

2018 Associated Students

The AS Review

AS Office of Assessment



Introduction:

The AS Review completed assessment on **Month day[to be added], 2018**. The currently approved statement of purpose for **The AS Review** is:

The AS Review is a weekly alternative publication that provides coverage of student government, Associated Students offices and clubs, arts and entertainment, student life and other areas of life at Western. The Review seeks to enhance the student experience by shedding light on under-represented issues through inclusive coverage, informing readers and promoting dialogue.

This is a broad mission statement that calls for providing a service that goes beyond just printing a paper each week. It involves a social mission that tries to make a better, more-informed community for students, and provides many intangible, but important, services. As such, as well as listing the tangible programs we provide, I have included many of the less tangible services we provide to the campus community, because they are part of what must be considered in assessing our effectiveness and how we can best fulfill our mission statement and live up the values of the Associated Students.

Program/Services Provided:

- **Programs:**
 - **Weekly publication of The AS Review**
 - **A regularly-updated website**
 - **Active and engaging social media**
- **Services:**
 - **A platform for student voices, particularly marginalized, or under-represented voices**
 - **Documentation of student and AS activities, events and concerns**
 - **Providing the AS Board, AS programs and students at-large with the information needed to make informed decisions**
 - **Increased accountability around issues of concern to students**

- **Publicity about upcoming events and AS Board initiatives**
- **Strengthening of the campus community**
- **Economically-accessible professional experience for student writers and photographers**

SCOT Chart:

SCOT Analysis	Helpful	Harmful
Internal	<p>Access to AS programs, clubs and community</p> <p>Paid writing, photography and editorial staff in year-long positions</p> <p>Budget not based on advertising sales</p> <p>Editorial discretion and independence</p> <p>Versatility in writing styles</p> <p>AS framework of inclusivity and service to student body</p> <p>Weekly event notifications from Communications Office</p> <p>KUGS top songs</p> <p>Work-study employees</p> <p>Strong visual branding</p> <p>Access to InDesign and computers</p> <p>Use of Communications Office videographer</p> <p>Access to AS/VU email list</p> <p>Free design work by Publicity Center</p>	<p>Lack of real website or integration with AS website undermines credibility and accessibility to audience</p> <p>Lack of control over WordPress site</p> <p>Lack of response from AS employees to writers</p> <p>Lack of continuous understanding about role by editors, leading to lack of voice, frustration</p> <p>Lack of comprehensive social media brand</p> <p>Inconsistent descriptions of role/mission in different places</p> <p>Delays in AS website update</p> <p>Location in PC is less than ideal, easy to forget about</p> <p>Low staffing hours budgeted for writers</p> <p>Confusing relationship with covering AS Board</p> <p>AS employees confused about role, unsure or unaware about how to take advantage of our coverage</p> <p>Lack of codified reporting/editing training</p> <p>Office hours during business hours don't always reflect best times to do work</p>

		<p>High work load for photographer</p> <p>Lack of dedicated fund for pricey camera upgrade that will be needed eventually</p> <p>Sharing equipment with Communications Office videographers without increased funding</p> <p>Lack of clarity on legal resources</p>
External	<p>Trust in reporting brand</p> <p>Cross-campus distribution</p> <p>Claim to student voice</p> <p>Trust from community we cover</p> <p>Potential change to Lynden Tribune printing</p>	<p>Lengthy printing schedule inhibits timeliness</p> <p>Low social media following</p> <p>Low pick up rate</p> <p>Competition for writers + photographers with Western Front</p> <p>Struggle for relevance without strong news reporting</p> <p>Transition to digital-first media landscape</p> <p>Lack of clear understanding of role, relationship with rest of AS by campus community</p> <p>University charges for public records</p> <p>Inconsistent distribution, especially on short weeks</p> <p>Changing Facebook and Social Media Algorithms</p> <p>Bellingham Herald closing press</p>

Areas for Improvements/ Recommendations:

The following are the validated recommendations for strategic goals over the next four years:

Transition away from reliance on physical publication to greater web presence

As more students get their news online and the AS faces an uncertain budget forecast, it is necessary to lay the groundwork for a potential future where The AS Review is primarily online. As well as being potentially more eco-friendly, this is important to maintaining the Review's effectiveness, relevance and existence.

