

## Summer 2023 Advisory Board meeting notes

Oct. 29, 2023

**Board of Directors members present:** Nicole Dungca, Frank Bi, Jin Ding, Kris Vera-Phillips, Shirley Qiu, Marian Liu, Aric Johnson, Anika Varty, Christopher Nguyen, Daigo Fujiwara, Moriah Balingit

**Chapter and AG leaders present:** Peter Wong, Cody Hmelar, Corinne Chin, Darrell Miho, Hangda Zhang, Howard Chen, Heather J. Chin, Jessica Kim Cohen, Jingyao Yu, Jireh Deng, Moni Basu, Anh Do, Rachel Ramirez, Ron Nurwisah, Sameer Rao, Wes Nakama, Yuri Nagano, Alexander Lim, Nandita Godbole, Sandeep Chandok, Oanh Ha

**Staff present:** Naomi Tacuyan Underwood, Ai Uchida, April Siruno, Yi-Shen Loo

### **New HQ Staff: Naomi**

Working on growing and stabilizing HQ staff. Just hired Will Schick for director of programs and partnerships, Felicia Chanco for Director of Special Initiatives. The full time salaried staff now numbers 8 – we grew that from one ED position and two junior positions. A lot of these are new positions to help us support our signature programs.

### **Financial report: Naomi**

We're looking on track to having more than a balanced budget. We are netting \$630K. The goal for any nonprofit is to have a balanced budget at the end of the year, and we also have a healthy reserve. We've had a very good year in terms of the attention on Asian Americans and journalism. The goal is to sustain this higher level of revenue.

One goal is also to diversify our funding. Usually it comes from the profit we make from convention, but we're really working to diversify. Foundations are a big part of that diversification: Ford Foundation, Democracy Fund, Knight Foundation, Asian American Foundation, McArthur Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Looking also to individual donors, fiscal sponsorship fees.

Netting \$448K from convention. We've had the highest number of expo hall numbers, registration numbers. We're adjusting the capacity and room block.

Our current membership count is 1600 strong with 4 new lifetime memberships. We revised our membership categories to include ally memberships for people who aren't traditional journalists. We also had more gold and platinum members.

We know maybe there are some turbulent times ahead, but with the help of the board and Glenn Sugihara, HQ, we're on solid footing.

Jin: We're lucky AAJA is in such a strong position financially, given the current economic situation. Thanks to Naomi for her leadership.

Nicole: Over the past couple of years, we've been able to essentially double our budget. Naomi has helped us score big wins in terms of foundations, grants. That's because our leadership, Naomi and HQ, have been working hard for years building relationships and showing everyone how strong and capable AAJA is.

### **New initiatives: Ai Uchida**

We're trying to also go to events that are also taking place so we can meet AAJA members there. For example, in March we went to Austin for SXSW, targeting AAJA members but also invited local stakeholders. Had about 40 attendees.

The other is the White House Correspondents Brunch in late April. In collaboration with TAAF and APACs.

Naomi: JCal – we were approached by CalMatters to design a program for highschoolers. For one week, we had a diverse group of highschoolers from all over California, brought them to the CalMatters newsroom. They reported on climate change and other issues. While our national programs are renowned and stand on their own, we want to figure out how to have impact in our local communities. We are just now getting close to final edited stories.

We're really proud of this pilot program, and the question is, what's next?

We've also embarked on a grant from TAAF, taking broadcast snapshot one step further, take a snapshot of the masthead.

Jingyao: What is the outreach strategy with the survey piece? Is there any coordination with the local level?

Naomi: Yes, the diversity associations will definitely be a big part of that. We'll also have that info for chapters as we get it.

Ron: For JCal, have there been any considerations for expanding this in other states?

Naomi: We are! The most important thing is to have a proof of concept. Do we go back to what's worked, or what does this look like in another local newsroom that has a strong local chapter? I think my job now is to shop around this proof of concept and see if any funders want to support this program.

Cody: Would there be opportunity at the local level to help work with local funders?

