

# 2021 AAJA Summer Board Meeting minutes

## Advisory Board meeting

Saturday, Oct. 2, 2021

On Zoom

**Board of Directors members present:** President Michelle Lee, Senior Vice President Nicole Dungca, VP of Communications Shirley Qiu, VP of Finance Jin Ding, VP of Civic Engagement Julia B. Chan, VP of Journalism Programs Kris Vera-Philips, Large Chapter Representative Henry Fuhrmann (LA Chapter), Small/Medium Chapter Representative Julia M. Chan (Atlanta Chapter), At-Large Chapter Representative Benjamin Pu (New York Chapter), At-Large Chapter Representative Yuri Nagano (Asia Chapter)

**Board of Directors members not present:** Small/Medium Chapter Representative Bethany Ao

**Board members present:** Arizona Chapter Representative Aric Johnson, Atlanta Chapter Representative Julia M. Chan and President Mallika Kallingal, Florida Chapter Representative Moni Basu, Hawai'i Chapter Representative Wes Nakama, LA Chapter Representative Samantha Masunaga, Minnesota Chapter Representative Nancy Yang, New England Chapter Representative Daigo Fujiwara, Portland Chapter Representative Peter Wong, Sacramento Chapter Representative Bobby Caina Calvin, San Francisco Bay Area Chapter Representatives Cecilia Lei, Seattle Chapter Representative Anika Varty, Washington, DC Chapter Representative Seung Min Kim

**Board members not present:** Asia Chapter Representative K. Oanh Ha, Chicago Chapter Representative Ariel Chung, DC Chapter Representatives Kelyn Soong, New York Chapter Representative Emily Tan, Philadelphia Chapter proxy Juliana Reyes, Texas Chapter Representative Lauren Hardie, San Diego Chapter Co-Presidents Justine Saldana and David Jones

**Affinity Group directors present:** Freelance Co-Director Ellen Lee, Features Forum Co-Director Kellie Hwang, Photo Co-Director Darrell Miho, News Nerds Co-Directors Alex Lim and Thomas Oide, Radio and Podcasting Director Rahul Bali, Sports Task Force representatives Josh Tolentino, Karlo Sy Su and Sandeep Chandok

**Affinity Group directors not present:** Enterprise Director Sally Ho, Small Market Broadcast Director Stella Kim, Video Co-Directors Violet Wang and Dolly Li (joined later), Women & Non-Binary Voices Co-Director Corinne Chin, Yung AAJA Director Beena Raghavendran

**Staff present:** Executive Director Naomi Tacuyan Underwood, Chief Financial Officer Glenn E. K. Sugihara, Director of Communications and Strategic Engagement Jessica Xiao

Michelle Lee called to order at 5:04 p.m. ET. Shirley Qiu called roll at 5:05 p.m. ET.

## Financial update (Naomi and Jin)

We're in a very good place in terms of our assets and liabilities. We have done really well with fundraisers this year and are operating with a profit. It is much cheaper to do a virtual convention than an in-person convention.

Glenn: No direct expenses for the convention this year. Costs are mostly from consultants.

Ben: Now that we have all this income, what is our strategy to disburse it?

Bobby: Could you be more specific about the sources of the money and the sustainability of the income?

Naomi: More media sponsors have come in (e.g. both NBC News and Warner came in at \$75K). A lot of the funds coming in are based on the work we've done in the past 1.5 years -- so sustainability is unknown. But we're working on building and sustaining these relationships. This has been a phenomenal year in terms of having these conversations and proposals.

Michelle: Next year we should expect to spend a lot more on convention in person.

Naomi: We will use whatever surplus we have to spend on programming, priorities according to the strategic plan.

We've heard from lots of individuals that you want to learn more about fundraising -- let's start that dialogue and make sure we all coordinate as much as possible and assist you with as much as possible. We want to continue training on fundraising.

### **CRM updates (Naomi)**

We have been discovering issues in Salsa gradually -- including being able to pull member files and rosters. We are working on that. Some of it is due to user error. We've had different emails used for donations vs. membership. Some people have renewed multiple times. Some have not filled out profiles fully. There are problems specific to the Asia chapters.

That said, there is accurate data, but it's hard to pull together -- we just have to go to different data sources to pull the accurate info.

