

**ARKANSAS COMMUNICATION & THEATRE ARTS ASSOCIATION  
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE  
DECEMBER 30, 2018  
REGULAR WINTER MEETING.**

**Call to Order:** The Executive Council of the Arkansas Communication & Theatre Arts Association (ACTAA) was called to order by President Rosie Valdez-Block on December 30, 2018 at 11:37AM in the Old Bank Sports Grill in Russellville, Arkansas for its regular winter meeting.

The following members were present: Jennifer Akers, Melinda Beth, Rosie Valdez-Block, Brandon Box-Higdem, Joel Brown, Martene Campbell, John Gale, Colton Gilbert, Laurie Harrison, Julia Howell, Jacki Reiff, Ron Spalter, Pat Treadway, Tiffany Tucker, and Zackery Tucker. Shelle House was absent.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the September 6, 2018 and September 7, 2018 Fall Conference meetings of the Executive Council were prepared by former Recording Secretary Colton Gilbert and presented by Executive Secretary Zackery Tucker. After review, a motion to accept the minutes as presented was made by Gilbert, seconded by Joel Brown, and unanimously passed.

**REPORTS**

**President's Report.**

*Welcome.* Valdez-Block welcomed members to the Winter Executive Council meeting and thanked the group for the various work each member did to help move the association although through various matters during her recent pregnancy.

*ADE Professional Development Partnership.* Valdez-Block further reported as President, she has been recently approached by Lana Hallmark of the Arkansas Department Education (ADE) about new possible opportunity for ACTAA to partner with ADE to offer professional development (PD) throughout the state. ADE is considering coordinating various PD speakers, both from within the state and potentially outside the state, to present PD in the state's various regional educational cooperatives. Valdez-Block reported this partnership, which may include ACTAA providing members as PD presenters, as a great opportunity to expand membership by being provided an opportunity to get the association in front of communication and theater teachers outside of competition environment. However, there is a possibility ADE might be asking the association to co-sponsor out speakers in communication and theater financial.

Valdez-Block further reported, Hallmark asked if ADE may submit a survey about communication and theater PD offerings in the state to the association's members utilizing the association's listserv. Valdez-Block communicated when she receives the

survey and poetical email language from ADE, she will forward it to the Executive Council via email for review before directing the content to the Webmaster for distribution on the association's listserv.

Pat Treadway added, ACTAA once hosted PD sessions at various regional educational cooperatives, possibility in cooperation with ADE, in the past. The effort saw a significant increase in new membership as a result. However, the Fall Conference that following year did not include expansive enough offerings of PD and activities for new members and many, if not all, of the new members did not renew membership. Treadway further contributed that Janet Buchanan was larger contributor of the PD session at that time.

*Committee Charge Documents.* Valdez-Block further reported she has been working on updating the format of the charge documents for committees, chairs, and various other new positions. The efforts also will include adding email and phone numbers for positions holders and committee members to be updated with the Committee Coordinator and Webmaster for publication on the website.

Valdez-Block additionally reported she has had some difficulties with finalizing committee commitments from various individuals. Continuing, several individuals have turned down committee appointments either out of lack of time for the particular committee's work or lack of personal investment in the committee's work. An example provided was at the chair the Professional Standards Committee. At the previous Executive Council meeting Tim Peerbolte was approved to replace Jacki Reiff as chair. However Peerbolte did not accept the appointment due to its time commitment as requirement to travel to Little Rock often during legislative sessions and attend ADE meetings. Valdez-Block will continue to consider placement on committee but encourage Executive Council input.

### **1st Vice-President's Report**

*2018 Fall Conference.* Following the most recent Fall Conference organized by Reiff, she reported the need to encourage earlier payment of conference registration in the future. At one month before the conference the association had collected only \$400.00 in registration and collected nearly \$5,000 in expenses. Although the conference pays for itself in the longer term, cash-flowing the pre-conference organizing is hard to financially manage. Gilbert contributed that many member's districts do not may for Fall Conference and making registration due earlier might not be feasible. Jennifer Akers added, many districts that do pay for PD and Fall Conference don't issue budgets to programs until September limiting the timeframe members can commit to attend Fall Conference. Reiff added since the state requirement for PD hours has been lowered form 60 hours a year to 30, perhaps the conference could offer less PD hours and be shorts a day. Melinda Beth suggested offering various days options for individual to choose attendance to fit their needs. Zackery Tucker reminded the group, currently the conference offers a variety pricing options for attendance different days (e.g., one, two, or three days).