1. Work with web development team to incorporate web app into new AS website

As the process of building the website continues, it will be important to make sure it will support the functionality the Review needs. The current AS website doesn't support the AS Review's need to host articles and multimedia content, which is why we have moved to an external website. The Viking Union I.T. team has said they are willing to build web apps in to the site for AS offices that need them, such as KUGS. They will be conducting a process to catalogue needs in the next few years. At minimum, the Review's app will need:

- A user-friendly interface to add stories.
- Easy support for adding photos, video, embedding pdf's, hosting downloadable files and other multimedia content in line with best practices for news websites.
- Strong mobile support. Sixty percent of traffic in the last year has come from mobile sources. As well as responsive design, this will include support for AMP or whatever the most current protocol for quickly loading web content is.
- Byline support to allow easy cataloging of stories by author.
- Tags to support categorization of news stories.
- An attractive, updating home page.
- Integration with Facebook and Twitter posting through Open Graph mark up or the most recent protocols.
- The ability to embed tweets and Facebook posts.
- A comprehensive visual style in line with the AS Review's branding.
- Meets accessibility requirements.

There has also been discussion of finding a way to integrate AS Review headlines in to the front page of the AS site. This could be a great way to promote AS news, and showcase the services the Review provides.

2. *Acquire funding from AS Board for temporary domain name*

In the short term, it would be beneficial to have a top-level domain name. “TheASReview.com” and “ASReviewOnline.com” are available for less than \$10/year. This would work with hosting (see next point), or could simply redirect to the current “wp.wvu.edu/theasreview” site. This would increase the AS Review’s credibility and professionalism, as well as make being easier to remember and access, a great feature in building branding and an audience. We already have a separate website from the AS, so why not have one that reflects better on the AS and makes us more effective? This would require submitting a funding proposal to the AS Board for their final approval of any move.

3. *Acquire funding from AS Board for temporary hosting*

A Wordpress site, like we currently have, can be hosted through GoDaddy (for example) for \$10/month, providing 15 gigabytes of storage and support for 100,000 monthly visitors (we had 2,500 users and 3,149 pageviews in the last month according to our analytics). It is very straightforward to export a Wordpress site and move it to new Wordpress hosting. This will require consultation with ATUS about how much storage will be needed before finding new hosting, but the ATUS could also help facilitate the transition. Having the AS Review’s own hosting would fit well with a top-level domain, as well as give greater control of the site. Currently the AS Review is unable to install their plugins, such as an AMP plugin that would allow near-instant load time for mobile users (60 percent of our traffic) and is becoming standard for news sites. This also would require submitting a funding proposal to the AS Board for their final approval of any change.

4. *Try gradually reducing print publication to bi-weekly*

This would allow the AS Review to dramatically cut printing costs, which is by far the largest cost after staffing. It would allow for more focus on a digital-first model that reflects news industry standards, and what most student news consumers increasingly expect. This would also allow a higher-quality print product with more longform, in-depth pieces that increases the value of it to student, while simultaneously pushing them online for more timely news. This would be a way to also help increase the pick-up rates by keeping the paper on stands longer to allow more time to be picked up, and also creating more reason to do so. The Stranger, an alt-weekly in Seattle, saw a [20 percent increase](#) in print readership the same year they switched to

a bi-weekly model featuring a more comprehensive paper, according their publisher. This could either be a long-term move, or part of a transition to digital-only eventually. The AS Review is currently scheduled to try this out next spring quarter, and if it does not work moving back to the current weekly model is possible.

5. *Reduce office supply and copy services budget items*

The AS Review is budgeted \$200 for office supplies and \$60 for printing services this year, neither of which we have come close to using. Typically a camera battery and SD card are replaced each year for a cost of \$60 from the office supply budget. The remaining \$40 is enough to buy pens, notepads and calendars, and replace whiteboards as needed. There is one large banner in the Viking Union lobby that will cost \$40 to replace. The rest of the money should be reallocated to more effective promotional methods in line with the online approach.

