Uncontested TSM Student Leadership Positions

*These positions had one applicant each:*

KVRX Radio Station Manager: **Gab Soong**

Cactus EIC: **Hailey Wheeler**

Texan ME (summer): **Catherine Marfin**

Texan ME (fall): **Ellie Breed**
TEKS STUDENT MEDIA APPLICATION FORM
STATION MANAGER OF KVRX RADIO
Term of Office: June 1, 2018 - May 31, 2019

This application and supporting materials must be submitted to the TSM Business Office (HSM 3.200 / William Randolph Hearst Building, 2500 Whitis Avenue) by Monday, April 23, 2018 at 12:00 p.m.

This position is due to be appointed at the TSM Board meeting scheduled for Friday, April 27, 2018 at 1:00 p.m.

Please plan to attend and discuss your application with the Operating Trustees.

Applicant Information

Gabrielle Soong
Name

@ts493
UT EID

gabrielle.soong@utexas.edu
Email Address

Public relations
Major

Applicant Attestation / Authorization for Release of Information

1. I am currently enrolled as a UT-Austin student.

2. By the start of my term of office, I will (if an undergraduate) have completed 12 hours at UT-Austin with a GPA of at least 2.0 or (if a graduate student) have completed 9 hours at UT-Austin with a GPA of at least 3.0.

3. I agree to demonstrate an understanding of media law and FCC regulations by passing an exam prepared by the Broadcast Adviser prior to taking position.

4. My application has been approved by at least 30% of the participants in the KVRX staff approval voting process.

I certify that to the best of my ability I have given true and accurate information concerning my scholastic and experience qualifications, and hereby grant permission for the Office of the Director, Texas Student Media, to verify said information. Further, I understand that this information will be provided to the TSM Board of Operating Trustees and will become part of the public record of TSM.

Signature of Applicant

4/20/18
Date

It is recommended that you include supporting materials such as:

A résumé
Your record of experience with KVRX (list positions and dates)
A letter outlining your qualifications, goals, plans for the position
Letters of recommendation
EXPERIENCE

General Mills - Campus Leader
August 2017 - February 2018
• Assist with the recruitment of potential General Mills employees.
• Communicate with various campus organizations by phone and email, as well as face-to-face interaction.
• Host information sessions for prospective employees.
• Answer questions at career fairs.
• Advertise for various General Mills events on campus.

KUTX 98.9 FM - Music Intern
January 2018 - Present
• Write blog posts about in-studio performances.
• Design social media plans for effective communication with the public about various radio events.
• Implement social media plans by posting on various platforms and monitoring the results.

KVRX 91.7 FM - Public Relations Director / DJ
March 2016 - Present
• Create organized music playlists to air on my weekly radio show and review new CDs received by the station.
• Assist with the recruitment of new DJs.
• Use multiple social media platforms to promote radio shows, concerts, giveaways, and station news.
• Organize social events for DJs.
• Write a monthly alumni newsletter.
• Act as a mediator and resource for conflict management.
• Foster a friendly environment for working and socializing.

Orange Magazine - Music Writer
August 2015 - December 2015
• Attended weekly meetings and pitched ideas for articles.
• Communicated with artists to set up interviews and photography sessions.
• Contributed to weekly group articles.

EDUCATION

Public Relations Major at The University of Texas at Austin (2015-)
GPA - 3.6673

Graduated number one in class

Successfully completed Emerson’s Pre-College Creative Writers Workshop (2014)

HONORS AND ACTIVITIES

President of the Students Against Destructive Decisions Club (2014-2015)

Captain Northlake Christian School Women’s Varsity Soccer Team (2013-2015)

Member of National Honor Society (2011-2015)
KVRX experience:

**DJ** – March 2016 – present

**Public Relations Intern** – January 2017 – May 2017

**Public Relations Director** – August 2017 – present
To Whom it May Concern,

I am well-suited for this position for a variety of reasons, the first being my communication skills and experience within the field of public relations. I consider my ability to develop and maintain relationships one of my strongest qualities, and know I’ll be putting these skills to use daily if I become station manager.

I have also developed my leadership abilities over the years. In high school, I served as the captain of the women’s varsity soccer team for two years, during which time I earned the respect of my teammates, kept team morale high, and led my team to two back-to-back district championships.

Additionally, my experience as a music intern at KUTX 98.9 has also helped to prepare me for this role, as I get to practice my writing and social media skills in a highly professional setting. I also get to sit in on their weekly staff meetings and observe how they conduct business.

The experience that has prepared me the most for this position is the time I’ve spent in KVRX as a DJ and PR Director. During the past two and a half years, I’ve fallen in love with this organization and the people in it. Planning and hosting socials, promoting the station on social media, writing an article for the Daily Texan about KVRX’s values, and even handling situations of sexual assault and harassment have all taught me valuable lessons about management.

If I become station manager, my main goal for the year is growth within every aspect of the station. I want more students to join the organization as DJs, photographers, videographers, etc. I want to expand our listener base by gaining more support from the general Austin community as well as the student population. Essentially, I want the whole world to know how special KVRX is and to love it as much as I do.

To accomplish these goals, I would start by hiring a diverse, talented staff of people who truly cared about the station. I would encourage the booking department to increase the number of shows they book, and to only hold shows at respected venues. I would encourage the music department to continue to uphold our blacklist policy standards, and to ensure that the music we support is not only diverse in genre, but also is made by diverse musicians.

I also want to push our merch heavily at all shows, and to encourage our photography, video, and production departments to produce as much content as possible to be distributed online.

I would encourage the public relations department to maintain KVRX’s brand and to hold lots of socials to give our volunteers plenty of opportunities to get to know each other.
I also want to hold more events on campus to get a higher rate of student involvement. For example, this year I had the idea to partner with Texas Spirits on their annual Band Jam event, and it was one of the most heavily attended concerts we’ve hosted all year—with a completely different audience then normal.

Finally, I want to establish a strict anti-bullying policy. With the new anonymous comment box feature on the website, DJs will now have a way to submit a formal complaint if they are ever made uncomfortable in any way.

I have big dreams for this station, and I’m confident that this upcoming year will be fruitful.
April 15, 2018

KVRX 91.7 FM
The University of Texas at Austin
P.O. Box D
Austin, TX 78713

To Whom It May Concern:

I highly recommend Gab Soong for the position of station manager next year at KVRX 91.7 FM.

I am a lecturer in the Stan Richards School of Advertising & Public Relations. I first met Gab when she was a student in my Intro to PR writing class last fall. I got to know her better this semester in my advanced PR writing course.

From the first week of class, I knew Gab would be a student who shines above the rest. She distinguished herself immediately as someone who was filled with passion, enthusiasm, and excitement about the course and PR in general. My initial impression of her proved accurate not only in the fall course but in the class this spring.

I find Gab to be motivated and determined to succeed. She participates in discussions, asking insightful questions and sharing perceptive opinions that show a keen interest in all aspects of public relations. Throughout both semesters, Gab has exhibited strong organizational, interpersonal, and critical thinking skills. She excels in the coursework, which has included writing news releases, blog and social media posts, designing a portfolio website, and creating and hosting a podcast.

For a media pitch contest last semester, Gab was chosen by her team to give their 30-second elevator pitch. She used her time wisely, getting her ideas across clearly, simply, persuasively and engagingly. And she won the competition.

But it’s more than her academic achievements that have me singing her praises. As you know, Gab is your Public Relations Director and DJ. And she wants to take that next step to station manager. This position involves managing teams, making decisions, and building relationships. In the year I have known Gab, I have witnessed her attention to detail, coordination of responsibilities, and interaction with peers and guest speakers. I have no doubt that she is ready and prepared for a management position at your radio station.

Gab is unquestionably an excellent candidate for station manager at KVRX 91.7 FM next year. She has proven to have the initiative, insight, and the intellectual creativity necessary to be a leader at your station. Therefore, I enthusiastically recommend Gab Soong for the position of station manager.

Sincerely,
Tamara Bell, Ph.D.
Lecturer
Stan Richards School of Advertising & Public Relations
TEKS STSTEK MEEIA APPLICATHE FORM
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF CACTUS YEARBOOK
Term of Office: June 1, 2018 - May 31, 2019

This application and supporting materials must be submitted to the TSM Business Office
(HSM 3.200 / William Randolph Hearst Building, 2500 Whitis Avenue) by
Monday, April 23, 2018 at 12:00 p.m.

This position is due to be appointed at the TSM Board meeting scheduled for
Friday, April 27, 2018 at 1:00 p.m.

Please plan to attend and discuss your application with the Operating Trustees.

Applicant Information

Hailey Wheeler
Name

hew655
UT EID

hailey.wheeler97@gmail.com
Email Address

Advertising
Major

Applicant Attestation / Authorization for Release of Information

1. I am currently enrolled as a UT-Austin student.

2. By the start of my term of office, I will (if an undergraduate) have completed
   12 hours at UT-Austin with a GPA of at least 2.0 or (if a graduate student)
   have completed 9 hours at UT-Austin with a GPA of at least 3.0.

3. I agree to complete and pass a media law and libel test administered by the
   Editorial Adviser prior to taking position.

I certify that to the best of my ability I have given true and accurate information concerning my
scholastic and experience qualifications, and hereby grant permission for the Office of the Director,
Texas Student Media, to verify said information. Further, I understand that this information will be
provided to the TSM Board of Operating Trustees and will become part of the public record of TSM.

