AAJA Governing Board Meeting - Fall 2016
December 2, 2016
AAJA National Office, San Francisco, CA

Officers present: President Paul Cheung, VP of Broadcast Niala Boodhoo, Senior Vice President Michelle Lee, VP of Journalism Programs Yvonne Leow, Secretary Nicole Dungca

Officers absent: Treasurer Shawn Nicole Wong

Governing board members present: Lauren Hardie, Julianne Chiaet, Matt Stevens, Esther Gim

Staff present: Executive Director Kathy Chow, Consultant Justin Seiter, Treasurer Glenn Sugihara

Others present: incoming officers Ramy Inocencio and Pia Sarkar

At 1:39 p.m., Nicole called the meeting to order. Paul started with the president’s report and talked about hoping to keep momentum going.

Yvonne said that Paul has laid groundwork to keep AAJA growing. She said she can’t thank him enough for leadership. She said that the board is very young, and that it’s telling and she’s excited for the future. She said she’s helping to shape narrative strategy at Sequoia Capital.

Paul said selling the president is as important as selling AAJA, because people always ask.

Kathy started with national office report, and said Justin was promoted to program coordinator. He’ll be taking on more responsibilities, assisting in fundraising and looking at how to make programs profitable and sustainable. Patricia, a recent Berkeley grad from media studies, will also be hired in January. She has been working as a consultant, and has a background in broadcast and print. She will be working on News Desert program, which will be called the Criminal Justice project. She will also work on convention, and will be go-to person for website.

She talked about the career center, which is another revenue opportunity. The budgeted goal is about 40k. She says we might hit the goal, and we’ve rolled out a new pricing model to lock in ads more.

She said we’re tracking social media now. We added Instagram. We’re looking at sister organizations to see what their social media presence is. We need to build up our presence more.

She talked about new ELP Boot Camp, which Nicole and Julieanne participated in. Julieanne said it was very specific for certain people. She said there was a woman’s leadership salon. There weren’t too many options, and some weren’t relevant to her. She is happy with where she is, but there wasn’t as much for people who did not want a promotion right away. She said she wasn’t sure what to expect and she wanted to see what it was about -- she said she wanted more things to work harder as a journalist and inspired.

Julieann said she doesn’t think it would make her want to do ELP. She said she didn’t feel like she learned anything personally, but the women’s leadership forum was helpful. She said it could help five years from now. She works at a company that’s not a journalism company, so it wasn’t particularly relevant to her. She said she’s focusing on journalism, but wasn’t in the position to get promoted.
Yvonne said she went to leadership sessions outside ELP, and thinks the feedback is valuable. She said she should assess expectations for the boot camp. Without adjusting, there will be a level of disappointment. You wouldn’t have the structure or hierarchy, you need a whole different set of skills.

Paul said the genesis of boot camp was part of commitment to a grant from the Knight Foundation.

Esther asked about the plan for next year, but Paul said he doesn’t know yet. Kathy noted that part of the grant would give them a business consultant to evaluate the programs. She said we will look to implement the recommendations after choosing a consultant.

Kathy also talked about the Criminal Justice project, which partnered with the University of Santa Fe, the Associated Press, and the Santa Fe New Mexican. AP was a subgrantee and a distribution channel, and AP’s Mary Hudetz was dedicated to the project. She said they were in the process of hiring an editor.

Niala made a motion to approve summer board meeting minutes. Esther seconded. All present approved.

Justin gave a presentation about Vegas convention data, which showed that attendance was down, at 701 registrations. There was a decrease in full paid members, but an increase in on-site registration. He also said there was an increase in the overall amount of workshops, and that many wanted to go to expert/advanced career sessions, and those that talked about diversity in political journalism. The AARP and Nielsen-sponsored workshops were less well-attended.

Justin said there were 28 sponsors, and about a quarter were exclusive. He said many sponsor said the career fair was problematic onsite because the market wasn’t as robust. Paul pointed out that it’s usually more convenient in larger markets, but also pointed out that it was an election and Olympic year.

Many sponsors said the career fair expo was problematic onsite because the market wasn’t robust. Paul said it’s more convenient in larger markets, but also pointed out that it was an election and Olympic year.