6. *Allocate money to online advertising and promotion*

By cutting the other budget items, The AS Review has been able to allocate \$308 to online promotions in our proposed budget. This will allow the AS Review to spend around \$10/issue to promote a story on Facebook. The algorithm Facebook uses makes it important to promote some posts on Facebook to ensure that they appear in news feeds, even among people who have followed the AS Reviews page. In addition, it will drive page follows by exposing the content to people who have yet to follow the AS Review. The AS Review has seen dramatically higher reach and engagement on posts with only a \$10 boost, and while part of that is due to the posts we boost being interesting stories, the impact cannot be ignored. Other offices such as AS Productions have also been doing this and seeing results. Facebook is especially important as it drives most of our traffic. This will also act as insurance against Facebook's notoriously fickle algorithm, going forward. The AS Review can also reallocate this money to Twitter or other online ads if they decided to change their strategy going forward.

7. *Increase hours budgeted for writers*

Cutting the number of issues also allows us to increase the number of hours writers are budgeted for from 12 to 15 without increasing the AS Reviews budget beyond what it would be if we maintained at current staffing levels. Building an online presence will require a steady stream of high quality

content which will take more time to produce. Some writers are already averaging this much, and in weeks where important events happen, like the Naomi Grossman controversy, going much higher. This will also provide a greater degree of financial stability which will help make it so that writers don't need to seek second jobs that affect their availability to cover events.

8. *Institutionalize work study positions*

By the same token, the more work-study writers we can hire, the better. They don't impact our budget, and can work up to 19 hours a week without worrying about cost. Providing opportunities to students with work study to get co-curricular journalism and real-world writing experience showcased in published work without the costs associated with an, often unpaid, internship furthers the AS' mission of promoting equity and serving students, as well as helping break down barriers that have traditionally prevented diversity in journalism. Past years have hired work-study copy editors and photographers, and we have hired two-work study writers this quarter, but there have not been consistent openings of work study positions. It would be beneficial to offer work-study versions of all positions during the main spring hiring process, and quarterly, as a way of increasing our staff to meet digital demand, and advancing the objectives mentioned above.

9. *Start email newsletter, explore other options to diversify spreading online content*

As Facebook has tinkered with its algorithm, it has threatened many news sites who rely on it to drive content. We currently fall in to that category. Social media, especially Facebook, drives close to 55 percent of our web traffic and is our best method for disseminating our content online. If we want to remain relevant and able to reach our audience, we need to be exploring other options that are not reliant on a third party's algorithm. One way that has been successful for other outlets is an email newsletter. The Western Front is doing this, as is Western's Communication department (in the form of Western Today), and we have begun distributing a proto-newsletter within the AS. This has proven successful at other colleges: at Stanford the email-only, investigative newsletter [Fountain Hopper](#), has been a more effective voice for the student body than the Daily, which uses a more traditional student-newspaper model. We plan to create a more comprehensive newsletter using Mailchimp and begin distribution to more of the student body, like a student-centric Western Today. This may eventually require

some funding to support, but up to the first 2,000 subscribers are free. Other potential future options could involve looking at Snapchat discover stories or message bots.

10. Produce social media plan to better engage with students online

As we try to increase our social media presence, it's important to be strategic to ensure we have a consistent flow of posts. Posts can be scheduled ahead of time, so we should figure out when the optimal times are based on our analytics and general best practices. It would also be good to codify our voice on different social medias to a degree, as well as the types of posts we are looking for. For example: putting video on Facebook and polls on Twitter. This should not preclude additional posting, just serve as a base level of content.

11. Better integrate with current AS website

The current website has a box that says it features weekly headlines, but remains empty. It would be good to integrate the headlines, perhaps in a more visible box on the home page. This may need to wait until the next website, in which case it would be good for the Communications Office to remove that section and just leave the link in the meantime. Otherwise, we can send the Communications Office links to add there each week. Additionally, the link to our actual website can only be accessed by clicking through to the "About" page on our section of the website. We cannot add a link to our current home page since it is not an actual flat page. Viking Union I.T. has said they will reconfigure the AS Review homepage, and add a link to the actual website in the menu bar, but after several months and multiple follow-ups, they have yet to do so.

12. Produce more native web content

Growing our web following may involve rethinking some of the content we aim to produce. Our most popular Twitter post was a meme about sculptures on campus. Reaching and serving out student audience means making a conscious effort to expand the ways we present information, whether it's memes, videos or scroll-through articles.

