

Narrative of Assistant Professor Brett M. Rhyne's work as faculty adviser to the student newspaper, The Salem State Log.

Introduction. This is my fourth semester serving as faculty adviser to The Salem State Log, the independent voice of Salem State College students. What follows is a statement of our organizational mission, as well as a report on the progress we have made in achieving our organizational goals.

A. Mission:

- 1. Pedagogical.** To create a work structure and environment that replicates that of a professional newspaper, since The Log is an educational organization (with related courses and majors in the communications department) where students can learn how newspapers operate;
- 2. Structural.** To put in place a self-sustaining administrative, editorial and financial structure for the newspaper and to train a self-selecting group of students in the system, since The Log needs to function independently of any particular individuals; and
- 3. Community building.** To build a community among the Salem State College students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni and local businesses and residents, since The Log is a community newspaper and this is an essential part of the mission of all community newspapers.

B. Goals:

- 1. Regular publication.** In the Fall 2004-Spring 2005 academic year, The Log established an annual publication schedule; we print 16 biweekly issues (eight per semester), beginning with a summer Orientation issue and concluding with a May Commencement issue. Regular publication helps The Log develop credibility among our readership and improve advertising revenue (see below).
- 2. Improved accessibility.** The Log publishes in a "short tab" format (11" x 12"), akin to other commuter newspapers like The Metro or the Weekly Dig. The front and back pages and centerfold spread are printed in full color and on premium white stock paper. The Log averages 16 pages per issue.
- 3. Personnel recruitment.** We have routinized the positions on the editorial board to include an editor-in-chief and a managing editor; four section editors (news, sports, arts and features), a photo editor and an editorial assistant; and managers of advertising, production and circulation. The system of associate and assistant editors, created to ensure continuity from semester to semester, has already borne fruit: several editors previously served as associate or assistant editors. By the end of Spring semester, the staff also included 39 reporters, photographers and production people.
 - a. Management** is now divided between an editor-in-chief (editorial responsibilities) and a managing editor (financial responsibilities).

next three years. SGA will provide \$5,000 and the President will provide \$5,000.

- g. Tuition bill line item.** When our funding situation was most dire, The Log staff was contemplating a referendum whereby the students would fund The Log directly through a line-item on their tuition bills, in the same way MassPIRG is funded. While the deal struck with SGA forestalled that step for at least three years, The Log retains the right to entertain that option in the future.
- 5. Improved distribution.** The Log currently distributes to every dormitory, academic and social use building (i.e., O’Keefe, cafeteria, library) on campus, as well as to eight sites throughout Salem, Marblehead, Swampscott and Beverly. An ad agency provides nine distribution racks to us and pays The Log \$5/month per ad to fill the racks. Our student distribution managers have greatly organized our distribution efforts.

 - a.** We rent server space, own a domain — www.ssclog.com — and have an adjunct faculty member, David Penna, to develop the site. Students will eventually take over all Web site responsibilities, including design and maintenance. Already launched, the site includes pages for archives, advertising information, a letter to the editor form, staff and subscriptions.
- 6. State-of-the-art equipment.** The Log is now produced entirely through digital means, from story and graphic creation, through filing stories via email, electronic editing and desktop publishing, to FTPing (file transfer program) the completed document to the printer. The only non-electronic element of The Log is the printed newspaper itself! Several equipment upgrades have increased our production speed and capacity, which is what enables The Log to publish biweekly:

 - a.** Thanks to the generosity of the Bookstore Council, The Log has a new G4 Mac computer and new versions of QuarkXPress, PhotoShop, Illustrator, and text-scanning and crossword puzzle-generating software.
 - b.** The Log has four used iMac computers, donated by IT; thanks to IT as well, the six computers in the Log office (the new G4, the old G4 and the four iMacs) are now networked together, with the old G4 acting as the Log Office Server. IT has upgraded The Log Office Server’s operating system to OS X.
 - c.** Thanks to the efforts of Comm Lab Technician Ellen Hughes, The Log computers can now communicate with the 15 G4 Macs in the Communications Lab, as well as the adviser’s computer on his desk..
 - d.** Thanks to the generosity of VP for Academic Affairs Diane Lapkin, The Log has three new white boards mounted in the office. With these white boards, dedicated to advertising, story assignments and page layout, we have achieved a new degree of organization and professionalism.