Due to these issues, we will be extending the chapter election deadline to the end of year -- Dec. 31, 2021 -- and the new deadline to report results to us is Jan. 15, 2022.

### **Affinity group timeline (Nicole)**

We did not make AGs reapply last year due to the pandemic but we will reinstate that this year. The deadline to reapply this year is Nov. 15, 2021. We will put the applications on the site in the next week or so. It will have the original requirements that we had before -- 50 members interested in this group -- but we also want to look at the application process and streamline it so folks don't necessarily have to reapply each year.

We want to convene a governance committee to talk more about what affinity groups and task forces mean and how they look within our organization. Currently AGs aren't officially a part of the national advisory board, but we may want to put new rules in place so that they are. Let Nicole know if you're interested in joining this governance committee.

### **#AAJA21 recap (Naomi)**

We had two sponsors come in at \$75k each, which is unprecedented for us. We had relatively high registration, about 1,000 (lower than last year but expected due to Zoom fatigue). We cut down the number of days but still packed in a lot of programming.

Peter: I would hope that when we're back in person, we continue to take advantage of the virtual platform.

Ellen: To add to that, I was wondering if there's a livestream aspect of next year's convention.

Naomi: With the expense of putting on in-person, how do we maximize revenue in registration? I think we could get high registration for the virtual conventions because our registration rate was lower. We'll have to rethink that for in-person. We'll also have to consider: where are the sponsors?

We're hoping to coordinate with AAJA Asia on some of these plenary sessions. We'll have to think about our goals in convening our membership and how our plans affect revenue.

Michelle: Hybrid comes with added costs -- we've talked with NABJ and NAHJ about this as well. I think we'll look for more opportunities to hold virtual events and training throughout the year.

Looking at the data, very few people watch the recording back after the fact.

Peter: I do want to say because of things that came up at work, I did go back and watch some of the sessions I wanted to attend, but I did it within a day or two of the sessions.

Rahul: Can we see the data from specific sessions?

Naomi: We can send you the link with the summary.

Kris (in chat): Should we repackage the sessions into a podcast? [Lots of folks in the chat supported this idea. Could be something to pursue.]

### **#AAJA22 update (Naomi)**

We're really excited to work with AAJA-LA and AAJA-Asia chapters to co-host the 2022 convention. We're looking at July 27-30. Looking at a hotel in Studio City that's right across from Universal Studios.

Knowing that there are still public health uncertainties, we're working on taking that into account in the contract.

We're also postponing awards this year but will award for two years in 2022. We're also working on the Hall of Fame -- that might also coincide with convention. It's important that it's in LA because that's where a lot of our founders are.

Michelle: The cities under consideration for Asia are Hong Kong and Singapore, but the Asia portion might be virtual because COVID restrictions are much more strict in Asia. We will have overlapping sessions for a few hours with Asia.

Please share your insights with in-person convention participation if you have them.

If things are bad in January we may just switch to virtual for 2022.

Darrell: Doesn't there have to be a hybrid model if LA and Asia are coordinated?

Michelle: Yes, the idea is that if there's a plenary in Asia there would be a live broadcast. We're not sure exactly what that would look like yet.

Darrell: I can almost guarantee you hotels will not have the capability to do that. You'd have to source it out. I've done some research on this -- cost is \$2,500-\$4,000 per room.

Naomi: A fully hybrid with Asia is exponentially expensive. So the practical alternative is only one shared plenary for only 2 hours per day. We know labor in LA is expensive.

### **MediaWatch (VP of Civic Engagement Julia B. Chan) + Chapter/AG/Task Force Statements (Michelle + Nicole)**

Julia: MediaWatch is going through a transition period. We brought on some new people and we're trying to sort through who wants to stay on and who we want to continue to recruit. CeFaan has stepped down as co-chair to focus on work and family. Please reach out to me if you're interested in serving in this role or have any thoughts/ideas.

Michelle: Nicole and I wanted to talk about issuing statements, bc a lot of chapters and AGs have worked on that. We want to support that, and think it's really good for raising our visibility.

The way it's worked so far: sometimes the leaders will let us know that a statement is coming, and the board of directors could jump in to add support; sometimes the chapters/AGs just issue the statement and the board amplifies it later.

