694-4.00). The average semester GPA for all our students was 3.146 (range: 0.20 – 4.00).
- Academic progress spring semester: Of the 256 students working for Student Media in the spring 2010 semester, we had 23 people (9 percent) with a perfect 4.000 semester GPA and 12 (5 percent) with a 4.000 cumulative GPA. There were 87 students (34 percent) with a cumulative GPA of 3.500 or greater and 167 students (65 percent) with a cumulative GPA of 3.000 or greater. The medium with the highest cumulative and semester GPAs was *Windhover*, followed by *Agromeck* in both categories. The staffs of *Nubian Message* and *Wolf TV* had the lowest cumulative and semester GPAs. There were four students with below a 2.000 cumulative GPA (up from three students in fall 2009). The average cumulative GPA for all our students was 3.207 (range: 1.574-4.000). The average semester GPA for all our students was 3.176 (range: 0.000-4.000).

III. Diversity: The *Technician* staff received a Diversity Award from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion in recognition of the staff's work with Time Out for Diversity published online. This methodology has been presented at national conventions and is now being used by other college media outlets to examine their operation.

We continue to have a young staff but the percentage of staff members this past fall mirrored the percentages from previous semesters. However, the percentage of students joining staff with experience prior to coming to work for the *Technician* dropped to 48 percent, the lowest percentage in

three years (from 60 percent in 2007). Increased emphasis on high-school recruitment seems to be working.

The *Technician* staff was female dominated this year, a change from past years and not reflective of the campus. Sources in the paper (especially sports) still tend to be predominantly male and Caucasian, not reflective of campus. Sources from CALS, Management and Engineering were still significantly under-represented although Engineering made gains.

IV. Staff:

- *North Carolina College Media Association:* Students received 18 individual awards from the third annual NCCMA convention at Elon. In addition, the *Agromeck* yearbook took first place best of show, the technicianonline.com tied for first place with the dailytarheel.com for online news best of show. *Windhover* placed second in best of show and the *Technician* placed third in large schools. Bradley Wilson continued to serve as the chair of the steering committee that organized the statewide convention and, for the first year, statewide collegiate contests.
- *Society for Collegiate Journalists:* Students received 14 individual awards from SCJ and *Windhover* received the top award for “overall excellence.” In addition, SCJ named Martha Collins its adviser of the year. Active members of this collegiate honor society included Susannah Brinkley, president; May Chung, vice president; Kathryn Glaser, treasurer; Alison Harman and Kieran Moreira, historians; and Megan Myers, secretary along with members Mike Alston, Tommy Anderson, Alanna Howard, Jeniece Jamison, David Mabe, Lucia Moser, Jessica Neville, Lauren Quick, Nick Tran, Russell Witham, Joe Wright, Helen Dear, Meredith Faggart, Saja Hindi, Tim O’Brien and Luis Zapata.
- *Associated Collegiate Press:* The 2008 yearbook edited by Mary Beth Hamrick received a national Pacemaker, only the third one the yearbook has one (2004 and 2007). In national individual competitions, John Cooper Elias and Bryant Robbins placed first for yearbook/magazine page/spread and Ana Andruzzi and Biko Tushinde placed third for newspaper page one. In the ACP best of show at the fall convention in Austin, Texas, *Windhover* 2009 edited

by Joe Wright, *Agromeck* 2009 edited by John Cooper Elias, and the *Technician* podcast “88.1 Seconds of Technician” by Graham Bruns and Stephen Kinane all placed second. The new student supplement of the *Technician* edited by John Cooper Elias placed third in best of show.

- *Columbia Scholastic Press Association*: The 2009 book edited by John Cooper Elias received a Gold Crown national award, only the second one the book has received (2009). In addition, CSPA awarded Bradley Wilson a Gold Key for “outstanding devotion to the cause of the school press, encouragement to the student editors in their several endeavors, service above and beyond the call of delegated duty and leadership in the field of education.”

V. Recommendations and concerns for the future.

- The University regulation 11.55.6 regarding student academic progress took a toll this year. Still, it is the right regulation to have in place to hold our students accountable for being here to get a degree first and to participate in other activities second. Tracking the academic progress of our student leaders and developing work plans takes a considerable amount of time and this is something that will have to be monitored as the regulation evolves.
- The top concern cited in a national survey by college media advisers was expectations exceeding reality of student leaders. NCSU mirrors this concern. Especially with the *Technician* editor, we need to reconsider the expectations placed on this person. We’ve had discussions this year about allowing the *Technician* editor to take a reduced course-load or to count their time as editor for a lengthy internship or co-op type program. Although a student committee formed this year made no such recommendations, indeed leaving the job description largely unchanged, the expectations placed on our top student leaders need to be examined in detail and in conjunction with our academic expectations.
- We made little to no progress this year on the development of an editorial leadership course to be required of all student leaders. Initially as a special projects course under Communication, this

course will give us a chance to teach leadership skills as well as give the students a foundation in law, ethics and the fundamentals of media. But we've got to find the right partner that will help us get the course on the books.

- Staff salaries and hierarchy within Student Affairs has become more of an issue due to the state budget problems. We have not been able to pay our professional staff commensurate with the market or our peer groups.