Hailey Wheeler
Signature of Applicant

4/23/18
Date

It is recommended that you include supporting materials such as:

A résumé
Your record of experience with Cactus (list positions and dates)
A letter outlining your qualifications, goals, plans for the position
Letters of recommendation
Signatures of Cactus staffers indicating support for your application
Samples of published work (on 8 1/2" x 11" paper)
Hailey Wheeler  
hailey.wheeler97@gmail.com  
2505 Longview St Apt #525 • Austin, TX 78705 • (979) 203-1122

EDUCATION

The University of Texas at Austin  Bachelor of Science in Advertising  Aug 2016 - May 2019
Junior Classification | GPA: 3.81  Minor in Business

WORK EXPERIENCE

Dahmann & Associates – Summer Management Intern; Brenham, TX  Jun 2017 – Aug 2017
• Installed, maintained, and operated new digital Agency Management System
• Provided technical training by holding info sessions to teach co-workers how to navigate the system
• Entered payments, legal documents, and other confidential client information into system daily
• Managed front desk, assisting customers with their questions in a friendly and professional manner

Germania Insurance – Summer Marketing Intern; Brenham, TX  May 2016 – Aug 2016
• Wrote promotional copy for the life insurance department’s flyers and business website
• Designed new graphics and templates for outdated business website
• Developed potential marketing campaigns and pitched them to department heads
• Attended business meetings and spoke with regional insurance agents concerning sales strategies

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE AND ACTIVITIES

UT Cactus Yearbook – Editor-in-Chief & Design Editor; Austin, TX  Aug 2017 - Present
• Hired and led a staff of 22 managing editors, photographers, and copywriters
• Worked under pressure of tight deadlines to design, edit, and submit spreads for publication
• Initiated, organized, and managed innovative marketing strategies aimed at increasing book sales
• Attended weekly leadership meetings to report progress/concerns to Texas Student Media directors

Texas American Marketing Association (Texas AMA) – Active Member; Austin TX  Aug 2017 – Present
• Participated in hands-on activities aimed at developing problem-solving skills
• Attended networking opportunities, social events, and guest speaker presentations
• Increased overall knowledge of marketing field, with emphasis on CRM, research, and social media

UT Cactus Yearbook – Assistant Editor; Austin, TX  Aug 2016 – May 2017
• Assisted with fundraising efforts of more than $2500
• Tabled at events on campus to increase awareness of The Cactus and participate in direct selling
• Initiated, created, and sent out promotional emails to university students to encourage sales
• Organized employee payroll and organization finances using Microsoft Excel

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Hard Skills: Proficient in Adobe Creative Suite and Microsoft Office Suite
Soft Skills: Strong collaborative and interpersonal skills; extensive editorial and leadership experience
Interests: Marketing Research, Customer Relationship Management, Social Media Marketing, Content Creation, Account Management, Ad Campaign Planning, Copywriting, B2B Marketing, Google Analytics
Languages: Fluent in English, Elementary Proficiency in German
Work Eligibility: Eligible to work in the U.S. with no restrictions
Experience with the Cactus Yearbook

I have served as both Assistant Editor and Editor-in-Chief of the Cactus Yearbook. Being Assistant Editor and Editor-in-Chief of the Cactus Yearbook over the past two years has been both an exciting and rewarding experience. Over the years, I have acquired a wealth of knowledge and developed a greater understanding of the Cactus Yearbook organization as a whole.

Throughout my time as Assistant Editor, I engaged in multiple tasks. I participated in weekly meetings, where I pitched spread ideas, communicated with other editors, and reported my progress. I also wrote several sports and student life stories, which involved extensive research and correspondence with faculty and students to collect information. During events such as Family Weekend at UT, I helped promote the yearbook by tabling, where I answered any questions parents had about the book and encouraged them to purchase one. The bulk of my responsibility involved collecting photos from clubs and organizations for the group photo spreads. This required contacting the leaders of all of UT’s clubs and orgs via email and communicating with them regarding what date, time, and place they wanted to take a group photo. Another task was organizing the payroll. I created an Excel spreadsheet to calculate the amount each photographer and writer who submitted content earned for the year. As Assistant Editor, I really learned the ropes to help me following year as Editor-in-Chief.

Throughout my time as Editor-in-Chief, I was responsible the implementation, production, and completion of this yearly publication. I hired and managed a staff who I meet weekly with to assess their progress and delegate tasks to. My work as Editor-in-Chief also included attending weekly Leadership Meetings and monthly Board Meetings to report progress to department directors and voice any concerns regarding my entity. Lastly, I doubled as the Design Editor for the yearbook, which required extensive work in Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign to digitally create the individual pages of the book.

I have gained valuable editorial and leadership experience from my two years on the Cactus staff, and I am so excited to have the opportunity to continue to be a part of such a wonderful organization.
Qualifications and Future Plans

I believe that the six years of yearbook experience I have under my belt qualify me to be Editor-in-Chief of the Cactus Yearbook. Throughout the years, I have developed strong organizational, communication, and interpersonal skills that I believe will be of great asset to the Cactus. Additionally, having already been Editor-in-Chief once before, I am very familiar with the organization and the process of creating the Cactus Yearbook.

I was involved in yearbook all four years of my high school career, where I served as Editor-in-Chief my senior year. I was chosen for the Editor-in-Chief position due to the quality of my work and my high level of expertise, and it was here I learned the ropes that would eventually assist me as Editor-in-Chief of the Cactus.

Working on UT’s yearbook staff this past year has allowed me to experience creative problem solving and independently operate in a student-led, college setting. As Editor-in-Chief, I wore many hats. Not only did I hire and lead a staff, but I also wrote copy, indexed spreads, and organized payroll. I should also mention that I doubled my work as Design Editor, where I designed the entire book from front cover to back. Being a part of the Cactus this past year has allowed me to advance my skills and expand my knowledge of the organization, while also gaining invaluable editorial and leadership experience.

This year, one of my main goals as Editor-in-Chief of the Cactus Yearbook is to increase sales. There has been a severe decline in yearbook sales in recent years, and I will make it my primary goal to increase demand. I want to improve upon the advertising and marketing of the book, whether this means tabling, offering incentives, or organizing unique events. I also believe that the Cactus organization needs to be more vocal. I want more students to not only know about our organization, but to be excited about the yearbook.

I plan to hire a motivated staff that will assist me in creating a memorable yearbook. I believe having cohesive team that is able to brainstorm copy and design ideas, plan marketing strategies, and provide feedback is imperative for success.

I am willing to invest as much time as necessary to the Editor-in-Chief position. From being Editor-in-Chief once before, I am completely aware of how much effort and commitment it requires to create a yearbook, especially one as important as the Cactus. I am a devoted and enthusiastic worker who is eager to once again be a part of UT’s longest running publication!
21 April 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to recommend Hailey Wheeler for The Cactus Yearbook Editor-in-Chief. Hailey was a student in my yearbook class throughout her four years in high school, serving as assistant editor her junior year and editor-in-chief her senior year. She was selected for these positions based on her motivation, knowledge, integrity, and organizational skills.

Being the editor requires the ability to be creative and work independently. Hailey is a self-starter, who has learned how to delegate, work with others, manage her time, and work under pressure. She was responsible for developing the yearbook theme, graphics, and layouts for her senior yearbook. She received an award at the Balfour Communications Workshop for her outstanding theme development.

Hailey designed spreads and artwork, working with staff to complete pages; she was also responsible for the final edit and proofs. She has an eye for detail and has excellent grammar skills. She is focused and has the ability to get the job done.

I have been in education for 28 years and I would place Hailey in the top five students that I have taught. She takes the initiative to get assignments completed and does not accept mediocrity. Her ability to manage her schedule and stay organized will help her be successful as The Cactus editor.

I highly recommend Hailey for the editorial position. You will not find a more dedicated and caring student.

Sincerely,

Laurie Kirts
525 A. H. Ehrig Dr.
Brenham, TX 77833
lkirts@brenhamk-12.net
DocuSign Staff Signatures

1. [Signature]

2. [Signature]

3. [Signature]
Samples of Graphic Design Work I Did For The 2018 Cactus Yearbook

FALLING SHORT Of the First Time

GIVE ME A LIFT

AN ARTISTIC ADDITION To the Newspaper Project
TEXAS STUDENT MEDIA APPLICATION FORM
MANAGING EDITOR OF THE DAILY TEXAN

check one or both terms of office:  ✓ June 1, 2018 - August 15, 2018
☐ August 16, 2018 - December 31, 2018

This application and supporting materials must be submitted to the TSM Business Office
(HSM 3.200 / William Randolph Hearst Building, 2500 Whitis Avenue) by
Monday, April 23, 2018 at 12:00 p.m.

These positions are due to be appointed at the TSM Board meeting scheduled for
Friday, April 27, 2018 at 1:00 p.m.

Please plan to attend and discuss your application with the Operating Trustees.

Applicant Information

Catherine Marfin
Name

UT EID

CM53976

Email Address

CatherineMarfin@utexas.edu

Journalism + Public Relations
Major

Applicant Attestation / Authorization for Release of Information

1. I am currently enrolled as a UT-Austin student.

2. By the start of my term of office, I will (if an undergraduate) have completed
   12 hours at UT-Austin with a GPA of at least 2.0 or (if a graduate student)
   have completed 9 hours at UT-Austin with a GPA of at least 3.0.

3. I agree to complete and pass a media law and libel test administered by the
   Editorial Adviser prior to taking position.

4. I have obtained and included signatures from at least five staff members of
   The Daily Texan supporting my application.

5. By the start of my term of office, I will have completed at least two semesters
   as a permanent-staff member of The Daily Texan in an area other than opinion.

6. By the start of my term of office, I will have served in a Daily Texan
   management position with supervisory and design responsibilities
   (as defined by the Daily Texan Handbook) for at least one semester.

Note: if no qualified applicant has filed by the deadline, the Board shall make an appointment
using the Handbook qualifications, each of which shall be waivable by an affirmative vote of
two-thirds majority of the voting members present.

I certify that to the best of my ability I have given true and accurate information concerning my
scholastic and experience qualifications, and hereby grant permission for the Office of the Director,
Texas Student Media, to verify said information. Further, I understand that this information will be
provided to the TSM Board of Operating Trustees and will become part of the public record of TSM.

