



# THE DAILY COUGAR®

FY 2014  
SFAC Questionnaire

**THE DAILY COUGAR**  
**STUDENT FEES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SFAC)**  
**FY2014 PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE**

- 1. Please provide a one-page executive summary of your questionnaire responses. This summary should include, in brief terms: your unit's mission, how you accomplish your unit's mission, and a justification of your unit's student fee allocation in terms of benefits for students.**

The mission of The Daily Cougar is to provide the University community with accurate, relevant news and information to students, faculty, staff and alumni in a timely fashion as frequently as possible, serve as a public forum and a voice for the student body, and function as a practical learning laboratory for student journalists.

We do this by providing content, as well as a platform for that content, on a daily basis. By remaining entirely student-run, we not only give students a channel through which they can speak to their entire community, we also give them practical experience within the field of journalism and publishing.

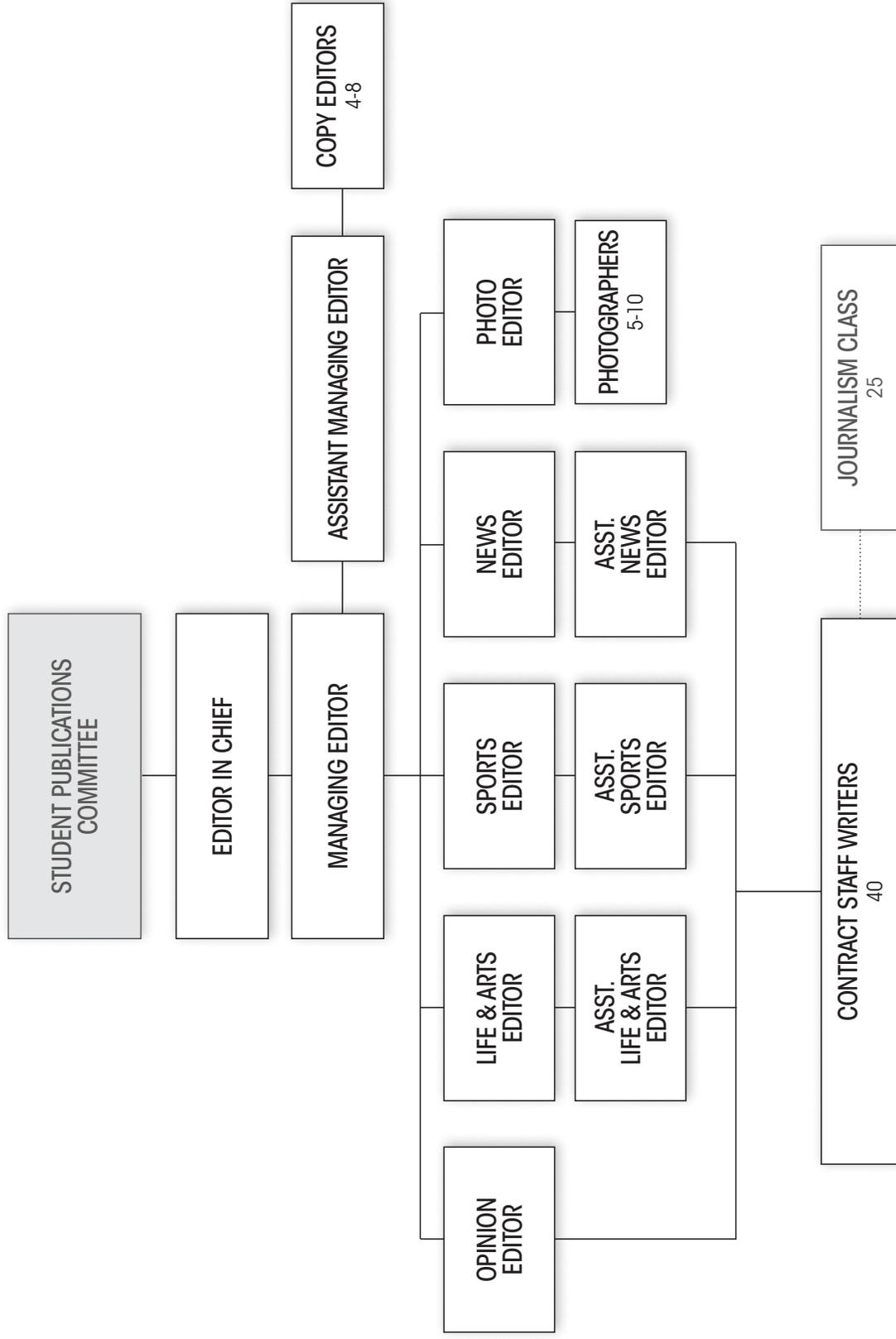
The Daily Cougar not only makes students more capable of entering a rapidly changing industry by giving them a place to hone their skills, it gives them a chance to try out the various facets of their trade before deciding what career path to take. It allows students to gain experience in everything from photography, to writing and editing, to directing coverage and assigning stories.

