

AAJA Spring Board Meeting 2023

Saturday, April 22, 2023

4-7 p.m. ET

Board of Directors members present: Nicole Dungca, Frank Bi, Jin Ding, Shirley Qiu, Aric Johnson, Anika Varty

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, Kristine Villanueva, Jireh Deng, Valerie Boey (proxy for Moni Basu), Anh Do, Gwendolyn Wu, Rachel Ramirez, Ron Nurwisah, Sameer Rao, Wes Nakama, Yuri Nagano, Nancy Yang, Nandita Godbole, Sandeep Chandok, Oanh Ha, Alex Wong, David Deloso, Josh Tolentino, Katrina Pham, Sandeep Chandok, Annie Yu, Harry Mok, Sarah Rahal

Staff present: Naomi Tacuyan Underwood, Ai Uchida, Glenn Sugihara

Nicole called to order at 4:05 p.m. ET. Shirley called roll at 4:06 p.m. Breakout rooms until 4:26 p.m.

President's update from Nicole Dungca

Nicole: Would love everyone here to be able to talk about why they're a part of AAJA; shared [AAJA's strategic priorities](#).

AAJA National Update – Executive Director Naomi Tacuyan Underwood

Budget/Finance overview

Naomi: We wanted to create infrastructure with strong financial planning, fundraising capacity that prioritizes stability and sustainability, even through economic downturns. We want to diversify our revenue.

Glenn: At the last board meeting I projected that we might have a small loss in the year, but thanks to Naomi we brought in some last minute sponsorships and ended up making a small profit last year.

As of March 31 of this year, we're getting off to a very good start.

Naomi: To Glenn and Karen's credit, AAJA wouldn't be where we are now without their financial savvy and love for AAJA. Big thank you to them for keeping us on track.

Staffing

Naomi: We have Ai Uchida and Waliya Lari, who has been with us about a year, and April Siruno. We are slowly trying to transition the governing board as a hands-on operating board to a more advisory role, and that means intentionally growing our staff.

Initiatives

Naomi: We have JCal, a partnership with Cal Matters/high school partnership. This is an experiment to partner with a newsroom and bring attention to local problems. We want to make newsrooms aware of local up and coming high school journalists of color. To the California chapter, we'll reach out to see how you can get involved.

Visibility programs

Naomi: Instead of creating new things, we've latched onto what's already happening, engaging where people are already convening. We did a meet and greet panel at SXSW; thinking about a convening space at ONA.

Masthead diversity research

Naomi: The Asian American Foundation grant is around diversity in masthead leadership positions. We're going to partner with a research institute on a study for 12-18 months as a follow up to the [broadcast snapshot](#).

We know some chapters are thinking about doing their own research – we may come to you as chapters and get your help on the survey mechanism.

Jingyao: With ONA and NLGJA both being in Philly, is there an opportunity for Philly to support these? Re: masthead diversity research, are there plans to do a follow up to see if things have changed?

Naomi: That is the plan. We didn't cast any judgment in the original report but now we have a baseline we can measure against.

Nicole: I would love to see AAJA in concert in NLGJA and ONA. I want to get Daniel Garcia (former AAJA staff) in touch with our AAJGay affinity group.

Fundraising Update

Team AAJA

Frank: Team AAJA is a great fundraising opportunity at the NYC Marathon for AAJA. Ron Nurwisah, Jin Ding and Nicole Dungca will all be running this year.

Endowment + Ambassadors Circle

Naomi: We have been cultivating a major donor for a \$2M ask for our endowment campaign. We are really organizationally pivoting in how we think about fundraising – not just thinking about the coming year, but how we set aside money for a rainy day.

Jin: Re: endowments – we will only collect the interest, not draw from the principal. If we can get a \$5M endowment, we can get around \$250K in interest each year.

We do have an investment consulting group working closely with Glenn. There will be an endowment policy established and approved by the board to keep us accountable too. We want to put up guardrails to make sure the spending from the endowment is approved by the board.

Naomi: This does not fall just on the advisory board and governing board. But to be realistic about where this fundraising will come from, we have established structures like the ambassadors circle to support this effort.

Jingyao: I'm interested in being a thought partner and thinking about how this can reach our local chapter. Is there room to have continued conversations about how local chapters could also benefit from this fundraising?