*Fall Conference Variety of Offerings.* Reiff reported the review of comments about the 2018 Fall Conference conclude there are many times new members and non-competitive educators are not interested in the offerings. Valdez-Block added a considerable concern of hers for improving Fall Conference is the General Business meeting and breakout meetings. Since currently a quorum for the General Business meeting requires is based on conference attendance, the conference is scheduled with no competing sessions during the General Business meeting. Treadway contributed the sometimes heated debates over rule and constitutional changes that happen in the General Business meeting are not the place a new member or English Oral Communication/ Theater educator would become excited to join the association. Ron Spalter suggested requiring members to sign up before the start of the meeting to better ensure the meeting is more orderly and perhaps less confrontational. This would direct the lively debate to the High School and allow the Business Meeting to run smoother. Treadway suggested renaming the high school meeting to “Issues on Competitive Events.” In her experience, she has notices new member see the “High School Meeting” forum as an opportunity to setback and understand the association and the event, but discover it’s a quite lively debate on competition.

Z. Tucker suggested either coordinating activities of PD session that relate to non-competitive educators (Oral Communication for English Educators) during the business meeting and forums to provide everyone something to attend. Z. Tucker further added at several conference he has attended like the National League of Cities, sessions are labeled for new members/ attendees to experienced members allowing member know what events to attend. Valdez-Block contributed that the National Speech & Debate Conference have a leadership track for senior educators. Treadway further added, the Summer Workshop was originally created to have the informal lively discussion and to conduct association work so the Fall Conference can be focused on PD.

*2020 Fall Conference.* Reiff reminded the Executive Council that due to the additional of two year terms of elected officers, Brandon Box-Higdem, as 1st Vice-President-elect, will continue to plan the 2019 Fall Conference, while Reiff will plan the 2020 Fall Conference.

Reiff reported cost for the 2020 Fall Conference will be the association’s largest issue. Reiff has contacted various Central Arkansas locations to host the conference, including The Marriot Little Rock Downtown, Lake DeGray State Park, and Mount Magazine State Park, and the cheapest pricing is \$18,000. Reiff continued the constitutional requirement for Fall Conference to be hosted on Thursday-Saturday following Labor Day limits the Fall Conference Committee’s ability to negotiate pricing for venue. Z. Tucker asked if a multi-year commitment has been explored with venues. Reiff reported there is no significant cost savings.

Valdez-Block explained the conference was hosted at Mount Magazine State Park for several years, however a larger conference scheduled the same weekend and the venue was unable to accommodate ACTAA Fall Conference on our weekend. Reiff contributed

Mount Magazine State Park could accommodate Fall Conference for \$5,000 if we could schedule August 27-29, 2020.

Valdez-Block entertained a motion enacting Article I, Section 5, of the Bylaws declaring scheduling the 2020 Fall Conference on alternative dates than those prescribed by the constitution an emergency the allowing the Fall Conference Committee to explore better competitive rates for venues on different dates, including, but not limited to, Mount Magazine State Park on August 27-29, 2020. The motion was made by Gilbert, seconded by Spalter, and passed unanimously.

### **1st Vice-President-elect's Report**

Box-Higdem suggested since great discussion of Fall Conference had already been had and the discussion on 2019 Fall Conference is provided under New Business, he would yield his time to New Business.

### **2nd Vice-President's Report**

*Summer Workshop.* Gilbert reported on development on planning the Summer Workshop with Valdez-Block. Final plans will be announced to the association before Spring Break; and the theme will focus on community building.

### **Executive Director's Report**

*Constitutional Revisions.* Martene Campbell reported following the Fall Conference, she worked to engross and published the various amendments that the association approved to the constitution.