What we would prefer: chapters/AGs, let us (Michelle, Nicole, Naomi) know beforehand when statements are coming. This would be helpful for coordination. We do also want to give a heads up to the companies involved if applicable. We want to keep engaging those companies even after the statement comes out.

Bobby: As a former chair of MediaWatch, during that era (with Paul, Sharon and Doris), we were very measured in our statements. I wonder if we have a policy around what's in chapters' purviews and what's not.

Michelle: What we've been witnessing with chapters/AGs is they've taken on issues within their realm (chapter or AG subject matter).

### **Awards committee update (Julia M. Chan)**

Proposed changes: we're no longer splitting the awards categories into General and AAPI, ~40 total awards. New categories: medium/format, subject, community impact and leadership. Members-only, no application fee. We hope this will incentivize membership/leadership.

What's left to do: [Take a look at this document](#) Jessica has put together and add your feedback. We need to put together the application form. We also need judges -- 3 judges per award, 25 awards

Please send feedback by Monday, Oct. 11. Please feel free to share the document with your membership.

Daigo: Are the July 27-30 convention dates public knowledge?

Michelle: That is still under negotiation with the hotel. So don't publicize it yet -- but once we formalize a contract with the hotel, you can publicize it.

Kris: AAJA Mentor Match is looking for new directors. If anyone knows of folks who might be interested, please let me know. We'll open applications probably by December.

Michelle motioned to adjourn at 6:57 p.m. ET.

## **Board of Directors meeting**

Sunday, Oct. 3, 2021

On Zoom

**Board of Directors members present:** President Michelle Lee, Senior Vice President Nicole Dungca, VP of Communications Shirley Qiu, VP of Finance Jin Ding, VP of Civic Engagement Julia B. Chan, VP of Journalism Programs Kris Vera-Philips, Large Chapter Representative Henry Fuhrmann (LA Chapter), Small/Medium Chapter Representative Julia M. Chan (Atlanta Chapter), At-Large Chapter Representative Benjamin Pu (New York Chapter), At-Large Chapter Representative Yuri Nagano (Asia Chapter)

**Board of Directors members not present:** Small/Medium Chapter Representative Bethany Ao/proxy Juliana Reyes (Philadelphia Chapter)

Staff present: Naomi Tacuyan Underwood

Michelle called to order at 10:05 a.m. ET. Shirley called roll at 10:06 a.m. ET.

Bethany has resigned from the board. Under the bylaws, Michelle can appoint a new member of the board since there are only 3 months left. Michelle asked Kelyn Soong and he was interested, but he didn't feel like he had the bandwidth. So Michelle asked Nader Issa -- he is considering it.

### **AAJA News Leadership 3.0 (Michelle)**

There's been a lot of turnover of top leaders at major national outlets in the past year. Every time that happens, we try to think of who in AAJA is positioned to take those roles. We want to be prepared for the next time this happens -- how can we continue to elevate AAPI leaders in the highest levels of leadership?

A couple tactics: raise visibility of what we've already accomplished -- we could be better at crafting a narrative around it; help develop cohorts who are taking on/in these positions; programming, mentoring opportunities.

Requires one-on-one contact and relationship-building with potential cohort participants by the President and Senior VP.

Jin: How does this fit with ELP?

Michelle: We'll have to coordinate with Paul to see how this will fit in with ELP. It's time to rethink updates to ELP anyway.

Shirley: It might be better to open this up more to our current membership and ask for nominations/applications in the interest of transparency and inclusion.

Michelle: We'll consider opening it up to our larger membership and make sure the process is transparent.

Julia M. Chan: A lot of folks aren't ready for this right this moment but are leaving the industry or thinking about leaving. How will we serve them?

Michelle: We'll broaden beyond just people positioned to move into top leadership now -- think of folks who might be ready in the next 5-10 years.

### **AAJA Fundraising Advisory Group (Naomi)**

We are a little bit beholden to how well the industry does in our current fundraising model -- this is unsustainable. We want to diversify our revenue model.

We want to tap some members (external-facing ambassadors who have experience/connections in fundraising) for a group who can help with this effort. It would be an additional entity that wouldn't be elected -- it would be an external-facing fundraising mechanism to increase our funding.

Ben: What is the potential size of this group? Who gets to sign off on it?