Justin talked about how we were able to secure about 60 percent more in silent auction items, with higher retail values. The switch to mobile bidding led to an 18 percent cut in revenue, with some expressing frustration in new systems.

Matt asked whether the new technology is worth it, and Yvonne said there is a transitional period with any technological change.

Justin also said the silent auction was still competing with other things last year, and overall drop in attendance in general was a factor. People were frustrated, but some were excited and said it was pretty easy. He said we did have a higher number of bidders that were not at convention.

After some questions from the board, Glenn said that several items were sent in last-minute and had to be raffled.

Matt said that he finds the room has a ceiling where they’ll be willing to spend.

Kathy switched topics to the new financial managers: Erickson/Merrill Lynch. She explained we had a new portfolio manager, and the board had voted to move the investments to them.
Glenn said it took a long time to formulate the investment policy, but that it was a good time to do that because the current adviser is retiring. Bruce, the new financial manager, has a Harvard Business School MBA.

Matt got back to the data from convention, and asked if convention speakers could get a full registration rather than a single day pass. Paul asked Matt to move that conversation to the next day, when they would talk about the 2017 convention.

Justin said they had gotten more visibility on social media with the #aaja16 hashtag, and Paul said the town hall helped raise their profile. Kathy said 100 media outlets came to do a report on town hall.

At about 3:07 p.m., Bruce Erickson, the new financial manager, introduced himself and handed out packets about their investment strategies and investment policy statements.

Kathy asked about customer service, and Bruce said he would let us know when they’re moving out of equities. In 2009, he said, they were holding their clients’ hands so that they knew what was going on during the downturn.

Ramy asked about what suggestions had looking ahead, and Bruce said that people put a disproportionate amount of pressure on the role of presidential administrations. He said the key thing is that they need to be globally diversified. Right now, we have about 60 percent invested in the US, and that it should be more balanced.

Yvonne asked whether global investments will increase risk. Bruce said it won’t and will mitigate volatility.

We took a break before Glenn discussed the treasurer’s report, since Shawn was not in attendance. He said we have over $2 million in assets, and that Atlanta wants national to take over accounting.

Paul said the chapters who have national handle accounting should take a look at services such as Venmo.

Glenn also said they are on track to meet their balanced budget in 2016.

For 2017, expecting to have balanced budget. 2017 will be challenging because big grants in previous years that will wrap up at the end of that year. Glenn said we’ll go over cash/accrual differences tomorrow.

Paul said we have a zero balanced budget, everything we make goes back into programs.

Yvonne said that we had about $315,000 budgeted out for convention, but this past convention was more expensive than that. Glenn said that different cities mean different expenses, and that they were still unsure what the expenses would be for wi-fi.

Paul said ELP would be conducted from March 28 to April 1 at CUNY. He said it will be a mix of business and soft skills negotiations, rather than just teaching how to move up to management. Paul will be the ELP co-director for the next year, and he said they’re bringing back the same trainers.
Paul said that new leaders will take over Voices. Yvonne said the JCamp and Voices directors are excited to work with Ramy.

Yvonne also said that as a broader goal, they want to create a more structured pipeline for leadership so that AAJA is part of your professional growth from high school into your career.

Paul said he doesn't want to temper ambition, but he said they need to deal with reality. Most people can accomplish one or two things a year. As officers, they need to manage responsibility and help them prioritize.

Paul talked about Media Watch and what their goals should be. Ramy asked if AAJA was planning to beef it up, and Yvonne said her plan is to make it much more vocal. But she also wanted to make sure that we weren’t getting lost in the mix, and try to contribute only when it’s valuable and impactful.

Kathy talked more about media institute, and how it’s about training non-profit leaders and business leaders to have stronger media skills. The first class was about 22 people.

Pia asked if we become advocates by training advocates, but Niala said it was similar to media literacy.

Michelle said she’d like to provide some sort of professional database: People are always looking for sources for Asian issues, or lobbyists of diverse backgrounds.

Paul pointed out that the role of the executive director and the president is to speak for AAJA, so media should always go through Kathy and Yvonne.

