

Executive Director's Report

May 2006

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Since the last Board meeting, a series of hiring decisions have been made, including Interim General Manager at KPFA, Interim National Technical Director, and National Election Supervisor. These decisions have helped to reassure the KPFA staff, launched an assessment of the network's technical and training needs, and begun the preparations for this year's elections.

During this period, I have also developed a revised Executive Director job description, based on the agreement contained in the offer letter I received in December. Therefore, I will attempt to base my report on that description. Although the Board has yet to review it, this hopefully will assist in the process. Where appropriate, the suggested duties and responsibilities are followed by comments on recent activities. I conclude with some recommendations and a self-evaluation.

JOB DEFINITION

The Executive Director (ED) is the President of the Pacifica Foundation, General Manager, Chief Executive Officer, and Chief Administrator, and is responsible for management activities of the Foundation, including hiring of Station Managers of the five sister stations and National Staff, with the exception of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO); implementation of Board policies and bylaws, and oversight of fundraising, development, national programming, financial stability, physical integrity, and compliance with CPB and FCC rules and regulations.

The ED ensures that the Foundation operates in a fiscally and socially responsible fashion in compliance both with state and federal laws, and with the mission of the Foundation to operate radio outlets that encourage the creative skills and energies of the community; contribute to a lasting understanding between nations and individuals of all nations, races, creeds and colors; gather and disseminate information on the causes of conflict between such groups; promote the study of political and economic problems and of the causes of religious, philosophical and racial antagonisms; and employ varied sources in the public presentation of accurate, comprehensive news on all matters affecting the community.

The ED is selected, supervised and discharged by, and reports to the collective body of the Pacifica National Board of Director (PNB).

Responsibilities and duties

1. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

a. Managing and supervising National Staff and General Managers to provide for the effective operation of the Foundation's public radio stations in compliance with the objectives and policies of the Board of Directors and consistent with the Pacifica mission

Shortly after beginning work, I instituted regular meetings of the national staff and managers. During April and May, the Operations Collective (OC) has met three times, and has developed new procedures for developing, evaluating and broadcasting specials. In addition, it monitored and evaluated an independently produced special concerning the impacts of Hurricane Katrina, and approved plans for a national Spanish Language News program. However, the current organizational structure makes action difficult without the assent of General Managers, Program Directors and others who tend to resist change. In my opinion, the current management structure, elements of the Bylaws and factional politics combine to prevent effective supervision.

b. Appointing and facilitating the work of a National Election Supervisor in each year when elections for delegates are held

After interviewing candidates, I selected Lester Radke and signed a contract for his services. We meet frequently, and he works at the National Office. His initial activities have included selecting local election supervisors, obtaining member lists, and assessing potential vendor options for election services.

c. Selecting General Managers for each sister station upon vacancies, from candidates presented by the Local Station Boards (LSB)

Search processes are underway at WBAI and KPFA.

d. Selecting Interim General Managers in accordance with Pacifica bylaws

In April, I selected Lemlem Rijio as IGM for KPFA.

e. Hiring and coordinating supervised National staff, including the Human Resource Director, Pacifica Radio Archives Director, Assistant to the Director, National Technical Director, Affiliates Coordinator, Webmaster, Network Programming Coordinator, News Bureau Director, Administrative Assistant, and others as approved by the PNB.*

** The Chief Financial Officer supervises financial staff, including the Controller, Assistant Controller, Payroll Manager, and Financial Audit and Systems Manager.*

Coordination is a complex task, since the staff members listed above work in different parts of the country. In practice, the ED works daily in the national office with the Human Resource (HR) Director, Assistant to the Director, and Administrative Assistance, as well as with the CFO, who supervises other financial staff. Regular contact is maintained with

other staff, who also participate in bi-weekly Operations Collective meetings. In April, a job description for Network Program Coordinator was developed, approved by the PNB, and posted for applications.

f. Conducting annual evaluations of supervised National Staff and General Managers, with appropriate recommendations

In May, an annual evaluation process was initiated for 11 members of the staff. To be completed by August, it will include review and revision of individual job descriptions, review of performance objectives, interviews, self-evaluations, assessment of LSB input, and final evaluations, along with recommendations and the opportunity for employee comments. LSB Chairs have been contacted about the process, and an evaluation form has been developed.

2. GOVERNANCE

a. Attending and participating in meetings of the PNB and Coordinating Committee, including teleconferences, regular quarterly PNB meetings, and special meetings

In addition, the ED is also asked to participate in meetings of other committees, most recently the National Finance Committee.

b. Ensuring the effective organization of quarterly PNB meetings, including Board packets, in cooperation with the Board chair

3. COMMUNICATIONS

a. Conforming to the communication policies established by the Board, including accurate reports and providing appropriate information for Directors upon request

Due to a request by PNB Director Ken Freeland for access to the KPFT donor list, I have found it necessary to weigh the right of directors to inspect documents against the need for confidentiality and privacy in regard to donor information. To inform my response, I reviewed previous precedents and sought outside legal advice. In May, the PNB addressed the issue, and received a policy recommendation from our new corporate counsel, Dan Siegel.

b. Supporting the PNB in fulfilling its governance role through regular communication with the Board and its officers

I have reported to the PNB twice during the last six weeks. On April 11, I provided an update on hiring, legal issues, programming, promotion, and planning. On April 25, I forwarded a separate legal and personnel update, covering matters at WBAI, KPFK, WPFW, and KPFA. In addition, I have personally discussed issues with 14 Board members during this period.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES

a. Ensuring that stations and the network are managed according to state, FCC and CPB requirements, including state and Federal labor and employment regulations, and that any grievances are addressed and resolved in a fair and timely manner

