Membership: 246 (as of 8/31/05)

Present: Kristeen Bullwinkle, Connie Burkhardt, Melanie Clarke, Santiago Fernandez-Gimenez, Ross Janssen, Deb McKinley, Jessica Mooney, Ingrid Nutall, Lani Payette, Julie Pierce, Nicole Pilman, Jamie Proulx, Jennifer Schultz, Donna Weispfenning

Minutes
Connie moved to approve the April and May minutes, and Santiago seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as submitted.

Treasurer’s Report
Nicole distributed copies of the FY 2005 and FY 2006 budgets. Nicole stated that the committees have been allocated the same numbers for FY 2006 as for FY 2005, and encouraged committee chairs to advise her if they need their numbers adjusted. The Forum is carrying forward $17,801.22 from FY 2005. Nicole has not received the download from CCE for this year’s conference yet, so those numbers are not reflected yet in the budget report. She also informed the committee that the University requires a contract for professional services be established for certain outside vendors (such as photographers) so committee chairs should let her know if they are planning to hire an outside vendor before they receive and goods or services.

A suggestion was made that the program committee could use some of its budget to pay for outside speakers.

The Forum has an outside checking account, established with payments from vendors, to be used to purchase alcohol for events. This account should also be used to pay for any alcohol purchased at committee appreciation lunches.

Action and Discussion items

Database/List Serve Report/ New Member Welcome: The membership numbers are available on the Forum website.

In order to make new members feel welcome and included at Communicators Forum events, Jennifer has been passing around a list of new members at board meetings, and encouraging board members to contact them. Jennifer has a supply of $5 gift certificates from UDS which can be used to take the new members to coffee. With Jennifer leaving, Alan will now be in charge of welcoming new members, and developing talking points board members can use when contacting them.

Committee Reports

Program Committee:
• In September, the Program Committee is planning to bring in an outside expert in communications project management, perhaps to be joined by a communicator from one of the colleges. The September program is also the annual recruitment event for both the Forum and the individual committees, and one of the three biggest programs of the year.

• The board discussed whether the Forum should continue holding three big events each year—the September recruitment program, a social event in January, and a member appreciation event in the spring.

• The Program Committee plans to bring in more outside speakers in FY 2006, and this may attract more high level communicators and directors to Forum programs.

Marketing and Promotions:

• The Marketing and Promotions Committee met in July to discuss the committee’s direction for the upcoming year. Committee members feel that the committee’s purpose should be strategically positioning the Communicators Forum within the University, rather than planning events. Melanie said that one challenge faced by the committee is a lack of institutional memory, as it is composed mainly of new members.

• Committee members identified evaluating perceptions of the Forum among its members, the supervisors of its members, and the University community as important functions of the Marketing and Promotions Committee. They would also like to improve supervisors’ support for employee participation in the Communicators Forum, especially among supervisors who are not communicators themselves, and identify underserved groups of communicators.

• The committee offered the following suggestions for improving the perception of the Forum within the University community.
  o Pay for high level, outside speakers. Non-members could be charged a small fee to attend the programs.
  o Partner with the School of Journalism on some Forum events.
  o Identify different categories of communications employees and target the communicators directly.
  o Meet with high level communicators from the colleges to share information about the Forum and solicit feedback.
  o Develop key messages about the Communicators Forum.
  o Align with other University communications groups (such as AHC Communicators).
  o Maintain strong relationship with U Relations, but develop relationships with other University resources in AHC and the colleges. U Relations is a great resource but we should not overuse it.

The group discussed these suggestions, and veteran board members mentioned that surveys of the membership’s perceptions of the Forum were conducted in 1999 and 2003. Jessica is planning to meet with Linda Thrane to discuss the relationship between the Forum and U Relations, and several board members recently met with
Kathy Yaeger. Board members agreed that, historically, the role of the Marketing and Promotions Committee has not been clearly defined.

Many of the questions raised in the ensuing discussion were addressed during our subsequent brainstorming session with Amy Anderson, including:

- Is our goal just to have as many members as possible, or to attract certain types of members?
- How do we identify potential members when University job titles are often generic and broad?
- What do we want from high level University communicators?

**Internal marketing brainstorming with Amy Anderson**

Amy asked the board whether it believes the Communicators Forum is positioned correctly, and stated that word of mouth is more important than marketing. She led the board in brainstorming both the positive and negative perceptions of the Communicators Forum among the University community:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large membership</td>
<td>Composed of editors, writers, designers, web designers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking possibilities</td>
<td>Low key, social, laidback—perception of members as artsy, not professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable professional development</td>
<td>Cliquish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University-based</td>
<td>Lots of money to spend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality and relevance</td>
<td>Lightweight programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varied membership</td>
<td>People “grow out” of Communicators Forum as their responsibilities increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source for common knowledge information and interest groups</td>
<td>Communicators viewed as support staff—not part of planning process—brought in at the end of a project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides access to communicators</td>
<td>Gets confused with U Relations—“is it a part of U Relations?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listserv is valuable and is used responsibly</td>
<td>Its members are “weirdos”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place to share best practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Challenges identified:

1. Inclusivity vs. focusing on attracting higher level communicators
2. How can we appeal to communicators at different levels?
3. What is unique about the Communicators Forum—what differentiates us from CASE, AIGA, IABC, etc.?
With Amy’s facilitation, the group identified a facet of the Communicators Forum that would appeal to communicators at every level: Access and Connection. The Communicators Forum is perceived by many as a source of professional development and monthly programs. Amy suggested that if we shifted that perception to a source of ongoing access and connection to other communicators, membership and/or program attendance may be much more attractive to higher level communicators.

The board brainstormed strategies for changing the Forum’s perception. Suggestions included:

- Advertising joining the Forum as “$30 to stay in the know”
- Referring to the Forum as “the source”
- Using listserv more to discuss best practices—promote as a place to formalize best practices—board members can “prime the pump” if necessary
- Board members should mingle more at events
- Annual membership reminder should offer members tips on “How to maximize your membership”
- Consistent promotion in Brief

Melanie will take the ideas generated during the brainstorming session with Amy back to the Marketing and Promotions Committee for discussion, and that committee will develop a new mission statement for the Communicators Forum.

**Future meetings**

A sign-up sheet was passed around to seek volunteers to host the monthly board meetings, held the second Tuesday of each month from 3-4:30. Hosts are asked to reserve a room and provide refreshments, for which they will be reimbursed by the Forum.

**Next Meeting**

Tuesday, September 13, 2005  
3-4:30 p.m.  
289 HHH (Donna and Santiago)

*Respectfully submitted by Julie Pierce, recorder*