*Tournament Qualifying Document.* Campbell additionally reported with coordination of the Tournament Advisory Committee (TAC) Chair and Webmaster updated and published the Tournament Qualifying document reflecting the various amendments approved by the association at Fall Conference.

*Student Congress.* Campbell reported the efforts to coordinate the 50th Arkansas Student Congress at the Arkansas State Capitol as the Permanent Director on the committee.

*Conferences.* Campbell ended her report with details about coordinating with committees to finalize details for Fall Conference and Summer Workshop and ensure plans are detailed by constitutional deadlines to get information to the member before the end of the academic year.

### **Executive Treasurer's Report**

*Financial Report.* Akers presented the financial report to the Executive Council. The balance in the checking account was reported to be \$11,250.72 and the CD balance was reported to be \$2,113.93.

*Demo Day Accounts.* Following review of the report, Brown reminded Akers several individuals did not register for Northwest Arkansas Demo Day through the website; and the Demo Day not paid accounts might be more than reported. Brown assured the Executive Council that, since he organized the event, will follow-up with Akers after the meeting to reconcile the invoices.

*Membership Accounts.* Akers reminded the Executive Council, individuals with past due balances after January 1, 2019, their membership will be suspended. Various emails have been sent out to the entire membership to remind individuals about this membership requirement. Akers reported she has been in contact with several members who have detailed payment in being processed by their district; and she will be working with these members.

*QuickBooks Upgrade.* Finally, Akers requested permission to renew the QuickBooks subscription for the software used to management the finances of the association. Akers reported, the version of QuickBooks currently being used is six years old and several components will no longer be serviceable in the near future. Campbell moved to approve the purchase of an up-to-date QuickBooks subscription. The motion was seconded by Box-Higdem and approved unanimously.

### **Executive Secretary's Report**

*ACTAA Calendar.* Z. Tucker reported since Fall Conference he has developed a new streamlined online form for submissions to the ACTAA Calendar which is now located on the Tournament page of the website. Saturday, December 15, 2018 was the last day for current tournaments (tournaments offered in the 2018-2019 academic year) to confirm their dates on the 2019-2020 academic calendar year. For programs to confirm dates for a new tournament (a tournament not offered in the 2018-2019 academic year) they may request dates in the 2019-2020 academic year between December 16, 2018 to February 15, 2019. Starting February 16, 2019, programs may begin to request dates for any additional (or second) tournament they wish to offer in the 2019-2020 academic year.

### **College Representative's Report**

John Gale reported he hosted a college member forum at the Fall Conference. At the meeting the college caucus made commitments 1) to explore needs of theater and communication students can receive from ACTAA, 2) to explore gaps ACTAA can provide college educators, 3) a explore the development of a program for college members to provide PD for secondary members, 4) explore ways to communicate the current status of theater and communication instruction in secondary schools, and 5) promote Student Congress on the college level. Gale will continue to work with college members and communication and theater instructors/ professors across the state to address these commitments. Finally Gale encouraged members to reach out to college

instructors/ professors they know and shame them for not being involved in the state communication and theater association.

### **High School Representative's Report**

Brown reported since Fall Conference and enactment of various rule changes to the Tournament Qualifying document, he has collected input from members on the impact of the rule changes. As a whole, many of the rule changes are well received by the membership. The only two concerns that have been communicated are the 1) additional of a universal sweepstake formula for all qualifying tournaments; and 2) clarity when to challenge novice eligibility under the new rules. The new qualifying level seem to be working well, however the state tournament will be growing faster.

*Clarity on Challenging Novice Eligibility.* Akers added TAC has yielded one question on challenging novice eligibility and the issue was resolved. Akers asked what concerns Brown has received. Brown elaborated the question have been made on what punishment will happen in a violation occurs? There have been concerns of punishing a student for a coaches decision outside the control of the student. Also, when should a challenge be made before or after the tournament? Akers followed up that the challenges should happen at registration before the tournament starts. However the complaint made to TAC was made after the tournament because the entry field list was not published before the tournament. Valdez-Block added publishing the entry field list should be added to the Tournament Qualifying document as guidance, since in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century it is common practice. Valdez-Block committed to work with Brown and TAC to improve guidance.

