

*These minutes received approval by the IRE Board of Directors via email and were finalized on November 11, 2022.*

- *Josh Hinkle moved for approval on November 9, 2022.*
- *Lam Thuy Vo seconded that motion and voted “yes” on November, 9, 2022.*
- *The final/total board vote was 11-0. Mark Walker and Barbara Rodriguez did not vote.*

## **IRE Board of Directors Meeting Minutes November 4, 2022 | Via Zoom**

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President Mark Walker called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. CST.

Secretary Josh Hinkle called roll:

- Directors present: Darla Cameron, Jodie Fleischer, Cindy Galli, Mark Greenblatt, Josh Hinkle, Kate Howard, Aaron Kessler, Barbara Rodriguez, Brian Rosenthal, Neena Satija, Lam Thuy Vo, Mark Walker and Simone Weichselbaum
- IRE staff present: Director of Member Services Amy Eaton, Financial Officer Heather Feldman Henry, Executive Director Diana Fuentes, Director of Programming & Resources Lauren Grandestaff, Director of Events Stephanie Klimstra, Director of Partnerships Anna Lopez and Director of Diversity & Inclusion Francisco Vara-Orta
- Other IRE members present: Scott Zamost

### **Executive Session**

Vice President Cindy Galli assumed control of the meeting and made a motion to enter into executive session at 10:10 a.m. CST. Hinkle seconded the motion.

- The motion received approval 11-0 by show of hands from directors present and voting at that time.
  - Walker and Treasurer Brian Rosenthal recused themselves due to a conflict of interest and left the meeting during executive session.
  - All staff but Executive Director Diana Fuentes left the meeting for the duration of the executive session.
  - IRE legal counsel Seth Berlin joined the executive session to answer any questions.

Fuentes gave an update on a membership issue related to the board’s executive session in September.

- At-Large Director Jodie Fleischer said the Governance Committee would be working on IRE membership requirements. Director Kate Howard and Galli reiterated the importance of this point.
- Berlin recommended reviewing IRE’s bylaws on this issue.

Galli made a motion to end the executive session at 10:25 a.m. CST. Satija seconded the motion.

- The motion received approval 11-0 by show of hands from directors present and voting at that time.

At 10:25 a.m. CST, Berlin left the meeting, and Rosenthal, staff and other attending IRE members rejoined the meeting.

## **Executive Director's Report**

### **Budget**

Fuentes and Financial Officer Heather Feldman Henry updated directors on the [organization's budget](#), including by saying IRE had received a renewed grant for Total Newsroom Training and fellowships for the upcoming year.

- Rosenthal asked how the additional money would be used in the proposed budget.
  - Fuentes explained the funds would pay for the Total Newsroom Training program over two years and for fellowships for conferences, meaning IRE will not need to use as much interest money as previously included in the original 2022-23 budget. She added staff would receive a 3% raise and that she plans to hire a deputy director in the future.

Walker rejoined and assumed control of the meeting at 10:33 a.m. CST.

### **DBEI Symposium 2022 Overview / Revenue Discussions**

Fuentes said the DBEI Symposium last month was a success and had made \$13,850 in profit, but there was low turnout and no sponsors. As a result, she said the event had brought in almost \$20,000 less than hoped.

- Fuentes added Access Fest and other virtual options in the next year would be filling some of the virtual/hybrid gap, as IRE will not have those options at the NICAR and IRE conferences in 2023.
- Howard asked who had sponsored the DBEI Symposium in 2020.
  - Director of Partnerships Anna Lopez said Facebook was a sponsor then. Despite there being no sponsors this year, Lopez said she was confident there will be sponsors for Access Fest next year.
- Rosenthal asked about Lopez's process for finding sponsors.
  - Lopez said she has been setting up meetings in recent months. She said the organization has currently raised \$40,000 in sponsorships for the upcoming NICAR Conference and \$60,000 in sponsorships for the upcoming IRE Conference. Those amounts make up 47 percent of the NICAR23 goal and 23 percent of the IRE23 goal, representing 28% of the organization's revenue goal for conference sponsorships for this fiscal year; the total goal is \$360,000.
- Fuentes said DBEI-related funding would likely be easier in 2023 since the event is rebranding and expanding to Access Fest. This process will start in January.
- Lopez reviewed revenue generated in FY21 and FY22. In FY22, IRE did not meet its sponsorship goal but exceeded its grant goal. She said individual donations increased from 2021 by 247%.
  - Walker requested a 10-year breakdown of fundraising goals and revenue for the next budget presentation at a future board meeting. Lopez said she could do that.
- Rosenthal asked how IRE sets fundraising goals.
  - Feldman Henry said she could not speak to the grant goals, but the sponsorship goals are based on the total budget - weighing whether IRE's conferences are profitable.
  - Fuentes said she is working with Lopez and Feldman Henry to reset IRE's financial goals for the future.
- Fleischer asked Lopez if there were any new donors or sponsors she had recruited recently.
  - Lopez replied that there were a handful of new sponsors.
  - Fleischer expressed the need to find new sponsors, grants and other donors to fill gaps where grants may not be available in the future.

