

*Note: The board approved these minutes by email on July 24, 2025.  
The vote was 12-0, with Caresse Jackman abstaining.*

# IRE Board of Directors

## IRE25 Board Meeting Minutes

2:00 p.m. CT | June 19, 2025

In person in New Orleans, La. and via Zoom

**Board members in attendance:** President Brian Rosenthal, Vice President Josh Hinkle, Treasurer Mark Greenblatt, Secretary Kate Howard, At-Large Member Ana Ley, Alejandra Cancino, Marina Villeneuve, Mary Hudetz, Paroma Soni, Cindy Galli, Jodie Fleischer, Andy Lehren, Tag Lee

**Staff members in attendance:** Lauren Grandestaff, Francisco Vara-Orta, Heather Feldmann Henry, Anna Lopez

**Guests include:** Dave Boardman, Tisha Thompson, Mark Horvit, Dean David Kurpius  
Several other members were in attendance in-person.

### I. Call to order

A. President Brian Rosenthal called the meeting to order around 2:10 CT.

### II. Update from the University of Missouri (University of Missouri Dean David Kurpius)

Dean Kurpius gave an update on the relationship between IRE and Mizzou. Updates included continued work on getting approval for a for-credit certificate program from the university system, and former IRE staffer Liz Lucas strengthening the relationship with IRE and bolstering investigative reporting offerings through her new role with the university.

### III. Officer and Staff Reports (10 minutes total)

A. [Report from Executive Director Diana Fuentes](#)

B. [Report from President Brian M. Rosenthal](#)

C. Report from Treasurer Mark Greenblatt

### IV. Update on 50th Anniversary Gala (Chairs David Boardman and Tisha Thompson, 15 minutes)

Boardman and Thompson updated the board on the upcoming gala on Sept. 15 in New York, which they called a unique opportunity to raise big money and raise the organization's public profile. The gala will be honoring investigative journalists from each decade of IRE's 50 years, and fundraising is going extremely well. They asked for

support from the board to sell more tickets. An emcee has been secured and would be announced soon.

## V. ACTION ITEMS

### A. FY26 Budget (Fuentes, Rosenthal, Greenblatt, Financial Officer Heather Henry, 30 minutes)

1. Cover letter from the IRE staff
2. Rosenthal shared that fundraising continues to be a challenge, and IRE lost some funders this year and gained new grants, including from the Ford Foundation. The budget does not include raises for staff and the board would like less endowment earnings to be used. Fuentes noted IRE had an open application with the Press Forward initiative.
3. Discussion followed about membership revenue, NICAR and AccessFest revenue, and regional workshops.

**Greenblatt moved to pass the fiscal year 2026 budget as written, which was seconded by Hinkle. The motion passed unanimously.**

### B. Earnings from 50th Anniversary Gala (Rosenthal, Fuentes)

1. Rosenthal proposed a plan for spending proceeds from the gala. Rosenthal said it doesn't tie our hands about future spending, but gives a direction for current revenue.
2. Hudetz moved to approve the motion as written<sup>1</sup>, which was seconded by Lehren. The motion passed unanimously.

**Villeneuve left the meeting.**

### C. Investment policy (Greenblatt)

1. Greenblatt shared that a review of our investments showed that they're underperforming and overreliant on a few individual stocks. He said his proposed policy is meant to lower IRE's risk portfolio, and that he will also propose re-bidding the investment contract and working with whoever is selected to fine tune the application of the policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Proposal from Rosenthal: "I move that we direct the revenue raised from the IRE 50th Anniversary Gala to first go to pay the expenses of the event and then go into the IRE General Endowment, where it will help lay the foundation for the organization's future.

I move that the money be subject to the investment and spending policies currently being drafted by the Finance Committee. I move that the annual proceeds from this endowment (estimated to be 4% of the total) be used for training of journalists, at regional workshops or other events as determined by the Board of Directors in consultation with the IRE staff."

Lehren moved to pass the policy as written, which was seconded by Hinkle. The motion passed 12-0.

**D. [Academic Task Force proposals](#)** (Chair Jodie Fleischer)

The group discussed the proposal and after Fuentes raised concerns about student chapters, Fleischer noted that this proposal didn't make college chapters permanent.

**Fleischer moved to convert the existing Academic Task Force to a standing Academic Committee and to expand IRE's student chapter pilot program to allow additional colleges and universities to create student chapters, subject to approval of each school by the Academic Committee<sup>2</sup>, which was seconded by Hinkle.**

**Cancino proposed a friendly amendment to use the word group instead of a chapter, which Fleischer didn't accept and Cancino withdrew.**

**The motion passed unanimously 12-0.**

**E. [Affordability Task Force proposals](#)** (Chair Barbara Rodriguez, 20 minutes)

**F. Rodriguez brought a slate of proposals from the affordability task force.**

The board first discussed the proposal for a ticketed luncheon at future conferences, and discussion followed about the pros and cons of a ticketed luncheon: how that might affect affordability, whether companies will pay for the tickets, and what that might mean for attendance at the luncheon.

