AAJA National Advisory Board Meeting - Fall 2017
December 15, 2017

At 1:49 p.m., Yvonne Leow called the meeting to order.

Roll Call:

**Officers present:** Yvonne Leow, Pia Sarkar, Michelle Lee, Ramy Inocencio

**Officers absent:** Nicole Dungca, Shawn Nicole Wong (for first half of meeting)

**Governing board members present:** Julia Chan, Matt Stevens, Julianne Chiaet, Esther Gim, Sameer Rao

**Staff present:** Executive director Kathy Chow; Accountant Glenn Sugihara

-Yvonne presented the president’s report. She talked about Catalyst and noted that the participants were all women entrepreneurs. There were other people of color besides Asian, including two black women (35 people applied, 10-15 were picked). Every project was aimed at serving communities of color and it was a testament to how this ecosystem can work. Maynard was there and we had good connections with Brian Lam, founder of Wirecutter. We reached out to organizations that never thought of AAJA before. As for improvements, the level of questioning was different for each speaker because of the different experience levels of the participants. Also, we could have spent more time marketing Catalyst. Paul and Kathy will try to streamline Catalyst and ELP and we will use funding from Democracy Fund.

-Yvonne also talked about the AAJA logo redesign. She said we need to think of the chapter logos and figure out earmarking the budget for chapter logos. Chapters have put their own stamp on the logos. Should national pay for it or the chapter? Yvonne said we should standardize the logos across the chapters. What would be ideal for national is to have consistent branding for all the chapters. Julia suggested we offer guidance that will ensure continuity--branding guidelines that can be communicated to the chapters. Julianne will reach out to Ben Pu, who worked on the New York chapter’s logo, and have him talk to Nicole.

-AAJA-Asia’s Digital N3 Con will be in May 25-27, 2018

-UNITY is looking to redistribute whatever money is left after it disbands. UNITY president Neil Justin and Yvonne would prefer to distribute the funds to another similar organization or project (like ProPublica or other journalists of color) versus dispersing the $80k back to the UNITY organizations.
-Paused the UNITY conversation in order to get an investment update from Josh Erickson and Rob Montierth of Merrill Lynch.

-Returned to the UNITY discussion. Kathy said she would rather have the money come back to us to use for journalists in need. We could set aside in a money market account. Every year, people scramble to come to our events. Pia said she would rather use the money toward something more concrete and immediate like ProPublica, given that UNITY turned out to be a bust. UNITY representatives will make the final decision. Neil is asking for each organization to come up with three ideas. Sameer said we should make sure that if we do give the money to other organizations, they should have a track record in issues of diversity. He said he would prefer to use the money for our members. Julianne said it’s better for us to have the money than not. Esther said it seems like too much work to find an organization or project to give it to. She would rather give it back to ELP/convention attendees. Michelle also wanted to give the money back to AAJA. Julia likened it to us asking for people to come fight for our carcass if we decide to give the money away to other organizations. Matt said AAJA is the most qualified to receive this money rather than other organizations.

-Kathy presented her report. She informed the board that AAJA Program Associate Daniel Garcia got into an accident and he’ll work halftime from 8:30 a.m. to noon while he recovers. On Jan. 7, he’ll talk to doctors to see when he can come back.
-She also told the board that AAJA received $200K from Democracy Fund to support 1) membership efforts for 2018; 2) help our enterprise entrepreneur programs as it relates to ELP/freelance data; 3) increase media access and media workshops. Grant was supposed to be for two years but now they want it to be 18 months so we will revise what we can do in 18 months.
-Kathy talked about Facebook’s offer to give each minority organization $250k. AAJA will get a $250K grant over five years, or $50k to be distributed each year to students. That would mean five students would get $10k each for a fellowship/scholarship to go to school. Facebook says the money must be awarded at our convention. It’s not clear whether we or Facebook will determine which students will get the money. AAJA would have to do the outreach; Facebook won’t pay for any administrative fees. It will be a Facebook fellowship. Kathy said AAJA would want Facebook to provide some administrative costs. Julia said she is in favor of more professional development. Remy said we should try to set the parameters via AAJA. Matt said he would hate for us to talk ourselves out of the money. Kathy said this money is coming but we’re not happy with how we’re getting it, and it’s a bigger issue that all the executive directors of the minority journalism organizations need to be in agreement. We need to go back to Facebook and set the parameters. Michelle said we can ask our younger members to spread the word to take pressure off our own staff. Pia said that even if Facebook doesn’t want to do the work, we can still ensure the money goes to the right people. Kathy said students don’t have to be a member of AAJA in order to apply.

