

Will Edit for Beer Money

BY WILLIAM KLINE

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Newspapers carry some scary headlines lately. Those that concern me most as a journalist proclaim the disappearance of headlines from newspapers. Without newspapers, who would inform us of the really scary stuff in the world like wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and government-run death panels?

One headline from *USA Today*, which particularly concerned me, trumpeted: "College Newspapers Face Weak Ad Revenue." While Student Activity Fees fund *The Banner's* primary expenses, the paper accrues money by selling ad placements. Since this information is open to the public, we've banked over \$5,145 (since the last count) over the course of several years. It's used for varying purposes, depending on a staff vote. But essentially it's *The Banner's* money. Naturally, news like weak ad revenues would make for a gloomy CUNY Media Conference on a comparable Friday in mid-October.

Yet, the prospect of employment, offered during the conference, lured a number of suits, resumes and clip portfolios to the lines for *The New York Times*, the *Associated Press*, 1010 WINS and CBS among others. While there seemed to be little optimism on the business end, there was a ton on the editorial end as evident in the final seminar, which brought together student editors from across CUNY. Like any prolonged discussion in news, all roads led to money—no shock there.

The shock came when CUNY's Communications Director, Michael Arena, surveyed the room for those who received stipends. Most of the people in the room raised their hands. Not only did editors raise their hand, but staffers did as well. The two *Banner* editors in

attendance did not. Even more interesting, Baruch divided a percentage of their ad revenue and dispersed it among its editors. At CSI, this practice is neither explicitly prohibited, nor granted.

Of course, we volunteer ourselves for this, but we also log many unusual hours putting together an issue (and now a website) once every two weeks. Personally, I've had to sacrifice many shifts of work for cold pizza in Room 228, and the small reimbursement wouldn't even cover for that loss. Obviously this sounds like a self-indulgent gripe, but it's not. The hope is that a stipend will help attract a willing staff in the future. In fact, if it did come to pass, that editors of publications were able to receive stipends, I would vow to leave any potential reward to the next editor.

If Student Government senators can receive anywhere from \$900 to \$1,350 per semester in stipends, publications editors, who often leave long after the lights go off in the Student Government office, when most other college business has closed for the evening, should receive similar compensation. If the rationale is that stipends would lower student incentive, then at least allow for a system where editors would receive a percentage of the ad money that they generate. This would seem to be a rational and merit based system. Even better, it doesn't tap into student funds.

Contrary to antiquated belief, this system would raise incentive for editors to sell ads, students to join publications, and would expand opportunities for students outside of the journalism field itself. And hey, at least someone in journalism would make some money these days. Certainly, newspapers aren't. Another gripe, another issue.