**G. The board and staff also discussed the proposal for a flat fee conference rate, which would be reduced to account for separating out the cost of the luncheon.**

1. Fuentes noted her concern whether reduced registration costs will cover expenses and if a \$100 ticket will fully cover the cost of the luncheon, which has sometimes run higher with AV costs and other

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<sup>2</sup> Full text of Action Item 1: To convert the existing Academic Task Force to a standing Academic Committee to focus on the needs of IRE's student and academic members. Action Item 2: To expand IRE's student chapter pilot program to allow additional colleges and universities to create student chapters, subject to approval of each school by the Academic Committee. The committee will review each request on a case-by-case basis to ensure there are founding students and an adviser who are IRE members, and that each school adheres to IRE's code of conduct.

associated expenses. She said she thinks reducing the ticket by \$50 may be too much.

2. Rodriguez noted that the intention with a ticketed luncheon isn't to create a revenue stream but create a way for members to attend conferences more cheaply, and said communication will be really key here in terms of explaining our decision. She said IRE has this opportunity to try something different, and if the data doesn't bear the idea out that we are making it more affordable for our members and covering our expenses, we can always come back and reconsider.
3. Discussion followed about communicating the decision and ensuring the cost will be bundled for attendees whose companies will pay for IRE costs.
4. Fuentes raised an additional concern that the measures proposed would reduce the cost of the NICAR attendance, even though we don't have a luncheon during that conference. Rosenthal said the goal is standardization across our events.

**Galli moved that the board approve two recommendations from the task force moving to a ticketed luncheon<sup>3</sup> and lowering future conference registration rates, which was seconded by Hinkle. The motion passed unanimously 12-0.**

- VI. Rodriguez raised another affordability task force recommendation that we pause conference bookings for a year so that staff and the committee can work together to discuss affordability measures and the requests for proposals (RFP) process. IRE has already booked both of our in-person conferences through 2029, and Rodriguez said there is an air of inevitability because these details are decided so far in advance. IRE books much farther ahead than a lot of our peer organizations (to lock in good prices), and Fuentes noted that the staff is already looking for ways to improve affordability. Rodriguez emphasized the task force's respect for the work of staff and the desire to improve communication and offer potentially new ideas.

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<sup>3</sup> The Board should create a ticketed option for the annual IRE conference luncheon that reduces the base price for the IRE conference for most members. This recommendation is contingent on conference rates approved by the task force.

The Board, starting at IRE26, should charge \$100 for luncheon attendance and implement a series of new registration rates for NICAR26 and IRE26: For students, a \$100 flat rate; For early-career/freelance/unemployed, an early bird rate of \$150 and a regular rate of \$250; For everybody else, an early bird of \$325; a regular rate of \$425 and an on-site rate of \$525.

Galli moved that the Board should pause the conference selection process for 2030<sup>4</sup>, which was seconded by Rosenthal. The board approved the motion 12-0.

## **VII. CONSENT ACTION ITEMS**

- A. [Investment adviser RFP](#) (Greenblatt)
- B. [990 review policy](#) (Audit Committee Chair Ana Ley)

The consent agenda passed 12-0.

## **VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Executive Director's review (30 minutes)**

Rosenthal moved at 4:22 p.m. to go into executive session to discuss the executive director's review, which was seconded by Howard. The motion passed 12-0.

At 4:55 p.m., Rosenthal moved that the board return to open session, which was seconded by Fleischer. The motion passed 12-0. No action was taken in the executive session.

## **IX. Discussion Items (15 minutes total)**

- A. **Working group on press freedom** (Howard, Ley)
  - 1. Howard reiterated the need for board members to get involved on issues of press freedom that cross their own expertise.
- B. **Priorities for Website Task Force** (Board Member Alejandra Cancino)

## **X. Committee Reports (15 minutes total)**

- A. [Conference Committee](#) (Chair Cindy Galli)
- B. [Finance Committee](#) (Greenblatt)
- C. [International Committee](#) (Chair Tag Lee)
- D. [Member Services Committee](#) (Vice President Josh Hinkle)
  - 1. [End-of-Year Presentation](#)
- E. [Academic Task Force](#) (Fleischer)
- F. **Reports submitted only in writing**
  - 1. [Contest Committee](#)
  - 2. [Diversity and Inclusion Committee](#)
  - 3. [Executive Committee](#)
  - 4. [Governance Committee](#)
  - 5. [Affordability Task Force](#)

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<sup>4</sup> Full text: the Board should pause the conference selection process for 2030 in order for IRE staff to work collaboratively with the Conference Committee and the Affordability Task Force to ensure that our process for conference site selection is effective and prioritizes affordability.

6. [Visibility Task Force](#)
7. [Website Improvement Task Force](#)
8. [Training Committee](#)

## **XI. Adjournment**

**The meeting adjourned shortly after 5 p.m. CT.**