**Services & Activities Fee Annual Program Review**

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| Program Name: | The Observer |
| Program Manager: | Gretchen Lohse |
| Fiscal Year: | FY2024 |

1. In what way(s) does your program support CWU students? Please be specific and concise.

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| The Observer is the student-led newspaper available to the entire CWU student population— both in hard copy and online at https://cwuobserver.com. Distribution points also make it available to all CWU faculty and staff as well as a large portion of the Ellensburg community. It is also delivered to CWU campus university centers throughout the state. With faculty adviser guidance, the student leadership staff directs and leads a team to cover, write and assemble information relevant to students, CWU and the community. The Observer keeps the campus and local community informed of stories and issues at and relevant to CWU, providing reporting and coverage on topics such as news, features, profiles, sports, events, community and national issues, and much more. Student employees can also include advertising sales representatives and distributors. All students gain valuable, real-world experience with working in a newsroom, journalistic professionalism, teamwork, management and working under deadlines. The Observer’s students come from various programs and majors on campus, and the opportunity to form part of The Observer staff is open to any CWU student. The Observer also continues to win regional and national awards for its work. A minimum of 8 and up to 20 student employees make up the editorial and leadership staff. With mentorship from a faculty adviser in the Media and Journalism program, students oversee the entire production of the newspaper – from conceiving of ideas and laying out the pages, to reporting, writing, editing and photographing stories. Students also promote the magazine on and offline. They rose the challenges of reporting during a pandemic. |

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

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| Students writing stories and producing other content for The Observer learn how to communicate effectively to broad audiences, identify and properly label facts vs opinions, employ news values to select information, and apply ethical standards to the gathering of newsworthy information. Students in paid staff positions at The Observer also learn invaluable leadership skills, copyediting techniques, layout design, best online and social media practices, marketing, advertising, and media relations skills. We assess the targets through a weekly critique, performed in class by and with the support of the faculty adviser, of the published product. The faculty adviser also conducts an ongoing evaluation of the paid staff culminating in a mid-quarter and end-of-quarter assessment of said staff |

1. What is the overall purpose of your program and what service(s) does your program provide?
   1. Are there overlaps or intersections with other university programs that have similar purposes or services?

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| The Observer keeps the campus and local community informed of stories and issues at and relevant to CWU, providing reporting and coverage on topics such as news, features, profiles, sports, events, community and national issues, and much more. The operations and service that The Observer provides intersect with those of the other student media: PULSE magazine and Central News Watch. However, the newsrooms of the three outlets operate separately because they produce different kinds of news and feature stories. They may sometimes cover the same topics, but they generally do so from different angles dictated by the characteristics of the different media: different schedules, formats, and to some extent audiences. |

1. How does your program align with the purpose of S&A funding? “*Supporting cocurricular and extracurricular activities and programs participated in by students in the furtherance of their education*.”

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| All students gain valuable, real-world experience with working in a newsroom, journalistic professionalism, teamwork, management and working under deadlines. By working for The Observer, students put in practice knowledge that they learn in virtually all the courses that they take at CWU. |

1. Please provide specifics on how your program supports and aligns with CWU’s strategic plan (<https://www.cwu.edu/about/mission-vision/_documents/cwu-vision-mission-values-strat-plan-bot-approved.pdf>)?

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| CWU’s mission states that “In order to build a community of equity and belonging, Central Washington University nurtures culturally sustaining practices that expand access and success to all students. We are committed to fostering high impact practices, sustainability, and authentic community partnerships that are grounded in meaningful relationships.” The Observer is a high-impact practice offer that allows all CWU students interested in it to practice the written and oral communication skills that the General Education Program aims to teach, learn leadership skills, enjoy their First Amendment rights, and build a professional portfolio for job hunting purposes. The student-run newspaper provides an independent voice (that of CWU’s students—not CWU’s Administration or faculty) that shares information about CWU and the Ellensburg community necessary to pursue the “sustainability,” “meaningful relationships” and “authentic community partnerships” indicated by the University’s mission. |

1. Please provide detailed information regarding who utilizes your program? (*Students, faculty, staff, community? Specific demographic information? Class standing, gender, ethnicity, transfer, campus location, etc*.)

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| The Observer is a student-run operation supported by the College of Arts and Humanities through the professional and academic advising provided by faculty and staff of the Department of Communication. The program is open to and utilized by undergraduate students of all demographics (including gender, race and ethnicity), class standing, transfer and nontransfer status. Because the courses taken by students to participate in the operations of The Observer are typically offered in person on the Ellensburg campus, students enrolled on other campuses are rarely on staff. |

1. How many unique CWU students utilize your program or services?
   1. How do you gather these metrics?
   2. If you do not, what is preventing you from getting that data and how are you determining usage by CWU students?

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| All 9,000+ students enrolled at CWU are served by and have access to The Observer, which is a free publication. Between the Winter quarter of 2022 and the Fall quarter of 2023, 45 unique students have taken COM 444 which is the course in which students enroll to produce content for The Observer. Of those students, 22 were journalism majors, 2 Communication majors, and 6 Public Relations majors; the remaining 15 were pursuing majors or minors in Art, Business Administration, Psychology, English, Film, Social Sciences, and STEM Teaching. Students who take on leadership roles, which are paid positions, in The Observer take COM 444 more than once.  a. An Oracle PeopleSoft (CWU’s internal software) query allows the Department Chair and Secretary Supervisor to access the roster of the course taken by students who work for The Observer.  b. N/A. |

1. Are there any current vacant positions in your program?

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| There are no vacant positions currently. |

1. Given the budget reductions taking place, and continuing for the remainder of the funding cycle, please tell us what specific impacts those reductions have had on your program compared to what was originally planned and included in your initial base funding request.

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| To curb expenses as a consequence of the reduced S&A allocation, we reduced the number of copies of The Observer to the minimum for the printing company to be willing to print the paper. However, rampant inflation and supply chain disruptions following the Covid-19 pandemic have offset some of those savings. In addition, minimum wage adjustments chip off The Observer’s budget each year. We employed fewer students on staff and have also limited opportunities for traveling to conferences. |

1. Are there any circumstances or challenges that are currently impacting your ability to use your base funding allocation this year?

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| No. |

1. What other funding does your program receive? What percentage of your program’s total funding is coming from S&A Fees?

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| The Observer does accept revenue from selling advertisement space. This means that the amount varies drastically. In FY23, revenue was only 9.9%, and S&A provided 90.1% of The Observer funding. However, it is important to note that revenue is variable and some years maybe even less than 9.9%. The Observer survives off of S&A funding. |

1. What growth or expense increases do you anticipate seeing in the future?

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| The Observer is a solid program. We would like to see it grow further but the enrollment decline CWU has been experiencing does not realistically allows us to project it. |