Jin: Yes absolutely. This is a path we're going down that we haven't tried much in the past. We very much welcome chapters to engage with Naomi's team on this.

Breakout room at 5:30 p.m. ET

Share-out from breakout room

Group 1

Lee Uehara: Our group brainstormed having local events and pay what you wish, e.g. donating photo sessions, auction, running a 5K, biking for boba, author signings, art showings.

Gwendolyn Wu: Convincing members of how AAJA can help them at different stages of their career. At the end of the day, that's what we come to AAJA for, the community.

Ron Nurwisah: Yung is crucial, especially for folks who don't live in larger chapter cities, for connecting our members.

Group 2

Anika Varty: We thought it might be helpful to have more fundraising conversations with chapters and affinity groups throughout the year. It would be great to continually share what is successful. We are hungry for fundraising training.

Group 3

Nandita Godbole: We talked about trying to set goals for every chapter in terms of fundraising or trying to find ways for outside entities to support AAJA. It's harder for our chapter to go out to seek grants because of the way our finances are tied to the larger organization. But that doesn't mean individual chapters can't create a wishlist. We also talked about coming together as a community, like celebrating Lunar New Year, having a potluck, student workshop. Establishing a chapter mission to keep that legacy consistent over time.

Group 4

Sameer Rao: Holding fundraising trainings throughout the year – there continues to be a lot of demand for it. It can be kind of terrifying for people but if we share a formula that everyone could try, that makes it more approachable. Relationship building with local businesses, restaurants, tech companies, and creating a member-accessible directory to track potential fundraising sources but also sources for reporting.

Frank: We are holding regular quarterly leadership roundtables for chapters and AGs to connect regularly. We will have a training and roundtable in person at convention.

Style Guide & Media Watch Update & Recruitment - Naomi and Nicole

Nicole: We would love to get your help on revamping the style guide and Media Watch.

AAJA 23 update - Naomi & Jin

Naomi: Thank you everyone for being patient with the hotel and unprecedented demand. We're looking at doing additional room blocks as registrations come in.

Jin: Hangda Zhang and Rachael Ramirez are stepping up as convention programming co-chairs, along with Frank Bi helping out this year. We will be sending out speaker invites soon. Wednesday we'll have a training day, starting at 10 a.m. Thursday other programming kicks off. Both Thursday and Friday we'll have extended time for lunch, and there will be no programming at night (we'll conclude programming at 5 p.m.). Next week we'll roll out the full schedule.

There's an ask for VP Kamala Harris to come to the gala. We will also arrange for a lot of DC local tours on Saturday.

We also want to arrange some programming for AAJA leaders – like breakfast Saturday morning.

Frank: Thursday and Friday at 7 p.m. ET will be a good time for chapter/AG mixers. Please keep us posted on when you're planning yours so we can coordinate.

Naomi: I know Wednesday is when people traditionally fly in, but we want to do a big training day. We'll have APIA Vote speaking, we want to coordinate some sort of mixer. We're really excited about Wednesday and really hope people will make plans to be there sooner rather than later.

AAJA24 update - Naomi

Naomi: As you know 2024 is an election year. We want to bring it to a different region. We were in Atlanta 2019, virtual in 2020 and 2021, LA in 2022 and DC this year. The three cities we're thinking about are Austin, Atlanta and Miami. Our convention consultant is looking into all three cities, we want to make sure there's time to discuss the pros and cons. We were considering Phoenix but considering possible impacts and proximity, Austin is center and south as well, and the other two are on the eastern seaboard.

While we were in Atlanta in 2019, it is a big battleground in the election and the site of the shootings. Austin attracts a lot of national leadership. SXSW is there, Texas Tribune is there. We haven't been back to Texas since Houston in 2018. Miami is a costly hotel city but Florida will also be a battleground state.

Nicole: We have started thinking about 2025 as well in order to get better hotel rates.

Jingyao: The cheapest option would be the best. Reducing that financial barrier would help.

Breakout rooms at 6:40 p.m.