13. Coordinate with AS videographer to produce video content

Facebook's algorithm boosts video content. Whether it is standalone video stories, or slideshows of the 10 best bathrooms on campus, incorporating the

AS videographer will give us another type of content to share with our audience. Closer coordination will also help include content from our articles in the weekly WWU Update videos.

14. *Review any website changes for accessibility, and make sure to use image descriptions on social media and website*

As part of our goal to serve all Western students and continue the AS' goals of accessibility and equity, it is important to constantly assess our publication and website for accessibility. Western's Equal Opportunity Office is conducting a review of much of the university's web presence to make sure it is accessible, and we should make sure we meet those standards as well. Specific standards include making sure the website resizes properly with large text, has good color contrast and logical organization. In addition, images need descriptive captions and alt-text for people with screen readers, including using the image description feature on Twitter. These considerations must be factored in when looking at possible website changes, or when thinking about our presence on the new AS site. It may also be useful to consult with the Disability Outreach Center coordinator and DRS to make sure we are meeting the standards we need.

15. *Assess potential need for staffing increases going forward*

As we expand our web presence and cut down our print publication, it may be worth looking at using the resulting additional funds for hiring new positions or increasing the hours for the AS Photographer role (who also has the responsibility of overseeing and editing the other photographers' photos), and Assistant Editor (who is in charge of social media and uploading stories, as well as actually editing stories and helping lay out the paper). This is something that will become more apparent as the move to hourly pay gives us a better sense of how the workload compares to the hours allocated.

16. *Protect Archives*

Having easily accessible archives of a publication is important, both for the campus community and for the publication. As well as acting as a living record and source of historical information for students and scholars, it can serve as the best source of ideas and inspiration for stories, while also ensuring stories are well informed by past events and reporting. Currently, viewing the Review's print archives involves going up to Special Collections in the library during business hours. This is somewhat inconvenient, but

more problematically, it only includes paper copies. As we produce more online and online-exclusive content, they will not be included there. Going forward, as we consider our web options and the new AS website, it will be important to ensure that our online archives are not misplaced in the process. This happened when The Western Front transitioned to a new website, and the records were almost lost forever, as well as leaving a multi-year hole in the community record.

17. Host public data online

In the course of the work done by the AS Review, documents or datasets are come across, either through public records requests or other means, which could be of value to members of the campus community. For example: past committee agendas, a searchable pdf of the campus police log and a spreadsheet of University Police purchases. While it would be important to hold back documents that could infringe on someone's privacy, like random police reports, these documents could be a resource to other students working on projects or seeking to understand how the university works. It would be easy to host these documents on our website for download, and would perhaps drive traffic to the website, as well as foster transparency on campus. While they have yet to post any documents, WSU's Daily Evergreen has [adopted](#) this idea.

18. Use analytics to better understand audience interests and drive content

One downside to a physical paper is not knowing which articles people are actually reading or interested in. Now that we have integrated Google Analytics with our website we can see tons of in-depth data, including which articles get the most interest. Our data so far isn't comprehensive, it only begins part of the way through fall quarter and so doesn't include some of our most popular articles (like that about Naomi Grossman's visit), but the top three viewed articles have been: Ana Ramirez's statement on stepping down, an article asking who left a sign outside Miller Hall over break and an article about the controversy over Hawaiian Night. Of the top 10 articles, two are about drag performers and the rest relate to political issues (not to say that drag can't be political) or controversies that affect students. It seems that may be what students want to read about.

Better coordinate institutional resources for visual storytelling

Visual storytelling, either through photos or video, is an important way to communicate with our audience, particularly as we promote more online content. Currently, the AS has two main resources for visual storytelling: the AS photographer, who acts as a photo editor for the AS Review, and the AS videographer, who has their own office as part of the Communications Office. This is kind of a counterintuitive arrangement, but short of moving the videographer position, there are a few things we can do to make it more effective. In addition, our AS photographer has encountered a high workload that could be addressed by additional staffing to make sure all AS offices are able to benefit from their service.