7. **Transparency.** The Log strives for all procedural and financial processes to be completely visible to our readership. This Adviser's Report, which is publicized in the newspaper and available on-line on The Log Web site (www.ssclog.com), is part of this effort to be transparent. There are two primary motivations for this:
 - a. **Pedagogy.** The opportunity to observe and understand every aspect of the newspaper's operation, from the editorial to the financial to the managerial, is an invaluable learning opportunity for Salem students and members of the college community.
 - b. **Democracy.** Essential to the well being of our democratic society is the open and public operation of its institutions of government and, as a significant determinant of public opinion, the media. Log staffers appreciate the necessity of operating with complete openness, both to promote the credibility of and the public's trust in the newspaper, as well as to serve a model by which other campus operations — especially student groups such as the student government — can learn how to operate transparently.
8. **Participation.** As part of the newspaper's mission to build community here at Salem, The Log has both formally and informally reached out to other groups on campus, including students, academic departments, student groups and clubs, alumni and the Alumni Affairs, IT, the recycling program, Purchasing, the Budget Office, the School of Arts and Sciences, the Office of Student Affairs, the Office of Academic Affairs, Athletics, the Graduate School and Publications.
9. **Cultural change.** Our most ambitious and least quantifiable goal is changing the culture of the newspaper. Beside the pedagogical aspects, my responsibilities as faculty adviser also include students' social and psychological well being. Efforts we are undertaking to make The Log more welcoming to new students and to retain existing students include:
 - a. Making the office environment more pleasing, functional and accessible. Currently, everyone on the editorial board has a key to the Log office and can go in anytime. All staffers, regardless of their status, are encouraged to use the office computers, Internet access and printer for schoolwork or personal projects. Likewise, staffers are encouraged to eat and spend their leisure time in the office. We have also separated the office space into conference and lounge areas. We are still looking for a conference table, chairs and a new couch for the office, as well as trying to get the office cleaned and repainted. Since it is a windowless room, we recently added several plants to give the place a more natural feel; replacing the current fluorescent lighting with full-spectrum lighting would be a vast improvement, as well.
 - b. Holding regular Editorial Board and full staff meetings. Structured communication between editors and staffers, for discussing both upcoming stories and issues and ongoing stories and past issues, is

essential for advancing the pedagogical, professional and social goals of the organization.

- c. Holding staff retreats. Biannually — during summer and winter breaks — The Log staff holds a retreat to review the previous semester's work and plan for the next semester's issues. Again, this advances the newspaper's pedagogical, professional and social goals.
- d. Developing enough income to be able to stipend staffers. Students volunteer a lot of time to work on The Log, regardless of their positions. Some of the editorial workers are compensated with academic credit; some of the advertising, production and distribution people are compensated with internships. All the staffers are full-time students and most of them, like the student body at large, work part- or full-time jobs. One goal of a more financially successful Log would be to reward staffers with stipends commensurate with the amount of responsibility they assume. Other student newspapers do this and it is entirely appropriate to the university culture we are trying to create here at Salem and the professional culture we are trying to create at The Log.
- e. Offering students the quintessential college experience. For some of us lucky enough to have attended elite universities, our fondest memories of college are working on the school paper. Given Salem's unique history and composition of its student body, virtually no Log staffers have had that opportunity — yet. The challenge here is providing that kind of opportunity to students with widely varied schedules and commitments. An extended, two-week production cycle allows for more student participation, as does an increased reliance on email and Web forums for communication among the staff. Having many staffers also helps, in two ways: it encourages more socializing, since staffers have a greater pool of people with whom to make friends; and it promotes a highly diversified division of labor, so staffers can concentrate on their own jobs and don't feel responsible for more work than they can perform. Finally, the bulk of Log production happens on the Sunday before publication; this weekend timeslot gives more students an opportunity to participate, since production never conflicts with their classes, and gives working at The Log more of a social feel.