Annual Report 2012-13

Student Publications

1. Unit Profile Statement and Introduction of Major Goals, Opportunities and Initiatives

Unit Profile Statement
Student Publications provides professional and administrative support for the staff of The Shorthorn, UTA’s award-winning student newspaper. In doing so, it provides the main student-produced source of news and information for the University community, experiential learning and leadership opportunities for students, and a designated public forum for the University community.

Major Goals and Initiatives
In 2012-13, The Shorthorn converted its publication strategy and schedule to become a “digital first” operation, reducing the number of print editions of The Shorthorn each week from four to one and producing a full digital publication each day with content delivered directly to readers in a variety of formats in response to changed news consumption needs and wants and well as changed experience and skills needs by students using Shorthorn staff experience as career preparation. This was the most significant change in The Shorthorn’s operation since the 1970s. The Shorthorn was only the second major college newspaper in the nation to make this change … meaning The Shorthorn was pioneering new territory, and nobody else had provided a roadmap for us or other student media to follow. We were a trailblazer.

2. Program/Service Areas: Milestones and Major Accomplishments

The overarching themes and priorities of 2012-13 for Student Publications were successfully launching The Shorthorn’s digital first publication plan and successfully completing the realignment of responsibilities for the Student Pubs professional staff. The two were intertwined.

The new publication plan required major changes in The Shorthorn operation, which are among the year’s accomplishments. Among them:

- **Reorganized Shorthorn staff in all areas in line with the new publication strategy.** Included in this realignment were creation of a Digital Development Team, expansion of The Shorthorn Marketing Team, creation of a Digital/Social Media resource position in Advertising, and creation of a Community Engagement Editor and a second Managing Edition position in the Newsroom. In addition to providing for content, support and marketing needs of the new strategy, it also provides updated learning opportunities for students. In some areas, that reorganization is still a work in progress, but it’s definitely headed in the right direction.
- **Incorporated print editions of Shorthorn special sections into the new strategy:** They’re popular with readers, profitable for The Shorthorn and provide important experiential learning for Shorthorn staff in all areas in conceiving, planning and producing the publications.

By objective measures, the new plan is off to a very strong start (even though at year’s end the transition appears to be a multi-year process instead of the one-year process that had been envisioned):

- **Increased regular Shorthorn readership among UTA students by more than 20 percent.** (Source: Shorthorn surveys of UTA student body, spring 2013 and spring 2011)
- **Re-established The Shorthorn as the leading source of UTA news and information for students.** (Source: Shorthorn survey of UTA student body, spring 2013.)
- **Maintained revenue from local advertising sales at near-previous levels.**
• **The Shorthorn was again recognized nationally and within Texas.** The print-digital combination was named one of the six best college newspaper in the nation by the Columbia Scholastic Press Association, which awarded The Shorthorn a Gold Crown, its highest award. The Shorthorn website –theshorthorn.com – was a finalist for the Associated Collegiate Press’ Pacemaker award, widely considered the top national award in college media. The Shorthorn also received the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association’s Sweepstakes Award, its top award. In all, The Shorthorn, theshorthorn.com and individual staffers were recognized with more than 50 state, regional and national awards. (A complete list of awards is included later in this report.)

• Continued to provide work and career preparation experience valued by students: 96 percent of Shorthorn staff members during the fall semester (including students who do not plan to pursue careers in journalism, advertising, marketing or other media-related fields) said the experience gained at The Shorthorn provided valuable career-preparation experience or aided them in making career choices. (Source: Shorthorn Staff Survey, December 2012)

• Awarded more than $30,000 in scholarships to Shorthorn staff members.

• Reorganized Student Publications professional staff necessitated by elimination of department Administrative Assistant position.

• Provided subsidized tutoring support to all Shorthorn staff members.

• Achieved 100 percent encryption status for departmental laptop computers.

**Accomplishments by department within The Shorthorn:**

**Shorthorn Newsroom**

• Created a daily news report, the Shorthorn Headlines Daily Digest, which is emailed to subscribers at 8 a.m. Monday-Friday and other days as news warrants. At the end of the spring semester, Daily Digest had almost 37,000 subscribers and at year’s-end was the No. 1 driver of Shorthorn readership. This met the need for a daily Shorthorn news report and also reflected survey results that email is UTA students’ preferred method to receive news and information.

