

USITT@PSU

General Meeting Minutes: September 12th, 2006

7:00 PM, TAPS

Prepared by Rachel Harpham, Secretary

Present: President J. Jacobsen, Vice President E. Gast, Secretary R. Harpham, Treasurer S. Riddle, IPP N. Gonsman, Historian J. Stasiw, PR Chair S. Rowland, Ad/Marketing Chair K. Kudrick, Programming Chair G. Ryan, Concessions Coord. P. Cardona, THON Chair A. Radebaugh, Outreach Education Chair E. Hendrickson, Executive Assistants A. Ciampi, K. McNiff, J. Schlader, Advisor W. Kenyon + 19 General Members

I. Meeting called to order at 7:06 PM.

II. Last week's minutes were passed by acclimation.

III. Reports

A. Concessions

1. The concessions sign-up sheet was passed around during the meeting. There are lots of nights available for Cloud 9 and Five Women so SIGN UP!
2. Urinetown concessions were very successful. More details to come.

B. Treasurer

1. We have about \$1,470 in our accounts.
2. Steph has about \$400 that she is in the process of depositing.
3. We do not have any bills to pay but the \$1,470 does not include the upcoming withdrawal of our Behind the Scenes donation of about \$200.

C. President

1. Our re-chartering is officially processed.
2. Curtis has offered to do a master class on MIDI and Show Control on Tuesday, November 21st. The master class would be sometime in the afternoon after 285 class.
 - a. 12 people were interested in the master class.

IV. Where are we and where are we going as an organization?

- A. We want to hear especially from the general members.

V. Readings

- A. 2006 Fellow's Address by Richard Stevens: "What do I get for my \$95?"
- B. "Guidelines for Establishing a USITT Student Chapter"
- C. USITT@PSU's Charter & Constitution

VI. Why did you join USITT and/or USITT@PSU? What were your expectations?

- A. Michelle Kokal: She wanted to meet new people and make friends, learn, get involved and catch up with the program.

B. Brian Kurtz: He heard about USITT@PSU from current members. He joined because it is a club that helps him achieve his goal of being a theatre technician while enjoying himself at the same time.

C. Emily Reeder: She joined to be a part of our community and to work with people that could help her in the future.

D. William Kenyon: He joined in 1987 because he heard it was a great place to make connections to help him get a job.

-Being a USITT member will help us in the long run.

-USITT played a major role in William getting his current job at PSU.

-Once again, it's not what you know but who you know! The more people you know the better. USITT can help you make those connections.

E. Ben Gasper: A few years ago when Ben joined the organization, USITT@PSU was based on people with common interests coming together and working as one. 2006 Alum Cheryl Norcross worked very hard to put together our Alumni Database so we can maintain connections with our former members.

F. William Kenyon: Our chapter has grown to be the largest student group within the School of Theatre. Large programs like the B.A's and Musical Theatre students do not have the voice and cohesiveness that we do. We have become a "force to be reckoned with" in the eyes of the School of Theatre faculty.

G. Brian Kurtz: Agreeing with William- he finds it very impressive that a student organization is in charge of concessions at main stage shows. He would have assumed that the School of Theatre organized concessions.

VII. Why do you come to meetings and events?

A. Eric Christian: He feels like he should know people in the programs and this way he gets to see at least twenty people every meeting.

B. Katie McNiff: She doesn't always want to come to meetings but the bottom line is that she made a commitment to this organization.

C. Nick Gonsman: Weekly meetings are not always convenient, especially when he should be working on other things like schoolwork. However this organization is something that he believes in. We are laying the groundwork for future Penn State students.

-USITT can make major connections for students- it certainly has for Nick.

-We are part of a long proud tradition of Penn State theatre technicians.

Someday a PSU grad could call you for a job.

-It is his goal to make USITT@PSU stronger for current and future members and for the organization to become synonymous with PSU technical theatre.

D. Eric Hendrickson: It's a great way to meet everyone in the major and talk to people about problem solving and sifting things out on current shows.

E. William Kenyon: This is his time to give back to the Institute. He is in his first session as Education Commissioner for USITT and will hopefully serve another term. He wants to make sure that USITT is as helpful to us as it was/is to him.