*PD Session.* Gilbert added a PD session on how to run a tournament or the impact of the recent rule changes should be hosted at Summer Workshop of Fall Conference. Valdez-Block supported Gilbert and added the association has focused on tabulation but not tournament best practices. Akers contributed TAC will be sending out a reminder to members before the first spring tournament of commons issues reported to TAC in the fall semester.

### **Junior High School Representative's Report**

*Jr High Ballots.* Spalter reported with coordination of Laurie Harrison and T. Tucker, a survey was sent out to the junior high school programs to collect suggestions to improve the events and ballots. The new ballots have been adopted and published on the website.

*New Opportunities for Competition.* Spalter encouraged Executive Committee to concern methods to promote the further development of middle school programs. Spalter further explained his program is being provide the opportunity to preform before the Springdale Board of Education. He hopes this will help encourage the development of programs at his districts two other high schools. Box-Higdem contributed promotional material for middle school program might be developed by the publicity and promotions committee to be used at the Principals Conference.

## **Lifetime Member Representative's Report**

Treadway recommended that professional standards efforts include Fred Boosey and Mary Richardson. As retired members they would bring history of the association and possible have more time to commit to advocating for theater and oral communication at the capitol.

## **Webmaster's Report**

*Tournament Page.* T. Tucker reported since Fall Conference, in addition to general updates of new information and content, she has updated the organization of the Tournament page and how ballots are organized on the website.

*Recommendations.* T. Tucker further reported he suggests a plan to redesign the website to have a more modern look and continue improving on the site's organization of content. T. Tucker recommended the development of a survey to be published to the membership for input on the website to be deadline around the state tournament. Using the comments collected from the members, T. Tucker will develop a plan to present to the Executive Council at Summer Workshop; with hopes to "go-live" of the new design before the 2019-2020 academic year.

## **Professional Development Coordinator's Report**

Harrison reported the Fall Conference offered 10 sessions and 14.75 hours of PD organized by Reiff. Harrison continued it is her understanding her role as PD Coordinator is to handle the paperwork and reporting of PD planned by the Summer Workshop and Fall Conference committees. However, in addition to the paperwork she is willing to work with the committees to develop PD, find speakers, and apply for grant funding. Spalter contributed he has recently been trained to offer PD at his district and would be willing to help the association. Treadway added from the beginning of ACTAA into the 1990s, the association invited a guest speaker from outside the state to speak at Summer or Fall meetings.

## **Archivist's Report**

No report was provided in the absence of Shelle House.

## **Committee Coordinator's Report**

Julia Howell reported she is excited about her new role in the association and looks forward to assisting the President and Executive Director coordinate the work of committees in this new role.

## **Immediate Past President's Report**

Beth reported at Fall Conference she questions Hallmark of ADE about a technicality in the new state law related to charter schools. When questioned, if a charter school in a district waves a state requirement, can the public schools in that district do the same, Hallmark responded yes. A public school can wave a state requirement if the charter school in that district has waved that requirement. Beth continued, the association and all its members should be “super vigilant” as oral communication can easily be one of the requirements waved in this scenario.

Valdez-Block underlined the need to fill the Professional Standards committee. Perhaps with Fred Boosey, Mary Richardson, and Chris Flowers, as someone in the classroom, would be able to advocate at the state board or the capitol on issues.

### **New Business**

**Item 1. Association Insurance.** Valdez-Block reported to the Executive Council on research on options for liability insurance for the association. After discussions with an insurance agent close to Valdez-Block, five options were reported – 1) associational coverage expanded from a member’s personal policy; 2) the association securing an independent policy; 3) the association securing director/leadership policy; 4) the association securing volunteer coverage; and 3) the association securing event insurance for each ACTAA event hosted by the association.

Valdez-Block explained that although a personal policy being explained to cover the association is an affordable option, the individual agreeing to explain their personal policy would be accepting direct liability for claims. Since the association is not designated by the IRS as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, an independent policy would be expensive; insurance policies would be setup as a for-profit business. The option of securing director/leadership coverage is more affordable, however as a completely volunteer organization the volunteer coverage is more favorable option. At a minimum, Valdez-Block reported the association was advised to purchase event insurance to protect the association for revenue loss and risk liability.

