

Fall 2008 Technician Advisory Board & Nubian Message Advisory Board

MEMBERS

- **Patrick Clarke**, designer, 96 Studios; former Technician managing editor, patrick@96studios.com
- **Ben McNeely**, reporter, Concord Independent Tribune, former Technician managing editor, bmcneely@independenttribune.com
- **Jose Picart**, vice provost for diversity and African-American affairs, jose_picart@ncsu.edu
- **Anna Rzewnicki**, director of communications, College of Management, anna_rzewnicki@ncsu.edu
- **Andrew Williams**, freshman, electrical engineering, anwilli5@ncsu.edu
- **Spencer Williams**, freshman, electrical engineering, sewill10@ncsu.edu
- **Nancy Wykle**, managing editor, Durham Herald-Sun, nwykle@heraldsun.com
- **Melody Guyton**, copy editor, the Durham Herald-Sun, mguyton@heraldsun.com
- **Tracey Ray**, director of the Department of Multicultural Student Affairs and director of the Office of African-American Student Affairs at NCSU, tracey_ray@ncsu.edu
- **Dick J. Reavis** assistant professor teaching journalism in the English department at NCSU, dick_reavis@ncsu.edu

MET JOINTLY AT 7 P.M., DEC. 2, 2008

PRESENT: Patrick Clarke, Andrew Williams, Spencer Williams, Nancy Wykle, Tracy Ray, Dick Reavis, Ty Johnson, Saja Hindi, Derek Medlin, Demi Olubanwo

Lesson 1: Schedule all of next year's meetings before the end of this year.

Dick started by saying that the Technician staff should have copy editors and that the Nubian Message staff should take ENG214 and ENG215.

Spencer said he was impressed with the photography. He said the stories were well rounded. He enjoyed the graphics last year and missed those this year. He said the paper got a little busy at times, especially with ads.

Patrick said he's noticed a lot more consistency in the Technician over the course of the year. He said he was happy to see fewer graphics especially when they weren't well-researched and were unexplained. Have seen, and need to see, more pictures that go with stories on the front page. He said he was "blown away" by the amount of quality photography in the Nubian Message. He said the Nubian Message should work on avoiding small jumps and providing content, not just filling space. He also said he was glad to see different types of coverage, branching out.

Andrew said he could easily find the Technician on Centennial Campus but couldn't easily find the Nubian Message. We agreed that we need to just leave some copies in various student areas in buildings. Drop boxes aren't the answer. He also said he liked the broad range of coverage in the Nubian Message. He particularly liked any science coverage in both

publications. He said the layout of the Technician looks good but that ads sometimes make page look cluttered.

Tracey said she especially liked the most recent edition of the Nubian Message, a four-color issue devoted solely to Pan-African Week. A lot of effort was put into that. She also appreciated the more diverse coverage, including Native-American coverage which she said is something that should continue. Diversity in coverage helped to facilitate readership. She said she only heard positive things. Would like to find some competition for the Nubian Message to compete in. Keisha has done a great job. Build a bigger staff so it's not such a load on a few individuals. Build leadership. Identify successors. Distribute something at the summer symposium.

Nancy said she was really impressed with all facets of the Nubian Message, especially photography and design. Need to polish writing. Really good job with features. Need more hard-hitting news. In a short discussion about the racial incidents on campus, Keisha said they tried to cover it from different angles. Everyone agreed this was the right thing to do. Nancy suggested the publication explore issues, repercussions and that, as a weekly publication, they should use time to their advantage.

Nancy said the Technician staff has had "a good run." Spend time with stories asking "What is news?" "Why should I care?" For example, in stories about budget cuts, "What does it really mean?" She said the organization was great from cover to cover. She said she loved the teasers, but we need to work on design. Tease online material. Shows good planning.

Tracey suggested that the Technician staff find some way to promote people subscribing to the online edition.

Demi said he was proud that the Nubian Message consistently filled up the back page with content. The photos were good. They did more photo stories. He also liked the range of topics covered. He liked the student spotlights. Need to do more with Web, including video, etc.

Derek focused on staffing issues although he said the staff has been more consistent lately. The spring semester has been great. Dreier has done a good job of being a leader on the photography staff. It shows in the paper. Planning should be something to focus on. The "Focused" section was the most trouble. "These shouldn't be stories that we write the day of." We've known the topics for weeks. Also need to work on diversity of sources in that section.

Saja said they did a lot more with Web particularly with national elections and Student Government elections. Some partnerships with Wolf TV. She said features split per day has helped. "What it really should mean is that you have a whole week to plan."

Dick said there were two issues that he heard covered too much: the issue with the Free-Expression Tunnel and the Renaissance Festival.