Michelle then gave background on restructuring: The Vice President of Journalism Programs and Vice President of Civic Engagement ties directly to the organization’s missions, and helped us evolve away from titles that included broadcast and print. The senior vice president oversees the affinity groups that could be formulated according to career interest. We had five affinity groups, and all five reapplied. These groups are supposed to contribute to programming.

Michelle said the reapplication process this year was burdensome. Justin keeps close tabs on the groups and alerts them when they fall below 50. Michelle said that the reapplication process could eventually go to every 2 years.

Paul said more of the affinity groups would help mirror chapters, and eventually members would belong to two different groups: affinity groups, and regional chapters.

Ramy said broadcasters were concerned about not having a voice with the new affinity group, and Paul said he should encourage them to organize and create an affinity group.

Kathy asked us to look through program recommendations, such as rebranding or creating a regional model for mentoring program. But Paul said it was difficult to have the bandwidth to formalize the mentoring program.

Matt said that mentorship is so intertwined with mission of AAJA that he would be wary of formalizing and creating a new group.
Kathy suggested something like “Mentorship Monday,” to highlight the new generation of AAJAers.

Paul said there were several good ideas, but that they need to focus on the strategy we need to implement.

Paul also said he wanted to have a policy handbook, outside of by-laws. He also explained the governing board responsibilities. He said the governing board isn’t supposed to ask staff directly about work, but go through Yvonne and Kathy. Paul also said he wanted to have a policy handbook.

Michelle asked about guidelines for people who treat staff members badly. Paul said we should pull them aside, tell them they’re a staff member and that they need to be treated appropriately. We can enforce our code of conduct.

When Matt asked about what to do when members ask about budgets, Kathy said governing board members can direct them to talk to Kathy or Yvonne. You can also refer people to minutes and public reports.

Paul directed all governing board members to the AAJA drive, which they should feel free to amend and copy edit.

Paul said that the policies are reviewed every odd year, and implemented in even years.

Yvonne then made a motion to recess the meeting at 6 p.m. Esther seconded the motion, and all those present approved.

The meeting recessed at 6 p.m.

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December 3, 2016
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Paul called the meeting to order at 10:11 a.m.

Officers present: President Paul Cheung, VP of Broadcast Niala Boodhoo, Senior Vice President Michelle Lee, VP of Journalism Programs Yvonne Leow, Secretary Nicole Dungca

Officers absent: Treasurer Shawn Nicole Wong

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Paul talked about the government funding policy, and said we are inconsistent with our policy on taking money from the US government. He mentioned that we don’t take sponsorships from agencies, but some buy booths at expos. He noted that the US Census Bureau bought a booth in 2009, and the Social Security Administration has bought a booth in the past.
Paul discussed the following recommendations:

1. No grants or sponsorship of government agencies in the department of defense or intelligence. This includes all advertising.
2. Acceptable government agencies include departments that deal with education or social services.
3. Only government grants to be used for the support of J Camp or VOICES will be allowed.
4. Local government officials are allowed to purchase advertising in chapter fundraising program booklets per chapter officer discretion. All terms of agreement for the purchase of these ads will have a disclaimer noting that AAJA does not endorse or support the candidate.
5. Government officials are not allowed to purchase advertising in national convention programs.

Kathy said there are also federal grants for small business owners, if we want to expand into digital media entrepreneurship. Right now, we’re restricted from even applying.

Paul also asked about making sure that local chapters also follows policies. Lauren also brought up Asia, which will have different standards because of the different forms of governments.

Kathy said that the CIA and the FBI have been at the conventions of NABJ and NAHJ. Kathy also noted that the Army has been at the convention, but a staff member never notified the board -- and nobody from the board or membership asked about why they were allowed to be there. Kathy said the policy has been inconsistent in the past.

Pia asked about the origins, and Paul said he assumed it was to disallow propaganda. Kathy said there have been debates on letting the census attend. Matt pointed out that some private companies, such as Toyota, could also be controversial, while Yvonne said reputations sometimes change.

Michelle said the ban makes sense with intelligence agencies and the department of defense. She said she doesn’t want certain agencies to get automatic approval, and that every government agency should be subject for review. She said she hoped local chapters would also follow that.

Yvonne asked about donors who used to work for the government, and Paul said individual donors are a different situation.

