



Request for 2020-21 Funding Services and Activities Fee Committee

BUDGET PROPOSAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Department Name: SAF Student Publications

Create Date: 02/04/2021

Due Date: 02/05/2021

Submitter Name: Daniel Nash

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Phone Number: 2536924813

Department Head Approval:

Department Head: Bernard Anderson

Requested Amount: **\$225,662**

Departmental Information

STUDENT UTILIZATION

These funds will go to the operations of two student-operated publications, the weekly newspaper The Ledger and the annual literary journal Tahoma West. Combined, the programs employ the most students of any organization on campus. The Ledger alone is tied for first with the Center for Student Involvement.

In short, the Ledger provides a news service for the campus, and Tahoma West provides student writers with a creative outlet, as well as direct experience with a small-scale version of the submission process they would face submitting to a professional publisher. The employees of both publications receive a firsthand education in the skills required to see a multimedia creative project to completion--in the Ledger's case, 30+ times a year.

If approved in full, this SAF funding request will pay for:

- student personnel wages
- weekly printing of 300 copies of the Ledger (assuming at least some in-person operations in fall)
- subscription to the MailChimp email newsletter service (New Item)
- Workday cost allocation (New Item)
- annual 900-copy printing of Tahoma West
- office supplies
- Adobe Creative Cloud
- UW telephone services
- professional journalism memberships and contest entry fees
- copy and postage fees
- food for Ledger staff training in September, as well as the Tahoma West launch party in May (assuming in-person operations)
- conference travel training for publication leaders (two to Associated College Press national conference, two to Association of Writers and Writing Programs national conference; assumes re-opening of university travel)

A (\$5,000) deficit is included in the budget to account for advertising revenue goals.

CORE VALUES/MISSION ALIGNMENT

Student Publications actively aligns with the Strategic Plan indicators of Students, Scholarship, Culture, and Growth.

Students

Tahoma West's mission is to publish the creative work of students, alumni, faculty, and staff (the latter two to a lesser degree). Tahoma West is the only campus publication for short stories, creative nonfiction, poetry, and visual art.

As a news service that reports on the campus, the Ledger "increase[s] student awareness of ... UW Tacoma resources, support and infrastructure" [Charting Our Course, page 10]. Student-facing programs and subjects the Ledger has covered this year include:

- the university's ongoing response to COVID-19
- tuition costs
- student reactions to the presidential election

- ASUWT's delayed senatorial elections
- Chancellor Pagano's departure announcement
- RealLit book club
- the CEI response to Federal orders on diversity programs
- the Swiss' closure

Scholarship

Through the Ledger's coverage of faculty and academic programs, and Tahoma West's mission to publish the creative work of students, Student Publications "increase the visibility of scholarship and creative activity across the campus and in the community" [Charting Our Course, page 10].

Culture

The Ledger is a potent "communication mechanism [to] increase awareness and connection among faculty, staff and students" and public coverage of campus happenings ensures UW Tacoma is accountable to be "responsive to the concerns of occupational and demographic groups" [Charting Our Course, page 11]. Tahoma West encourages artistic submissions that comment on the current moment in society or otherwise highlight the issues that bring out expression from students. Both publications host office hours on Zoom to respond to questions and concerns from students.

Growth

COVID-19 severely limited the Ledger's ability to distribute print issues, so in Spring 2020 the publication switched its format to an email newsletter that sends headlines and links to the Ledger website to currently enrolled students. The newsletter has been a success, and we intend to continue it when print resumes.

With remote operations continuing in Spring 2021, Tahoma West staff are researching how to create .epub and .mobi ebook versions of the journal (using Calibre) that will supplement the print publication and Library Digital Commons .pdf.

SAF-FUNDED PROGRAM OR SERVICES GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Tahoma West's goal each year is to gather as many submissions as possible from UW Tacoma students, alumni, faculty, and staff. As of January 25, 2021, Tahoma West has received 14 submissions in advance of the March 26 deadline for the 2021 volume. Historically, the vast majority of submissions come in over Spring Break, and the average number of submissions falls somewhere between 100-120.

The Ledger's service goals are to expand readership, maintain a UW Tacoma-focused content base, and collect ad revenue.

In a year of normal operations, the Ledger will distribute print issues that are tracked by hand--number placed in racks, and number taken. Due to UW's switch to remote operations at the end of WInter 2020, the newspaper has switched to a digital-only strategy.

Web traffic to thetacomaledger.com has continued a four-year pattern of growth. Except for September 2020, every month of the 2020-2021 school year so far has outperformed the same month from previous years. It remains to be seen if April-July of this year will be able to overtake the performance of those months in 2019, which saw a huge spike due to April Fools content that went viral. The website has had 48,265 views in the current school year (A 21% increase over last year) and 36,990 visitors 29,043 visitors (a 27% increase over last year).

The addition of an email newsletter has created an additional traffic channel to the website and created new tracking metrics: open rate, click rate, and unsubscribes.