Catherine Marfin
Signature of Applicant

4/23/18
Date
Supporting signatures from at least five staff members of The Daily Texan:

Ellie Breed (managing editor)
Juan Figueroa (photo editor)
Forrest Milburn (associate managing editor)
Carlos Garcia (associate photo editor)
Thomas Negrete (video department head)
Sha M. Khan (associate news editor)
Kirsten J. Handler (associate copy desk chief)

My experience at The Daily Texan consists of (list positions and dates):

News Editor, Spring 2018
Associate News Editor, Fall 2017
Associate News Editor, Summer 2017
Senior Reporter, Spring 2017
News Desk Editor, Fall 2016
Senior Reporter, Summer 2016
News Desk Editor, Spring 2016
General Reporter, Fall 2015

It is recommended that you include supporting materials such as:

A résumé
A letter outlining your qualifications, goals, plans for the position
Letters of recommendation
Samples of published work (on 8 1/2" x 11" paper)
Catherine Marfin  
2810 Hemphill Park Austin, Texas 78705  
210-667-0935 | catherinemarfin@utexas.edu | catherinemarfin.weebly.com

Education

The University of Texas at Austin  
Bachelor of Journalism and Bachelor of Science in Public Relations – December 2019  
Certificate in Forensic Science, December 2019

Experience

Austin-Bergstrom International Airport  
Public Information Office Intern — Spring 2018  
• Assist in airport promotional and marketing activities  
• Draft and proof copy for promotional and marketing and media relations activities  
• Use of social media to promote and market airport

The Austin American-Statesman  
CodeNEXT Intern – Summer - Fall 2017  
• Helped with the launch of CodeNEXTHub.org, a collaboration between the Statesman and leading Central Texas news outlets to provide a one-stop portal for CodeNEXT coverage  
• Coordinated between multiple professional newsrooms regarding story ideas, content and website layout  
• Pursued feature-length stories surrounding CodeNEXT and its larger impacts on Austin residents  
• Formed good working relationships with Statesman staff and city officials

The Daily Texan  
News Editor, Spring 2018  
Associate News Editor, Summer - Fall 2017  
• Oversaw the news department of The Daily Texan. Edited stories, delegated story assignments and coordinated breaking news events with reporters and news desk editors.

Crime/Public Safety Senior Reporter – Summer 2016, Spring 2017  
• Pursued data-driven stories surrounding crime trends on campus, and formed good working relationships with UT police officers, administrators and staff.

Additional Information

Leadership Experience and Activities: Longhorn Marching Band (Fall 2015-present), Webmaster for the Tau Beta Sigma Beta Gamma Chapter (Fall 2017 - Spring 2018), Publicity Chair for the Longhorn Band Student Association (Fall 2017 - Spring 2018)

Skills: MS Office, PowerPoint and Excel, Adobe Premiere Pro, Photoshop, InDesign and Illustrator, live tweeting, live blogging, Facebook Live, AP Style, Google sheets

Interests: data reporting, city policy, crime, courts and public safety
To the Texas Student Media Board of Operating Trustees,

My name is Catherine Marfin and I am applying for the position of managing editor for the summer of 2018. I am a third-year journalism and public relations major, and I have been working at the Texan since my first semester at UT. I am excited for the opportunity to apply for this position and eager to continue making a positive impact on The Daily Texan this upcoming summer. With this letter, I will outline my qualifications and plans for this position.

I didn’t know what to expect when I stumbled into the news department of The Daily Texan during my first week of class. I had filled out the interest form for half the departments, unsure of where my true interests lied. I explored different departments during the tryout process, but as soon as I was handed my first news assignment, I knew it was where I was meant to be. That fall, I began to fall in love with reporting. As a general reporter, my assignments were sometimes small, but I loved the fast-paced nature of the work, the opportunity to learn new things with each assignment and the challenges of coming up with interesting, unique stories to pitch. I hit the ground running when I came into the Texan, and I haven’t stopped since.

Since the fall of 2015, I have spent two semesters as a senior reporter covering crime and public safety, three semesters as a news desk editor, two semesters as associate news editor and one semester as news editor. Over my last eight semesters, I have learned the ins and outs of the news department and have served in every editing role multiple times. After multiple semesters editing and reporting on major campus events, as well as many semesters learning from my predecessors, I was selected as news editor for the spring semester. This semester, managing a staff of over 40 reporters and editors has been no easy feat. As the editor of the largest content-producing department at the Texan, my responsibilities include budgeting and developing stories, problem solving in the newsroom, coordinating breaking news events and most importantly, filling the paper with eight to 10 fully reported and edited stories each day. Serving
in one of the most stressful and challenging roles at the Texan has required me to further develop high levels of organization, dedication, composure and management skills, all traits which make me well suited for the role of managing editor this summer.

As news editor this semester, I was also responsible for managing and facilitating a news department that has completely changed in structure from previous semesters. With the help of the current managing editors, the department was restructured to allow for 10 additional beat reporters, each of whom are responsible for an even more specialized topic under the four broad beats we report on - campus, crime, the UT System and city/state. Under my management, these additional reporters have allowed the department to cover more specialized and unique topics, issues the student body cares about. In addition, I helped coordinate many high-profile events this semester, including the Student Government elections, the controversy and campus backlash surrounding pharmacy professor Richard Morrisett, and the Texas primary elections in March. I have also been an integral part of several long-form projects that the news department has published this semester, including the multiple-part series on University House leases and the multiple-part series on tuition and costs at UT. I have also coordinated with guest writers as part of the Texan’s partnerships with both the National Association of Black Journalists and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, which have produced many feature-length stories that have given minority groups on campus a platform to share their experiences. During both day-to-day content and special projects, I worked closely with the current managing editors, copy editors, design and the art director to plan content, budget stories and lay out each paper.

The upcoming summer is going to be significant for both The Daily Texan and the University. In early July, the trial for Meechael Criner, the man accused of killing dance freshman Haruka Weiser in April 2016, is set to begin. The death of Haruka was an incredibly tragic and incredibly impactful event on our campus — it has affected everything from building access to police presence and perceptions of campus safety. During my two semesters as a senior reporter covering crime and public safety, I went to many court appearances, including Criner, Kendrex White, the man charged with murder in connection with the on-campus stabbing attack last spring, and Daniel Magee, who was arrested in connection with a shooting at the Sigma Chi fraternity in 2016. I was the primary reporter during the on-campus stabbing incident last spring,
and during my time as a senior reporter, I wrote dozens of stories on these events, as well as other topics regarding public safety. My experience covering these high-profile cases makes me the best person to manage and coordinate coverage of this landmark event this summer.

This summer will be my ninth semester at the Texan, and my third summer working on the Texan staff. Last summer I worked as associate news editor, and thus have experience working with different department heads and budgeting the paper each Sunday. Across all semesters, the one thing I have enjoyed most about the Texan is that we produce quality work, and we also have fun doing it. As managing editor, I want to help foster this community and continue to make the Texan an enjoyable place to be. Speaking from experience, I can say that it’s easy to feel disconnected from each other and from the work during the summer because we only print once a week. To combat this, I plan on encouraging in-person meetings between department heads and their respective staffs. I will also make sure that I am reaching out to department heads regularly and individually to cultivate an enjoyable and efficient working relationship.

More importantly, I want to continue to make sure the Texan is producing the same high quality content we are known for throughout the year, and I want to make sure we are producing it regularly. With slower news days in the summer for all departments, it can be easy for online content to decrease when we don’t have a daily paper holding us accountable for the quantity we’re producing. I hope to work with all the content-producing departments to set goals for the number of articles published each week to ensure we are upholding our reputation of excellent journalism throughout the summer.

Lastly, I’d like to continue to produce web-based content as we’ve been doing this semester, such as the social media reactions to the ice day at the beginning of the spring and the Twitter reactions to several ceiling tiles that fell in the music building. Not all students are housed in Austin over the summer and thus won’t see the physical paper, but our content is still extremely visible and accessible on our website and social media channels. Our online presence is key to keeping all students at the University engaged and interested in our work during this break between semesters. Under the direction of Ellie Breed and Forrest Milburn this semester, this type of web-based content greatly improved our website and social media traffic and allowed
engagement with the community to become a priority for the Texan, trends I’d like to continue this summer.

The basement has become my home over the last three years, and The Daily Texan has allowed me to grow and has afforded me opportunities that I am immensely grateful for. I would be honored to serve as the managing editor of such widely-respected and revered college newspaper, and I am eager to give back to a paper that has given me so much. I am dedicated to this paper and to the work we produce here, and I would be honored to contribute to our reputation of excellent journalism this summer.

Sincerely,

Catherine Marfin
News Editor, The Daily Texan
Public Information Office Intern, Austin-Bergstrom International Airport
210-667-0935
April 18, 2018

Dan Zehr
6317 Wild St.
Austin, TX 78757
rheznad@gmail.com
501-765-0363

To the Texas Student Media Board of Operating Trustees:

I write this morning to offer the highest recommendation for Catherine Marfin’s application for managing editor of the *Daily Texan*. Catherine will bring great leadership, intellect and skill to the position and to the newspaper staff she manages.

I met Catherine during the summer of 2017, when she worked with me at the *Austin American-Statesman* and our CodeNext Hub special project. We launched the project with multiple local news outlets, combining resources to help audiences better understand Austin’s rewrite of its byzantine land-use code. We created an internship to help support and coordinate the project, and Catherine slotted into it.

What she dropped into was one of the most complex and controversial topics to come before city leaders in years. She quickly ramped up on the issue while helping compile content for the Hub site, working with other newsrooms’ representatives and me to aggregate coverage and provide supplemental content, including a history of zoning in Austin and a calendar of events.

However, Catherine really distinguished herself with the stories she delivered about some of the most contentious CodeNext details. She filled these with narrative and example that breathed life into an otherwise dry and esoteric topic—and, at the same time, illustrated the underlying knowledge she brought to the difficult issue at hand. Covering land-use code is difficult enough for long-time beat writers; Catherine picked it up and produced insightful features and A1 stories.

Since her internship, you’ve had ample opportunity to see her work as the *Daily Texan* news editor. I believe the combination of experience she brings, along with her demonstrated ability to tackle the most complicated topics with informative and readable reports, makes her the ideal candidate for managing editor there. I urge you to select her for the job.

Sincerely,

Dan Zehr
To the Texas Student Media Board of Operating Trustees,

I am writing this letter to strongly support and recommend Catherine Marfin as managing editor for the summer of 2018. I’ve worked closely with Catherine for three years now, and I can tell you that she is one of the most hard-working and reliable members of our staff. I have no doubt Catherine will excel in the management office and ensure the Texan continues to be a reliable news source for the UT community over the summer.

Catherine’s career at The Texan began in the fall of 2015, when we both joined the news staff as general reporters together. Catherine was consistently promoted, and served in every role within the news department, meeting and exceeding the expectations of each position she held. The news department is a tight knit family of editors and reporters, and from the day she joined its staff, Catherine has been an essential part of that family.