- Director Mark Greenblatt asked about the University of Missouri School of Journalism dean's offer for fundraising assistance.
  - Walker replied more would be discussed later in his President's Report.
- Fuentes said there would be more details released soon about progress with the Jeff German Fund, which has gone past the \$60,000 mark. It will provide funding for fellowships and possibly training sessions. A workshop in the spirit of German's local investigative work in Las Vegas will be held in spring 2023.

### **CUNY Event**

Fuentes said the CUNY training event is set for January 20-21 and requested help from the board.

- Fuentes asked that directors email Director of Programming & Resources Lauren Grandestaff to offer assistance if they would be in New York City on those dates.
- Fuentes explained there will be two main rooms for larger sessions and hands-on classes in smaller rooms, but the expected large turnouts is a concern for fire code reasons and help will be needed to maintain attendance limits in each room.

### **NICAR Conference 2023**

Fuentes said 15 people have registered, so far, for the March NICAR Conference in Nashville.

- Director of Events Stephanie Klimstra said that number is typical for this time of year.
- Grandestaff said staff would be meeting next week to discuss programming and panels, including the possibility of hearing from the director of the census.

### **IRE Conference 2023**

Fuentes requested the board approve the IRE Conference 2023 rates during this meeting. She said the earlier date would allow outlets/attendees to spend this year's budget - in case they face spending freezes next year. Fuentes referred to the [rate breakdown sent to the board earlier this week](#), which proposed the following registration rates: \$349 early bird, \$399 regular, \$450 on site.

- Fuentes acknowledged the rates were higher than in past years. She said the hotel rate in Orlando is one of the lowest in recent years, and the registration rate has increased due to expected expense increases at the hotel venue for the conference - including the possible increase for food for the luncheon.
- Fuentes said the plan is to have more fellowships available at this conference than previous years.
- Galli said the Conference Committee had discussed the proposed rates and there were no objections from committee members to support them in front of the full board, given the understanding of why the rates had increased.
- Rosenthal questioned the projected attendee number being lowered from last year.
  - Feldman Henry explained it was a conservative projection.
- Fleischer requested a breakdown of early-bird vs. on-site registrants at previous conferences, including the last conference in Orlando to determine whether lowering the cost of the early-bird rate could be offset by increasing the cost of on-site registrations.
  - Klimstra said those metrics were not immediately available.
  - Klimstra and Director of Member Services Amy Eaton said the number of people registering on-site is very low, typically less than 50.
    - Rosenthal pointed out - for the last in-person conference - there were close to 100 attendees who registered in the week before the event and on-site.

- Director Neena Satija - a member of the Conference Committee - said she had reviewed historical data distributed by Rosenthal and she now had questions about the amount for this year's rate increase. She agreed a rate increase is likely needed.
  - Hinkle - also a Conference Committee member - concurred.
- Howard reiterated an earlier point about the low cost for the conference hotel rate meant the overall cost was the same or cheaper. She also said it would be important to get data on if attendees pay for themselves or if their employer pays.
- Director Aaron Kessler questioned if the deadline and amount for on-site registration should be reconsidered, since so few register on-site.
- Galli said the IRE conference has a much lower registration rate than many other journalism events and cautioned that the rates should not be qualified as such an extreme increase as it undermines the value of what members receive.
- Rosenthal said that while the hotel rate is low this year, it may not be in future years - and the higher registration rate currently proposed may set a bad precedent. He added that he thought the attendance projections were very conservative, and that the organization could afford to reduce the registration rates. Based on projected revenue estimates previously discussed, he made a motion to adjust the proposed rates to the following: Early bird \$325; Regular \$399; On-site \$450. Greenblatt and Kessler seconded the motion.
  - Satija asked for more details on the attendance projections.
    - Fuentes said staff does its best to make those estimates, but some years - like the recent Houston conference - have had higher attendance than the estimate. Fuentes also said, without the virtual component this year, the estimates had to be adjusted.
      - Feldman Henry noted projecting attendance would likely become easier as future conferences are further distanced from the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - Director Barbara Rodriguez expressed her concern with the originally proposed registration rate. She said she appreciated Rosenthal's motion and that she recognizes the appeal of being the most cost-efficient journalism conference for newsrooms considering spending money. She also added it would be important to discuss future rate increases/decreases sooner than later.
  - Kessler said the reduction in the early bird rate could be offset by possibly increasing the on-site rate. He asked if Rosenthal would be open to doing that..
    - Rosenthal said he preferred sticking with his proposal.
    - Walker said he would suggest that the board discuss the timelines for different rates in the future.
  - Rosenthal's motion passed by voice vote 12-0. Director Lam Thuy Vo was not present in the meeting at the time of the vote.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Rosenthal indicated items previously discussed would suffice for this portion, so the meeting could move forward.