-Shawn dialed into the meeting at 3:47 p.m.
Strategic Planning 2020: The board discussed strategic planning for 2020, where are we headed. Yvonne said we have to let go of what we’ve done in the past. Kathy said in 2009, when she stepped into the role as executive director, the board was working on a five-year plan, which turned into a three-year plan. There hasn’t been true continuity beyond the national staff. It’s the plus and minus in terms of growth. Every leader has his/her own vision. The new leader should at least try to build on one area that we’ve laid out in our collective vision to ensure continuity. Now we want to look out to at least two years.

-Yvonne said this will trickle down to the chapter level and motivate them. Kathy said we don’t really train our future leaders. Camp AAJA used to be held at Poynter with chapters sponsoring. The board discussed succession planning, where a past president stays on to train the new president and serves as an adviser. Good, model nonprofits still do that.

Brainstorming what we want to be by 2020:
-Membership
-Thought leader in diversity/equity/inclusion, especially on AAPI issues
-Digital Innovation
-Expand into AAJA-Asia

Julianne made a motion to recess at 5:40 p.m., Esther seconded. Everyone voted yes.

AAJA Governing Board meeting
December 16, 2017

At 9:48 a.m., Yvonne called the meeting to order.

Roll Call:

Officers present: Yvonne Leow, Pia Sarkar, Michelle Lee, Ramy Inocencio

Officers absent: Nicole Dungca, Shawn Nicole Wong (for part of the meeting)

Governing board members present: Julia Chan, Matt Stevens, Julianne Chiaet, Esther Gim, Sameer Rao

Staff present: Executive director Kathy Chow; Accountant Glenn Sugihara

-Strategic Plan 2020 Part II, Building and retaining membership: The board discussed the challenge of students and how it’s hard to get them to commit. Board members brainstormed ideas on how to bring more in and keep them, including more outreach to student media outlets, second and third tier journalism programs, as well as engaging professors and advisors. The board also discussed building AAJA’s editor members. Some ideas included offering up job candidates for editors in a position to hire or influence hiring; mini-salons for editors; linking up
editors with freelancers; becoming a resource for fellowship applicants for Knight, Nieman, etc as well as journalism leadership programs.

-Journalism Programs: ELP, Voices & JCamp presentation

Ramy said the mentorship program has seen great progress. As far as applications, there have been 160 mentees, 86 mentors and 40 matches so far. Regarding Voices, Ramy spoke with Maya and the big thing we have to do is vote on their budget. Voices is made up of 12-15 students and there’s talk of extending it to a Sunday to Sunday deal. There are fundraising challenges for Voices. They also want to have a reception at the convention, and include someone from the Asia chapter. How do we make sure they’re more intertwined with the convention so that they’re not so siloed off?

Yvonne talked about ELP. Paul Cheung is running it with Katie Nelson. It’s definitely changed a lot. Paul is looking for an eventual successor. We’re in the process of pitching to the Gates Foundation for a grant. There are a lot of different leadership programs. How do we create a database for all the graduates so that all these organizations are working together, sharing opportunities? Kathy said Democracy Fund really wants more collaborations.

The board talked about creating a collaborative pipeline between JCamp, Voices, ELP, Catalyst as well as with other journalism organizations like the Maynard Institute. The idea is to strengthen the five things we have going. Kathy noted that an organization is stronger when it can show it can collaborate with another group. Ramy said there is a small gap between JCamp and Voices but a much bigger gap between JCamp and ELP. Yvonne suggested that perhaps mentorship can help fill that gap. Can we create a C-suite mentorship program?