Treadway asked if Valdez-Block had researched insurance coverage through the National Federation of High School Associations (NFHS). She remembered at some point NFHS offered insurance coverage to members. Perhaps the association could purchase coverage from NFHS or NSDA. Valdez-Block responded she did not know NFHS offered insurance coverage, but the association could defiantly explore the optional option.

Valdez-Block further added, the insurance agent she was in contact with did advise the association should not be on high alert about this matter. The association does not have resources valuable enough to justify a lawsuit, nor is the association high profile enough to attract symbolic lawsuits.

Campbell contributed, during the meeting she was able to find information about liability coverage to full program insurance options fro NFHS through the NSDA membership.



Treadway moved the President be authorized to purchase event insurance for the associations' hosted events (namely, the State Tournament, Demo Day, Arkansas Student Congress, Summer Workshop and Fall Conference) and liability coverage for the ACTAA Executive Council members by the most advantageous means possible. The motion was seconded by Gilbert and approved unanimously.

Gale contributed, in last year Rosie Valdez-Block and Martene Campbell drafted and signed, with their names, a legal document on a very hard issue. Gale asked the Executive Council to consider and recognize how professional this action was without any liability or protective coverage. Moving toward protection is a wise move by the Executive Council.

**Item 2. Summer Workshop.** Gilbert reported on the need to rebrand the event and that the theme will focus on community building. Brown contributed perhaps there could be offered for students to perform for new members. Like Demo Day but a learning opportunity to teachers new to the activity. Treadway added members might not appreciate high school students attending the conference, as member have different expectation for conference activities and activated with students. Brown followed-up with he participated in PD at his school with students and found the opportunity rewarding. Campbell contributed, she recently attended a two PD at the Clinton Presidential Center which included students. She attended breakout session with her students that included conversation about philosophy and deep subject matters. Campbell found the experiences powerful and valuable.

Brown added perhaps students could expo events during registration of conference or the state tournament. Howell contributed this would provide an opportunity for students to earn NSDA points for service to the community. Valdez-Block added, this might be a opportunity to engage college members and student alumni

Campbell reminded the Summer Workshop committee details for the event needs to be finalized for distribution to the membership before Spring Break.

No action was taken.

**Item 3. Principal's Conference.** Reiff reported to the Executive Council that association applied to host a session on "the importance of communication in an educational environment" at the AAEA Summer Conference in July. The description was made vague to allow the Professional Standards committee to develop content on a variety of subjects. Reiff plans to hear back from the conference at the end of January for the approval of the session. Gilbert added, the session needs to end with a slide or two about the important of oral communication classes. Box-Higdem added, perhaps a brochure or handout could be developed to promote the value of junior high forensics programs to be distributed at the conference.

No action was taken.

**Item 4. ACTAA Journal and Magazine.** Valdez-Block reminded the Executive Council at the last meeting the Executive Council received two proposals to establish publications – Angela Duggins of submitted a proposal to reorganized the academic Journal of ACTAA and Zackery Tucker, as then Publicity & Promotions chair, submitted a proposal to establish an associational magazine.

In pervious discussion, the Executive Council considered combining the efforts. Valdez-Block announced the association would be moving forward with the magazine proposal but not the academic journal at this time. Valdez-Block added, the association has struggled with maintaining an academic journal in the past and currently the proposal lacks a dedicated research college member to lead the efforts. This coupled with Duggins’ recent move out-of-state to take a position at Southern Illinois University, Valdez-Block annouced efforts to move forward with an academic journal should be put on hold. Treadway contributed, an academic journal needs to headed by a college member as they operate in a publisher’s parish.

Tucker mentioned the magazine program proposed – “Arkansas Speaks!” – is hoped to highlight the ACTAA community. Providing an organized platform to promote members, students and programs including, article’s about association activities (rule change proposals, conference announcements, etc.), individual student highlights inside and outside the competitive activity, highlight archival moments, program successes, and member achievements.