When I was selected as managing editor this past semester, my choice for news editor was easy and clear. Catherine knew better than anyone the intricacies of the news department and was visibly respected and appreciated by the news staff. I speak from experience when I say the position of news editor is often the most stressful at the paper. The pressure of being ultimately responsible for filling the first three pages of our daily paper is intense. Catherine has met that challenge and many more with confidence and led the department through the most consistent and steady semester of news coverage I’ve seen since I joined the staff.

This semester, Catherine led the news department through a tumultuous student government election cycle, two new partnership projects and countless other hard-hitting news stories. Most significantly, Catherine oversaw the news department’s transition to a new staffing structure that greatly increased the department’s output, in terms of both amount and quality of content. I surprised Catherine at the beginning of the semester with my desire to initiate this sort of restructuring. Without hesitation, she was on board and helped me brainstorm even more ideas to improve her department. Catherine made news’ resulting transition seamless and successfully helped her staff adjust to their new positions.

In addition to experience at The Texan, Catherine also has professional journalism experience she can bring to the management office. Through a recent internship at the Austin-American Statesman, Catherine has learned even more intimately what it takes to cover a breaking news situation and how a professional newsroom functions. This experience is just part of what makes her more than qualified for this position.

Catherine has consistently been one of my most reliable editors. She was always present, on time and fully prepared to participate in every meeting, and she cared for her staff on both a
professional and personal level. Catherine’s consistency and confidence in leading the largest department at our paper undoubtedly made me a better managing editor, and I am so thankful to have had her on my team.

What sets Catherine apart the most, however, is her dedication to The Texan. Catherine has been at The Texan for eight sessions now, longer than any other staffer. Through the last three years Catherine has demonstrated an amount of dedication and love for The Texan that, combined with her leadership abilities, makes her more than qualified to serve as it’s next managing editor.

Much of The Texan’s success this semester can be attributed to Catherine’s efforts. She maintained a level head during times of crisis. She was always ready to adapt when necessary and was quick to own up to any mistakes. I am very lucky to have worked with Catherine for the past three years, and the paper would be very lucky to have her in charge this summer. If you have any questions about Catherine or her qualifications, please feel free to contact me. I would be delighted to speak on her behalf.

Sincerely,

Ellie Breed
Managing Editor, The Daily Texan, Spring 2018
512-750-8147
Grand jury indicts suspect for capital murder in death of Haruka Weiser

By Catherine Marfin
June 10, 2016

A Travis County grand jury has indicted 17-year-old Meechaie Khalil Criner on capital murder charges for the death of UT-Austin dance freshman Haruka Weiser in April.

The two-page indictment accuses Criner of sexually assaulting Weiser and killing her by strangulation with "a ligature." The Austin Police Department originally charged Criner with murder, but the capital murder charge includes other offenses Criner committed during the crime, including kidnapping and robbing Weiser.

Weiser was reported missing on Monday, April 4 after failing to return home from a dance rehearsal the previous evening. On April 5, her body was found in Waller Creek, behind the on-campus alumni center near San Jacinto and East 23rd streets.

According to his arrest affidavit, Criner was found by Austin firefighters burning items in a trashcan fire on April 4, including a notebook filled with college-level coursework, on Medical Arts Street, just blocks from where Weiser's body was found. APD originally took him to the Austin homeless shelter LifeWorks, but after releasing video footage of the suspect on April 7, APD received anonymous tips that led them to identify Criner as the suspect.
While Criner is not eligible for the death penalty because of his age, he may face life in prison if convicted. Criner had only been in Austin a few weeks before Weiser’s death, and was listed as a runaway by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Criner had been in foster care from a young age and was under conservatorship of Child Protective Services at the time of his arrest, according to the Austin American-Statesman.

Criner remains in Travis County Jail and has a hearing scheduled for July 8.
Mental health could play a role in conviction of UT murder suspect

By Catherine Marfin
July 5, 2016

As the July 8 pretrial motions hearing for Meechael Khalil Criner — the suspect in the death of UT dance freshman Haruka Weiser — approaches, experts are debating what role his mental health will play during the trial.

On June 10, a Travis County grand jury indicted Criner on capital murder charges in the death of Weiser. The indictment accuses Criner of sexually assaulting Weiser and killing her by strangulation with “a ligature, a deadly weapon” and includes other charges, including attempted kidnapping and robbery.

As details of the murder continue to unfold, Criner’s complex family history has surfaced.

Criner was shuffled between his maternal grandmother’s care and Child Protective Services for most of his life. According to his sister and grandmother, who spoke to local news stations in early April, Criner was mentally ill and had been getting psychiatric help since childhood, KXAN reported.
“He’s smart, real intelligent,” Mary Wadley, Criner’s grandmother, told KSLA News 12 in April. “But he had a problem, he talks to himself and walks back and forth like he’s fighting himself.”

Ariel Payan, Criner’s court-appointed attorney, and the rest of his defense team are expected to continue discussing the collection of evidence and other issues that need to be resolved through pretrial hearings before the case moves to trial.

In felony crimes, there is no “rule of thumb” for the timeline of cases, but two law experts said the case could go to trial in less than a year and could potentially take as little as a week to try.

Criminals in Texas are tried as adults starting at age 17 but because of a 2005 Supreme Court decision, the death penalty cannot be given to minors. Therefore, if he is convicted, Criner will automatically be sentenced to life in prison — with the possibility of parole after 40 years.

Because of speculation concerning Criner’s mental health, the defense team could potentially make a case for one of two claims: incompetency to stand trial or insanity at the time of the offense.

“Competency to stand trial relates to his mental ability to communicate with his lawyer … and understand the roles of the various players in the courtroom,” said Gerry Morris, an Austin criminal defense attorney who has been practicing for nearly 40 years. “[Insanity] deals with his ability at the time of the offense to appreciate the wrongness of his act.”

If Criner were deemed incompetent to stand trial, the court would order Criner to seek professional treatment, putting the trial on hold until he regains competency. If the jury or judge decide Criner was insane at the time of the offense, he would be declared “not guilty by reason of insanity,” and would likely be housed in an inpatient facility and be under court supervision for most of the remainder of his life.

Both claims require evaluation from mental health care professionals.
“It’s very easy for a defendant to be tested for competency, because the specialists appointed are better than they have ever been,” said Keith Hampton, an Austin criminal defense lawyer who has been practicing for over 25 years. “The experts are kept at a high standard — they are required to be specialists in forensic psychology and have to consistently update their education.”

In insanity claims, however, mental health experts testify during the actual trial, making the case “a battle of the experts,” according to Morris. This claim, however, could be easy for the prosecutor to refute because Criner was found burning evidence connected to the murder, Morris said.

Criner and his defense team could also opt for a plea bargain. However, this is unlikely because Criner would automatically be sentenced to life in prison with the chance of parole after 40 years if convicted, which he could be sentenced too even without a plea bargain. The jury could also determine Criner is not guilty of murder, but guilty of the lesser crimes included in the capital murder charge.
Victim and suspect in on-campus stabbing identified

By Catherine Marfin
May 1, 2017

School officials from the North Texas town Graham confirmed the death of UT student Harrison Brown in the on-campus stabbing in a Facebook post Monday evening.

The UT Police Department held a press conference Monday afternoon confirming the suspect in the on-campus stabbing as biology junior Kendrex J. White.

UTPD received reports of an individual assaulting others with a large, Bowie-style hunting knife on the 200 block of East 21st Street, across the street from Speedway and San Jacinto, at 1:49 p.m. Monday afternoon. UTPD had officers on scene within two minutes, UTPD Chief David Carter said. Between the time UTPD received the call and the time officers arrived on scene, White had assaulted three other students.

White was taken into custody almost immediately, Carter said. The stabbing victims were three white males and one Asian male, all students in their early 20’s. One victim was pronounced dead at the scene. The victims have not been identified and those injured are receiving treatment at Brackenridge Hospital.

The University official safety alert was not sent to students until 30 minutes after the incident occurred.
Carter said the Austin Police Department and the Texas Department of Public Safety will be assisting with the investigation and sending their officers to help patrol campus and areas west of campus.

“This is something that rattles any community, especially a college campus,” Carter said. “We are fortunate in that the University of Texas has a great partnership with the Austin Police Department and the Department of Public Safety, who will be assisting us in this investigation.”

Carter said the department is working on interviewing upward of 25 witnesses, most of whom are students.

UT President Gregory Fenves released a University-wide statement after the incident.

“There are no words to describe my sense of loss,” Fenves said. “Campus safety is our highest priority and we will investigate this tragic incident to the greatest extent possible. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families, the witnesses to the crime, and every member of Longhorn nation. We all mourn today.”

UTPD said the social media rumors that circulated after the incident, many of which claimed the West Campus area, specifically Greek fraternities, were additionally being targeted, were not credible. Carter said UTPD cannot confirm if any of the victims were fraternity members, or if the incident is related to the West Campus vandalisms that occurred on several fraternity houses last week.

An APD Public Information Officer confirmed that rumors of other incidents near 24th and 26th Streets in West Campus were not credible.

Additionally, a sign that read "Tuition Pays for Bombs" was seen hanging from the Moody Sky Bridge, between the Belo Center for New Media and the Jones Communication Center, roughly an hour after the on-campus stabbing, but was quickly taken down. UTPD said they do not believe the two incidents are connected.
There are no additional or ongoing threats to the campus areas, according to UTPD.

Shortly after the incident, Provost Maurie McInnis announced in an email that all classes and events were cancelled for the day.
White claims no memory of Monday attacks

By Catherine Marfin
May 3, 2017

Biology junior Kendrex White, the student facing murder charges in the death of undergraduate studies freshman Harrison Brown, told police he did not remember Monday’s attack, according to an affidavit filed Wednesday morning.

When White was taken into custody after the on-campus attack, which left Brown dead on the scene and three other students injured, and asked by police if he knew why he was there, White said, “Yes, accusations of pushing someone down and I think using a bladed weapon.”

According to the arrest affidavit, White said it was possible he used a knife in a manner to hit someone, but that he didn’t remember. When police asked if White was hearing voices in his head, he said that his mind told him to “tell the truth and withhold any action that he did because it really didn’t happen.”