-2017 Convention: Kathy said we made a net profit from convention of $100k. We are providing $5k to Philadelphia (the chapter proceeds from convention). Michelle motioned to allocate $5k to the Philly chapter for the proceeds, Julia seconded. Everyone voted in favor (Shawn, Nicole absent)

-Treasurer’s Report: Ramy to lead the audit committee. Motion to approve draft budget, Matt motions, Esther seconds. Motion approved of the draft budget for 2018 (Nicole absent)

-SVP report: Affinity group. Michelle motions approval of all nine affinity groups contingent on them getting 50 current members as of Jan 15, 2018. Matt seconds. Everyone votes in favor (Nicole absent)

-MediaWatch: Pia talked about MediaWatch putting out a statement in light of ESPN's decision to reassign broadcaster Robert Lee in the days following the Charlottesville attack in late August. Michelle and Yvonne said they were glad we put out a statement, Yvonne said it could have been stronger. Matt said we were too slow and need to respond more quickly. Julia said she was glad we didn’t come out with something sooner because it would have allowed Lee to come out with his own. Pia said the MediaWatch committee needs to prioritize so that we know
how quickly to respond, even if it’s just the committee co-chairs, Yvonne and Kathy. Sameer said he didn’t think there was an issue of timing but he thought it was good to be deliberate. Yvonne says it should have been a national AAJA issue instead of MediaWatch issue because it wasn’t racially motivated. Giving ourselves 24 hours to come up with a response may be too long. Priority issues should be flagged as a code red so that we move faster. Sameer asked whether we should consider the motivation behind why the controversy arose, which were these right-wing sites stirring up trouble. Pia said we should have that information to help inform our response but we shouldn’t include it in our statement. Kathy said National was doing the triage so that members don’t get bombarded.

The board also discussed the decision to recognize the death of San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee. Pia expressed discomfort in recognizing a politician, even if the person is Asian, because it could indicate bias. Michelle said she was comfortable with the decision. Julia said there are instances that break the rules, but it does raise the question of how we treat others who pass away.

-Muslim American Task Force: Pia and Michelle named four co-directors, one lead and the others to oversee each of the subcommittees. We have to make sure AAJA stays close to MATF so they don’t defect.

-2018 Convention: Frank Bi joined the call to talk about convention planning. He said organizers are going to try to put in better protocols for moderators to keep conversation on point and on track. They want to focus on nuts and bolts of journalism, hot topics that pop up before the convention. They haven’t come up with a convention theme yet and will start brainstorming. They will make their theme announcement in January.

Frank also talked about how to bring the convention to members who can’t come to Houston. One idea is to stream some of the panels and find a way to monetize on it. Perhaps participants can pay a session rate. Yvonne said it’s also way to content market and she doesn’t think it will cannibalize it. She suggested we should give free access first. Kathy said she thinks it should be a nominal fee, like $20 just so there’s buy-in. Shawn asked whether we can get Zoom to sponsor this. She said she agrees that we shouldn’t charge because we don’t know what quality we can offer. Marketing it as a beta will manage expectations. Frank said we wanted to offset some of our costs but perhaps we can get a sponsor and then not have to charge. Frank will look into our options.

Sponsorships: Kathy said $70k has been raised so far. GM is not sponsoring us or anyone in 2018. GM had given us $5k to start and went as high as $100k in two years. Kathy is now talking to Nissan.

Silent auction: Kathy said we’re going to try to do half mobile and half paper. We’re trying to increase the opportunity to access. Esther volunteered to lead silent auction. Some items will be all paper and some will be all mobile. Kathy said we can review who would be the best provider for mobile.

Convention rates: Raising it by $25 for all levels except students. Matt asked whether we can set aside some of the rate hike to pay for speaker costs. Kathy said the hike would give us $12,000 extra, which would help us with our AV costs. We are also looking to raise our booth
rates. Michelle said we could bring back our “loyalty rates” (people who went to the convention five years in a row would get $25 off). Sameer motioned to increase registration rate and bring back loyalty rate, Michelle seconded. All voted in favor.

