

Journalism Advisory Committee Meeting

12 p.m. Monday, Dec. 8, 2025

Via Zoom

Voting members in attendance:

Gabe Meline, online arts Sr. editor, KQED

Karen Hart, freelance, freelance editor Sonoma Health Magazine

Greta Mart, News Director, KRCB radio

Allison Gibson, Sr. Editor, Business Editor / North Bay Business Journal
Editor/Visuals, Press Democrat

Martin Espinoza, Editor, Press Democrat

Amie Windsor, Community Journalism Team Lead, Press Democrat

Yatin Shah, Publisher, Community Voice

Members Attending as Proxy: None

Voting members absent: None

Faculty, staff and administrators in attendance: Anne Belden, journalism faculty and Oak Leaf adviser, Santa Rosa Junior College.

I. Call to order.

Anne called the meeting to order at 12.04 p.m.

II. Roll Call / Introduction of all members

All attending introduced themselves.

Yatin is a new member of the committee.

III. Approve minutes of Aug. 26, 2024 meeting

Allison motioned to approve the minutes and Karen seconded. Motion passed.

IV. Program Director's report (Anne Belden)

A. Report on Fall 2025 journalism classes —JOUR 1: Intro to Journalism;

B. Oak Leaf (JOUR 52A/B/C/D: News Media Practice) general update,
including budget, ad revenue, newsroom, awards, conferences

Anne gave an update on the journalism classes and The Oak Leaf in general.

Jour 1, Intro to Journalism: this class has grown from 18-20 to 28-30 and had a waitlist in Fall. We submitted two stories for video/media awards from Jour 2 in Spring and both won meritorious awards. Jour 5 will be offered year-round going forward. It focuses on video journalism skills, and students then bring those skills to The Oak Leaf. We won video journalism awards at the state conference. This Fall we held the second "Editing for News Media" class – splitting teaching between Anne and Gina Baleria from Sonoma

State, who teaches the audio and video editing part. The level of editing went way up at The Oak Leaf after this class.

Jour 59, Photojournalism, is extremely popular. The instructor, Brian Frank, freelances for WSJ, NYT and National Geographic. We are now offering it both for credit and non-credit, and it fills rapidly. Thanks to our career education grant we can provide equipment to students doing the class. We see the results of the class reflected in students winning a lot of photography prizes at the regional and state conferences.

The Oak Leaf student population is at an all-time high. We had 20 new students – who are all new to journalism — this fall. We lost a lot of the more experienced students to transfers at end of last academic year. Many of the more advanced students work part or full-time, so it was a very bottom-heavy group and took longer to bring up to speed.

Students covered the ‘No Kings protests’ in five different cities. They coordinated coverage after the event and posted online. A favorite event to cover is BottleRock in Napa. They just won a prize for their photo coverage there. They also covered auto racing. In both instances they have to produce a written story day of the event and that gives them great training. These are not campus-related events but give them excellent experience. Students also covered the protest about a dance instructor who had drawn a lot of student complaints – this was a great investigative reporting experience. They did an article about fire alarms constantly going off at the new dorm which involved doing a CPRA request for information. This story won a national SPJ award for investigative reporting. Another big investigative story is about former SRJC employee Jordan Mead, who was accused of stalking a college vice president. They are covering his ongoing court cases.

Students attended the state conference in March and the regional conference in San Jose in October. One non-verbal student, Noah MacSweeney, won two first place awards for his columns and stories describing his experience with autism.

We got both marketing and equipment grants. We have used a lot of marketing materials (tote bags, stickers, pens, stress balls) to help us get the word out about The Oak Leaf. The equipment grants have helped us supply cameras to the photojournalism and Oak Leaf classes and complete the podcasting studio.

PRESS DEMOCRAT JOURNALISM TRUST

Anne has been on the board of the trust since its inception. The trust funds a scholarship plus an internship at The Press Democrat. This has been a terrific experience for students who do the internship. With the sale of the paper, things have changed. Darius Anderson, the former owner of the paper, set up this trust with the help of local donors. The donors want to contribute to journalism in Sonoma County. He now wants

to close the trust and wants to figure out what to do with the funds – approx. \$350,000. In the past scholarships have been open to high school, Sonoma State and SRJC students.

Our foundation director is pushing to get the entire amount for SRJC as she reasons that Sonoma State doesn't really have a journalism program. They have the STAR newspaper class, media classes and a radio station but no formal program. Also, SSU is not currently financially stable, and their marketing efforts currently are across the state and these funds are supposed to be directed to Sonoma County students. This doesn't mean that students from SRJC transferring to SSU wouldn't be eligible. Anne asked for an opinion from the group and also whether the group could oversee scholarship selection and internships? Should we investigate paying the PD for the internship? These internships are how people get their foot into professional journalism.

Greta – I'm all for that. But why limit to the Press Democrat?

Anne – That's my thought also. We could expand the reach of the internships. It's now limited to the PD because it was their trust.

Gabe – KQED already has several outside funds supporting internships. I'd like to see this stay within Sonoma County. I'd be happy to be on a selection committee.

Greta – we already have an internship but we could take on more interns.

Yatin – We have never had outside funding so that would help expand the program. I'm very strong on students being part of the paper.

Allison – happy to be on the committee. Agree with Gabe that it would be great to keep funds within Sonoma County. The first goal is to get the funds transferred.

Amie – yes keeping the money within SoCo is vital. I have been on the committee to choose interns and would be happy to be on a selection committee. I think it would also be great to expand to photo and radio journalism.

Martin – yes though I thought there was more money in the fund.

Anne - I know there is a deadline due to tax issues. I think Darius is worried about ensuring he does what the donors intended. I want to ensure the trust continues to support local students. I will check on finances to ensure the numbers are correct.

Yatin – are donors anonymous? Who controls the trust now?

Anne – most major donors are known. The funds are in a trust account now.

Allison – I don't think the trust came over as part of the new ownership deal.

Anne – I will send email update after my meeting on this tomorrow

Greta – We moved into a new building in October. I'd love everyone to come visit and see our great set-up and new equipment.

Discussion items

- A. Update on area job market, needs of news organizations
- B. New student opportunities for internships and jobs

Anne went around the group to hear what attendees have to say about the job market and internship opportunities.

Yatin – we have two interns from SSU and some from SRJC. I always try to get students involved so they can participate. We are the largest community newspaper in the county.

Amy: Allison – I believe no internships are foreseen at the PD now. Our new editor is just coming on board so we don't know for now.

Greta: We have a paid internship. It can probably be whatever students are interested in but it is with the newsroom.

Gabe: KQED went through another round of layoffs after cuts at the Corp for Public Broadcasting. Internships weren't affected unless the team overall was closed. We have internships in the newsroom, podcasting, Arts & Culture, Photo, and Engagement/Social Media among others.

SCHEDULE

Schedule is set for Spring and Fall. We added Jour 5 Non Fiction Digital Storytelling as a year-round offering rather than just in Spring. So we don't need to vote on this again unless we make changes.

VI. Adjournment

Anne appreciated everyone making time for the meeting. She adjourned the meeting at 12: 55pm.