When police asked White about the knife that was on his person when he was detained in Jester Center on Monday afternoon, he said he purchased it a few days ago for protection and that Monday was the first time he had carried it on his person. White had two superficial cuts on his left hand and wrist “that appeared to be fresh and from a sharp blade,” according to the affidavit.
According to the affidavit, in his final statement during the interview, White told police “If I did something I don’t remember then I want to be told.”

Police said White had been suffering from mental health issues and had recently been involuntarily committed in Bell County, according to the Austin American-Statesman.

The UT Police Department also arrested White April 4 for driving while intoxicated. White told police during the arrest he had taken “happy pills.” White told officers he was supposed to take one 35-milligram Zoloft pill, but that he had taken two around 4 p.m. the day before, according to a UTPD report obtained by the Statesman.

All three victims of Monday’s attack said they were struck from behind. Two of the victims received lacerations to the back of the head and the neck.

The third victim, who has been identified as engineering student Stuart Bayliss, received a laceration to the back requiring surgery. Bayliss was released Wednesday from the hospital.

White’s bail is set at $1 million. He will be represented by defense attorneys Jacqueline Wood and Michael Watson and is scheduled to appear May 19 in state District Judge Tamara Needles’ court, according to the Statesman.
CodeNext draft proposes major changes for anxious Allandale community

By Catherine Marfin

Sunday, July 16, 2017

Todd Shaw and Amy Wood haven’t changed much about their Allandale home since they bought it in 1992.

Aside from a back room addition about a decade later and kitchen renovations about a decade after that, the house, built in 1950 along the banks of Shoal Creek, still looks much like it did when they moved in.

Out back, a few yards from the porch, sits a small clubhouse, complete with a zip line leading down to a bench swing and tetherball set, all of which were installed years ago. Shaw wouldn’t mind renovating the clubhouse and updating the rest of the backyard, but their 16-year-old son, Ian, insists they keep it as is.

If it ain’t broke, why fix it?

He and Wood feel the same about the rest of Allandale, too. There are Halloween parties and other neighborhood events they attend every year. Their next-door neighbor, in her 90s, is one of the many original homeowners in the area. And the architect who designed their home, now in his 80s, still lives down the street and goes for regular morning runs through the neighborhood.

“These are the things we think are valued about our neighborhood,” said Shaw, the Allandale Neighborhood Association’s zoning chair. “We know we need more housing supply in the city, but we don’t want our single-family neighborhoods to take the bulk of it.”

Most of the existing regulations for the city’s residential neighborhoods were preserved in the initial draft of CodeNext, the overhaul of the Austin’s land use and zoning policies. Yet some communities, Allandale more than most, could see far more sweeping changes.
This north-central Austin neighborhood, established in several phases from the late 1940s to the late 1960s, is characterized by the post-World War II and midcentury single-family houses, the many original homeowners and the tree canopies lining the streets.

“Old houses, big yards, lots of trees and really quiet. That’s the vibe,” said Marshall Thompson, president of the Allandale Neighborhood Association.

But under the first draft of CodeNext, 80 percent of the neighborhood was designated a transect zone, one in a series of zoning designations created under the first draft that transition from more rural to more urban development — and a stark contrast from the single-family standard zoning that currently exists there.

The initial proposed change would allow more units to be built on each lot in the neighborhood, giving developers housing options the old code didn’t allow, such as cottage courts.

“One of the promises that was made to us was that the city was taking into account the style and character of each neighborhood, and that the zoning designation was going to reflect what we have now,” said Thompson, who bought his home from its original owners in 2008. “It’s like they were promising and promising one thing, and then finally came out and said, ‘We’re going to change this a lot.’”

Alina Carnahan, the city’s spokeswoman for CodeNext, said the mapping process for the first draft took into account a multitude of factors, including existing neighborhood plans, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and previously enacted City Council policies.

In Allandale, the introduction of transect zones throughout most of the neighborhood resulted from its close proximity to schools, businesses and transportation corridors. In the first draft, Carnahan said, most transect zones were placed in locations with these elements because they could potentially support additional growth.

Transect zones additionally give developers more housing options that are intended to support citywide affordability in neighborhoods like Allandale, where property taxes and housing prices are soaring, while accommodating city growth.

“There are places today where you can build an accessory dwelling unit or a duplex, but there are a lot of hurdles,” Carnahan said. She said adding accessory dwelling units — which are small dwellings on the same site as an existing single-family home — “makes it easier for someone who couldn’t normally live in a certain neighborhood because of
prices to afford it while allowing the homeowner to make some money to pay their 
loans, too. We don’t want to promise that we’re making it immediately affordable for 
everyone, but we’re just trying to get us on the right track to do that by adding these 
options.”

But while Thompson said most of the neighborhood acknowledges and supports the 
need to create additional housing in the city, there is widespread belief among residents 
that the new zoning regulations put too much pressure on neighborhoods like Allandale.

In early April, after months of reviewing the first draft, the Allandale Neighborhood 
Association submitted a position paper to city officials outlining the neighborhood’s 
concerns, which included issues of parking, drainage and affordability.

The association and its members questioned whether the code’s efforts to encourage 
greater density in the area would actually promote affordability in the city. And given 
Allandale’s location — nestled between MoPac Boulevard’s traffic congestion and Burnet 
Road’s retail outlets and other businesses — they argued the first draft’s reduced parking 
requirements would increase traffic and overflow parking on generally quiet, residential 
streets.

And with that added density comes another source of anxiety.

Shoal Creek, which has been prone to flooding in past years, runs directly through the 
neighborhood, which is bordered on the north by West Anderson Lane and on the south 
by West 45th Street. Rising creek levels have been a major concern for Allandale 
residents since the Memorial Day floods of 1981, Thompson said, which killed 13 
people across the city.

Currently planned developments in the surrounding area, such as the Austin Oaks 
business park redevelopment, are already worrying residents about flooding risks and 
the impacts to the creek.

Those concerns were heightened by the first draft of CodeNext. While the new 
regulations maintain or reduce existing caps on impervious cover, or surfaces that 
cannot absorb water, Allandale residents worry they don’t go far enough.

“Has the city really studied and analyzed the impact on our creeks to carry that extra 
water?” said Shaw, whose street flooded in 2015 after the storm drains in the 
neighborhood backed up. “We’re not getting good answers.”
Council Member Leslie Pool, who represents Allandale and other areas in District 7, said she and her staff have been working overtime to understand the code and its implications.

Pool said she shares many residents’ concerns that the first draft too aggressively forces density into Austin neighborhoods without adequately taking into account their existing characteristics, an impact Mayor Steve Adler said CodeNext would not have in his 2017 State of the City Address in January.

"The original promise that the new code would be a direct translation of existing zoning didn’t happen," Pool said. "People have been very vocal in what they are asking for, and in the end we want to retain what’s special about this city, and that’s our neighborhoods. They’re not cookie-cutters, and we don’t want them to be."

While Allandale residents remain concerned about CodeNext’s impacts, city officials have announced that the code’s second draft, which is expected sometime in August, could show significant change. In the next draft, transect zones will be renamed and rewritten as “R” zones in an attempt to make the code less complex.

But while some transect zones could receive a direct R zone translation, other areas could be rezoned all together based on public feedback and other considerations, Carnahan said.

"In the next draft we’re looking at seeing if we did a good job (defining what zone) is appropriate," Carnahan said. "You could get a zone that remained unchanged from the first to second draft, and just rename the zone from transect to R … but we could also reconsider it" and revise the regulations and form standards.

In the meantime, the Allandale Neighborhood Association plans to collaborate with outside organizations, like the CodeNext-centered, grass-roots organization Community Not Commodity, to further express their neighborhood’s concerns and to push for change.

"Us alone as one neighborhood is not going to be as influential as if we team up with other groups," Shaw said. "There’s a lot to be concerned about. It’s not a good first draft."
Billboard owners, ad firms have CodeNext concerns

By Catherine Marfin

Friday, August 11, 2017

Deep within the city’s dense 1,100-page CodeNext rewrite of its land-development code sits a chapter that remains mostly blank.

The mostly empty section — which deals with the city’s signage and billboard regulations — hasn’t drawn a lot of attention, overshadowed by more publicized squabbles over building types, affordability, transects and a variety of other zoning changes in the initial draft of CodeNext.

The relative lack of attention, however, doesn’t mean there isn’t opposition to proposed changes to the city’s signage and billboard regulations.

Even as city staff continue to work on a new code to govern outdoor signage, businesses and organizations already have filed a lawsuit and launched a petition drive aimed at loosening the rules.

In its initial version, the CodeNext signage chapter included little more than a footnote signaling an anticipated April release date. That was delayed in the wake of a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling in a First Amendment lawsuit about signs at a church in Gilbert, Ariz. In Reed v. Town of Gilbert, the Supreme Court struck down the town’s sign regulations, ruling that content-based restrictions on signage infringed on the First Amendment rights of a local church.

In July, the Austin Planning Commission passed an interim ordinance to comply with that and subsequent lower-court rulings. If approved by City Council this month, it would be implemented until any final adoption of CodeNext, which would include a more expansive rewrite.
"We still plan to update sign regulations as part of CodeNext, but we need to ensure that we are achieving better consistency with the Supreme Court decision immediately," said Alina Carnahan, the city’s spokeswoman for CodeNext. "It's sort of like a patch to make sure we’re more consistent for now."

Yet, the interim regulations are just part of a growing debate about how tightly Austin and other municipalities can govern billboards and other signage, especially digital signs.

Currently, the city differentiates between on- and off-premise signs. Off-premise signs, or billboards that are not on the same site as the business or product being advertised, have been prohibited in Austin since 1983. Those that remain were placed before the ordinance was passed and are considered "nonconforming" under current city code.

While they are allowed to remain, they cannot be changed to become less conforming — meaning any billboard owner wanting to update or change the method or technology used to convey the sign’s message is prohibited from doing so. That makes digital billboards illegal.

"The large, digital billboards are simply obnoxious, and can be overpowering," said Greg Anderson, a city planning commissioner. "When you think about digital billboards, think about all the homes and neighborhoods along the corridors where those billboards exist. It becomes like a jumbotron in your living room."

What fills out the empty chapter of CodeNext will influence everything from digital signs to billboards to the branding on West Campus retailers and downtown high-rises.