Group share-out

Group 4: Influence & Thought Leadership

Ron Nurwisah: Pipeline building and nontraditional journalism roles – how do we build that pipeline and identify candidates? A lot of talk about organizing and advocating for yourself. Once you identify that, how do you celebrate those folks and connect them with others who need that guidance and help? How do we reduce the harms that exist now?

Group 3: Policy & Advocacy

Kristine Villanueva: How do we make sure our stories reflect our communities and hold our newsrooms accountable? What can newsrooms do in local news deserts? U.S. news and Asian news relationship building to improve international coverage – how do we use those information networks to improve our reporting + engage our international membership?

Group 2: Membership & Alumni engagement

Gwendolyn Wu: Convincing people to stay in AAJA as people move out of journalism jobs. While for some folks, the membership costs can be a hardship. How can we better publicize what AAJA can offer you?

Group 1: Program Impact & Pipeline

Sameer Rao: How do we make sure our programmatic offerings are expanded and we break down silos and advertise them to people? How do people know they're ready for it? How can we connect past and future participants? Programs localized? Collaboration on programs between chapters.

Jin moved to adjourn at 7:03 p.m. Frank seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Sunday, April 23, 2023

4-6 p.m. ET

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

Staff present: Naomi Tacuyan Underwood, Ai Uchida

Nicole called to order at 4:03 p.m. Shirley called roll at 4:03 p.m. ET.

Priorities discussion: What do you want to accomplish this year?

Nicole: What do you want to accomplish this year on the governing board? Let's go around and discuss.

Frank: Sustainability and stability. Proactive not reactive. Expectations and structure. How can we build structure around chapters and affinity groups so that the energy and programs they've set up can go forward?

Jin: Transitioning off convention, showing the new committee what happens behind the scenes and how the planning works. Want to improve and grow the nonprofit gathering at convention (which launched at last year's convention) – we can be a convening space to support other nonprofits in this space. We're throwing tons of energy into endowment. It's an economic downturn right now; I want to make sure we launch it into success in the next few years. The underlying theme is the philanthropic environment in AAJA – what can we do with this money, how can we make an impact with this money?

Marian: Kicked off style guide, brainstormed with Naomi and gathered a committee. Let me know if you'd like to participate. Currently the committee is heavily East Asian, and would love more representation from other parts of our AAPI community. We'd like to launch by next year's AAPI Heritage Month. We're looking for co-chairs, committee members, reviewers, experts/academics. We're thinking about doing a training for how to even approach this guide. The other thing is figuring out Media Watch. So many of us are not traditional journalists anymore – we're looking at analytics, audience, journalism as a business – so how can we serve those people?

Nicole: We're looking for someone to be co-chair with Marian for Media Watch.

Shirley: Community building has been my main focus throughout my tenure. Working on Camp AAJA and finalizing a framework for next year so we can more or less plug and play rather than start from scratch. Also working on AAJA Awards.

Aric: Interested in how we can better support folks climbing up the career ladder into the highest levels of leadership.

Nicole: We'd love your help to consult the VOICES alumni board.

Frank: I'd like to help with that as well, because I was part of the last VOICES alumni board.

Marian: Me as well.

Nicole: There are two new directors: Gwendolyn Wu and Jovelle Tamayo. The directors take on a lot, and we want to make the experience as seamless and rewarding as possible.

Daigo Fujiwara: I'm interested in the member/alumni engagement and local fundraising part. I've served in several chapter roles now and would like to help other small/medium chapters with that. Happy to help with fundraising trainings as well.

Nicole: Camp AAJA would be a good event for that as well as any fundraising trainings.

Anika: I'm also really interested in member and alumni engagement, I'm really interested in these leadership roundtables you've set up Frank, and would like to help out there. I feel more equipped to help out in that space but I'm also interested in the influence and thought leadership part of things. Would also love to help with the Style Guide.

Chris: I'm here to learn and see how I fit in the AAJA ecosystem. I was previously part of the media institute, would be interested in being a link to the Broadcast Advisory Council.

Endowment campaign, chapter/affinity group engagement

Naomi: There's an existing endowment and we have a responsibility to continue it. Over the last 2 years we rediscovered this challenge. We had to do some assessment: where are our supporters/donors? Where we landed is we've been cultivating a donor that we've asked a \$2M amount for. Our goal is looking toward our 50 year anniversary – the long term goal is \$10M so we have a principal in the bank that never gets touched and we draw from interest for core

operating costs. Thus far our revenue has largely come from media corporations, which is not the most steady source of revenue.