Michelle said that our members are a check on the government, but Yvonne said we’ve accepted similar sponsorships before and asked what the difference is. Pia asked if we have similar policies with corporations, and Ramy said that AAJA can always pull a sponsorship from an organization.

Kathy said we don’t seek government money, but they are constantly calling because they have access to other minority journalism organizations. Kathy said they have been consistent about saying our policy says we can’t accept it. She said her only concern is for finding funding specifically for entrepreneurship.

Pia said she would be open to avoiding a blanket policy because we could be cutting ourselves off from potentially good partnerships. She also noted that some corporate sponsorships could be even more objectionable.

Matt said he sees both sides, but that our fundamental mission should be to pay attention to journalists.
Paul said we need to review the fundraising policy and be very clear about our restrictions.

Michelle said we should always ask what these sponsorships bring our members. Is there an educational purpose, does it present any conflicts of interests, or are there any concerns in accepting the money?

Paul said he would want to present a guideline that is simple and clear, and more concrete.

Matt said he believes we came up with a good framework to rework the document. Sponsors or relationships should not have the potential to jeopardize our ability or core mission for Asian American journalists. Pia said we could also frame it positively: Sponsors need to support our core mission.

Nicole asked if Kathy would have brought up the census booth if we didn’t have the government policy. Kathy said she would have because of her own experience in journalism. Nicole said we should codify when such sponsorships need to come to the governing board, and Kathy pointed out that these policies will need to be understandable to future leaders.

Michelle also said that under no circumstances should local chapters or the national organization come off as endorsing a candidate. We decided that Nicole, Pia, Yvonne, Shawn, and Kathy would work on a fundraising policy by the end of the year.

Ramy took a moment to thank Niala, who is leaving.

Paul also talked about committees being a good way of engaging members: pointing out potential leaders and re-engaging previous leaders.

Niala talked about the auditing committee and why it exists. She said it shows why it’s important for chapters to send in their treasurer reports.

Kathy said that as a non-profit, we need a recent audit for each grant application. Audits are expensive, and we’ve been lucky to have clean audits.

Paul said Shawn is working on a chapter finance guide.

Paul said we’d also talk about chapter sustainability, membership engagement, and looking at who our members are.

Niala gave a report on her experience with National Association of Broadcasters, a lobbying organization that represents businesses of local broadcasts and stations. The organization met during the the NABJ/NAHJ conference. They talked about crisis management, perceptions and stereotypes, creating supportive environments and social media. She said they want to release these guidelines for local stations covering racially sensitive topics in January.

Yvonne asked how she thinks we should expand relationship. Niala said this was a good starting point. Kathy said the organization gave a $5,000 sponsorship to the convention.

Paul said Niala wanted to be the AAJA liaison to RTDNA, but she had to through the formal process. Archith, the current representative, would need to resign, the application would go to Yvonne, and then
Yvonne would recommend a person. The process was formalized several years ago: There is a two-year appointment, and representatives apply directly to the president and must be approved by the governing board.

Paul then talked about sponsorship for 2017. He said he’s going to assign different officers different sponsorships, and Kathy and Yvonne talked about obligations for officers. They said that Kathy is always the “closer,” and officers can’t offer a sponsor any benefits without clearing it with Kathy.

Niala and Paul said they also want to make a Camp AAJA for emerging chapter leaders, which trains people in fundraising and the by-laws.

Michelle talked about programming and the theme, which was Rise and Revolutionize. Sameer Rao and Juliana Reyes wanted to capture the DIY spirit of Philadelphia and the AAPI community. Frank Bi was helping to lead programming, and they wanted to keep programming tight because there were too many sessions the previous year. The programming committee is now 10 people. There were teams for entrepreneurship/leadership, race/identity, news gathering, and the news delivery process.

Michelle said she wanted to try an AAJA Story Slam.

Michelle said that they were able to tap the people who ran for VP of Journalism Programs. Emily and Hannah were also in programming, so we have good leaders in the pipeline.

Paul said he wanted to put on the silent auction again. He said he created a database of all the contacts already.

Pia asked what other associations do. Kathy said they do golf tournaments, nights out at clubs. She said a silent auction is universal and safe, and people can choose to socialize and not bid. Niala also said we have a good deal with Miller Coors.

