

S&A Annual Financial Report Supplemental Questionnaire

The Observer

- 1. Please provide an explanation of how the program plans to spend the budget in each line item of the Annual Financial Report. Items that are vague, such as "contract services" should be clearly explained. Please include an explanation of increases or decreases from the previous year's expenses.**

- *Salaries & Benefits – Partial funding for a full-time staff position (10-month cyclic) is covered by the base allocation The Observer receives from S&A. This full-time staff position is the Student Media Business Manager who manages not only The Observer but the other student-media outlets of PULSE magazine, CentralNewsWatch and Wildcat Films. The increase in the staff salary for FY19 is due to the position being vacant for a portion of FY18. Also included in salaries and benefits is student employment. A portion of The Observer's base allocation is spent on paid student leadership positions. 10 newsroom positions total plus a student advertising representative and two delivery crew positions. Each position is a student employee of the university. The increase in FY19's student employment line item was due to the minimum wage increase.*
- *Goods & Services – The majority of The Observer's goods and services expenses are for the weekly printing of the student-led newspaper. The Observer prints nine times per quarter for a total of 27 issues for the academic year in addition to a summer/orientation issue. We have an active contract with Wenatchee World to print the publication. Other goods and services include a Xerox printer lease, professional membership dues, award entry fees, some travel expenses and minimal supplies.*

- 2. What was your fund balance at the end of the year? If positive or negative, please provide a detail explanation.**

The Observer's fund balance at the end of FY19 was \$41,174 which was largely due to self-supported revenue through advertising sales.

- 3. Have alternative (non-S&A Fee) funding sources been pursued to the fullest possible extent? If yes, please elaborate. Please list all funding received for this program and the source(s) of the funding.**

Funding sources have been pursued in the form of generating self-support revenue through advertisement sales, both print and digital.

The Observer receives funding from the following sources:

- *Services and Activities fee base allocation: \$54,365*
- *Revenue (ad sales): \$48,679*
- *Foundation account: approx. \$1,000*
- *College of Arts & Humanities Dean's Office: Partial funding for FTE staff position (student-media business manager)*

4. Are there any long-term obligations or contracts associated with this funding request?

We have an active contract with Wenatchee World for the printing of The Observer.

5. Does your program provide employment opportunities for students? Please explain the nature of student employment within your unit, including total FTE and number of students employed.

Yes. The Observer hires approx. 10 student employees into leadership positions. The positions include Editor-in-Chief (EIC), Section Editors (three – news, sports, scene and photography), Graphic Designers, Online and Social Media Manager, Senior Reporters, Copy Desk Chief and Assistant. In addition, two delivery crew members are hired. This position entails the delivery of The Observer and PULSE magazine. A student sales representative is also hired who prospects and sells advertisements for The Observer and PULSE.

EIC applicants are interviewed by the Student Media Board (SMB). The SMB conducts interviews and appoints the selected leader into the EIC position. One of the EIC's responsibilities is to recommend students for the remaining paid student-leadership staff positions from a pool of applicants. This responsibility helps create a sense of leadership and provides a learning experience of developing and leading an effective team. The students on the paid leadership staff are going above and beyond the required course hours and assignments to solely produce, with mentorship from the faculty advisor, the weekly student-led newspaper for Central Washington University.

Student leadership staff consists of students from across the university. These positions are not solely reserved for journalist students but instead attract students from across all disciplines such as social sciences, film, art + design, public relations, and marketing to name a few.

The Student Media Business Manager (Program Support Supervisor 2) is a full-time position that The Observer budget partially funds. This is a 10-month cyclic position in which the staff person is responsible for all four student media outlets (The Observer, PULSE, CentralNewsWatch and Wildcat Films). This position provides fiscal management, human resource support and advertising support among other things.

6. How many students utilize the services and activities provided by your program? Describe how statistics are obtained and provide demographics as applicable.

The Observer is a free publication available to all students, staff, faculty and community members. There are over 40 locations on- and off-campus where the publications are distributed on newsstands and restocked weekly. Students are free to take an issue at any time they are available on the newsstands. Nine issues per quarter are produced, with 1,500 copies printed each time. In addition, a summer/orientation issue is produced at the end of spring quarter. This issue is distributed in incoming student's orientation packets and stocked at newsstands throughout the summer.

To date, The Observer has a combined social media following of 5,456 with over 50% in the 18-34 age range. The Observer utilizes Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. The Observer is also published on ISSUU. The Observer also has a digital presence at cwuobserver.com. Average impressions are approximately 10,000 per month.

Students (both paid and non-paid/for credit only) who contribute to The Observer are gaining real-life, practical experience through their involvement and contributions to the production of the newspaper. These students, just like all other CWU students, contribute to S&A fees. The impact being involved in The Observer is infinite in many instances. The skills learned in the practicum that is The Observer help create a foundation for the success many graduates see after their time at CWU and helps open an array of career opportunities for students.