Pacifica is currently dealing with fair employment complaints at WPFW and KPFK. After consulting with GM Ron Pinchback, I responded to the WPFW complaint. At my request, Dan Siegel visited KPFK to investigate a complaint and mediation request. Action will be taken soon on a separate request for mediation from a staff member based in L.A. In addition, I contacted Janet McIneaney to begin mediation at WBAI. The parties have started a dialogue about how they can work together and some progress is being made. Although cautiously optimistic, she notes that there is still work to be done.

b. Supervising implementation of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance

I have met with Francie Moeller to discuss the implementation of her work plan, which will include site visits and training at each station and the national office. She will begin with a visit to WBAI prior to the PNB meeting and a report to the Board. I have distributed an ADA guide to general managers. Moeller will also assist the Board in selecting future meeting sites that are closest to ADA compliance.

c. Encouraging equal opportunity and diversity in staffing, management and programming at stations, the Pacifica National Archives, and in the National Office

5. FINANCES

a. Working with the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), overseeing the foundation's budget, and providing for fiscal integrity of the foundation within the approved limits of the PNB

Pacifica stations are lengthening their drives to meet escalating goals. We need to consider other, off-air, fundraising initiatives to offset "donor fatigue."

b. Developing fiscally sound budgets in coordination with the CFO, General Managers, and the Pacifica National Board Finance Committee

This process began in April. National priorities are currently being reviewed.

c. Reviewing financial statements with the CFO

d. Monitoring and authorizing expenditures in accordance with budgets approved by the PNB, including but not limited to check authorization, reimbursements, consultant hires, and unbudgeted expense approval

e. Acknowledging all contributions and other support in a timely manner

f. Bringing contracts to the Coordinating Committee and PNB for approval, based on current policies

6. PROGRAMMING

a. Implementing procedures to enable staff and volunteers from network and affiliate stations to apply for participation in national coverage

A new process for national special broadcasts has been approved. However, this continues to be problematic, pitting local station priorities against Pacifica's responsibility to respond to important proposals and fast-breaking events.

b. Supervising the development of excellent national programming that covers major political and cultural events and topics

During recent weeks, Pacifica has broadcast a congressional hearing on the impacts of the Iraq War, FSRN's May Day coverage of the response to anti-immigrant legislation, and the Hayden confirmation hearing. Spanish language news will begin to air on July 10. I have begun to recruit a group to develop national programming for the election season.

c. Ensuring that technical systems, equipment, and structures adequate for the production and distribution of programs and the efficient, transparent functioning of the PNB and its committees are maintained

Pacifica's Webmaster and a newly hired National Technical Director are undertaking a needs assessment in consultation with staff at various stations. Meanwhile, work is underway on a virtual programming project that will organize content from stations as virtual "channels" and podcasts. Web pages will organize selections of regular programs and particular episodes to make them attractive to new audiences.

d. Encouraging the distribution of Affiliate programs and overseeing Affiliate relations

On April 19-21, I attended the NFCB annual conference in Portland.

e. Promoting activities and development that makes it possible for Pacifica to maximize its audience, and expand its membership and technical capacity

On April 15, I met with Amy Goodman to reaffirm her commitment to Pacifica.

7. LEGAL

a. Managing litigation and other legal matters, in consultation with corporate counsel and other attorneys as needed, and notifying the PNB of significant legal developments

See confidential report to PNB filed April 25. Completed counsel selection process.

b. Developing and enforcing procedures and policies to maintain confidentiality on legal, personnel and other appropriate matters

See 3 (a) above.

8. PROMOTION

a. Serving as spokesperson for the Pacifica Foundation, representing it in business relationships with other national and state nonprofits, government agencies, the media, professional organizations, and similar groups

Activities in this area included a meeting with CPB officials in Washington, DC, a press release on new hires and the election process, a presentation at the NFCB conference, and an agreement with Prometheus Radio to participate in a study and outreach concerning new noncommercial radio licenses that will become available.

b. Expanding positive public awareness of Pacifica through community events, media outreach efforts, and development of promotional campaigns

A new promotional and marketing group, organized by Phil Osegueda, held its first meeting on May 10, and is developing plans to promote Pacifica programs and its role as a leading voice for independent media. A nationwide media contact list is being constructed. Members include Ursula Ruedenberg, Brian DeShazor, Donna Platt, and Bonnie Simmons. Funding will be needed to make their efforts successful.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations for the months ahead:

-- At least 3 hours of national programming on each station: require that staff at various stations work together, and bring local talent and new voices to a national audience. Don't just add shows based on political pressure; demand excellence and sustainability.

-- A new national program this year: I believe this will help to reverse the decline in listenership, and talent is clamoring at the door, if Pacifica will let it in. Distribute more local shows nationally, and revisit schedules and formats. Also, reduce the negativity in news and public affairs programming, and bring some fun back into radio.

-- Encourage and support efforts to discipline managers and staff who abuse their power or are clearly insubordinate.

-- Impose sanctions on those who engage in defamation and consistent obstruction. In other words, get tough in order to change the culture.

-- Emphasize positive reinforcements and incentives for initiative and excellence.

-- Suspend Roberts Rules whenever possible. Focus on empowerment and inclusion (special efforts to hear from everyone) rather than control.

-- Aggressive major donor and planned giving campaigns to plan for the intermediate and long-term financial future. Individuals and organizations specialize in creating and customizing such campaigns, a skill that not all development professionals possess. Also, stations should begin to actively solicit funds from non-profit foundations to cover the expenses of instituting such campaigns. Foundations often look favorably on requests viewed as "capacity building."