Naomi: Yes, absolutely. Examples?

Cody: In Philly, we have some educational grants that we could have access to. They're external funders.

Naomi: If it's a grant proposal, the chapter would take the lead on writing it and we would provide feedback. But we would support bc we're on one tax ID number.

### **Officer updates**

Nicole: Naomi, Ai, Frank, Jin and I were able to participate at a convening with other journalism groups (NABJ, NAHJ, INdigenous Journalists Association, JAWS, NLGJA); funded by Democracy Fund after the directors got together and thought wouldn't it be great if we could all get in the same room? It was about professional development, figuring out how to run the board. Hopefully this will put us in the position of more collaboration in the future.

We were also able to support Yanqi Xu after the xenophobic comments from Nebraska's governor.

The McArthur Foundation is infusing lots of money for local journalism, and we signed a letter with other groups that made sure they would keep diversity top of mind.

Frank: Governance Committee – just started a small committee to review the bylaws around the chapters, student chapters in particular. At the leadership retreat at convention we identified those challenges as well. We see this as something everyone here will be involved with before we finalize everything.

We have Team AAJA running the NYC Marathon next week. We're very close to the goal, about to raise \$20K.

We're due for another chapter leadership roundtable. That invite will come out soon.

Jin: We are working really hard and hopefully soon we'll have really amazing news to share with everyone about a new grant. But I'll share when the news actually drops.

A big part of next year's planning for me is to start a finance committee to advise the national board on financial policies, including endowment policy. I wanted to see if your treasurers and folks who are good and/or interested in fundraising would be interested in this.

Shirley: Chapter election deadlines are coming up – deadline is Nov. 5.

Kris Vera-Phillips: We are still looking for people to lead our journalism programs. AAJA Voices, JCamp

### **Strategic priorities**

Frank's group: We talked about how to get our members engaged, AG and chapter members.

Shirley's group: We also discussed the challenges of smaller chapters and chapters that are more geographically spread out.

Moriah's group: Mailing list challenges – how can we integrate MemberSuite so we only email members? We also headed up the Style Guide – Hawaii put together an incredible Style Guide after the Lahaina wildfires. Creating solidarity with labor unions.

Ron's group: We spoke mostly about chapter engagement and making sure there's continuity, strength within chapters so there's succession planning. Engaging younger and new members but also keeping more senior members engaged.

Sandeep's group: We talked about how to keep members involved, so we talked about doing a resume workshop, maybe on a bigger/national level. People need this year-round, not just during summer. Mentor Match has been huge too for me. Virtual programming, people aren't always willing to attend, but maybe we can help people with things they need in the moment, like covering the Middle East right now.

Frank: We should think about synchronous programming as well as asynchronous programming, such as a listserv in NY. That's a big member benefit. Also Yung AAJA has a FB group.

### **2024 Planning / Committees**

Finance Committee: Jin Ding

We're trying to set aside money in an endowment that we don't touch, but we can use the interest to help with our operations. What we're trying to avoid is putting AAJA in a tough position financially and making sure we can pay for our core programming and HQ staff.

After years of cultivation, we have potentially two donors who will give us a pretty big gift. I can't tell you the exact amount yet, but this is very exciting. We're going to get at least half of our annual budget in the door right away. If this is successful, we can announce a dollar to dollar challenge in 2024. This committee would be working on helping launch this financial challenge, policy updates.

Naomi: We actually have an existing reserve of money. We did manage to raise \$1M in past good times. What is this moment now at 42 years old, what will our organization look like when we're celebrating 50 years? We do consider this an all hands on deck effort.

Governance committee: Frank Bi

Said what I wanted, but we'll talk more about this at the roundtables. Please let me know if you have thoughts.

Style Guide subcommittee: Marian Liu

Set to come out for AAPI Heritage Month in May 2024. It's not just for media orgs but also for nonprofits and AAPI communities as a whole. We've set a threshold for what is on this guide. Right now we have a strong committee of 13, but we're looking for more members to help with the committee.