The Tacoma Ledger averages a 32.4% open rate. Our unsubscribe rate is slightly better than 0.2%. Our average click-through rate from the newsletter to the website is 1.1%. The open and unsubscribe rates exceed the average performance of other MailChimp users, but the click-through rate is lower than the user average. It's too soon to know why that is, but typical clients of MailChimp use the service for targeted marketing and not news delivery, so it could be a matter of apple-and-orange comparisons.

Content counts are attached for the 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021 (so far) school years.

Ad revenue has suffered under COVID, as local businesses that are facing less foot traffic have less money to spend on advertising. The National Bureau of Economic Research calculated in November that small businesses had seen drops of 40% in their revenue since March 2020. But our ad manager has signed a few accounts since late Autumn Quarter. Recent contracts with Legendary Doughnuts (ad fulfilled, payment on the way) and Pacific Lutheran University ROTC (contract signed) will supply more than \$1,170 in advertising revenue. The manager is also in talks with UW Internal Communications to sell an ad for SafeCampus services. In all, advertising revenue from the two already signed accounts puts ad revenue at a little more than a third of the \$3,437.40 earned at this time last year.

STUDENT UTILIZATION (COMPARISON OVER PAST 2 YEARS)

The Ledger primarily tracks service use through distribution and readership, covered above in Q4. The bar chart of web traffic to thetacomaledger.com provides raw readership numbers (which can include non-student readers) by month over the past two years. The MailChimp data, which is brand new this year, provides a gender and age breakdown of students using the mailing list.

Tahoma West tracks the total number of submissions received by the Spring Break deadline for its annual volume, as well as the demographics of contributors.

- The 2020 issue of Tahoma West saw 79 total submissions (22 visual art, 12 creative nonfiction, 43 poetry, 2 fiction).
- The 2019 issue of Tahoma West saw 130 total submissions (37 visual art, 20 creative nonfiction, 50 poetry, 17 fiction + 6 additional art submissions for a new Tahoma West logo)
- The 2018 issue saw 225 total submissions (63 visual art, 21 creative nonfiction, 114 poetry, 30 fiction).

For context to what appears to be a downward trend shown in the above, 2018 was unusually high in submissions due to a small number of active alumni who sent in dozens of works that year, and 2020 was unusually low. Submissions in 2019 were typical to historical submission rates.

I suspect COVID impacted 2020 submissions. The number of early submissions that year was unusually high. But most submissions tend to come in immediately before the journal's deadline; and the 2020 deadline, during Spring Break, occurred simultaneously with the university's sudden shift to remote operations. Many students were in limbo waiting to find out how their spring classes would be taught online. In the midst of the confusion, it would make sense that an extracurricular activity like editing and submitting a story or poem would become a low priority. However, the staff of the 2020 volume also chose to institute a theme that year (social engagement), so it's possible that potential submitters who believed their work did not match the theme opted not to send in work.

The 2021 staff's strategy is closer to that pursued by the 2019 staff: they have been reaching out to professors to pass on information about Tahoma West to their students. This approach has already been relatively successful; the greatest number of submissions so far have come from Riki Thompson's "Writing Through Comics" class after the journal's editors sent an invitation to Thompson's students. That's an exciting development on its own, as the journal had only received one comic submission before this year; now it has half a dozen.

A demographic breakdown of the contributors to the 2020 Tahoma West (Vol. 24) by gender, grade level, and program of study is attached.

COLLECTION OF FEEDBACK & IMPROVEMENTS

The Ledger and Tahoma West both held physical office hours during normal operations, and have currently replaced that practice with virtual office hours via Zoom. The Zoom office hours are advertised on the program websites and in the Ledger's newsletter.

Tahoma West maintains three regularly updated social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to interact with UWT students interested in submitting or attending events. The staff also maintains the Tahoma West website, which the editor-in-chief updates with blog posts about upcoming events. The editor-in-chief interacts with interested submitters or campus partners via tahomaw@uw.edu.

The Ledger likewise maintains social media accounts on the Big Three services, as well as a dedicated email address (ledger@uw.edu), to communicate with students, take letters to the editor, accept press releases, and otherwise conduct business.

SERVICE BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

The most significant way the Ledger benefits students is that it gives them a chance to read about issues that impact the student body, in articles written by students like them. One tool we have to see this in action and examine whether the paper is hitting the mark is to review thetacomaledger.com's story analytics on the day new stories are released. Stories that directly affect students' day-to-day lives--on topics such as COVID updates or entertainment options that remain available during the pandemic--rise to the top of the "Most Viewed" list when they're published online. We believe that it is essential for universities to have an independent paper that reports and critiques topics that are relevant to students.

It's important to gauge the paper's impacts on its student employees as well. The Ledger's staff develop professional skills that carry over after college. The process of handling unfamiliar information, making quick sense of it, cooperating with peers, and transfiguring raw material into a narrative product that will make sense to casual readers--on a deadline--prepares students for managing the ambiguity and demanding schedule of a full-time workplace.