VIII. Why don't you come to meetings and events?

A. Erik Hendrickson: Work at Eisenhower CPA and other obligations.

- B. Brian Kurtz: Meetings are very formal and not as interesting as the events we organize.
- C. Greg Ryan: Last year as a freshman he had little to say but came out of obligation.
- D. Courtney Cavanaugh: Agreed with Greg- she is confused by parliamentary procedure and the long walk to meetings was difficult during the winter.
- E. Amy Silverman: She was unable to come to Harner Farm due to her work schedule and the change of date.
- F. Josh Mankser: When few people showed up to go to Harner Farm he decided to leave since he wasn't really interested in going.
- G. James Cline: Where is the pride in our members? He doesn't see it.
- H. Katie Kudrick: She sees lots of pride in the Exec Board but not in the body. She sees the same people helping over and over again.
- G. Patricia Cardona: She sees the same people helping with concessions.
- H. Stephanie Riddle: No one is busier than the Exec Board due to upperclassmen having show assignments. We are putting in a lot of time in this organization. When people do not come to meetings and events- there is no passion for the organization.
- I. Patrick Sieg: We are students busy with homework and classes. There is a time management problem.
- J. Rachel Harpham: Before joining Exec Board she was another quiet member at meetings. Obviously everyone cannot be a part of Exec Board but getting yourself involved at meetings and events can make you just as important as Exec Board members.
- K. Ben Gasper: Re-iterating Steph's point. If no one else cares, why should I? This is the wrong attitude to have towards the organization.
- L. Nick Gonsman: If you're not interested in what we are doing, this discussion should show us what is important to our members.
- If no one volunteers for concessions or shows up for social activities, why waste the time in organizing them?
 - The body has to support the Exec Board. The Exec Board exists to diversify our organization's interests to appeal to all members.
- M. Sarah Rowland: The organization is what you make of it. The group as a whole needs to have more initiative.
- N. William Kenyon: Many student chapters rise and fall due to a small group that gets it going and then graduates, leading to the organization falling apart.
- It happened to his student chapter in college.
 - So far this chapter has had four changes of management.
 - Other universities were impressed by our huge showing at last year's conference. This gives our chapter great credentials.
 - Hopefully underclassmen will strive to take Exec Board positions in future years.
 - In his student chapter, the Exec Board did all of the work between concessions and professional enrichment. The people that worked hard reaped the benefits. Take advantage of these opportunities!

-Yes, our programs ask a lot of us. They are some of the most difficult BFA's out there, comparable to pre-med and pre-law. However once you graduate you will be way ahead of most graduates.

-TIME MANAGEMENT! Learn it!

-You need to ask yourself, what do you need to make you happy? Once you are out of school life will be more complex with families, houses, etc. Don't sacrifice things you enjoy, make the time.

O. Katie McNiff: To those who don't come to social events- you're missing the fun stuff. Try it once!

P. Adam Ciampi: He felt less involved last semester but now he sees a whole new side to the club as an executive assistant. Get involved and give your ideas for fundraisers, social activities, etc.

-Adam had the opportunity to have lunch with heads of Ohio Valley during the conference. People you meet through USITT will remember you.

-He thinks of meetings similar to a class. By not coming you are missing out. He is forcing himself to get to the national conference this year because he sees it as very important.

Q. Michelle Kokal: We've established that there is a gap between the Exec Board and general members. We need to move on to find a solution to encourage non-Exec Board members to get involved- i.e. point system.

R. Eric Hendrickson: Any of the Exec Board members would most likely not say no to help from general members.

S. Nick Gonsman: The organization is what you put into it. The Exec Board is elected and those people should be more involved, but you are all in this community of USITT.

-We have very high standards for our degree programs.

-Members have great opportunities for employment, use the tools you are given.

-The national conference is the "pot of gold at the end of the rainbow".

This organization has helped him so much professionally.

T. Meaghan Dougherty: The problem is follow-through. She had second thoughts about going to Harner Farm and the Ohio Valley Conference but both ended up being worth it.

U. Courtney Cavanaugh: Social events help us have a normal college life outside of theatre. Spend time with the group and have fun.

V. Justin Stasiw: If we are not doing something you are interested in participating in, don't commit. People may change their mind about the MIDI master class since it is so close to Thanksgiving break. We should find things that people want to do or change dates so that more people can participate.

W. Katie Kudrick: She was intimidated by the Exec Board last year but by going to conference and putting herself out there she got much more involved. Make yourself known within the organization and contribute.

X. Brian Kurtz: Some people may not get involved due to confusion over parliamentary procedure. An informational session on Roberts Rules of Order could help.

- Y. The Simple Guide to Parli-Pro will be put on our website.
- Z. Point of order called by Nick Gonsman.

IX. What can the organization do so you get more out of it?

What do you feel should be the focus of our organization?

What can the organization do so you get more out of it?

What activities would you like to see the organization pursue/not pursue?