• Reorganized editing and design staffs to incorporate needs of an all-day editing/publishing operation to meet current news and readership needs, all within the context of student schedules.

• **Challenges:**
  o Seeing The Shorthorn as one publication with several products and platforms (print-online-email-mobile-social media) instead of a print publication with add-ons is proving to be a more complicated transition than anticipated. The plan going into the fall semester, in retrospect, was overly ambitious. Tweaks to that plan were needed and often were envisioned and executed well. Occasional missteps along the way were to be expected. But as the year progressed, when faced with a challenge about how to produce content (and utilize staff and other finite resources) appropriate for each platform and technology, Shorthorn editors sometimes gravitated back into their traditional print comfort zone rather than understanding, embracing and learning the needs and the possibilities (and overcoming the challenges) associated with the redefined publication, which was one reason the new plan was developed. At year’s end, the Shorthorn’s products were well established but producing content appropriate to each was still a work in progress. Work groups for summer 2013 will focus on finding the right print/digital mix and developing processes, skills and job definitions needed to “right-size” the combination for next year.
  o The continued reduction in resources to provide supplemental training for Shorthorn Newsroom staff affected student development.

**Shorthorn Advertising Department**

• Increased revenue from local advertising over the previous year through an aggressive strategy of retaining advertisers in The Shorthorn print edition, increasing advertising on theshorthorn.com, providing advertising presence in new Shorthorn products and continuing to explore and grow other revenue streams related to The Shorthorn. These included:
The Shorthorn’s 5th Annual Housing Fair was a success, generating $24,606 revenue even though even though less space was available for vendors due to the new UC usage guidelines. Creative selling ideas were used to avoid potential revenue loss.

- The Shorthorn’s Dining Guide realized an 18 percent increase in revenue from prior year.
- The Shorthorn produced a Safety Guide as a service to students and a revenue-producer for Student Publications.

- Increased revenue from online advertising 230 percent.
- Developed advertising tools, pricing and strategies for all new Shorthorn products, including the mobile apps, Facebook and the Daily Digest enewsletter.
- Created a student staff position to take the lead on social media advertising.

**Challenges:**
- Revenue from national advertisers continued to fall sharply for The Shorthorn as it is falling for college media nationwide. Student Publications’ plan to address this decline could not be implemented due to staff changes.

**Shorthorn Marketing Team**
- Shifted resources to promote expanded marketing initiatives for The Shorthorn. Increased staffing for Shorthorn Marketing Team from two positions to three.
- Organized first-ever Shorthorn fall semester kick-off event, to promote The Shorthorn's "NEWs FRONTIER" digital-first publication plan.
- Used analytic about usage of various Shorthorn products to help all Shorthorn work areas maximize results. (Combining data from various analytics reports is still a work in progress.)
- Promoted The Shorthorn print edition, online edition, enewsletter, mobile apps, Facebook page and other products and content at more than 15 scheduled university events including Welcome Week events, Homecoming, Bed Races, Parent and Family Weekend, athletics events and other regular activities, and at 30 weekly on-campus events through the fall and spring semesters. (Creative marketing initiatives included a "Clue-a-Day Giveaway" readership contest to increase newsletter readership and Facebook "Likes".)
- Handed out more than 7,000 pieces of branded promotional material including T-shirts, bags, sunglasses, pens, planners, koozies, rally towels, pens, megaphones and hand fans.

**Challenges:**
- Our intent to expand the scope as well as the level of marketing and promotional efforts had to be delayed in large part because the staff member assigned to lead and direct this expansion was assigned to other temporary responsibilities related to Student Publications staffing realignment.

**Shorthorn Production Department**
- Planned, researched and executed migration of The Shorthorn’s website and archives to a new content management system (BLOX) and host with enhanced capabilities and technical support, and provided training on the new CMS tailored to individual Shorthorn work group needs. (In most years, this alone would have been a major initiative in itself.)
- Worked with iCampusTimes to develop and launch iPhone, Android and iPad apps for mobile devices. The apps access both news and advertising content.
- Developed The Shorthorn mobile edition for other tablets.
- Created a three-person Digital Development Team to work with other departments to meet digital and interactive content needs of the Shorthorn products, information needs of Shorthorn multiplatform readers and experience needs of Shorthorn staff members. Incorporating this group’s work into The Shorthorn operation is still a work in progress.)

**Challenges:**
- Leading student staff to think in terms of digital content possibilities and in turn utilizing Digital Development Team staffers effectively had several starts and stops. A work group for summer 2013 will focus on incorporating DDT members into planning and content production processes for all Shorthorn departments.
Student Publications and professional staff

- Provided funding for approximately 25 student employees to attend regional, state and national conventions for skills development, recognition and career development.
- By Aug. 31, will have completed realignment of responsibilities that began in April 2012. 2012-13 was a year of staff transition, organizationally and staff-wise. Realignment will enable a large expansion in attention needed for Shorthorn marketing expansion. But plans to attempt to increase revenue from national advertisers had to be shelved because of reduced staff capacity.
- **Challenges:**
  - Across the board and in all Shorthorn areas, recruiting and retaining qualified staff and preparing enough students with needed skills and experience to take on leadership positions in continued to be a challenge in all areas.
  - This year's accomplishments would not have been remotely possible except for the commitment and talent of Student Publications professional staff. Student Publications professional staff were in transition all year: realignment of positions and responsibilities, staff departures and hiring, limited training for new staff due to the Define/PeopleSoft transition. Professional staff members should be highly commended for maintaining stability of operation and support for student needs during this very unusual year. This stability allowed student learning and student success to continue to occur without missing a beat.

The CAS external review team a couple of years ago commented that Student Publications is consistently high-achieving in an environment with limited internal and external resources to help prepare students for the cocurricular opportunities and challenges that Student Pubs provides. That report suggested that at some point, Student Publications might need to reconsider goals and expectations for possible “right-sizing” to match resources. With the digital first transition still a work in progress, and with addition of ad sales and production for the University directory and apartment guide added for next year, Student Publications is at (and possibly a little over) capacity for current staffing and resources. Anything else new that's added to staff responsibilities and expectations, either by internal or external decision, may necessitate letting go of something that currently exists.

3. Assessment Highlights

- The publication changes implemented this year were the result of research, assessment and surveys conducted as far back as 2007 but especially student surveys in 2011, staff work groups in 2012 and research and analysis by Student Publications professional staff. Every change implemented was a direct result of research and assessment. For example, replacing four print issues of The Shorthorn each week with one print edition and daily publication online was a direct result of analysis of Shorthorn readership trends and student survey results. Delivering the new daily news digest by email was a direct result of student survey results that found that more UTA students prefer to receive news and information by email than from other delivery methods. And so forth.
- **Learning Outcomes**
  - The Shorthorn Newsroom’s learning outcome stated that section editors and reporters with more than one semester of experience will demonstrate the ability to report and write stories that reflect second-semester reporter levels outline in the Student Publications schedule of competencies. The newsroom met criteria for success outlined in the Learning Outcomes document.
  - The Shorthorn Advertising and Production departments’ combined learning outcome stated that members of the advertising sales and design teams will demonstrate the ability to sell and produce advertising packages that include print, online and digital advertising for The Shorthorn. Although anecdotal evidence supports the conclusion that the outcome was met (by the presence of
all types of advertising mentioned), assessment using criteria listed in the Learning Outcomes document was not possible because of imprecise coding of sales data that prevented extracting the data sets needed for this assessment.

4. Academic Collaborations

- Newsroom adviser Beth Francesco is co-advisor of the UTA student chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. Through this, she plans programming that benefits Shorthorn staff for training and networking.
- Worked with the academic partners (College of Liberal Arts, Department of Communication) to recruit Shorthorn staff and explain benefits of experiential learning that takes place in Student Publications.
- Worked with academic partners in the Department of Communication to encourage students who cannot commit to working at The Shorthorn to submit their classwork for consideration from editors for publication in The Shorthorn. This netted a handful of stories this spring, and we hope to continue to find ways to collaborate in the coming year. In particular, we will work with reporting classes to provide content for special sections.