Saja said they need to work to attract a more diverse staff. They have visited various intro classes across campus including journalism classes. Need to do that earlier in the year and more often. Derek said they need to consistently go out and recruit.

Keisha said she had three people who copy edit. She said she knew she had weaknesses in terms of her ability to copyedit, so she hired people who could fill in those gaps. Saja said that for the Technician, having a copydesk chief would have helped. Put someone in that position and train them. Patrick said, "The more eyes that see the page, the better." Nancy suggested that staff members not hesitate to send proofs of pages off to people who can help them before they're printed. And don't hesitate to use various resources to get answers to questions you don't know the answers to. She also said she stress to reporters that if they "want to get it right in the paper, they better get it right on the front end." Copyediting, she said, is a reporter's responsibility. Dick said that at a student newspaper the copy editor has to have more status because the quality of the writing isn't that good.

In a discussion about copyright issues, Patrick said the staff shouldn't just pay a staff member to surf the Web. Reporters should not be e-mailing primary sources. Reporters need to talk to people face to face. We're not just paying writers, we're paying reporters. Reporters need to become familiar with their sources. Use the Web for story ideas and background research.

Focus one aspect of training on the basics of reporting.

Dick pointed out that the Web is the library for current students. Don't use the Web in major stories except maybe breaking news when there is no other way to get the story. Make sure you have more than one source.

The group concluded that

- It was not OK to include Web sites as sources in major stories of any kind except when, in a breaking news situation, that another media outlet is reporting something, that becomes the story. For example: "WRAL today reported that..." All efforts should be made to verify with independent sources and all of those efforts should be documented even if people refuse comment.
- In briefs and alternative copy, using small pieces of content from outside sources with the proper attribution is acceptable. The best situation would be to create a small teaser the provide the teaser with a link to the original content online on technicianonline.com. For example, on the Web site, we could have a "Nanobytes" section online. That could be updated daily with releveant teasers that contain links to the full content regardless of the source. In all cases, the teasers would be written by our reporters, never just copying and pasting.
- If the staff chose to use copy not reported/written by staff members, they would have to pay for a wire service of some kind.
- [CLICK HERE](#) for approved procedure regarding use of non-staff content.

Calendar online — students like list of events in the paper.

Andrew pointed out that there is so much science stuff going on on this campus, stuff that is equally newsworthy to stuff taking place elsewhere, that the reporting of science issues can always find stories on this campus. He acknowledged that it might take more time but would be more relevant to the students. Write about all the innovation on campus. Link it to national and international news. For example, with story about Saturn, go over to astronomy or astrophysics

department and find local relevance. Publish how research at NCSU is having an impact on the outside world. Face-to-face reporting is the key. It all goes back to having adequate staff.

In closing, Derek said the publications were here to inform the campus. "We need to." Nancy said it was a great year with some very difficult stories. Spencer said these were great papers. Don't cut off stories outside the University. "Don't die." Patrick said students that are ending their terms but not graduating should stay involved. Make the paper better. Next year's staff should try to "one up" this year's staff. Andrew said he loved the polls and layout. Do more to direct people to the Web site

Notes from Melody. Melody was unable to attend. She sent the following notes.

1. We may want to look at the style of "African American." This can be tricky because when referring to a person (if using AP Style), you'd say, "She's an African American." But when you're using the term to describe a noun (when used directly before the noun), it will be hyphenated. For example, "The African-American population of the town is 4,000." If this agrees with NCSU Student Media style, this means you'll need to rethink the line below your flag – it would become "SENTINEL OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY AT NC STATE SINCE 1992"
2. Pay special attention to cutlines and headlines since the laziest of your readers will only read these. For example, a comma is missing from the cutline of "A Lesson from the Past" in the April 1 paper. (...Tuskegee Airmen with a fellow member, Mr. Harold Webb.) Also, on page 8 of the same paper, I noticed that the top right photo states that Isaac Owolabi II performed a song in two languages. Which two languages? Always make sure you're not leaving your reader with unanswered questions.
3. Names of movies, plays and books should be in quotation marks. In the Tuskegee story, the fourth paragraph should read "...has seen the movie "The Tuskegee Airmen," a movie ...". I noticed that in the review of "Milk," the movie's title was italicized, which – if it is your style – you should remember to use consistently.
4. I would consider finding a way to better set off opinion pages from news pages. Many readers have a difficult time separating newspaper editorial pages from news pages, even when they're clearly marked, but with "Opinions" in relatively small type in the corner of the page of the Nubian, it could become even easier for readers to confuse the two sections. I might think about centering and enlarging the "Opinions" header. It would also help to use a ragged-right style for the columns or column sigs to set them apart from news stories. I did notice the box stating that the opinions of the columnists don't reflect the Nubian staff, and I think that's definitely a step in the right direction!
5. A small style issue: Titles are only capitalized if they go directly before a name, without a comma, and remember that not ALL titles are capitalized, even when they're directly before a name. For example, "... the Airmen were visited by the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt." "First lady" should never be capitalized – I know that's confusing, but it's just the way it is! But let's pretend it says "the Airmen were visited by the President, Franklin D. Roosevelt." – "president" should definitely be capitalized when used directly before a name, but it's not being used that way here. It should read either "the Airmen were visited by President Franklin D. Roosevelt," or "the Airmen were visited by the president, Franklin D. Roosevelt." This might be confusing, so feel free to e-mail me with questions!

