

Executive Committee Call Minutes
Sept. 10, 2009 – 11 a.m. CDT

Board members on the call: Alison Young, David Cay Johnston, Duff Wilson, Manny Garcia, Cheryl Phillips, Leonard Downie, Jr., Phil Williams. **Absent:** Rob Cribb, Stephen C. Miller, Lise Olsen, Lea Thompson, Mc Nelly Torres, Lawan Williams. **Staff on the call:** Mark Horvit and Jennifer Erickson.

1. **Call to order (Young):** Young called meeting to order at 11:04 a.m.
2. **Adding new category to IRE Contest (Phillips):** Phillips said the contest committee made a few recommendations for potential categories to add to the annual IRE Contest. The new categories address quicker-turn-type investigations. Her goal on today's call is to find out whether there is consensus among the executive committee members to add a category/ies and if so, what types. If there is consensus, then Horvit and staff will be tasked with distributing a plan to the board for a vote in the coming week.

Phillips said she recommends that IRE add only one new award from the following committee recommendations: The Body of Work/Watchdog category would honor the shorter, quick turnaround investigations. Entrants could put in for three or more distinct investigations on three separate topics over a calendar year. The committee felt that this was the strongest category of the original four. The second award would address investigations sparked off of a news event and published within 30 days of the event. The committee did not have as strong of a consensus on this category.

Discussion ensued. Johnston pointed out that the current contest does not have a category for multi-year projects.

Young said the committee will take a comprehensive look at the contest structure for next year's contest. For instance, are we categorizing media correctly?

Phil Williams suggested that they name the second award as Breaking News Investigations.

Young asked Phillips, Horvit and staff to define and write up proposed rules for the two categories, distribute them to board early next week and review for a vote at next board meeting.

3. **Update on membership drive (Phil Williams):** Williams said a task force was created to address the issue of declining membership. There were 4,400 members in Aug 07; 3,900 in Aug 08; now we have around 3,500 members. What is the message to send out to increase membership? Williams said the challenge is to make IRE relevant on an ongoing day-to-day basis and to journalists who can't work on long-term projects.

Williams said the task force came up with a marketing pitch to make in October that includes incentives for drawings for conference hotel stays, IRE databases, books at IRE store, etc. The committee will ask volunteers to act as recruiters in all the major markets who would lead drives in their own cities. Young said volunteers could go into local journalism schools to talk about IRE and give a presentation; she said staff would be developing two PowerPoint presentations to assist with the process. Horvit said to send any ideas on reaching non-traditional members to Phil and him.

4. **Executive Director's update:** Horvit said that IRE will receive a \$500,000 grant over three years from the Lumina Foundation in support of a campus coverage initiative wherein college journalism students are taught investigative methods. The program will launch January 7-10 at Arizona State University; recruiting applicants will start next week. The Education Writers Association and Student Press Law Center are partnering with IRE.

Horvit proposed increasing the conference registration fees by \$15 for professionals – the 2010 fees would be \$190 for early bird and \$215 on-site. Student rates would remain at \$100. He said the conferences are the greatest value and least expensive among large journalism conferences. He raised the fees by \$10 in 2008 and there was no negative response. The increase would bring in significant funding and we would still be less expensive than other journalism conferences. The board members agreed that the fees should be raised and, further, suggested that they could go up as far as \$195/\$220 or \$200/\$225.

Horvit said he emailed budget updates out to the board members. He said there were no massive changes over the past month. The Lumina grant was not included in the recent version and he hopes to hear about a possible Ford Foundation grant soon as well.

Horvit described the breakdown for the Challenge Fund for Journalism \$50,000 grant as follows: \$25,000 toward Web operations and the remaining \$25,000 for new software for the office for membership, fundraising etc. He said he is waiting for a final quote from Blackbaud, the company that makes Raiser's Edge.

5. **New business:** Wilson said that he and the conference committee need help reaching journalists in southern California and encouraging them to register for the 2010 IRE Conference in Las Vegas. Any/all ideas are welcome. Also, he asked everyone to start thinking of potential keynote speakers.

Young said the next full board call is on Thursday, Sept 17, at noon EDT.

6. **Adjournment:** Phillips made a motion to adjourn. Wilson seconded her motion. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 12:02 p.m. CDT.