Yvonne said those are good points, but also noted that new members like experiences: karaoke, a talent show, concerts, a storytelling event.

Kathy said we haven’t done a good job of showing that silent auction is a fundraiser for programs.

Esther said she wants to improve silent auction, rather than just taking it away.

Matt said we should brand silent auction around students. We could bring them in and have them go up and talk. Matt says trivia bowl is marketed around student funding.

Paul said we could rebrand karaoke so that it’s a Voices karaoke night, and possibly do both silent auction and karaoke. He said a 5k run could help ELP. Michelle pointed out that many won’t want to run a 5k after the sports task force party.

Niala said ONA had morning yoga and a raffle. Kathy said Nike women could partner, and Niala said it was a good networking opportunity.
Yvonne discussed a UNITY board meeting that she attend with Paul and Kathy. They talked about whether to continue since UNITY is now so different. They said they wanted to do a 2018 diversity summit.

Esther said she thought the broader picture sounded good if they could bring everyone along, but she worried about the execution.

Kathy said UNITY has until about 2019 to decide on what to do. Matt said he would be a big proponent of trying to get UNITY back together.

Paul asked how the group wanted Yvonne and Kathy to move forward with the conversation and Yvonne said they were talking to NAHJ to see if they would say yes to a partnership.

We went around the room and asked about the pros and cons of joining the diversity summit. The group decided that it would wait for a status update on Feb. 15 to see who is committed to the idea.

Kathy asked about media access and whether we should do it again. It’s a good way to get into the community, but attendance varies. Matt, who has helped as part of the LA chapter, said it can be a heavy lift, especially when done remotely.

Paul said his recommendation would be to go to Philadelphia and get a commitment by the spring board meeting. The board said it’s okay to drop the workshop if Philadelphia doesn’t want to hold it.

Justin talked about switching membership databases: Membersuite was on contract from April 1st, and we continually experienced issues and errors. Justin said customer service has been a problem, too.

He said the benefits are a new website, with everything integrated into a new platform.

Paul said that the new database is separate from the website redesign. It could be at the same time, but it doesn’t necessarily have to be.

Kathy said it would be $25,000 altogether with architect -- $18,000 for just nation builder. Every year it would be $12,000. Justin said we have to decide a web designer by Dec. 23.

Paul said the website redesign would probably roll out in the summer. Kathy said we needed to be honest about funding:

1) If we draw from our endowment in terms of allocating toward programs, we can redirect some funds back to administrative programs to pay for it.
2) We could use chapter dues, since this is an investment for the organization that benefits chapter. The money would be invested back into the system, or we could split it over two years.

Paul said we didn’t have to make the decision immediately, and asked Kathy to map out funding scenarios.

Paul then sunsetted the NationBuilder committee, and said we needed to form a new committee for the web redesign.
We took a break.

Glenn then talked about the audit subcommittee, which includes Shawn, Joz Wang, Niala, and Ameet Sachdev. The auditor hasn’t raised its fee in three years and they needed to sign a contract.

Niala made a motion to renew the contract with our auditor, and Julianne seconded the motion. All present voted yes.

Glenn asked Ramy if he wanted to join the investment committee. Paul asked if we needed to form a new investment for 2017. Paul also said we always need finance committee.

Yvonne talked about a goal of getting our membership numbers up to 1,600. Paul said that the peak number was 2,200 in 2008 or 2004.

Yvonne said the number could help us have stronger voices. She outlined different opportunities for the organization:

- ethos/brand: When you think of aaja, what do you think? Aaja needs to have a clearer identity.
- culture: What are the unifying experiences, such as JCamp and ELP, that make up the organization’s culture?
  - globalization: More and more people are traveling and working remotely. We need to be where everyone else is.
  - media entrepreneurship: The money is basically going to a lot of white journalists. We need more minorities in that space.

Niala said we should think about how we can show this organization that has a role in advocating for free speech and for ending racism, and supporting each other.

Michelle said we’re leaders that can facilitate representation in America through the media. We were the ones who had access to the Asian community and to Fox.

Kathy said we’ve always been known as great connectors, but haven’t necessarily demonstrated that to others. The Watters World controversy was a good first step. That was our role.