At the heart of the revisions, though, is the 2015 Reed v. Town of Gilbert ruling. To comply with that and subsequent decisions, city staff worked up a revised version of Austin’s signage regulations to eliminate any content-related language — such as "advertising sign" or "memorial marker."

While the proposed ordinance retains current restrictions on the number, scale and location of signs, the removal of content-related elements would allow city officials to enforce the regulations without having to read the text or consider a sign’s content, proponents say.

A consortium of Austin businesses and billboard owners disagree. For these billboard owners and other groups, the recent court decisions opened up a new avenue to challenge the city’s regulations.
SignOnAustin, a coalition of billboard owners, employers, law enforcement agencies and community groups, argues that the problem with Austin’s interim ordinance lies in the city’s different treatment of on- and off-premise signs.

“Right now, along with the classes of speakers that are allowed to speak, they’re regulating the content and the amount of speech that is given to off-premise signs,” said Russ Horton, an attorney representing SignOnAustin. “If you have an on-premise sign, you can have a digital sign that changes every few minutes and changes the speech that is on it, but off-premise signs (are stuck). As long as you’re not making the distinction between the two, you don’t run into the problem.”

However, Horton said, the existing and revised policies do make that distinction. In early June, he filed a lawsuit in Travis County against the city on behalf of Reagan National Advertising, an outdoor advertising firm.

Reagan initiated the suit just weeks after Austin officials denied the firm 49 permits for the installation of digital faces on existing sign structures. In its decision, the city cited current regulations that prohibit technology updates on off-premise signs.

Reagan and Horton say the ordinance is unconstitutional because officials would have to read the off-premise signs to determine their legality — a challenge based on the Supreme Court ruling and a separate Texas appeals court decision about content on outdoor billboards and signs.

To determine whether a sign is compliant, Horton said, “you’re still requiring whoever is enforcing that ordinance to go out and read the sign and determine what it says.”

In the meantime, SignOnAustin has started a petition drive as part of a two-year effort to introduce digital signage on off-premise billboards and a further rewrite of the city’s signage regulations.

At present, though, the group’s aims have little support among Austin’s planning commissioners. When city staff presented the revised ordinance in July, several commissioners said they were concerned it already went too far in relaxing the existing rules.

Currently, on-premise signs are more loosely regulated and can be digitized. Some expressed concerns that the broader language in the new ordinance might lead to uncontrolled and unregulated growth of digital on-premise signs – let alone the off-premise structures.
Phrases like “embedded” and “inlaid” in the proposed revisions would provide too much “wiggle room” for businesses wanting to place digital signs on buildings and storefronts, commissioners said.

“'Inlaid' can have 1,000 different meanings,” said William Burkhardt, a city planning commissioner, “and there's no language preventing that sign from being anything other than every possibility it could be.”

The Planning Commission voted to approve the ordinance but recommended that city staff go back ensure the new code would not open up the possibility of larger, digital signs before it is presented to the City Council.

“We just want to make sure city staff doesn’t accidentally leave any backdoors open for that to occur without Council direction,” Anderson said.

The interim ordinance is scheduled to go before the City Council on Thursday. If passed, it would be implemented until a final approval of CodeNext. If or when that happens, the interim rules likely would fill in most of the blank chapter in the current CodeNext draft, Carnahan said.

City staff might propose other broader revisions in upcoming drafts, said Assistant City Attorney Brent Lloyd, such as “changes to both the substantive requirements and permitting procedures.” But absent any new direction from the courts or City Council, the CodeNext chapter most likely won’t radically change existing signage regulations, Carnahan said.

“As a general rule of thumb, CodeNext seeks to use existing City Council policy to modernize,” said Carnahan, the city spokeswoman. “It would be a departure from existing Council policy to allow for digital off-premise billboards.”
CodeNext battles intensify where dense corridors meet neighborhoods

By Catherine Marfin

Tuesday, December 26, 2017

The monthslong negotiation process between the four households on Wild Street and an Austin developer began with two sketches.

In early September, the residents began huddling inside Allen Reichler’s home, suddenly responsible for hammering out terms for a nearly 100-unit apartment complex that could affect neighbors for blocks around. With North Lamar Boulevard practically in their backyard, these four families were quickly — but not unexpectedly — thrown into the lengthy and daunting task.

“We knew something was going to go up there,” Reichler said. “If you have that kind of property on the other side of your property line in the city of Austin, to think that nothing would go up there other than what is there today is foolish.”

Sure enough, a multifamily development real estate agent named J.R. Ellis approached the group of families, representing an Austin builder who hopes to build middle-income apartments behind their homes. They presented each family with two drawings, one that depicted what was allowed by code and one showing what the builder wanted to put there.

And because it was so close to the residential properties, current city policy meant the developer needed approval from at least three of the four affected landowners to depart from current zoning allowances.

“I said, ‘We really, quite honestly don’t care about you; we’re worried about us,’” Reichler said.
From adjustments to parking locations, resident rooftop access and water flow considerations, there was nothing that the four families asked of the developer that was not put in writing, Reichler said. While the city still has to approve the negotiations, three of the four families approved the variance request after almost four months of back-and-forth negotiations.

"They were pretty serious about not trying to muscle their way through this," Reichler said, "and we were very serious about trying to work with them."

While Reichler and most of his neighbors reached a relatively quick and amicable agreement in their case, this sort of tug-of-war between residents and developers can become extremely contentious, as was the case with Austin Oaks battle this year in Northwest Austin.

Yet, these transition areas — the places where more densely developed corridors and other zones bump up against traditional single-family neighborhoods — have come to symbolize one of the most fundamental and most heated debates over CodeNext, the city's ongoing overhaul of its land-use code.

While not formally defined in the CodeNext drafts, these spaces embody one of the rewrite's fundamental debates — how the city will balance demands for a more flexible code and streamlined approval process with the ability of residents to retain enough control over the shape and size of developments going up near their homes.

Proponents argue the final version of CodeNext should retain certain compatibility standards, but it also should provide for a more efficient and less costly approval process for more types of buildings. Critics worry the new regulations will give away the store, eliminating the ability of the city and residents to extract certain concessions from developers, as Reichler and his neighbors did.

**The unpredictability issue**

The issue covers a vast cross-section of the city, but it comes to a head along the corridors where the city hopes to promote denser residential and commercial development, such as Lamar Boulevard and Burnet Road.

The second draft of CodeNext includes a set of new requirements for these stretches, proposing a set of building types and density levels that would provide a smoother transition between the corridors and the residential neighborhoods that abut them.
“You wouldn’t get a monolith building (near a residential unit), you’d have to stair-step it,” said CodeNext project manager Jorge Rousselin. “The closer you are to the activity corridor, the taller you can build. The closer you are to the residential unit, the shorter it can be.”

Under city code, a developer is only required to meet with a neighborhood association or land owner and engage in city processes when the developer wants to build something that varies from what current zoning allows, such as in Reichler’s case.

These negotiations result in a conditional overlay, which creates a zoning district unique to a specific property.

It’s these conditional overlays that add to the unpredictability of the current code, said Scott Turner, owner of Austin-based construction company Riverside Homes.

Anything allowed under a designated zoning category is up for negotiation between the two parties, from height, setback and compatibility requirements to less technical issues. Turner said this can make the process excessively arduous and complex.

“It’s hard to predict going in what you can get out of it, and it’s impractical for the city to rezone on a spot basis every time,” Turner said. “It’s extremely inefficient and just takes time ... so it’s a disincentive (for developers) to go into in the first place.”

Turner, who founded Riverside Homes in 2001 and worked as a real estate agent for four years prior, regularly works with neighborhood residents during his home construction projects and said he often runs into the “conditional overlay problem.”

Even when city code does not require him to, Turner said he has made a habit of meeting with residents early and often to explain the intentions of his project and answer questions about current zoning.

More developers are engaging in conversations with neighborhood residents now than before, he said, noting that completing a project on good terms with neighbors helps draws in more business for the developer later.

Still, many developers don’t engage with neighbors if those conversations are voluntary, even though the city currently tries to encourage them. In that sense, Turner said, CodeNext takes positive steps toward creating a better platform for developments that won’t require neighborhood approvals.
CodeNext would not change the requirement for negotiations in the case of developments that vary from code. However, in its current form, it would increase the number of "by-right" building types allowed in many areas of the city, allowing for more flexibility in what property owners could build without going through individual zoning cases.

And with more by-right development opportunities, developers might not have to request zoning changes nearly as often — something that proponents say will decrease building costs, encourage the addition of more housing in the city and ultimately help ease Austin’s soaring costs.

“One of the obstacles of (the current code) is that it’s too onerous to go from two units to three or four units," Turner said, “so you don’t see many being built, if any, unless the zoning is already there.”

'Strategic negotiation'

However, such an expansion of by-right development possibilities could decrease the chances that a developer would engage in any sort of conversation with nearby residents or neighborhood associations. And while it would substantially improve the predictability of the process, it would give residents less input into the proposals that arise around their neighborhoods.

In fact, said District 7 City Council Member Leslie Pool, the expected reduction in variance requests under CodeNext would leave residents and neighborhood associations with few options to mediate conflict or request concessions from developers.

"Why would I (as the city), give away a freebie for nothing?" Pool said. "Why would I give away an entitlement in advance when I can hold that and get more reduced apartment prices, or contributions for a park, or maybe a playground, or anything? We’re increasing the ability for different uses without using that as an opportunity for strategic negotiation."

Within Pool’s district, members of the Crestview Neighborhood Association have become some of the most vocal CodeNext critics. For the average resident, the idea of a decrease in these dialogues and a loss of control can be a major concern.

When negotiations between Crestview landowners and developers are on a small scale, like compatibility issues or the removal of trees, the neighborhood association doesn’t typically stand in the way, said Mike Lavigne, president of the association.
It becomes more heavily involved when commercial developments are planned — a major source of anxiety under this second draft of CodeNext, which expands the types of commercial use in some areas available to developers.