19. Pool funding with Communications Office for 5-year equipment upgrades, and yearly maintenance

With the Communications Office now having two videographers, there are now at least three positions trying to use the same resources, with potentially more if there are additional AS Review photographers, as would be preferred. So far, the videographers have been relying on our stock of lenses that were paid for out of our budget. While it makes sense to pool resources, increased usage means the amount of wear and tear on the collection of lenses will be potentially tripled. We currently have \$500/year allocated towards maintaining and repairing our collection of photo equipment, which isn't necessarily enough; the Communications Office had to request money from the Board to get a lens that we all used. It would be logical, and helpful, for the Communications Office to contribute an equal amount to equipment maintenance from their budget and increase their budget requests to ensure this, if necessary. If we pool the money, it should be enough to support replacing lenses as they become worn or scratched. In addition, we will eventually need to replace the camera bodies to make sure they are up-to-date and our image quality stays strong. This should be done every five years or so, and is estimated to cost around \$5,000[Hailey/Jeff can you review these numbers]. We do not have any money allocated in our budget for this, so we will need to make a request to the board for this money. We should make sure there is money allocated and being built up over time, either within the Communications Office or Review's budgets, or within a shared equipment fund, so this is not a surprise or an issue. Establishing a shared equipment fund instead of containing it in our individual budgets might be a more effective way of managing this.

20. Roll over equipment money

On the same note, our current \$500/year is not enough to replace some of the higher-end lenses. However, we may not need to use all the funds each year. Establishing a rolling fund would allow that extra money to be built up over time so we do not produce unexpected stresses on the reserves. We know these costs will occur every few years so it makes sense to build up the funds slowly over time.

21. Hire work study photographers

Largely addressed above, but we have found that one staff photographer at 15 hours/week and one work study photographer is not enough to adequately handle the workload. Hiring at least two work study photographers and promoting hiring for the positions year-round would help address this issue.

22. Hire an hourly photographer

We are currently using surplus funds to hire an additional, hourly photographer to help manage the workload this year. If we are unable to complete the necessary work with the number of work study photographers, we may need to seek additional funding for another photographer next year.

23. Improve coordination between Communications Office videographer and photographers

It would help to extend the scope of the AS videographer to help cover events and edit video for the AS Review. The videographer could edit video they, or the photographer, captured at events for the Review to publish online and accompany stories if possible.

24. Improve relationships with offices for photographing events or for marketing

As well as shooting photos for the AS Review, the AS photographer is also available to take photos of events for offices to put online, or to use in marketing and promotion. However, few offices ever utilize this resource beyond getting headshots at the beginning of the year. Reaching out to inform offices of this option could allow offices to better document their events.

Increase transparency and strengthen brand and relevance

25. Improve relationships with ROP offices and other programming offices through outreach

We've found that many offices don't see us as a resource, or don't consider the resources we can provide as platform for advocacy and informing students and the campus community. We have also received concerns about making sure we are covering sensitive events appropriately. Meeting with the directors of the Disability Outreach and Queer Resource Centers was really productive in addressing in concerns, and has led to great coverage that helped promote their office's goals. Working to connect with ROP offices in-particular allows us to do more meaningful stories than just event coverage, and better serve to give a platform to marginalized voices at Western.

26. Standardize descriptive copy

While the AS Review does have a mission statement, the specifics of that mission statement have been interpreted differently, seemingly changing from year to year. Perhaps as a result, there are many different descriptions of what the AS Review is and does floating around. Job descriptions, our website, the AS website, and our masthead each have a different description of what the AS Review is. How accurate each one is, and which one the editor will follow is anyone's guess. In the interests of establishing a clear brand, voice and purpose a clear description should be created and used in all of those locations, and anywhere else needed in future. This will also help ensure some stability in the legacy of the paper from year to year, and clarify what to expect when students pick up the paper, follow us online or apply for a job.

27. Clarify editorial independence and maintain through restructure

While the AS Review is set up in a way that helps protect its editorial independence (like most student publications, it has an adviser, but no direct supervisor, and isn't directly overseen by a Board member), there have been different views of what this means and resulting misunderstandings. Past editors have told writers they could not write any stories that might cause any part of the AS to look bad, and one went so far as to cast the role of the Review as to not report on "real news" and, instead, protect the AS from any negative publicity. However, ignoring controversial issues, or not reporting on them fairly and accurately, causes the publication to lose credibility and relevance. It is also not in line with our mission statement. In the anecdotal experience of the current AS Review Editor-in-Chief, acting as a de-facto