By providing our readers a source of news dedicated to the University, we help them become an informed and active member of the community. The bigger the campus gets, the greater the need for constant and effective communication. We are the eyes, ears and voice of the students. No other organization gives students access to such a wide audience on so regular a basis, whether as a writer or the subject of an article.

Student fee support is justified not to pay for the printing of a daily newspaper, but to ensure consistent student leadership of a longstanding and award-winning student news organization.

- 2. Provide an organization chart of your unit. Large units may need to have an overview chart and then more specific charts for each program. Where you have multiple staff in the same position (e.g. counselor, advisor, etc.), note this on your chart. Student employees should be cited on the chart and identified as students.**

See attachment.



- 3. List the objectives that you identified for the 2011-2012 academic year. Please comment on your success in achieving these objectives. If an objective changed during the year, please note this and explain. Also, list any new objectives, the rationale for the addition, and comment on your success in achieving these objectives.**

The Daily Cougar was not a directly fee-funded entity in 2011-2012.

See Section 3 of the Student Publications / Center for Student Media questionnaire for more information on Daily Cougar-related activities in FY 2012.

4. **Please discuss the means that you are utilizing to evaluate both your success in achieving the aforementioned objectives and their importance as compared to other objectives that you might pursue. Where data exist, discuss the number of persons served by each of your programs and any assessment measures used to evaluate program success. Please provide the method for collecting these data.**

The Daily Cougar website acts as our content management system, which we can use to evaluate how much we are publishing while also gauging how many readers we are serving on any given day. Pageviews are provided by Google Analytics.

This chart shows the aggregate production of The Daily Cougar staff in terms of content, page views and print editions produced (\*including inserted sections/special editions):

<b>Month</b>	<b>Articles published</b>	<b>Online views</b>	<b>Print editions</b>
August 2011	143	41,655	9
September 2011	252	75,728	19
October 2011	252	104,647	18
November 2011	213	94,070	18
December 2011	39	42,720	3
January 2012	154	50,148	9
February 2012	206	79,531	17
March 2012	181	100,679	14
April 2012	244	84,523	19
May 2012	4	30,244	1
June 2012	72	38,384	4
July 2012	63	38,272	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,813</b>	<b>780,625</b>	<b>135</b>

Note: an “article” is defined as a single item posted to the website; it also includes photo galleries and videos posted separately from articles.

A content analysis of the 2011-2012 articles was not performed, however with the help of the Student Publications Department, The Daily Cougar is now tracking the number of articles in each print edition and categorizing them by various content topics. Next year, the Cougar will be able to report on exactly what proportion of articles are UH related, as well as how many sports, news, arts and opinion articles are printed. We will also be able to compare the number of articles printed vs. articles posted online to demonstrate the additional work being done on the website.