"If you change the rules to allow (more) entitlements, there’s even less action between the builder and the neighborhood," said Lavigne, who also serves on the board of Community Not Commodity, which opposes the current CodeNext draft. "There’s no reason they would ever come to the neighborhood, because there’s no reason for them to ask for anything anymore."
TEXAS STUDENT MEDIA APPLICATION FORM
MANAGING EDITOR OF THE DAILY TEXAN

check one or both terms of office:  ☐ June 1, 2018 - August 15, 2018
☒ August 16, 2018 - December 31, 2018

This application and supporting materials must be submitted to the TSM Business Office
(HSM 3.200 / William Randolph Hearst Building, 2500 Whitis Avenue) by
Monday, April 23, 2018 at 12:00 p.m.

These positions are due to be appointed at the TSM Board meeting scheduled for
Friday, April 27, 2018 at 1:00 p.m.
Please plan to attend and discuss your application with the Operating Trustees.

Applicant Information

Ellie Breed                                      eab36078
Name                                            UT EID

ellie.breed66@gmail.com                        Public Relations
Email Address                                 Major

Applicant Attestation / Authorization for Release of Information

1. I am currently enrolled as a UT-Austin student.

2. By the start of my term of office, I will (if an undergraduate) have completed
   12 hours at UT-Austin with a GPA of at least 2.0 or (if a graduate student)
   have completed 9 hours at UT-Austin with a GPA of at least 3.0.

3. I agree to complete and pass a media law and libel test administered by the
   Editorial Adviser prior to taking position.

4. I have obtained and included signatures from at least five staff members of
   The Daily Texan supporting my application.

5. By the start of my term of office, I will have completed at least two semesters
   as a permanent-staff member of The Daily Texan in an area other than opinion.

6. By the start of my term of office, I will have served in a Daily Texan
   management position with supervisory and design responsibilities
   (as defined by the Daily Texan Handbook) for at least one semester.

Note: If no qualified applicant has filed by the deadline, the Board shall make an appointment
using the Handbook qualifications, each of which shall be waivable by an affirmative vote of
two-thirds majority of the voting members present.

I certify that to the best of my ability I have given true and accurate information concerning my
scholastic and experience qualifications, and hereby grant permission for the Office of the Director,
Texas Student Media, to verify said information. Further, I understand that this information will be
provided to the TSM Board of Operating Trustees and will become part of the public record of TSM.

Signature of Applicant                         Date
Supporting signatures from at least five staff members of The Daily Texan:

Catherine Mayfi (News Editor)
Forrest Milburn (Associate Managing Editor)
Alex Bresnen (Assoc. Sports Editor)
Vanessa Le (Assoc. Sports Editor)
Andrea D’Mello (Senior Designer)
Juan Figueroa (Photo Editor)
Thomas Negrete (Video department head)
Ryan Steppe - Associate Copy Desk Chief

My experience at The Daily Texan consists of (list positions and dates):

Managing editor - Spring 2018
News Editor - Fall 2017
News Editor - Spring 2017
Assoc. News Editor - Fall 2016
News Desk Editor - Summer 2016
News Desk Editor - Spring 2016
General News Reporter - Fall 2015

It is recommended that you include supporting materials such as:

- A résumé
- A letter outlining your qualifications, goals, plans for the position
- Letters of recommendation
- Samples of published work (on 8 1/2" x 11" paper)
Eleanor Breed
2105 Pearl Street
Austin, Texas, 78705
512-750-8147
eleanorbreed@utexas.edu

EDUCATION
The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX  |  Candidate, Expected graduation May 2019
Bachelor of Science in Public Relations, Moody College of Communication  |  Business Foundations Certificate, McCombs School of Business

WORK EXPERIENCE
The Daily Texan, Austin, TX
Managing Editor  January 2018 to present
• Manage a staff of over 300 employees, including editors, reporters, photographers, videographers, and designers
• Direct and oversee all news, sports, life and arts, and science coverage of The Daily Texan
• Act as representative for the paper and stay in constant communication with campus, city and state media officials
• Manage production nights five nights weekly and ensure the paper is produced and submitted on deadline
• Balance operational budget and allocate payroll to 300 person staff twice monthly

News Editor  January 2017 to December 2017
• Managed a department of 40 students, including associate editors and all news reporters, who reported directly to me
• Directed all news coverage in the print and online editions of The Daily Texan
• Oversaw production and edited content five nights weekly, working with photo, design and copy departments
• Coordinated breaking news coverage, including nationally recognized coverage of on-campus stabbing May 2017

Associate News Editor  June 2016 to December 2016
• Assigned and edited print and online news content three nights weekly
• Assisted in managing a staff of 30 reporters and editors

News Desk Editor  January 2016 to June 2016
• Edited print and online news coverage during production nights twice weekly following a prescribed editorial style
• Mentored general reporters to help improve their writing and reporting abilities

General News Reporter  August 2015 to January 2016
• Reported on campus and greater Austin news twice weekly
• Revised work to meet editorial approval or time and space requirements

Neogenis Labs, Austin, TX
Marketing Research Assistant  November 2015 to May 2016
• Forecasted and tracked marketing and sales trends, analyzing collected data.
• Devised and evaluated methods and procedures for collecting data, such as surveys, opinion polls, incentive-based questionnaires, or arranged to obtain existing data.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION
Paul J. Thompson Award, The Daily Texan, Austin, TX  May 2017
Finalist, Society of Professional Journalists Mark of Excellence Awards, In-Depth Reporting  February 2018
Judith Zaffirini Scholarship Recipient  April 2018
Headliners Scholarship Recipient  January 2018

SKILLS
Proficient in conversational Spanish
Computer Software: PC/Macintosh software, Microsoft Office and Excel, Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, InDesign, InCopy), Atavist
Reporting: Breaking news, multi-media reporting, AP style, extensive writing and editing experience
Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, WordPress, 24LiveBlog, and most familiar platforms
To the Texas Student Media Board of Operating Trustees,

My name is Ellie Breed, and I am applying to serve as managing editor of The Daily Texan for the second time in the fall of 2018. I am a third-year public relations major with a minor in business. I have worked on The Texan staff for the last three years, most recently serving as managing editor this past semester. The Texan has made great strides this spring under my leadership, and through this letter I hope to do three things: illustrate what we have accomplished this semester, communicate what I learned this semester as managing editor, and discuss changes I would like to implement in the coming semester.

What We Accomplished
This semester The Texan tried a lot of new things. We entirely reorganized our news department, created a new web department, made cuts to other departments, hired an art director and much more. Some changes were seamless, and some weren’t; however each of them helped the paper make strides toward providing the best service to the UT community.

In my eyes, our greatest accomplishment this semester was starting our partnership projects with the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the National Association of Black Journalist chapters here at UT. These greatly increased our ability to include the voices of minority students in our paper and helped us toward recruiting more black and Hispanic journalism students to our staff. Towards the end of this semester, Laura Hallas and I received and email from Leslie Blair, director of communications for the Division of Diversity at the University. She said she has “been on campus nearly 10 years and this year has been one of the best if not the best in terms of coverage and reporters.”

One of my biggest goals going into last semester was to increase our website traffic. While we didn’t see as large of an improvement as I initially hoped, we did see an average increase of 500 website viewers per day from last year. This is a significant increase, and establishing a web team was a big part of this effort. With the web team we were able to publish web exclusive content (such as listicles and social media aggregation stories) to our website each day that students were likely to click on. Each of these articles was almost always among the top five traffic-driving articles of the day. Additionally, our capacity for measuring our success on the website increase dramatically this semester when we made the switch from Chartbeat to Google Analytics. Google Analytics gave us a much more idea of what strategies we should be using to most effectively reach our audience.

The change that made the most tangible difference in the newsroom this past semester, however, was our restructuring of the news department. In the past the news department had four senior reporters who covered the campus, city/state, crime and system beats. These four reporters were consistently worked to the bone and tasked with covering all of the substantial news of the semester. This structure didn’t make sense and was not in line with how the news departments of professional newsrooms are set up. So we changed it. We took each of those four beats and split them into several, hiring more reporters and
greatly increasing the coverage potential of the department. The results were fantastic. A department that consistently struggled in the past to fill their section each day turned into a department with consistently more than enough content to bring to the table. The mental health of our reporters and the quality of their reporting improved dramatically. Additionally many of these beat reporters enjoyed the new setup and plan to return next semester.

**What I Learned**

The biggest challenge for me as managing editor this past semester was learning how to delegate more effectively. I have an unfortunate habit of trying to tackle too many things at once instead of administering tasks to the more than capable people I hired. I quickly learned this semester that trying to do everything myself wasn’t going to work. In the first month of this position I was overwhelmed, doubting my ability to achieve the goals I had set and generally not enjoying myself. Once I realized that my issues stemmed from my unwillingness to delegate, things got easier. If selected, I would go into the fall semester determined to assign tasks so they are accomplished in the most efficient manner.

Another significant lesson for me this spring was realizing the importance of clear job descriptions and clearly defined levels of authority. This semester we added an art director position to our staff. She, along with the design editor, was responsible for the general look and design of our print paper and online projects. When I created the position, I didn’t initially see a need to clearly define which position, art director or design editor, had authority over the other. I realize now this was a mistake. In any work environment, especially with positions that deal with something as subjective as design, it is critically important to clearly define who has the final say when disagreements come about. If selected, I would give the art director authority in these situations and update our staff positions description manual. This new manual will more clearly outline the specifications of each position and who each position reports to.

**Changes I Would Implement**

If selected to serve as managing editor for a second time, I would use the lessons I learned this semester to accomplish the following:

1. *Streamline the project production process*

   This semester, through the creation of a projects team, we were able to produce a lot of investigative and recurring projects that garnered high praise from our readership. However, the organization and final stages of the project production process can be greatly improved. Next semester I would make the projects team its own department with a projects editor as the lead. This would allow management to take a step back and not have to deal with the small details that sometimes fell through the cracks this semester. This editor would be in charge of scheduling the projects throughout the month, coordinating with the social media department for promotional strategies and working with the art director to make sure each project has a thoughtful visual representation.
2. **Strengthen the digital department, continue to prioritize engagement and SEO**

Our digital department underwent many changes this semester. We added a web editor and web reporters and emphasized the need for a more conversational tone with our social media staffers. In the fall I would like to more clearly define the positions of web editor and digital editor. The web editor would be in charge of monitoring web-exclusive content production and making sure that our homepage stories are updated according to which stories are receiving the most online traffic throughout the day. Our digital editor would continue to be in charge of social media staffers and promotion, but they would have the added responsibility of monitoring Google Analytics and telling social media staffers to push successful stories more heavily throughout the day. The digital editor would also be responsible for making sure the web-headlines on each story are engaging and utilize the search engine optimization (SEO) strategies we experimented with this semester.