propaganda outlet is not something that most students support. In addition, it makes it more difficult to recruit journalism students who can provide useful skills and expertise, and would otherwise be a natural fit for the publication. The AS Review was founded as a way for students to have a platform for their voices on campus. Limiting those voices to solely institutional AS voices does our readership a disservice, and has the possibility to further marginalize already-marginalized voices in campus discussions. For this reason, it is important to make clear that while the Review works to support and help AS offices, its most fundamental obligation is to its readers, the 16,000-or-so people who constitute the Associated Students and fund its publication, with a special emphasis on promoting the values of equity and inclusivity the AS strives for. One service the Review provides to those students is reporting on the AS Board, and discussing the issues they consider (as specified in its mission statement). While it is not unheard of for publications to cover the governing body that funds them (NPR covers Congress) and the current board has been very respectful, it is important to explicate that relationship to build trust with our audience and prevent any potential future awkwardness. This will also be important to consider as the AS restructures and reorganizes going forward.

28. Move printing to Lynden Tribune

We have been printing with the Bellingham Herald. However, they recently informed us that they are shutting down their press and moving their publication to Tacoma. They have arranged a deal with the Skagit Valley Herald to continue our printing in the meantime. However, after looking in to it, we have discovered that the Lynden Tribune can do our printing at comparable cost with only a 0.25 inches smaller product. We are planning to switch over starting in spring quarter.

29. Change publication date

The Lynden can also potentially do overnight printing, instead of the two-day delay we currently face if we don't submit the paper on Thursday or Friday nights (in which case it's actually a four-day delay). Now that The Western Front has dropped to once a week, we could potentially take the Thursday slot, or publish on Tuesdays if they continue to publish on Wednesdays. This would allow us to publish fresher, more relevant content instead of having to wait four days for the paper to come out.

30. Reduce number of copies distributed

Another service the Lynden Tribune can provide is reducing the number of papers delivered to 750. We currently can't go lower than a run of 1,000 papers, even though more than half end up being recycled. While it would still cost the same amount to publish, we would be creating less paper waste, and if more people start picking up the paper it won't cost extra to increase the run of papers

31. Increase accountability for distributors, work with distribution coordinator to increase reliability

Consistent distribution has been a recurring issue. We've heard from multiple people that they have trouble tracking down a new copy of the paper. In addition, some racks seem to get completely missed some weeks, without any real rhyme or reason. Other issues have included distribution being delayed by several days because a distributor reported the papers hadn't been delivered, even though they were just on the opposite side of the loading dock from normal, South Campus distribution being inconsistent because a distributor had "issues" with the Review, and slow distribution because one of the distributors refused to use the cart to carry papers. The inconsistent distribution is a real issue that inhibits building a reader base and undoubtedly helps keep the pick-up rate low. Working with the distribution coordinator, and adviser as necessary, to help address this will hopefully help increase accountability for distributors and ensure more reliable distribution around campus. In addition, working with the distribution coordinator to adjust the quantities of papers at different locations is another area that might help make us more effective.

32. Work with distribution coordinator to create distribution plan for short weeks

Another issue is distribution on four-day weeks. As distributors on different routes work on different days when there is a three-day weekend the North Campus route can be delayed till mid-day Wednesday, meaning that the paper is only stands for two-and-a-half days. This is really not enough time for it to be picked up, and wasteful, as the number of papers is based on a full week worth of pick-ups. We should either come up with a more effective distribution schedule, or discuss not printing on those weeks if no better option exists.

33. Provide funding to access Public Records

Some of our most popular and important stories this year have at-least-partially relied on public records from the university. This includes reporting on the Study Group contract that was a subject of controversy on campus. However, due to a change in state law, Western has begun charging to receive records. We have re-allocated \$10 from our under-utilized office supplies budget, which will pay for 100 pages of records at 10 cents/page. This amount should be adjusted in the future depending on whether it is being utilized and if the amount is sufficient.

34. Offer standardized training and skill building for writers

The Review hires writers from all backgrounds and majors. Some writers have expressed that they wish they had received more training in the skills necessary to do their jobs. We have been conducting short workshops, but it would be good to have a standardized training to do at the beginning of the year to ensure that everyone starts out on the same page, as well as are avoiding potential ethical or legal issues. This will also ensure consistency between years, and if we hire people to fill positions mid-year. In addition, some writers have expressed interest in learning about how to use InDesign and do lay out. Giving the opportunity for writers to learn and practice those skills is a way to help ensure that we are passing on skills and providing opportunities for employees to potentially move up in the Review, while also advancing AS goals of providing additional skills to employees.

