

WEIU Radio & TV Center Advisory Board Meeting

April 3, 2025 at 12:00pm

Present: Matt Gill, Angela Jacobs (via Zoom), Joe Gisondi (via Zoom), Everett Lau, Mason Tegeler, S.M. Walus, Dr. Holly Farley, Cameron Craig, Ke'an Armstrong, Jeff Owens

Absent: Jeffrey Snell, Provost Ryan Hendrickson, Dean Barbara Bonnekessen

1. Welcome & Introductions

Matt Gill – Board Chair welcomed everyone and asked for introductions.

2. Corporation for Public Broadcasting Funding Updates from Jeff Owens, WEIU General Manager

Overview... WEIU-TV funding issue. The House and Senate approved a Continuing Resolution (CR) for Fiscal Year 2025, extending funding for public media. The legislation provides \$535 million for CPB in Fiscal Year 2027, upholding the two-year advance appropriation for public media. So we are assuming our main CSG grant will be released each of the next two fiscal years. In addition, we have enough cash based on saving money from the covid cares grants for at least one full calendar year as well. So if CPB gets defunded, WEIU would be entering a critical time where over the next 3 years we would have serious issues to resolve as WEIU and for you on this board. There is even a worst-case scenario where the current administration doesn't honor the forward funding and defunds CPB, which would give us only a year or so based on what we have in reserve. President Gatrell, VP Hendrickson and our incoming VP Dr. Farley are aware of all these scenarios. I have begun to make plans for all doomsday scenarios – 1, 2 or 3 years, while hoping the current congress approves CPB for FY 2028 in "our world." We would also be asking this board for recommendations, ideas and action if CPB gets defunded. We will be keeping you updated via email when important items occur. The one thing we are doing as a staff... is staying focused on what we can control, which is stay true to our mission, which is serving EIU and our audiences and the education of EIU students. Local programming, live radio and being a source of information to our audiences is our focus. One thing to note if you watched the hearing last week, that was said but not discussed. PBS's programming for TV is 10% of what we do.

CPB/Budget Questions – Discussion

Walus – Question on goals and how to treat upcoming years.

Owens – Control what we can control, continue to provide locally produced programs, serve EIU students and the community as we are now. Determine what changes or transitions need to be discussed or made dependent on information we receive moving forward.

WEIU is 25% PBS and has other programming resources such as APT and NETA, not sure where the give may need to be moving forward, is dependent on Congress and upcoming Administration.

Lau – Has State funding increased?

Owens – we are still receiving Illinois Arts Council money with no increase for upcoming year. Not sure about any possible funding from FEMA or IEMA based on current administration decisions. There may be a possibility for program sharing among stations through a collaborative grant in the future.

Armstrong- mentioned Protect My Public Media as an advocate for public broadcasting stations. There is information available for viewers and or employees to search on their own time and personal computers.

Owens – discussed the FCC investigation and that we are working with our FCC lawyer to make sure WEIU remains compliant.

3. Local Productions

Being Well Season 17 and The Paw Report Season 14 finished airing. Both of those shows will begin taping their next seasons here in May/June.

City Spotlight continues taping episodes in Season 11. Just recently, City Spotlight did an online only segment on Neoga Schools following the tornado that damaged both Neoga School buildings.

WEIU aired its 19th Our Story program this past December, featuring the community of Altamont. #20 will air in July 2026 – 40 years of WEIU-TV

Fall EIU Commencement ceremonies was streamed by WEIU this past December. WEIU will stream EIU Spring Commencement ceremonies on 5/10.

WEIU streamed EIU President Gatrell's Spring Update on 1/22 from the Doudna Fine Arts Center.

Take a Hike Season 4 will debut on 4/21 on WEIU. Production for Take a Hike takes place in the previous Fall.

School Talk Season 3 is currently taping new segments. The new season will debut on 5/02.

News Watch nightly at 5:30

Issues/Attitudes each Monday.

We are working on two new documentaries – Carolyn Cloyd(Untold Stories Grant: Major Charles Blakesly Hall) and Joe Astrouski (Spreading Love thru Media).

4. News Watch

Illinois News Broadcasters State Collegiate News Awards

Outstanding Television Newscast – 1st Place

Outstanding Television News Reporting – 1st Place – Olivia Bennett

Outstanding Television News Reporting – 2nd Place – Matt Williamson

Outstanding Television Sports Reporting – 1st Place – Jenna Minor

Illinois Broadcaster's Association Student Silver Dome Awards

Best TV Newscast – News Watch Team – 1st Place

Best TV Sports Package – Andrew Spaid – 1st Place

Best TV Photojournalism – Matt Williamson – 3rd Place

Best TV Weather – Will Redd, Ben Whitney, Emily Davis – 1st, 2nd, 3rd

COLLEGE MEDIA ASSOCIATION, PINNACLE AWARDS

Finalist, Best Video Newscast

Finalist, Best Video Sportscast

Mid America Student EMMY: NewsWatch Honorable Mention. Olivia Bennet won an Emmy and Honorable Mention for another.