Some praise:

- I really like the use of pullquotes to draw in readers. That's a really good way to add interest when photos aren't an option. I also like the way you broke up the "Summer on the horizon" story on page 6 of the March 25 paper. For a fun story like this, it's nice to do something different.
- I was especially impressed with the April 8 paper. You all really made the most of your color pages, with beautiful photographs and attractive design.

MET JOINTLY AT 7 P.M., DEC. 2, 2008

PRESENT: John Cooper Elias, Saja Hindi, Derek Medlin, Ben McNeely, Patrick Clarke, Andrew Williams, Spencer Williams, Tracey Ray, Alison Harman, Dick Reavis, Bradley Wilson

Lesson 1: Schedule meeting well in advance so people can plan for it.

Spencer started off by talking about coverage in the Technician. He said he thought it was pretty strong on main campus, but needed to extend more across Western to Centennial Campus. He said he really liked election coverage. He thought the layouts were well organized but that there weren't as many "cool, neat graphics" as in the past. He said that he thought the paper was moving in the right direction, especially with coverage of engineering.

He suggested developing a relationship with department heads. There is tons of stuff going on in engineering, including women in engineering. The new FREEDOM center, a renewable energy center, \$50 million. No one at the table knew any more than that, but it seemed a good story worth looking into.

Andrew suggested covering the senior design projects this Thursday (Dec. 4) from noon – 4 p.m.

Andrew said he liked the Web site, especially the sports page and the multimedia. He suggested making the main page more like the sports page, grouped by topic. He'd also like to see that time last updated on the blurbs that link to stories. He loves the calendar in the paper and would love to see that online.

Ben said the election page was really nice.

Tracey said in her tenure here, the Technician has often become a target during times of campus controversy. This didn't happen this time. Good job of keeping diversity expressed. She said she was glad to see the staff was doing something with the topic. She asked if there was discussion regarding whether or not to print the forum letter regarding "What if I had written 'Shoot Oblinger in the head?'" Tracey said she had heard a few concerns about the Technician's choice to print it. Saja said not really, but that there was a lot of debate about whether or not to use the photo. They did put the photo of the Free Expression Tunnel graphic online for comment, but didn't link it from the Home Page, so probably no one knew it was there.

She also suggested the staff be careful of terminology. People are taking language from the incident and using it inappropriately. Terms like racial slur.

Patrick said he was really impressed with the forward progress of the Nubian Message. Content and coverage are both improving. Tons of in-house photography.

Ben said he noted the staff was really hitting a lot of big stuff, even University-wide news.

Dick said he liked how the Nubian Message continued to be a little on the editorial side, not right down the middle like the Technician tries to be.

Patrick said the Nubian Message is making progress; they seem to be taking a lot of pride in their work. He said there are days when he doesn't see pride in the work the Technician produces. He said the Technician should not sell itself short on big packages. "If you don't take pride in your work, why are you here?"

He said it would be good to write about Raleigh 2030, a planning meeting for the entire region. This will have an impact on the entire University. "You guys need to be the ones that push for change."

Patrick reminded the staff of something one of his peers told him when he became managing editor: This might be the only time you get to be in charge of a publication. Enjoy it. Have fun. But use that power wisely.

Patrick said he would like to see more investigative, in-depth stuff. Tracey asked for clarification and asked if one example of what he meant was the N&O's coverage of Mary Easley's salary increase.

Patrick cited the example of a story Jon Page wrote about the football team escorts, the WolfPack Women. He "exposed them for what they were."

Ben said he thought it would be good if the Nubian Message and Technician joined forces to create a special issue on diversity. But discuss all facets of diversity: race, ethnicity, diversity of thought, gender issues. The two newspapers could take a real leadership position on campus.

Patrick said by covering such topics, you can, with a feature approach, bring up old topics but revisit them in a completely relevant way. Make it an issue for people to talk about.

Tracey expressed concern about the Nubian Message's coverage of this "hot topic." The Nubian Message hasn't touched it much. She said the staff members might be concerned about the impression students have of the paper. They're trying to avoid controversy. Some writers might be afraid to cover the case.