35. Develop style and ethics guides, as well as writing tips - make available online

Relatedly, it will be necessary to create documentation to go with this training. This entails creating written ethics and style guides that will encompass everything from AS standards of inclusivity, to whether to spell out “Viking Union.” (Some tip sheets could be good as well.) Some of this already exists from past years, but it needs standardization and institutional buy in. Any documents should be posted on our website to make them easy for writers to access, and to promote transparency.

36. Codify hiring outreach to promote a large, diverse pool of applicants

As a publication we strive to have a variety of diverse voices. One of the most fundamental ways to ensure this is through widespread and robust outreach in hiring. While there is overall advertising for AS positions in the spring, we should consider doing additional outreach, both to relevant departments on

campus, and through our own mediums. This is even more relevant when hiring at other points during the year for vacancies or new positions. It would be good to have a plan of which groups to notify to spread the message about the opening, as well as how and when to promote the positions within our own mediums.

37. Examine potential legal advice options

As we engage in more, and more impactful, journalism that addresses the issues students care about (as our mission statement calls for) it is possible that we may encounter more complicated legal issues, or situations where the threat of legal action is used to attempt to dissuade writing about important issues. This has already happened this school year with Naomi Grossman attempting to seek legal action, although her lawyers told her she had no case. While the odds of this actually becoming a serious issue are low, it would be helpful to understand both what options are available for legal advice, and what we might do in a situation where we might require legal representation. There are a variety of free options for legal advice available to student journalists, including the Student Press Law Center and journalism professors on campus. In addition, Western's assistant attorney general has agreed to offer legal advice and representation to The Western Front, as part of an agreement about their relationship with the university that requires certain levels of editorial standards. It could be beneficial to reach out to that office to pursue a discussion around that subject, and come to an understanding. Either way, a documented plan of action in case legal questions or issues arise would be beneficial.

38. Assess the student body's goals for AS Review

Western students fund the Review, and they are its target audience. It would be good to have more concrete data on what their hopes for the Review are. A survey conducted last year had less than 30 respondents, with the most popular response (increasing investigative journalism) coming from only around three people. A larger survey, or an advisory referendum, could perhaps offer some guidance on what the student body would like to see from the Review.

AS Review Summary of Recommendations

Transition away from reliance on physical publication to greater web presence

1. Work with web development team to incorporate web app into new AS website
2. Acquire funding from AS Board for temporary domain name
3. Acquire funding from AS Board for temporary hosting
4. Try gradually reducing print publication to bi-weekly
5. Reduce office supply and copy services budget items
6. Allocate money to online advertisement and promotion
7. Increase hours budgeted for writers
8. Institutionalize work study positions
9. Start email newsletter, explore other options to diversify spreading online content
10. Produce social media plan to better engage with students online
11. Better integrate with current AS website
12. Produce more native web content
13. Coordinate with AS videographer to produce video content
14. Review any website changes for accessibility, and make sure to use image descriptions on social media and website
15. Potential need for staffing increases going forward
16. Protect archives
17. Host public data online
18. Use analytics to better understand audience interests and drive content

Better coordinate institutional resources for visual storytelling

19. Pool funding with Communications Office for 5 year equipment upgrades, and yearly maintenance
20. Roll over equipment money
21. Hire work study photographers
22. Hire and hourly photographer
23. Improves coordination between Communications Office videographer and photographers
24. Improve relationships with offices for photographing events or for marketing

Increase transparency and strengthen brand and relevance

25. Improve relationships with ROP offices and other programming offices through outreach
26. Standardize descriptive copy
27. Clarify editorial independence and maintain through restructure
28. Move printing to Lynden Tribune
29. Change publication date
30. Reduce number of copies distributed
31. Increase accountability for distributors, work with distribution coordinator to increase reliability
32. Work with distribution coordinator to create distribution plan for short weeks
33. Provide funding to access public records
34. Offer standardized training and skill building for writers
35. Develop style and ethics guides, as well as writing tips – make available online
36. Codify outreach to promote a large, diverse pool of applicants
37. Examine potential legal advice options
38. Assess the student body's goals for AS Review