## **Awards Committee Report**

Rodriguez made a motion to create two new longform awards categories (audio and video), outlined in her [previously-submitted document to the board](#). Walker seconded the motion.

- Director Darla Cameron questioned a portion of the language related to a “limit.”
  - Rodriguez and Grandestaff clarified that there would be no time limit for these categories.
- Hinkle expressed concern that video categories in general needed further review for equity purposes, considering outlet/platform type.
  - Director Simone Weichselbaum concurred with this point - specifically adding that network/newspaper/local documentaries could be largely different with different resources and funding.
- Howard asked for clarification on the description.
  - Grandestaff and Fuentes said the motion was to approve the new categories but descriptions could be adjusted as necessary.
  - Kessler added that getting one year of entries in these new categories would reveal possible future adjustments to the categories.
- Motion passed by show of hands 11-1. Weichselbaum voted “no.” Vo was not present in the meeting at the time of the vote.

Rodriguez made a motion to ask future award entrants to respond to a question about racial/ethnicity/gender of people on the entry. Howard seconded the motion.

- Motion passed by voice vote 12-0. Vo was not present in the meeting at the time of the vote.

## **Diversity Committee Report**

Rodriguez gave a general overview of early work with this newly-created committee.

## **Conference Committee Report**

Galli explained the committee’s work toward creating a FAQ document/page for future conference attendees, [referring to the committee report submitted earlier this week](#). She also said ideas were coming in for the upcoming NICAR Conference and that the committee will meet again this month to begin discussing the IRE Conference.

## **Training Committee Report**

Hinkle said the Training Committee [met last month to split into working groups](#) in the following areas: inclusivity/representation, local journalism, and advanced training/veteran members. The groups will work to finalize training recommendations for the board and staff to further consider by February.

- Hinkle said the committee’s [College Curriculum Task Force](#) has drafted a survey to send to MSI schools/contacts by the beginning of the year to ask for more detail about what they’d like to see in the toolkit to supplement their curriculum. The task force will meet later this month to finalize the survey before working with staff to send out.

## **President's Report**

### **University of Missouri Dean/Fundraising Update**

- Walker said he and Galli have spoken with the University of Missouri School of Journalism dean to discuss training surrounding fundraising for IRE. Details about who will be involved in the training are forthcoming. The goal is to complete it before the end of the year.
  - Walker added that he and Galli would be the point people for speaking with the university team about how it will work with the board on future fundraising opportunities, including grant-writing and meetings. Some of the conversations may be directed through the Finance Committee.
- Walker said he and Galli will be traveling to Columbia, Missouri, by the end of the month to discuss with the dean ways to offset the financial amount the university covers for IRE (\$62,000). He said Executive Committee members have discussed various ideas, and the dean has some ideas, as well. Walker also asked the board to email additional ideas to him or set up time to speak with him offline.
  - Galli concurred that this is a great opportunity to continue building the relationship between IRE and the university.

### **Committee Updates**

Walker said he plans to refine the description/purpose of the newly-created Public Engagement Committee. He will be emailing that language to the board for a vote soon. The next steps would be selecting a chair and other committee members.

- Hinkle asked about the duration of the committee.
  - Walker said it would be a committee that continues beyond a year, unlike a task force that is subject to a board year's timeframe.
- Rosenthal asked if the rest of the board's committees have been finalized.
  - Walker said all have been finalized, except some details surrounding the Audit Committee and the Awards/Contest Committee - which should be finalized likely in the next week.
  - Walker said Cameron would chair the Audit Committee, and its membership would be finalized soon.
  - Rosenthal asked that committee rosters be posted online for the membership as soon as they are finalized.
    - Walker agreed that they would be posted online.

Walker said he would be sending out the organization's strategic plan materials to the board to review ahead of its next meeting. He added the board would begin speaking soon about how to implement some of the suggestions from the Strategic Planning Task Force.

Walker moved to adjourn at 12:14 p.m. CST. Fleischer seconded.

- The motion was approved unanimously by voice vote of directors present. Vo was not present in the meeting at the time of the vote.