The Observer is mailed to all university centers throughout the state and reaches those university students not on the main Ellensburg campus. While every effort is made to ensure delivery every week, University centers will call and ask for the publication if they have not received their copies.

7. How do you assess the effectiveness of the services and activities you provide to students? Is student input collected and used in this process?

The effectiveness of the service we provide to the students is reflected in the fact that students look to The Observer as a source of information and can expect to have their voices heard.

The input that students give is immeasurable in the fact that The Observer is student-led. Students are pitching story ideas, interviewing sources, writing, designing, photographing. The whole publication and digital content online are student-produced. Advisers mentor students but have no control over the editorial content of the publication.

Students who work on The Observer have the chance to provide feedback at mid- and end-of-term. Feedback ranges from the leadership and effectiveness of leadership staff and faculty adviser to the quality of the paper.

Whether it be following up on a lead from a suggestion made on social media or covering student sponsored events and forums, the student leadership staff and students who are taking the class for credit-only always have an eye out for newsworthy topics.

Also, the effectiveness of The Observer can be looked at through a business perspective in the fact that local businesses and university departments see The Observer as an effective way to achieve exposure to the student population.

8. Does your program have an advisory committee? If so, in what capacity is it involved in your budgeting process?

The Student Media Board (SMB) acts as PULSE's advisory committee. As per the Student Media Board Charter, Article II, Section J: The SMB shall approve annual budgets for its operations and

all programs under its jurisdiction, and forward them to the Services and Activities Fee Committee of Central Washington University for final approval.

SMB is comprised of three faculty outside of the Communication department (two voting, one non-voting chair), a staff member from Public Affairs, a professional journalist and a member of the community. In addition, six student members are represented on the board including the lead paid-student staff position from each student media outlet (four total – PULSE, CentralNewsWatch, The Observer, and Wildcat Films) a student from The Burg and one student nominated by the Equity Services Council or the Student Academic Senate. Media outlet advisers and the business manager serve as ex-officio, non-voting members.

The SMB's principal purpose is to provide oversight and support the free and open exchange of ideas through student-run media outlets at Central Washington University. The SMB will protect the students' rights to free speech and press and provide a public forum to address issues involving media outlets and agencies.

9. What would be the impact to students if this program's funding were increased by 15-20%? What would be the impact to students if this program's funding were decreased by 15-20%?

If funding was increased by 15-20% that would make our base allocation between \$62,519 and \$65,238. With the increase in funding The Observer could employ one of a number of ideas:

- *Create a new student leadership position
 - o *New positions we would explore are: Street teams, marketing coordinator, circulation data team, or digital/social media analytics person.**
- *Distribute extra hours to already established positions with the addition of extra responsibilities.*
- *Expand and further utilize self-promotion and marketing materials such as swag, social media page boosts, contests/giveaways*
- *Fund a minimal portion of conference travel such as registration fees*
- *Purchase new equipment
 - o *Podcast equipment, multimedia equipment, new computer stations.**
- *Cover the increase in printing costs*

If funding was decreased by 15-20% that would make our base allocation between \$46,210 and \$43,492. Beyond impacting students on the The Observer leadership staff since it would potentially put student staff-positions in jeopardy it would also impact students in the following ways:

- *Quality of publication would suffer due to the decrease in responsibilities and benchmarks that are currently necessary in the achievement of producing a student-led newspaper at the quality of which students and the university has become accustomed to.*
- *A decrease in the number of issues printed which would negatively affect not only the reach and impact on students, but also the draw for potential advertisers.*
- *The already minimal amount of promotional materials we utilize would diminish.*

10. What are your program goals or learning/operational objectives? How are you assessing the effectiveness of your program in achieving those targets?

The Observer's goals and learning objectives are two-fold: We strive to serve the campus community by covering issues and events that impact the lives of CWU students, staff and faculty. The newspaper also is a practical training ground for student journalists, enabling them to practice the skills, mindsets and ethical tools they've learned in the classroom, which is essential to their success in the professional world.

Specifically, The Observer is intended to:

- Provide practical journalism training for interested students.*
- Fairly and impartially report news of the university and the larger community.*
- Provide a needed communication link between elements of the university community.*

As for "assessing effectiveness," we believe a solid independent assessment of the quality of the paper can be found in the fact that The Observer garnered nine 2018 Mark of Excellence Awards from The Society of Professional Journalists' Region 10, which covers schools in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Alaska. The Observer is in the highly competitive "large school" category (for schools with enrollment over 10,000), putting our students' work against students in programs many times its size. Further, at the Associated Collegiate Press's Midwinter National College Journalism Convention in La Jolla, California, The Observer placed 6th in the weekly newspaper category among participating schools with an enrollment of more than 10,000 students, and 7th in the four-year school website category. These awards are in addition to decades worth of awards The Observer has received.

We also assess effectiveness of reaching the goals by evaluating our reach. We strive to meet our community members "where they are." Whether through print, online or social media, The Observer stands as a reputable source of information for students, the campus community and surrounding area.