3. **Increase on-campus engagement**

If I am selected as managing editor, I will continue to have one of my associate managing editors lead the engagement effort. This editor, with the help of Liza, our new editor-in-chief, would be responsible for creating events and other opportunities for the student body to directly interact with The Texan as a news organization. Many professional papers, including the Texas Tribune and Austin-American Statesman, have recently employed the use of Facebook groups to connect with members of their readership that want a more personalized way of communicating with the newsroom. I think The Texan could benefit from a group of this type and other on-campus discussions and events, so we can more effectively reach our audience and communicate with them.

4. **Better utilization of on-campus resources**

Despite The Texan office being a mere 50 yards from the offices of the journalism school, our staff fails to capitalize on the expertise and knowledge of the many journalism professors we have access to. With the help of the Dean and willing journalism professors, I think it would be really beneficial to our reporters and editors to set up a mentorship and advising program between The Texan and the journalism school. Last year, I was lucky enough to receive help from Wanda Cash on our Presidential Power project, which was our most highly viewed project of the semester and won us finalist distinction in this year’s SPJ awards. Her expertise on open records requests proved invaluable during our investigation. Professor Cash is only one of so many professors with specific areas of journalism expertise in the college. We should not hesitate to work with them more in the coming semester.

5. **Increase staff camaraderie**

One of the most important and underrated aspects of being managing editor is bringing people together. Looking back, I wish I had done more this past semester to encourage a sense of community and shared goals amongst my staff. Should I have the opportunity to serve as managing editor again, I would have more frequent individual meetings with my department heads to discuss goals for their staff. Additionally, I would have at least three staff-wide meetings throughout the semester to encourage cross-department collaboration and interaction.
For the sake of brevity, these are only a few of the many improvements I hope to make next semester at The Texan. My goals for this paper and myself are even more ambitious than they were when I first applied for this position, but my confidence in our staff and their abilities is unwavering. There are many things I believe can be improved upon and many ideas I have yet to try and implement. Serving as managing editor this past semester has been an honor, and I would be extremely grateful for the opportunity to do so again.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ellie Breed
Managing Editor, Spring 2018
List of References

**Forrest Milburn**, (214) 715-5935  
Associate Managing Editor, Spring 2018  
Houston Chronicle  

**Tyler Horka**, (214) 493-6539  
Associate Managing Editor, Spring 2018  
Past: Sports Illustrated, NFL Media

**Akshay Mirchandani**, (972) 757-9949  
Managing Editor, Spring 2017  
Dallas Morning News

**Catherine Marfin**, (210) 667-0935  
News Editor, Spring 2018  
Past: Austin-American Statesman
Published Work Sample #1

“20 hilarious reactions to the Speedway brick removal”
(Originally published: The Daily Texan, 10/19/2017)

Below is a link to the web story discussed in my letter. Following this page is a pdf version of the story. It brought more traffic to our website than almost any other article.

Published Work Sample #2

Disclaimer: This is not a sample of my own writing, but an interview in which NPR’s local channel Texas Standard recognized my news department’s coverage of the on-campus stabbing this spring. It will serve to illustrate my ability to direct staff in breaking news coverage, maintain a level head during times of crisis and act as a calm and composed face for The Texan. A recording of the live radio interview, which contains most of my commentary, can be accessed at the following link:

“AFTER CAMPUS STABBING, UT-AUSTIN STUDENT NEWSPAPER PROVIDED INFORMATION WHEN OFFICIALS DID NOT”

(Originally published: The Texas Standard, 5/2/2017)

Monday afternoon, Kendrex J. White, a 21-year-old junior at the University of Texas, allegedly stabbed and killed Harrison Brown and wounded three others. So far there is no known motive.

UT-Austin students were not alerted by the university’s text messaging system until nearly half an hour after the attack started. By that time, word of mouth had spread across campus, sparking spurious, unconfirmed, and as it would turn out, unwarranted and unsubstantiated claims of other attacks occurring elsewhere on campus.

Students had few places to turn for more information, except for the student newspaper, which published some of the first actual images from the scene, including the arrest of the suspect.

The Daily Texan is one of the oldest student newspapers in the south, and in its 117 years has won more national, regional and state awards than any other student newspaper in America.

But like many student newspapers, and like the newspaper industry itself, its impact has declined over the years as people have turned to other sources for news. And yet Monday – as students complained about not getting enough information from either the school or from mainstream media – it was the student newspaper that was on top of the story.

Catherine Marfin, senior reporter and Ellie Breed, news editor for the Daily Texan, were covering the story.

When Breed first heard there was an incident on campus she says she was in an apartment building on 21st Street – the stabbing took place near Gregory Gym, on the corner of 21st Street and Speedway.

“The first thing that I noticed as I was about to leave for class were cop cars rushing down 21st Street towards the Speedway area,” Breed says. “Once I saw that you tend to jump onto social media and see what you can find about whatever incident and the second I got on GroupMe and Facebook I was already seeing
things from people that were down there and experiencing it first hand. And so after that I just called our news team and we got working.”

What you’ll hear in this segment:

– Why the Daily Texan was first on the scene

– How the app GroupMe contributed to reporting the incident

– The biggest issue for the Daily Texan staff reporting on the incident
“UT Sigma Alpha Epsilon chapter suspended”

Ellie Breed
(Originally published: The Daily Texan, 11/6/2017)

The UT chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon has been suspended as a result of health and safety concerns, SAE National officials said in a press release late Sunday night.

“Sigma Alpha Epsilon has zero tolerance for any actions or behaviors that are not consistent with our mission and our creed,” the press release said. “We are committed to the safety and well-being of our members and others with whom they interact.”

SAE Nationals received a tip to their anonymous hazing hotline, and after investigating found the UT chapter was not complying with multiple health and safety policies, according to the release. SAE notified University officials of their decision to suspend the chapter. The Office of the Dean of Students was not immediately available for comment.

The chapter, which was founded in 1882, is suspended until current membership has graduated or for a period not shorter than four years.

“Although we regret the closure of any chapter, there are situations in which it becomes necessary and warranted,” the press release said. “Our leadership remains optimistic that we can re-establish Texas Rho in the near future with members who exemplify our beliefs and who serve as leaders and role models on campus and in the greater Austin community.”

On Friday, Brandon Weghorst, chief communications officer for SAE, said the chapter was under a cease-and-desist order, but did not have a timeline for the pending investigation at that point.

Weghorst did not immediately respond to requests for comment after the chapter was suspended.
Published Work Sample #4

Update (12:41 p.m.)

Donald Trump became the 45th president of the United States on the steps of the U.S. Capitol at noon EST.

“Fellow Americans and people of the world, thank you,” Trump said in his inaugural address. “Today we are not merely transferring power from one administration to another... we are transferring power from Washington DC and giving it back to you, the people.”

Trump was sworn in by Chief Justice John Roberts under overcast skies, minutes after Associate Justice Clarence Thomas swore in Vice President Mike Pence. Thomas is the first African-American in history to administer the Oath.

In the address, President Trump echoed populist themes that were central to his campaign, saying America’s interests alone will be the top priority.

“From this day forward it is going to be only America first, America first,” President Trump said. “Every decision... will be made to benefit American workers and American families. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength... We have made other country's rich, while the wealth and strength of our country has dissipated over the horizon. ..That is the past. We are looking now only to the future..."

Trump also emphasized the importance of unity.

"Whether we are black, brown or white, we all bleed the same red blood of patriots,” Trump said. “We all enjoy the same glorious freedoms, and we all salute the same American flag… When you open your heart to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice.”

In stark contrast with these calls for unity were the approximately 70 empty seats left by House Democrats who took part in a boycott of the inauguration. The boycott grew significantly after the
then president-elect tweeted Saturday that John Lewis, Democratic congressman from Georgia and civil rights icon, should “finally focus on the burning and crime infested inner-cities.”

The country still faces significant domestic struggles, including violence, poverty and education issues, all of which need to be addressed, Trump said.

“Amercians want great schools for their children, safe neighborhoods for their families, and good jobs for themselves,” Trump said. “But for too many of our citizens, a different reality exists: mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities...and the crime and the gangs and the drugs that have stolen too many lives... This American carnage stops right here and stops right now.

Trump concluded his speech with a familiar campaign refrain.

“Together, we will make America strong again,” Trump said. “We will make America wealthy again. We will make America proud again. We will make America safe again. And yes, together we will make America great again.”

The J20 UT WalkOut protest began at the Tower around 11:45 a.m. This protest is expected to march downtown where it will merge at 5:30 p.m. with One Resistance Protest, a greater Austin demonstration. This protest will begin at Auditorium Shores and march down Congress Ave. to the Capitol Building.

**Original story**

Donald Trump will be sworn in as the 45th president of the United States on Friday. Trump is set to give his inaugural address at 11 a.m.

Protests over Trump’s Inauguration have already been planned, including the J20 UT Walkout and the citywide One Resistance.

Follow our live blog below for updates throughout the day on the Inauguration and planned UT and Austin protest:
The One Resistance protest is about to start.

Comments(0)

15:19

Protesters are now walking down Congress Avenue. Our reporter, @catherinemarfin, has updates on Twitter.

Comments(0)

11:51

Campus protests beginning earlier than anticipated. Revolutionary Student Front, an organization for revolutionary anti-capitalist students, beginning march toward the Tower as students begin to walk out of class.

Comments(0)

11:20

Trump: "To all Americans...hear these words. You will never be ignored again. Your voice, your hopes and your dreams will define our American destiny...Together we will make America strong again. We will make America wealthy again. We will make America proud again. We will make America safe again, and yes, together we will make America great again."

Comments(0)

11:17

Trump: "Whether we are black, blown or white, we all bleed the same red blood of patriots. We all enjoy the same glorious freedoms, and we all salute the same American flag."

Comments(0)

11:16

My full live-blog coverage from inauguration day can be accessed with the following link: