

## **Minutes of the October 29, 2021 Ad Hoc Meeting of the ASUCLA Communications Board**

**Board members present:** Jessica Behmanesh, Jesse Coronado, Andrea Gambino, Steve Greim, Tim Groeling, Alexandre (Alex) Holt, Ye Jin (Jeanie) Kwon, Sylvia Robledo, Navdha Sharma, Samira Singleton, Doria Deen

**Board members absent:** Judy Hernandez, Shantall Medina

**Guests present:** Sophia Li (BruinLife Managing Editor), Katelyn Su (BruinLife Copy Chief), Leonardo Aguas (BruinLife Editor in Chief), Alexa Iovine (BruinLife Marketing Editor), Janiece Cabatu (BruinLife Video Editor), Sasha Fuson (BruinLife Layout Editor), Amanda Chhouk (BruinLife Marketing Editor)

### **Agenda**

#### **I. Call to order (Gambino)**

Gambino called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

#### **I. Approval of the agenda (Gambino)**

Groeling asked to add public comment to the agenda to give space for the BruinLife staff to speak to their issues.

Robledo moved to approve the amended agenda. Greim seconded the motion. The motion passed by consent.

#### **II. Public Comment (Gambino)**

Aguas and his staff introduced themselves, and they expressed to the board that they wanted to follow up with the Communications Board regarding their previous decision to continue working with ASUCLA Campus Photo Studio instead of working with BruinLife Photo Studio solely. Aguas said he contacted other schools to see what their practice was, and he said the schools usually choose their own photo studio. He said he felt it was within BruinLife's editorial rights to choose how their senior portraits looked in the yearbook, so they wanted to work with BruinLife's studio instead of ASUCLA Campus Photo Studio. Aguas said that he didn't like that the students were being asked to pay an additional fee to be in the yearbook. They thought that Campus Photo Studio would pass along the sitting fees they collected to BruinLife, but instead they continued to charge their own sitting fee and told students that they'd have to pay an additional \$15 to be in the yearbook. Aguas said he felt that discouraged students from opting into the book. Coronado said historically BruinLife didn't take their own photos. He said they started several years back when Arvli Ward was director, and they saw an opportunity to bring it in-house. Campus Photo Studio used to sell most of our yearbooks, but slowly their sales have been in decline. Coronado said he saw legitimate reasons to either meet

with Campus Photo Studio to discuss these issues or inform them that we've decided that it was in our best interest and the best interest of BruinLife to bring it all in-house. He said if we decided to go in-house, we'd need time to inform Campus Photo Studio. Groeling asked why not do an ultimatum with clear terms and let them know that if the changes are not made then we will go out on our own? Aguas said it was because they had asked them to do things in the past that they have not done. He said he did agree with Coronado, that the relationship shouldn't be ended abruptly, but their deadline for this school year would be the end of January anyway, so it would end at that point. Groeling said that from what he's heard thus far, Campus Photo Studio has been responsive to our needs, even though there may be inconsistencies, but it seems they have complied. Fuson said lately things having been going to smoothly, and it hurts us a business. She said they have their own studio who works hand-in-hand with their editorial staff, so working with Campus Photo Studio really drags down their production and hurts BruinLife in the long run because Campus Photo Studio wasn't marketing our book, they sold no books last year or thus far this year, and they've removed our yearbooks from their display. Groeling suggested presenting a memorandum of understanding to Campus Photo Studio with clear expectations. Greim said he's hearing that the staff no longer wants to work with Campus Photo Studio, and their looking for a way to do that, not that they want to find ways to continue working with them. Both Robledo and Aguas asked to hear from the student members on the board. Singleton said she believed the first step was to conduct a formal proposal to ASUCLA providing them specifically of what BruinLife needs. She said based on what she's heard in the meeting, she felt that BruinLife was communicating their concerns to Campus Photo Studio, but it didn't seem to be consistent. She also expressed concern over the new workload involved in taking over all yearbook portraits. She wanted to make sure the staff had adequate time to handle the additional work. Iovine said she understood the board's point of view, but she felt like this wasn't a business decision. She felt the matter was regarding BruinLife's editorial independence to be able to make the decision to use a product that was created for BruinLife by BruinLife instead of using a third party. Coronado said editorial independence entailed the board telling BruinLife how to produce the yearbook or the board getting involved with details and procedures of how to process pictures. He said the board never gets involved on that level. He said the board doesn't tell the publications what to write. He said the only things they comment on are things that are under their purview, and he felt that contracts were under the board's purview. Behmanesh said she heard the editorial board and understand all their points of view. She said she felt it was important to convey BruinLife's concerns to Campus Photo Studio and discuss the issue of editorial independence. She said since she is a lawyer, if the board decides to take the route of drafting a contract or memorandum of understanding, she was there to help in any way possible. Gambino summarized the discussions and echoed the points of the importance to communicating BruinLife's needs to Campus Photo Studio, or if severance

was going to be the option, to work on plans on how to prepare and how to best move forward.

### **New Business/Action Items**

#### **III. Executive Session (Gambino)**

Greim moved to enter executive session at 2:06 p.m. Coronado seconded the motion. The motion passed by a member vote of 10-0 with no abstentions.

Greim moved to exit executive session at 2:31 p.m. Robledo seconded the motion. The motion passed by a member vote of 10-0 with no abstentions.

Groeling moved to have the board work with BruinLife to generate a memorandum of understanding with ultimatum fall back with a deadline of January 31, 2021 or we would sever the relationship with Campus Photo Studio. Coronado seconded the motion. The motion passed by a member vote of 8-2 with no abstentions.

#### **IV. Adjourn (Gambino)**

Groeling moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:32 p.m. Coronado seconded the motion. The motion passed by consent.