5. Awards and Accolades

**College Media Association Board of Directors Citation** for work as managing editor of CMR Review, the organization’s professional journal, Beth Francesco Currie

**Shorthorn Awards**

**Associated Collegiate Press**

- National Award
- **Online Pacemaker Award**, finalist, theshorthorn.com

**Columbia Scholastic Press Association**

- National Award
- **Gold Crown Award** (overall excellence, print and online), The Shorthorn and theshorthorn.com

**College Newspaper Business and Advertising Managers**

- National Award
- 2\(^{nd}\) Place, Best Advertising Rate Card, The Shorthorn

**Texas Intercollegiate Press Association 2013 awards**

**Sweepstakes:** The Shorthorn

**Best of Show:** The Shorthorn

**Individual awards**

- Photojournalist of the Year: Michael Minasi
- Editor/Director of the Year: Dustin Dangli
- Reporter of the Year: Krista Torralva

**First place awards:**
- General Column: Milad Minooie (Sanctions on Iran double cost of tuition)
- Photo Illustration: Casey Holder (Basketball Preview cover)
- Page One Design: Lorraine Frajkor (June 20, 2012)
- Best Blog: Sarah Lutz (Cyc-ology)
- Best Slide Show: Casey Holder (What's it's like to be a Maverick volleyball player)

**Second place awards:**
- Overall Excellence in Newspapers
- Feature Page Design: Lorraine Frajkor (Barbecue on a budget)
- News Feature Story: Shelly Williams (Missing class can affect grades and pocketbook)
Best Blog: Ann Mai (Broccoli Bulletin)
Best Breaking News Online: Ashley Bradley, Krista Torralva (Police lock down School of Social Work)

**Third place awards:**
- Feature Page Design: Mason LaHue "Be your own brew"
- Ad Design: Skye Leung (Housing Fair)
- Information Graphic: Ben Ohene, Gus Contreras, Josh McCollough (Volleyball injuries)
- Picture Story: Erika Dupree (Storm shocks …)
- Sports Feature Photo: Michael Minasi (Pre-game rituals…)
- Feature Story: Alyssa Demeter (Building Focus)
- News Photo: Richard Hoang (Day after Destruction)
- Editorial: Editorial Board (Define Life Threatening)
- Sports Action Photo: Michael Minasi (Slamming with Success)
- Illustration (nonphoto): Venecia Jones (Drowning in clichés)
- News Story: Lindsey Juarez, Johnathan Silver (The Day After Destruction)
- News Feature Story: Brandon Gray (Student works toward the American dream)
- Page One Design: Jose Enriquez (April 24, 2012)
- Best Video: Richard Hoang (One Night without a Home)
- Best Interactivity: The Shorthorn staff
- Best Use of Multimedia Package: Natalie Webster, Krista Torralva (Elevators database)

**Honorable mention awards:**
- General Web Site Excellence
- Feature Photo: Stephanie Goddard (Civil engineering freshman …)
- Sports News Story: Travis Detherage (Baker: UTA’s keeping its options open)
- News Photo: Casey Holder (Marchers: Justice for Trayvon)
- Single Subject Design: Jose Enriquez (Oozing orange and blue)
- General Column: Jack Simmons (Texas economy could not survive…)
- Headline: Staff
- Opinion/Editorial Page Design: Mason LaHue (Sept. 5, 2012)
- Photo Illustration: Richard Hoang (Overcoming homesickness)
- Critical Review: Sara Henkelman (Taylor Swift’s ‘Red’ continues…)
- Sports Page Design: Lorraine Frajkor (Feb. 15, 2012)
- In-Depth Reporting: Johnathan Silver (Where does UTA stand in the Tier One race?)

**On-site contests**

**Honorable mention:**
- Feature Writing: Ryan Waggoner
- Newspaper Design: Natalie Webster
- Headlines: Bekah Tomlin

**Scholarship**
Photographer **Casey Holder** received the Jeff Henderson scholarship, the largest TIPA scholarship.

**Society of Professional Journalists Region 8 Awards**

**Texas and Oklahoma**

**First place**
- Online sports reporting: Casey Holder (The Life of a Volleyball Player)
- Online in-depth reporting: Krista Torralva (Elevator story)

**Second place**
- Best affiliated web site
- Best newspaper
- Editorial writing: Staff
- Photo illustration: Casey Holder (Basketball Preview cover)

**College Media Association Best of Collegiate Design**
- Best Nameplate, third place