- 5. Please discuss any budget or organizational changes experienced since your last (FY2013) SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them. SFAC recognizes that some programs did not receive the funds that they requested, that some programs were impacted by additional expenses after the conclusion of the budget cycle, and that some programs may be ahead of or behind their self-generated income projections. In addition, if your unit concluded FY2012 with a Ledger 3 Fund Equity balance, please describe the conditions which caused the fund balance.**

In FY 13, The Daily Cougar Editorial Board was shifted completely toward the Stipend Student Leader model as outlined by the Compensated Student Leader Task Force in Summer 2012. Previously, only the editor in chief and managing editor were considered student leaders. The change had minimal budget impact, however it meant that editorial board members began participating in leadership development offered by the Center for Student Involvement. With this small change, the Cougar Editorial Board will become part of a broader student leadership community at the University of Houston.

The editorial board was also restructured so that section editors had the option to hire assistant editors to ease the daily workload and help improve retention of staff members.

6. **The terminology for responding to this item has been amended to be consistent with the strategic planning framework. Therefore, SFAC requests that you report your success measures in terms of strategic initiatives and action steps versus goals and objectives as previously requested. To this end, please list your 2013-2014 strategic initiatives and action steps in priority order. Larger units may wish to group responses by subprogram. Under each strategic initiative, please state the specific action steps (programs, activities, services, policies/procedures, etc.) you implemented to accomplish your stated initiative.**

**1. Improve coverage of the UH community.**

The main priority of The Daily Cougar will be to continue expanding and deepening our coverage of UH. In doing this, The Daily Cougar will attract a larger audience from within the community and build credibility. There are several steps that will be taken to this end.

- a. The Editor in Chief will meet regularly with representatives from University Relations, the Student Government Association, the Staff Council and the Faculty Senate to discuss general ideas for coverage of the University as a whole.
- b. Editors of news, sports and arts will establish focused areas of coverage called beats and assign writers to keep in contact with sources from within those beats. The writers will be responsible for seeking out story ideas and writing articles in order to provide extensive coverage for their beat.
- c. Editors will receive training on how to make requests of the University and other state institutions under the Texas Public Information Act. TPIA is a powerful tool for any member of the public who wants to be informed, and it is important for any Texas journalist to be familiar with its use.
- d. Continue building our online presence. The Cougar will commit to updating the website with new content seven days a week while class is in session, and weekly during semester breaks. In addition, the Cougar will commit to breaking important news stories online and updating real-time as additional information is found.

**2. Strengthen organization and increase campus presence.**

The Daily Cougar will work to strengthen a tradition of excellence and build its reputation among student organizations. To that end, these steps must be taken:

- a. Update the staff handbook and ensure it includes all editorial policies, guidelines and procedures, which will be given to all members, new and returning.
- b. Commit to having a presence at key organizational fairs and large events for recruiting and community interaction.
- c. Host a town hall meeting on a focused campus issue with a connection to news coverage.
- d. Host an SGA presidential candidate debate in Spring 2014 in partnership with other student organizations.

7. **What are the other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them (e.g. grants, donations, etc.)? If you receive funds from other sources, please briefly describe the source, purpose, and duration of the funding and report the amounts received in the appropriate rows/columns on the SFAC Spreadsheet.**

Up to this point, The Daily Cougar has relied on the Department of Student Publications budget to cover all of its operations costs and was not directly responsible for managing the budget.

In FY 14, the proposed budget includes a 50% allocation of advertising revenue generated by the Center for Student Media sales team. This compensates the organization for the space used in print and online and is used to cover the costs of printing, student support salaries, travel and miscellaneous expenses. The Editor in Chief will have discretion over spending like any other student organization executive.

- 8. Please describe any services that are similar to yours and/or any overlap between your unit and any other unit(s) providing services to students and the rationale for the overlap.**

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There are no other organizations or departments in the University that do what The Daily Cougar does on the scale on which we do it.