Naomi: We have to take a look at the bylaws -- I don't believe we can elect this kind of entity to the advisory board. We would do a little bit of a wide callout but also know who we are inviting for sure, who has brought in money already and has been advocating for us. It might be more a committee structure under bylaws.

Jin: Right now we're probably looking at less than a dozen people. We want to figure out if we want these folks helping out with a specific fundraising event and how big of a time commitment that would be. Best-case scenario: we have a pool of advisors.

### **Strategic Planning with Julie Truong**

Today we're going to focus on benchmarks. How will we put this plan into action? This will inform the staff retreat coming up in a few weeks.

A theme throughout this process is that AAJA values collaboration. We want to make sure that internally collaborative efforts are more strategic.

Priority 1: Program impact and pipeline

- Get more people who go through ELP to stay engaged and active with AAJA for x number of years
- How many continue to go to convention?

Priority 2: Member and alumni engagement

- Increase membership numbers
- Retention of new members -- do they come back for year 2? Why/why not?

- Leadership pipeline internally -- are folks moving through it?
- Affinity groups -- keeping them and evolving them to be nimble with our needs

#### Priority 3: Policy and Advocacy

- Measure the increased engagement of AAJA guidance and statements
- Grow louder -- bringing in DEI training
- Survey our members about how these statements are landing

#### Priority 4: Influence and Thought Leadership

- Annual conversation with more top news leaders/executives about their DEI efforts
- Elevate more AAPI leaders to the highest levels and into key roles
- Get more people into our programs -- ELP, Catalyst, Media Institute

### **Policy Discussions + Votes -- Finance (Jin)**

Lots of new scholarship proposals. This will fall under Waliya. One application for all scholarships.

For the new scholarships, we'll charge 10% each year. Recently we had a situation where the PI Task Force wanted to start a scholarship but they ultimately went to NAJA because they had an existing relationship with NAJA (who were charging a similar fee).

Would like the board to approve the Scholarship Funds Policy.

Ben: How do we decide what kind of money we accept?

Jin: Mission is really important -- their mission needs to align with ours. We also want to maintain independence. On a separate note, I find that our fundraising policy is a little outdated; we will think about updating that.

### **Treasurer Policy (Naomi)**

Lots of chapters don't have the capacity to handle their treasurer duties. What capacity does HQ have to help with this?

Glenn has had to take on more than the usual CFO/accountant duties. It's time to revisit the treasurer's roles in the chapters. Not sure if there's a policy with AGs but some have accounts.

We're definitely here to support smaller chapters but is there some capacity we can build in the chapters? If the treasurer position is not filled, who has to serve as treasurer?

Ben: Do the bylaws have any wiggle room to allow for accountants rather than an elected treasurer?

Michelle: Not a lot of wiggle room due to nonprofit status but the accounting services can be taken on by Glenn.

Naomi: Currently the New England and Asia chapters are getting help from Glenn.

Yuri: It is challenging for Asia to make a bank account in the U.S. Currently have an account in Hong Kong but thinking about moving it to Singapore.

Naomi: Is there some sort of loose tiering system we could propose to help guide chapters? E.g. assumption is that with bigger chapters, they have the capacity within their ranks to keep their own books. This also goes into governance of AGs -- we're holding healthy accounts for two AGs (Photo and Sports TF) at least. We are all one 501(c)3; in contrast for NABJ, each chapter is its own (c)3. We need to submit a financial audit annually.

Michelle: Glenn is always wrangling treasurers for the yearly audit. How can the board support Glenn's workflow? Maybe Glenn, Naomi, Jin, Michelle and Giles can meet to figure out the policy. Then we can review the policy at the next board meeting.

### **Convention Host City Agreement (Naomi)**

We want to review convention host chapter expectations in light of a very different kind of convention we're holding next year.

Michelle: Our partnership with LA this next year is unique and will set a high bar. Suggest not abiding by this handbook policy for this upcoming convention and figure out what we need for #AAJA22. Might be helpful to talk with Teresa, Henry, Oanh and Giles.

Kris motioned to go into closed session at 12:50 p.m. ET. Ben seconded.

Kris motioned to get out of closed session at 1:29 p.m. ET. Ben seconded.

Jin motioned to adjourn at 1:31 p.m. ET. Yuri seconded.