5. HIT-MIX 88.9 WEIU RADIO

40 Students this semester – most ever.

EIU Sports

13 Seniors getting ready to graduate.

Announce winners: Senior of the year and Dan Marvin Scholarship soon.

10,000 Songs in our system

Installed iMedia Touch Upgrade over Thanksgiving Break

Upgraded FM Studio and Production Studio with New Microphones

Two students work behind the scenes with New Music and Classic Hits Music Entries (Sam and Sophia)

Media Job Fair was held April 1st

Installed Campus Cam, radar graphic, and area temperatures graphic that is able to be used during Morning Show on 51.6

Movie Watch feature for morning show (Alex)

Students presented at Cumberland Middle School Career Day on February 14 (Leah, Austin, Robby, Alex, and Marshall)

Radio Students assisted with WEIU Kids Day

Fall graduate – Cade Slaughter

Radio Election Coverage on November 8 (Marshall, Lizzy, Jacob, Robby, and Ben)

6. Updates from Ke'an, WEIU Donor and Community Relations

Altamont: This is Our Story Live Night (18 stories) - 12/11/24

Underwriting = \$10,400

Media Income = \$5,085

38 flash drives, 36 dvds, 6 blurays

An amount given to WEIU Radio & TV since November 2024 = \$51,225.34

\$3700 March Pledge

Passport for March \$800

Monthly Sustainers \$190

About \$4500 for March 2025

WEIU Kids Day - approx 700+ / \$4500 budget revenue/expenses

Public Media Day March 6th

Submitted PBS Annual Meeting Video Shout Out from WEIU

Viewers Like Me Campaign - soft launch was 3/26/25, hard launch 4/2/25

Upcoming School and Group Station Tours

An EIU Kindergarten Day on South Quad in partnership with the EIU Education Dept. on 4/30/25

7. WEIU-TV Programming

Programming: We are a PDP station which means we air 25% PBS programs and 75% non-PBS programming – NETA, APT, and local productions. We would use more of the NETA and APT programming to replace PBS shows. PBS also may allow us to continue airing older programs for a while, this will be decided if worst comes to worst. We could also air repeats of our local shows we produce over the next year as well. We have worked on a non-PBS TV schedule, and we can fill the time to maintain full time broadcasting operations.

We just added The American Public Television Movie Package. We will have these on Saturday nights @ 7pm and Sunday's @ 1PM, Saturday nights will also have Nightmare Theater @ 9PM on Saturdays. Some of the titles for the new movie package:

ESCAPE FROM ALCATRAZ

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

LA LA LAND

HIGH NOON

ARRIVAL

SOME LIKE IT HOT

GHOST

THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER

SELMA

Coming at the beginning of May: Austin City Limits 50th Anniversary

Austin City Limits 10th Annual Hall of Fame Honors Garth Brooks

Season 2 of the British mystery series Ridley, airing now, Monday's @ 9PM.

Coming soon, Independent Lens documentary called "We Want the Funk"-a history of funk music

Season 2 of Big Cats 24/7 a nature documentary, more nature coming, Sacred Planet and Walking w/ Dinosaurs

Coming in 26 for the 250th anniversary is a huge **PBS project: Ken Burns-American Revolution**

A couple of new kids' shows starting: Skillville & Mystery League

Questions:

Walus – What percent of the budget is News Watch?

Owens – It's significant, but important to remain a part of WEIU as it serves students daily. There are costs associated with the equipment, weather, Associated Press, etc.

Gill – what do we know about NOAA and weather alerts/updates.

Owens/Lau – this is dependent on the current Administration's future decisions

Craig – discussed weather with Lincoln, IL staff and potential changes in the future

Owens – Illinois public broadcasting stations collaboration may become more important

Craig – further discussed weather, the government decisions and effects on viewers

Owens – 51.6 has become a real source for weather related events for viewers.

Craig – discussed recent severe weather live break ins on WEIU from current News Watch students. Important for training as well as to inform viewers.

Owens – WEIU is a training ground for students and need to continue to offer hands on training

Gill – discussed the recent PBS/NPR hearing and hasn't heard much about the response.

Owens – agreed, not much response and mentioned that we were proud of Paula Kerger – President of PBS. 10% of PBS is news. WEIU TV produces our own local news program – News Watch and we provide children's programming and educational programming. We serve the university and a 22-county broadcast area.

The next WEIU Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 6, 2025 at 12:00pm noon.

Meeting adjourned 1:00pm