- A. Katie McNiff: We have committees but we don't really use them. Serving on committees would be a great way to meet Exec Board members and get involved on a smaller basis.
- B. Stephanie Riddle: For members who join later in the semester it's easy to get lost. It is important to get to know each other at the beginning of each semester. We need to bridge the gap between upper and underclassmen and keep people up to date.
- C. Nick Gonsman: Nick suggested a beginning of the year retreat with ice-breakers and games to get to know each other. We could pair freshmen with Exec Board members so people feel more comfortable.
- D. William Kenyon: Our organization needs to focus on what our programs cannot give you in a classroom environment. We should find activities that compliment what we are learning. We have specialty knowledge useful for master classes, networking.
- E. Ben Gasper: The fall cook-out was originally meant for upperclassmen to meet the freshmen. We should keep this in mind for next year if we do not do a retreat.
- F. Eric Christian: We could organize group dinners before meetings, for example- Pollock Commons.
- G. Courtney Cavanaugh: Big/Little program separate from our major's Big/Little program.
- H. William Kenyon: Agreeing with Big/Little program.
- I. Katie McNiff: Despite all of the work we do, we don't talk about theatre very often. People could talk about what shows they are working on and bring in their design concepts- sort of a show and tell.
- J. Nick Gonsman asked the general members what they want from the organization:
 - Michelle Kokal: Agreeing with Katie. We should talk about the industry, Broadway, etc.
 - Justin Couchara: We need direction and goals. We talk a lot but we need to do something once we decide on our direction.
 - Lauren Williams: The majority of her time this semester has been spent in class or rehearsal. She would like more outside info on the School of Theatre.
 - Hanna Oravec: She doesn't understand parliamentary procedure. She thinks that the Big/Little system would help freshmen learn more.
- K. Justin Stasiw: Upperclassmen could have basic master classes on things they've learned through their design processes. It could be more interesting than regular master classes to underclassmen.

L. Eric Hendrickson: Agreed with Justin. Upperclassmen could teach basic skills not covered in classes. Speak up if you're interested.

M. Nick Gonsman: Since our academic classes are often very compact, upperclassmen master classes could be a great resource. The classes wouldn't have to be formal.

N. Katie McNiff: The master classes should be formal. We could have a shadow program, for example having a freshman stage manager shadow an SM at rehearsal. This would fall under Programming.

O. Stephanie Riddle: Agreed with Katie. There is a steep curve among all of our different skill levels starting out. Our teachers can only do so much and tend to jump in to more advanced skills while some of us still need to learn the basics.

P. William Kenyon: To future theatre professionals: the organization should do it's best to fill freshmen in. Underclassmen should feel like they can seek out help. Bug the crap out of your major advisors to get as much experience as you can out of our resources, for example, lighting students getting time on the new consul.

Q. Brian Kurtz: He thought that he came from a very experienced background but has still learned so much so far in classes and at focuses/hangs. He had the opportunity to play with the Congo and figure some things out on his own, but could have learned more with someone to help him.

R. Courtney Cavanaugh: Agreed with shadow program. She thinks it would be helpful to underclassmen stage managers learning how to do paperwork.

S. Sarah Rowland: She thinks it would be helpful for people to take master classes in areas besides their major.

T. Adam Ciampi: He would like to see us take trips to New York and take advantage of the \$50 round trip bus tickets.

U. Nick Gonsman: Everyone is in favor of what we've been discussing; let's move on.

A recess was taken from 8:37 PM – 8:46 PM.

X. A system of awarding participation points has been discussed. What sort of incentive should be attached to this system? Do you think this system will be beneficial?

A. Katie McNiff: A point system would make her sad because no one is forcing people to be here.

B. Emily Gast: What if people had something to gain for participating?

C. Sarah Rowland: People who don't care now will continue to not participate. The points will not matter.

D. Emily Reeder: A point system would just create more work for Exec Board.

E. Michelle Kokal: Participating in USITT is similar to a class. Maybe we should make some things mandatory like volunteering a certain number of concession nights. This would be a way for members to give back to the organization.

F. Ben Gasper: He suggested the point system a few weeks ago. It is sad that we need it, however clearly just asking people to participate doesn't work.

-Can the point system work so if you do so many nights of concessions that the organization pays for something like a bowling night?

-This comes down to the question, do we want to be a conference-based organization.

G. Emily Gast: We are only giving people points for participating, not punishing those who do not. What should we do?

H. Ben Gasper: If we were not conference-based we could still do social activities.

I. William Kenyon: This group is like any other group. Those who work hard will reap the benefits. You shouldn't want to put forth effort for saving money on a social activity, but rather for the education and connections.

