

**WEIU Radio & TV Center Advisory Board Meeting
October 7, 2021 at 12:00 p.m. (by Zoom)**

Present: Barbara Bonneken, Jay Gatrell, Matt Gill, Joe Gisondi, Everett Lau, Melody McGrath, Faith Nuss, Jeff Owens, Jaime Pedigo, Anne Thibault Geen

I. Welcome & Introductions

Owens asked members to introduce themselves. In attendance were: Barbara Bonneken, Dean of EIU's College of Liberal Arts & Sciences; Jay Gatrell, EIU Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Matt Gill, Chair of EIU's School of Communication & Journalism; Joe Gisondi, Professor of Journalism and Director of Student Publications at EIU; Jeff Owens, Interim General Manager of WEIU; Melody McGrath from Coles County Sanitation & Recycling; Anne Thibault Geen, Associate Professor of Theatre at EIU; Faith Nuss, EIU student representative (Biology/Pre-med major); Everett Lau, recent EIU graduate and WTHI reporter and weekend meteorologist; and Jaime Pedigo, Office Administrator at EIU's School of Communication & Journalism.

II. General Manager's Report

Owens reported on the PBS "Rebrand" grant received by WEIU in the amount of \$10,000; this money is being used for printed materials and items that showcase the new PBS logo. Owens said that WEIU's NewsWatch has 23 students participating this semester; he noted that it is one of the only local and live newscasts in the area. He reported on several nominations that students have received this year, including several from the Illinois Broadcasters Association. Owens said that there are 34 students working at WEIU-FM this semester, which is one of the biggest groups of students ever.

Owens gave an update on the annual fundraising initiative held each September. This annual "adopt-a-watt" event brought in over \$15,000 this year which sets a new record. The fundraising event resulted in 128 new members as well as 61 active "Passport" members (a program where donors giving at least \$60 per year get a streaming service of PBS programs).

Owens noted that COVID did not interrupt WEIU's broadcasting. He said that local programming continues. One of the most successful productions has been the "This is Our Story" show that has recently highlighted towns like Arthur, Oakland, Kansas, and Teutopolis. Owens also talked about a recent documentary completed by Joe Astrouski, a Journalism instructor. The documentary focused on Ted's Warehouse, one of the only live band bars in the area from the 1970's through the 1990's. Online response to this documentary was incredible. Owens noted that it brought in new viewers which is very important, and he lauded Astrouski for his hard work on crafting the documentary. Owens also gave a run-down of upcoming programming which includes the Charlie Brown holiday specials in October, November, and December. Owens reported that WEIU's Rameen Karbassioon has been working on a documentary about former EIU football coach Bob Spoo; this documentary will air on November 17.

Owens gave details on how funding from the "COVID Cares" and "American Rescue Act" is being utilized. WEIU's current news editing source is beyond its useful lifespan, so that will be replaced with this funding. The money is also being used to update master control and purchase a new server. Finally, the current, aged fleet of vehicles will be updated to include

three new vehicles to support WEIU's news and production services.

Owens expressed appreciation to WEIU's staff of 12 people who are so talented and hard-working. He said that he has been to other stations with staffs of over 60 that do not do a fraction of the local programming that WEIU does.

Owens said that he and Gisondi have been volunteering for the "colescountysports.com" initiative. He noted that Gisondi spends countless hours on this endeavor which provides students with the opportunity to cover sports events at Lake Land College and at the Charleston and Mattoon high schools, filling a gap in local coverage that is greatly appreciated by citizens of the county.

Gatrell said that Owens has leveraged the COVID money to further strengthen the infrastructure at WEIU which is a powerful investment in the future of the station. He also said that WEIU is remarkably well connected to the community.

Thibault Geen discussed a current Theatre student who is actively involved at WEIU's NewsWatch while also preparing to play a lead role in the upcoming "A Bright New Boise" play at the Doudna. She said that this student is getting quite a breadth of experience while at EIU, and she is glad that she and WEIU are able to play a role in giving students this kind of involvement that prepares them for all kinds of careers.

III. Next Meeting Thursday, April 7

Owens said that the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 7, 2022 at noon in the WEIU conference room in Buzzard Hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:25 p.m.