We then brainstormed on what words describe who we are and who we want to be. The clearest trends were family, advocacy for AAPI, diversity, and leadership development.

Paul then separated them into emotions:

Family, fun, support - essence and feeling (heart of aaja)

Advocacy for community, diversity, watchdogs, etc (actions of aaja)

Leadership, development pipeline, connectors - inward + professional (gains from aaja)

Yvonne said she hadn’t heard AAJA pitched as family. Matt said he took a while to feel the family aspect of AAJA. How do we pitch that? What to do we go to get them to feel that way?
Paul said the family aspect will keep people coming back.

Yvonne said that AAJA’s mission is about family, leadership development, training, and access, diversity, and blowing up stereotypes. She said they are really clear pathways into defining what these organizations are about. She said we could put together more of a mission statement, and crystallize everything.

Michelle said it would be good to rethink how chapters are structure. The way that chapters are running out of resources mirrors the way the media industry is structure. Many at-large members don’t feel represented. How do we reach those members, and help struggling chapters? She said we need to make a more sustainable structure.

Yvonne said that small and medium chapters are particularly hard-hit, and trying to keep all of them alive is not the answer.

Paul said we need to be careful about language with chapters.

We broke out into committees that represented chapter sustainability, community engagement, and civic engagement.

For community engagement, Pia said building a source base would be important. It has to be reputable and authoritative, so that we can broaden people’s source lists.

Yvonne talked about the role AAJA has in the AAPI community, and said we’re connectors and amplifiers. They’re our sources and the voices.

Matt said we have to continue to see how MediaWatch fits into this, since we need to keep looking at the journalism aspect. Advocacy lines can get blurry.

Michelle talked about chapter sustainability. They talked about the existing chapter model and whether it is flexible enough. They talked about a decentralized system that adds onto the current chapter system, or takes its place: ambassadors all across the country are point people.

Pia then left the meeting.

Paul asked about amending the bylaws to remove programming as a committee, and add new committees.

Michelle made a motion to do that, and Yvonne seconded the motion. All present voted yes. Motion passed. Update by-laws.

Michelle talked about renewing affinity groups. Michelle made a motion to approve the affinity groups, contingent on the groups having their full members by next January 15. Julianne seconded the motion. All present voted yes, and the motion passed.

Michelle also said that Carolyn Hong wanted to put in a program where people could sponsor student memberships. Carolyn and Ramy could work on the program together, and Paul asked if they could work on a trial basis in 2017 to work out any programs.
Michelle made a motion to do a one-year trial of the student sponsorship program. Esther seconded the motion, and all present voted yes.

We then talked about the 2017 elections, and Nicole talked about how senior vice president, secretary, and vice president of journalism programs were again up for grabs.

Paul said he would ask everyone to rethink the secretary position so that both the secretary and treasurer positions could be more active. Treasurer could become a vice president of finance and development, and the secretary could become a vice president of governance to enforce by-laws and policies.

Matt said it would be good to elevate, but also wanted to be careful about adding responsibilities onto positions that already have a lot of work. Paul said they wouldn’t be doing more, but would have more exact language. The secretary would draft policies, be a sort of standards editor and a vice president of policy.

We also talked about how the governing board would need to replace Joy and Lauren.

Yvonne said we need to think about how we are recruiting and finding talent. Paul said they could give the zipcodes to Yvonne and Michelle to map out the density across the country. Michelle said she would have the data visualization and proposal ready for the spring board meeting

Paul said the prior reorganization took four years, so they’d like to get changes going by the end of 2017.

Niala said that any change would require more explanations of what’s happening, since it’s a long process.

We tentatively chose March 10 - 12 as the spring board meeting in Philadelphia.

Niala made a motion to enter closed session at 5:40 p.m. Michelle seconded the motion and all present approved. We entered close session at 5:40 p.m.

Nicole made a motion to allow Ramy into the executive session. Esther seconded the motion, and all present approved.

Michelle made a motion to come back into open session at 6:06 p.m., and Yvonne seconded the motion. All present approved.

Nicole made a motion to adjourn at 6:07 p.m. Lauren seconded the motion. All approved. The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 p.m.