Ben said they definitely need to address the fear factor. People can be fearful. Of course the administration does not want to explore this. Explore the line between perception and reality. Sure diversity is a link on the NCSU Home Page, but what does that mean?

Tracey said the students who wrote the threats on the Free Expression Tunnel came from areas where what they wrote is commonplace. Talk to that cohort of people. There is no one on task force that can inform the committee members of that point of view.

Tracey said she'd also like to see the Nubian Message sell more ads and promote sale of photos more.

Patrick said this is a great opportunity for the Technician to take a leadership role. How can the Technician get everyone to the table?

Ben said the staff members need to find out who these students are and should lobby them to talk. And don't stop. It's going to take planning, participation and "a helluva lot of maturity." He discussed maturity of coverage, maturity of content. "You're smart, intelligent people." He said such mature discussions will force the discussion.

Patrick said he would focus on maturity of decision making.

Spencer said he thought the idea of exploring the diversity issue more in-depth was good, but that the staff should wait until it's fresh on campus. [Maybe February, Black History Month]

Ben said to take that as a springboard: do more in-depth reporting. He also cited lack of coverage of women's sports. You should be covering women's sports just as much as football or men's basketball. He said baseball coach Elliott Avant and women's basketball coach Kay Yow were some of the paper's strongest supporters. They're institutions at this University. He said sports coverage was the hallmark of the Technician. "Always has been, always will be." He suggested extending that breadth and depth to the rest of the University. "You've got breadth. Now work on depth. Cover all sports." Depth of coverage is lacking.

Dick Reavis said that if he were Saja, his very first goal would be to get paper copyedited. "I would do anything to make that happen."

Ben: "This goes to maturity issue."

Dick said he'd never noticed that the Technician was a "crusading" paper. It's modeled on the Associated Press, balanced and objective. It should be more like the Nubian Message — speak for the students. Go out of your way to protest tuition hikes. Don't be timid.

The problem seems to be that the Technician is understaffed. It always has been understaffed, underedited. The copyediting is the one that worries me the most.

Spencer said the errors disrupt him when he's reading the paper. He cited an example of a jumpline being wrong.

Patrick said the staff needs to take all errors seriously. If you have someone who blows off a mistake, you're better off without them. You have to take this job personally. You have to care about what you're spending all this time doing.

Dick Reavis asked why understaffing was an issue. Money was brought up. Sports was the exception because some sports reporters got perks of going to game.

Patrick said the issue was retention. People are stretched too thin. Ben said retention is always an issue.

Ben asked if the staff had a beat system. Saja said the sports staff did. The news staff has a few beats, but not enough writers.

Patrick said his challenge to the staff would be that they have to WANT to say. They need clips. But writing hard-hitting, in-depth reporting should be their reward.

Dick asked, "If all this works, why didn't it work before?"

Ben said he didn't think the staff was hard-hitting enough. They need more passion.

Dick said he didn't think he had more than two or three people in his class who could do an in-depth piece.

Derek said "The core of the staff cares. We wouldn't be up there if we didn't."

Dick said, indeed the paper becomes a cult of self sacrifice resulting in lower academic performance but they do get the clips.

Coop said he observed that the staff doesn't come together enough. They don't get passionate as a group enough. Everybody needs to come all together.

Dick went back to election coverage and how he liked localization of a national issue. He said today, the page one story should have been the recession. Take a national issue and localize it. The purpose of the University is to prepare students for life. The Technician should be the bridge. The students read the Technician more than they consume any other media. He also suggested using wire copy to fill holes instead of running bad stories. "Hold it over the heads of bad reporters."

Spencer said the staff can find solid writers. Just target another audience, not just CHASS.

Patrick suggested finding people who know stuff, those smart people in whatever college they happen to be in. Ben suggested getting a network of freelancers. Get beat reports who just cover one thing, then let them go.

Patrick said in his discussions with other editors around the country, paying every staff member for entry-level work was the exception. "You're publishing their work. That is reward number one." Use a volunteer trial period to figure out who's gonna be around. Make people earn the pay. He said when he joined staff, moving up from an entry-level reporter showed that the staff trusted him. They gave me more responsibility.

Dick said the staff needs to be more in touch with the faculty to find out issues of importance to the students. There is a distrust of the competence of the student newspaper. Always has been there, Ben said. Patrick said reporters should always ask, "Who cares?"

Dick also discussed coverage of Student Government. Most students don't believe in Student Government. Technician always treats it with a straight face. No sense of humor. "Why are you putting in this BS?"

Patrick said he thought it was because they were right next door. Ben said it was an incestuous relationship. Derek said it was a working friendship. Saja said maybe they could make an effort to use less SG jargon.