Also always looking for help on Media Watch. Let us know if you're interested.

Rachel: How involved is the Pacific Islander Task Force and folks from SAJA and AMEJA?

Marian: We have a diverse group with folks from different newsrooms but please let me know if there are people who you think should be involved.

Broadcast Task Force: Chris Nguyen

Hoping to convene a Broadcast Task Force in 2024, trying to address issues in this space. It's no secret that there's been a lot of media group consolidation in recent years. Aric Johnson provided great insights to barriers to entry for students. We want to focus our efforts on how we can support broadcast. If there's anyone who would like to be involved, let me know.

Awards Committee: Shirley

Just quickly want to say that we do welcome more people on the committee, let us know if you're interested.

### **AAJA23 recap: Naomi, Jin, Frank**

Naomi: We had more than 1500 attendees. We're incorporating lessons learned – expo hall space, etc. Thank you to the DC chapter for help with programming – tours around DC and in the suburbs. It was a very good year monetarily and goes straight into funding for core programs. We're excited to build on that momentum and go to Austin.

Rachel: Just wanted to thank everyone, especially HQ for helping us.

Ron: I was curious, in terms of attendance breakdowns, do we have a breakdown of where people are in their careers? Early/mid/late career?

Naomi: We'd like to have more precise insight into that. That's built into MemberSuite, so we encourage people to fill out their profiles. We might make it mandatory for people to provide information when people register.

Nicole: Just want to make sure we make registration as easy as possible. Also want to thank Rachel and Hangda (convention committee chairs) for a really great job.

Ron: How was it received from the sponsor side?

Naomi: As far as our major sponsors, the boards before us have always maintained good working relationships – CNN, NBC, the networks – to make sure the programming is solid. The expo hall is always a puzzle because you can't be equitable for everyone because of the layout and flow of traffic. The smaller expo booths – there was less foot traffic than expo hall reps expected. But we've experimented with incentivizing traffic.

Jin: Encourage you to think about what the urgent issues you want to discuss in Austin are – we will have early deadlines for that.

### **AAJA24: Naomi and Nicole**

Naomi: Texas is home to the fastest growing AAPI community. Really excited to engage with the nonprofit newsrooms and legacy newsrooms based there. We'll be at the Hilton Austin, which is the flagship hotel for SXSW; it's a much bigger hotel than the Capital Hilton.

Coming off of LA, building our narrative, DC, building our collective power, this is another way we can show our force.

Nicole: We thought Austin was a good choice partly bc of geography, we haven't been in Texas for a while. We wanted to be somewhere where a lot of the issues dividing our nation are there and support local AAPI journalists covering these issues and the presidential election.

Rachel: Keep in mind safety bc of extreme heat. Maybe think about water bottles, mini fans from sponsors to keep our members cool.

Naomi: From our walk-through, it's very ADA friendly, but if there's something specific we can go back to that. The Hilton Austin is connected to the convention center. But I want to clarify that we don't have contracted space in the convention center.

Jin: We should ask if folks need accessibility assistance in the registration process.

Nicole: CPC usually talks about themes once the larger group convenes, but please let us know if you have ideas.

Jireh: Heard really good feedback from the VOICES students bc of the accommodations they got, newsrooms they got to see. Any thoughts on newsrooms they'll go to this year?

Naomi: Yes, we want to see if there are newsrooms that can accommodate them.

Cody: I know we have group hotel rates, do we have any deals with travel partners for AAJA?

Naomi: We do not.

Chris: Can we check with Southwest and Alaska? They've been receptive in the past for other trade groups.

### **New business**

Jireh: Coverage of Israel-Palestine is top of mind for folks. Are there any standards?

Nicole: We've wanted to let different affinity groups to take the lead there. The last time there was concentrated violence, I think in 2021, we got questions on whether we'd put out an advisory, and we reached out to AMEJA and worked hand in hand with them to put together an advisory. We amplified that and recently amplified their recent advisory.