Many former publications employees have gone on to wonderful and varied careers. Former opinion editor Meghan Rand is working on a master degree in journalism at the University of Texas at El Paso. Former Ledger Editor-in-Chief Ella Lucente is studying Law online at Pepperdine, worked as a paralegal for a local law office, and currently advocates for survivors of sex trafficking as an intern at Rebuilding Hope. Former Tahoma West Editor-in-Chief Maxine Metzger moved to Nevada and applied to become a Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor. Monica Marchetti (nee Cysensky), a former news editor, started a communications consulting business.

Tahoma West benefits students by providing them a localized means to become a published author. And not just students in creative arts majors, but students from many academic programs. I know the publication is accomplishing this when I check the academic majors of contributors and see many majors represented. Art is, and should be, for everyone. Students who submit to Tahoma West are exposed to the same publication process they would encounter at a professional publisher, but scaled down to the size of our campus, making it a manageable first step for someone interested in pursuing authorship.

Staff Budget Requests

Category	Details	Amount Requested
Student Staff ³	Please see attached wage worksheet to see all types of employees, the number of employees of each type, hours worked per week, the number of weeks worked, and their wage. E001	
	Student Staff Wages:	\$156,106
	Fringe @ 22.2%:	\$34,656
	PERSONNEL TOTAL:	\$190,762

Other Budget Requests

Category	Details	Amount Requested
Contracted Services	Honoraria for guest speakers or incidental event costs.	S001 \$100
	Printing costs for the Ledger and Tahoma West. Pacific Publishing Co. prints the Ledger weekly (in a normal year) and bills week-to-week. Johnson-Cox prints Tahoma West 1x/year and charges ~\$10,000.	S002 \$29,000
	UW Telephone Services	S003 \$350
	Professional Journalism memberships, conference, and contest entry fees. The Ledger belongs to Associated Collegiate Press. Tahoma West belongs to the Association of Writers and Writing Programs.	S004 \$500
	Copy and postage fees, used for poster and flyer printing at the copy center.	S005 \$200
Other Services	Subscription fee for five Adobe Creative Cloud licenses for the Ledger and Tahoma West. We pay this every year, but previously lumped it in with "Equipment." We're separating it out for accuracy.	S006 \$1,350
	Annual subscription costs to Mailchimp, an email newsletter service the Ledger has begun using to send stories directly to student inboxes. This is a new request.	S007 \$1,200
	Workday cost allocation. The charge has been levied on all wage-paying budgets since 2017, but this is the first time it's being requested in our SAFC proposal.	S008 \$650
	Web hosting fees for thetacomaledger.com. We've previously lumped this in with our equipment line, but we're separating it out for accuracy.	S009 \$100
Travel	Registration, transport and lodging for students to attend professional conferences. This has been approved in the past, but we acknowledge the ongoing uncertainty about university authorized travel.	S010 \$4,000
Non-Food Supplies & Materials	Office supplies, including paper, notebooks, pens, and printer ink.	S011 \$2,050
	Food for Ledger's September staff orientation and training, assuming in-person operations in Autumn 2021.	S012 \$100
Food	Food for Tahoma West Spring Book Launch recognition event, assuming in-person operations in Spring 2022.	S013 \$300
Anticipated Revenue	Anticipated advertising sales	S014 -\$5,000
	SUPPLEMENTAL TOTAL:	\$34,900

PERSONNEL TOTAL:	\$190,762
SUPPLEMENTAL TOTAL:	\$34,900
COMPLETE PROPOSAL TOTAL:	\$225,662

Supplemental Documents

TAHOMA WEST VOL. 24 DEMOGRAPHICS



A demographic breakdown of Volume 24 (Spring 2020) of Tahoma West, by gender, grade level, and major.

TABLE OF JOBS, HOURS, AND WAGES



All jobs, hours, wages, and weeks worked for student employees of the Ledger and Tahoma West.

LEDGER WEBSITE PERFORMANCE REPORT



A performance report of the past two years of visitors and views on the Ledger's WordPress website, thetacomaledger.com.

LEDGER EMAIL NEWSLETTER PERFORMANCE AND DEMOGRAPHICS



The opens, click-throughs, unsubscribes and demographics of the Ledger's MailChimp newsletter.

LEDGER STORY COUNT 2018-2019



A chart tracking Ledger story content by section (News, Opinion, Arts and Entertainment) and whether it's UWT or non-UWT related.

LEDGER STORY COUNT 2019-2020



A chart tracking Ledger story content by section (News, Opinion, Arts and Entertainment) and whether it's UWT or non-UWT related.

LEDGER STORY COUNT 2020-2021 SO FAR



A chart tracking Ledger story content by section (News, Opinion, Arts and Entertainment) and whether it's UWT or non-UWT related.