Valdez-Block added, she would like the first issue to be released in the beginning of the new year and hopes the Executive Council could workshop the first issue to start the efforts. Valdez-Block asked Executive Council members to submit articles to Tucker in the next four days, so he can begin to develop a draft to submit to Valdez-Block and Campbell for review soon.

No Executive Council action was taken.

**Item 5. Inclusivity Statement/Behavior Expectation Statement.** Valdez-Block reported little efforts have been put into developing these statements and recommends finishing the academic year before adopting an associational statement perhaps at Summer Workshop. Treadway questioned the need for such statements related to gender and gender identity. She reported in the last year two 4-H state organizations have been sued due to positions taken. Tucker added 4-H state organizations own and maintain overnight accommodations either camp sites or housing. Perhaps concerns about their inclusivity statement are related to overnight accommodations, something ACTAA would not be concerned about. Treadway was concerned also about Arkansas Act 835 that restricts political subdivisions of the state (like school districts) from extending protections to classes of people not protected by state law – like gender identity. Treadway suggested perhaps requiring tournaments to be accommodations would encourage them to break the law. Valdez-Block added, tournament directors would be encouraged to have conversations with their school administrators before making any accommodations. Furthermore, Valdez-Block added, harassment and discrimination

statement has been development by NSDA as a blanket statement ACTAA could adopt. Treadway asked if the National Association of Secondary School Principals as the parent organization of NFHS had an inclusivity statement. Suggesting utilizing the principals' statement might deter any scrutiny the association might receive.

No action was taken.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Item 6. Qualls Membership Status Update.** Campbell presented the Executive Council an email addressed to the Executive Council from Micah Qualls providing updates on the her professional employment and status of her ADE ethics investigation. Valdez-Block reminded the Executive Council at its last meeting, the Executive Council tabled the matter until the ADE investigation is concluded, but felt the communication from Qualls should be presented to the Executive Council.

Reiff contributed, as a member of the Ethics committee, an academic year is not uncommon for an ADE investigation for just one violation of state standards. One academic year of membership suspension seems reasonable for a major ethics violation of the membership. Valdez-Block added, she would be more agreeable to a more reasonable deadline, like the end of the academic year (May 2019), instead of an the results of the ADE investigation which the ACTAA has not input or control over. Tucker moved to table the matter until a special called meeting of the Executive Council in April or May 2019. The motion was seconded by Gilbert and passed unanimously.

Valdez-Block reported to the Executive Council she will send Qualls a letter stating the Executive Council will reconsider the status of her membership at special called meeting in April/May 2019. Qualls will be provided the opportunity to submit to the Executive Council additional material as she may see fit that might assist with the Executive Council's consideration.

**Item 7. Fall Conference 2019.** There was not further discussion on this matter.

**Item 8. New Positions/ Job Descriptions.** Valdez-Block reported to the Executive Council she will work with Howell, as Committee Coordinator, to review and develop charge documents and job descriptions of committee chairs and new positions in the association.

No action was taken.

**Item 9. Tournament Qualifying Application.** Valdez-Block reported to the Executive Council she feels the competitive circuit has grown to a point that there is a need to improve the quality and equality of environment of competition in state qualifying tournaments. Each year the State Championship Tournament committee has to waive numerous conditions of variations at tournaments host throughout the year that result in an uneven playing field at the state tournament. Gilbert added the application could serve

as checklist to programs to be aware of standards and rules before hosting a tournament and not during the event. Treadway added this would be a great session for Summer Workshop.

No action was taken.

**Item 10. ACTAA Banners.**

Valdez-Block reported Box-Higdem requested the Executive Council earmark \$1,000.00 for the purchase of updated banners for the 2019 Fall Conference and other promotional needs. Tucker asked the purchase be coordinated with the Publicity and Promotions committee. T. Tucker moved the same. The motion was seconded by Beth and approved ominously.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Brown announced the topics for IPDA, Impromptu Speaking, and Extemporaneous Speaking for the state tournament will be collected by the submission from the body and reviewed and selected by the committee.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business or announcements, Gilbert moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was second by Treadway and unanimously passed. The meeting was adjourned by President Valdez-Block at 3:16PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Zackery A. Tucker  
ACTAA Executive Secretary  
Arkansas State University - Beebe