-It goes back to working your way up the ladder, just like for production assignments.

-Strive for an Exec Board position.

-It is sad that we need to motivate members. You should want to be here and take part.

J. Nick Gonsman: We should be self-motivated. The problem last year was that some tasks never seemed to get done.

-This is a voluntary organization. What do we take away from those who don't participate?

-Is the point system the best way to give back to those giving to the organization?

-This semester we've been understaffed on Behind the Scenes collections and concessions. Will the point system solve the problem?

K. Katie McNiff: The point system rewards people who earn it and those who are not motivated to be in the organization without incentives.

L. Ben Gasper: This is a worst-case scenario discussion. We need to hear from the general body.

M. Emily Gast: To general members who say that they will participate, would you with the point system?

N. Emily Reeder: She can't decide until a proposal is made with all of the details.

O. Randi Fields: She feels attacked by the Exec Board. What else is available to volunteer besides concessions?

P. John Jacobsen: Concessions is a big problem. Come to meetings and discuss what you would like the organization to do.

Q. William Kenyon: The fact that you are here shows that you are committed to this organization. All of you should not feel attacked.

R. John Jacobsen: Where is the full involvement? The problem with the point system is that it doesn't really reward people for speaking up at meetings and getting further involved.

S. Brian Kurtz: He would still participate with or without the incentive. He thinks that people who aren't interested still won't participate.

T. Amy Silverman: She has been busy this semester with Thespians. She wants to be more involved but hasn't had time. She doesn't think the point system will help.

- U. James Cline: After hearing the Exec Board and Williams's interest in USITT and USITT@PSU, he wants to be more involved.
- V. Rachel Eisemann: The incentive would have to be bigger to make an impact; however that would be detrimental to the organization.
- W. Eric Christian: Incentives would give the organization's money away for what people already do.
- X. Nick Gonsman: The founding principles of our organization are philanthropy, social and educational activities.
 - The organization is here for you- it's your money. The treasurer is in charge but everyone has input.
 - Activities that help you as a technician are important.

XI. A conference-based organization vs. a well-rounded chapter

- A. If we are become a conference-based organization we would lose our national charter and support from our faculty.
 - We would lose our national charter because we would not be supporting the full goals of USITT.
- B. Eric Hendrickson: National conference is the bonus to a well-rounded organization.
- C. Hanna Oravec: Social activities help us with networking. We should do more for recruitment.
- D. William Kenyon: Conference is important but it's also important to remain fully-rounded.
 - We were very fortunate to send so many students to conference last year.
 - With the expenses of traveling to Phoenix and Houston next year, the group will be smaller.
 - It is unfair to ask so much of the body to send a few people to conference. It's valuable to work locally for the chapter.
 - It is important for the Exec Board to go along with faculty. There are options for getting funding:
 - Becoming a member of a panel
 - Awards: Ohio Valley, Design, etc
 - It is an investment in your future.
- E. Brian Kurtz: If we were conference-driven he probably wouldn't be a part of the organization with so many expenses. The organization as a whole would be much smaller.
- F. Meaghan Dougherty: People want the social aspect of the organization.
- G. Nick Gonsman motioned to close the speaker list and put the question "Do we want to become a conference-only organization?" to a formal vote by a show of hands.
 - Yea's: 0
 - Nay's: 24
 - Abstains: 1
- H. There was a discussion over the wording of the vote since we do not want to stay the same as we are now.

XII. Open Discussion

- A. Concession Sign-ups
 - 1. The concession sheet was passed around tonight so people did not have to stay any longer after the meeting ended to sign up.
 - 2. Be pro-active! Sign up for concessions and show up for your dates.
- B. Parliamentary Procedure
 - 1. William Kenyon made the point that while our parliamentary procedure can be overwhelming; we manage to get a lot done because of how organized our system is.
 - 2. Two years ago every meeting was this long. With the help of Roberts Rules of Order we are much more efficient.
- C. Ben Gasper formally retracted his motion of a point system.
- D. Dues
 - 1. We are being lenient about dues so people can still attend meetings and participate in activities.
 - 2. PAY YOUR DUES!
 - 3. We will discuss national dues next week.
- E. Please keep coming and get involved!

XIII. Reading from 2006 Fellows Address

- A. "What do you get for your \$95?" The answer: opportunities.
 - 1. The full fellows address is available in the summer issue of TD&T

XIV. Adjournment

- A. Our next general meeting is Sunday, November 18th at 7:00 PM in TAPS.
- B. Meeting adjourned at 9:26 PM.