We haven't announced this publicly yet, but we've been talking with people and hope to have a donor commitment and announce something by convention.

Jin: Why did it take us three years to just now launch the relaunch campaign? When we first started this, we brought on a consultant and looked into the readiness of AAJA's endowment campaign. It took us 2-3 years of cultivation to identify the seed funder and enough people we've talked with who could support this.

Traditionally, we would only look in the journalism industry for fundraising. But in the past few years, we've boosted our visibility and it has opened doors for potential donors. In times of economic downturns, donors will actually give more because they understand the urgency of the needs.

Nicole: There's been a real shift in how we approach fundraising. We want to make sure we have the materials to put our best foot forward, speak in the language donors are speaking. Big thanks to Jin and Naomi and the rest of HQ for doing this.

The Ambassador Circle is something we're launching for people who are in a better position to cultivate those relationships.

Jin: I would like to work with everyone on the governing board on their elevator pitch for AAJA, make sure we're making our message clear, sharp, consistent. Just want everyone to know that we would not want this campaign to eat into chapter fundraising; don't want overlapping asks to hurt chapter asks.

Nicole: I would love you all to talk with your chapter/AG leaders about how we'll launch our endowment campaign. Would love everyone to think about whether they can contribute.

Jin: I will do more work with chapters and AGs on how they package their fundraising ask and culture.

Aric: For the smaller chapters, I think it will be a struggle. They're thinking more about keeping the chapter alive. Maybe making the goals smaller based on the chapter/AG.

Chris: If we do something this fall, maybe we could find a major donor who could do \$5K or \$10K and push that number out there – can you, our AAJA members, match that number?

Jin: Naomi ran an end of year campaign last year and the outcome was very low. But the NYC Marathon is a time bound campaign and folks feel more involved, want to give.

Anika: I'm trying to think about what would be helpful for chapter leaders to hear. The phrase endowment campaign doesn't mean a lot to people. Just explicitly saying out loud that right now, it's everyone being a part of something rather than taking on fundraising individually. We should also explicitly spell out how this would benefit our members this year, next year, down the line and for specific programs.

Nicole: The endowment would go to general operating costs. This is something that will enrich all of us and our programs.

Frank: What if we create these stickers for convention that show if people contributed to the fundraiser?

Budget deep dive

AAJA Awards

Individual

Changemaker of the year: Naomi Ishisaka

Member of the year: Jin Ding

Mentor of the year: Corinne Chin

Emerging Journalist of the Year: Celina Tebor and Sophia Cai

AAPI Community Impact: ask Kris

Suzanne Anh: Assunta Ng

Leadership in Diversity & Solidarity: Jeff Chang

AAPI Community Impact Award: The Very Asian Foundation

AG of the year: STF

AG Leadership of the year: Yung

Chapter Leadership of the Year: Philly

Chapter of the Year: LA

Community Impact Award: Sahan Journal
Leadership in Diversity & Solidarity: W. Kamau Bell

Note: Let's revamp the awards next year to be more specific about internal or external facing impact.

2023 Hotel

Nicole: We have released more rooms and have some overflow hotels that are less than 10 min away by foot. Please tell people to register so we can get more rooms.

Chris: What is the target attendance?

Naomi: We are facing a year of no precedent. We consider success 900-1,000. Going into this year we know people are cutting back. Last year was highly unusual with 1,600 attendees. This year we would like to get to 1,000.

2024 Location

Naomi: The cities on the table, based on the conversation yesterday, would be Austin and Atlanta. Both have pros and cons. Does anyone have other thoughts or want to discuss that further?

Marian: Is Atlanta cheaper than Austin?

Naomi: Our consultant is running a request for proposals out. We have less of a bargaining advantage for clients this time.

Jin: I want to flag that some AGs said the laws in Florida would not be welcoming to some members. Similar concerns in Texas.

Anika motioned to go to closed session at 7:34 p.m. ET. Jin seconded. Entered closed session.

Anika motioned to get out of closed session. Frank seconded.

Aric motioned to adjourn. Marian seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.