-Michelle motioned to go into closed session, Julia seconded. Meeting closed at 2:28 p.m. (Ramy absent, Shawn & Nicole remote)

-Julia moves to move out of closed session, Sameer seconds, out of closed session at 2:52 p.m. (Ramy and Nicole absent)

-2018 membership drive: Kathy said there had been huge shrinkage between 2013 and 2014 and we have been slowing building back up. (2013 was in NYC). Our largest declines have been in the largest chapters.

Chapter revamp: Michelle said Atlanta and Chicago are struggling, San Diego made a comeback, NYC is strong. She has discussed the possibility of merging chapters but merging two bad chapters won’t help; good chapters don’t want to merge with bad chapters because they don’t want to get anchored. Can we get the chapters to engage on Slack more? Kathy said the national staff split up to oversee regions and give them more targeted support. Matt asked whether we have the staff focus on the chapters in the regions that need the most help. Kathy said we can do both.

-National restructure: Yvonne said we need to empower the national office with strategic visioning. Kathy asked where’s the money coming from. It’s not enough to say we want to restructure. She said what she’d hate to do is lay off someone because we can’t support them. There is a level the staff has to be at before they get a bigger title. None of us wants to set up anyone to fail. Kathy said she outlined a research phase, with possible funding via Democracy Fund (after finishing the 18 months we’re already working with them) and Ford Foundation. Kathy said we want a grant to provide seed money based off a business plan that would allow us to hire for this position. Basically the one- to two-year grant would support the new position; it will take 18 months to get them off the ground. Kathy said we can cobble together money here and there but a grant would be the better route. Yvonne said this would be a more conservative, secure approach. Kathy said the position is $90k in theory but we’d have to get a feel for whether it’s a realistic number based on what the position demands, how it would be balanced with the Executive Director’s responsibilities.

-Net neutrality: Kathy said UNITY spoke on the issue on behalf of our communities eight years ago, specifically NAJA and rural communities with low economics. All the other journalistic associations were putting out statements on their social media except for AAJA. Kathy reached out to the others and asked if they would like to put out a joint statement. There’s still an opportunity on it. Yvonne said she don’t know that we need to put out a statement but perhaps we do webinars or workshops to discuss this issue. Kathy asked whether we can incorporate the issue into our media access workshops, in an attempt to raise awareness. Pia said for media access, it should be education, but if we’re making our position known to the government,
it should be as an issue of restricting information and we should make it very specific to the journalism mission point of view. Matt said net neutrality is such a political landmine that we need to be careful what message we are trying to convey.

-Freelance platform: Yvonne talked about creating a platform that generates revenue, that is purely digital. She said she thinks it’s an experiment worth performing. Julianna said she’s in favor but it’s going to be complicated. Matt said he thinks it’s good to offer to this part of our membership, in recognition of their needs. Yvonne said neither editors nor writers have a good system. It would be a way to post clips so editors can better assess talent. Michelle said that if it’s work that highlights our work/mission, then she sees the point. Yvonne said we want the platform to be open to journalists of color more broadly, not just AAJA. Julia asked that as an editor, why would I want to use this platform? It can conceptually be a resource. For the Washington Post, for instance, there’s quality control. Yvonne said some quality vetting should be part of that platform. Kathy said she wants to test it out with our AAJA freelancers but Yvonne thinks there might not be enough of them to support the platform and it would be better to have more people in the pool. Matt said perhaps we can get more AAPI writers who aren’t already in AAJA.

-New business: Asian Pacific Islander Month Theme. Kathy noted we are deficient in Asian male broadcasters and we are not recognizing men in our membership. Pia said that could make us sound tone deaf in light of the #metoo movement. Kathy suggested InspirAsian groundbreakers/trailblazers.

-Spring Board meeting: Proposed dates: February 23-25 or March 2-4

-Julia motioned to go into closed session, Pia seconded, all voted in favor (Shawn, Nicole, Ramy absent), 5 p.m.

-Michelle motioned to exit close session at 5:44 p.m., Julia seconded. All voted in favor. (Shawn, Nicole, Ramy absent)

-Julia motioned to adjourn, Pia seconded. All voted in favor (Shawn, Nicole, Ramy absent). The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.