GWUJEP Staff Interview: Kiriana McAffee

Strategy and Sustainability Committee Lead



Biography

Kiriana (Kira) McAffee is a second year graduate student in George Washington University's publishing program. After obtaining her undergraduate degree in English Literature from Brigham Young University--Idaho, she has spent several years as a grant proposal writer for the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area, a higher education nonprofit in DC. She has also worked as a freelance writer and editor in the creative and education literature spheres. Kira has utilized her professional background in technical writing and funding to lead Strategy for the developing GW University Press and plans to continue pursuing work with university presses after her graduation. In between her work with the Consortium and GW, Kira spends her time reading, writing, and exploring the Oregon coast where she lives with her husband and two daughters.

Why are Strategy & Sustainability important to publishing?

Strategy and sustainability is essential for turning the long-term vision of a press into reality. That has been the cornerstone of my work with the Strategy and Sustainability committee, especially as it applies to the new George Washington University Press (GWUP). The focus of our Strategy and Sustainability committee has been on building foundations for the future GWUP by streamlining processes, seeking funding for financial self-sufficiency, and laying plans for long-term projects. I've had to develop a more far-reaching mind that doesn't think so much about the next issue of the *GWJEP*, or even next academic year, but several years ahead to what the future committee members will be doing long after I've graduated.

What drew you to this committee?

I've been lucky in my educational and professional experience to develop skills that have been applicable to strategy and sustainability, especially my grant writing experience. This has allowed me to seek grant opportunities for *GWJEP* and the GWUP that will hopefully allow them to become even more financially sustainable. Additionally, I've always been interested in university presses due to the impact they have on higher education, especially student-led presses like what GWUP will be soon and publications like *GWJEP*, which provide students with experience in the publishing field. It's unsurprising that I jumped at the opportunity to become involved in strategy for both of these organizations.

What are the ethical issues in S&S that your committee wants to solve for both GWJEP and the wider publishing world?

It's getting more and more difficult to break into the publishing industry in part because of how quickly it is evolving with new technology, trends, and funding landscapes. It also feels like jobs everywhere, including publishing, expect you to have multiple years of experience even for entry-level positions. For many, these factors make building a career in publishing feel like swimming upstream. This makes publications like *GWJEP* incredibly valuable for students because it is almost entirely student-led, allowing students to graduate with some industry experience already on their resumes. The S&S committee wants to increase these types of opportunities; we've been working for the past academic year to build GWUP, which will be student-led, and we are in the beginning stages of a couple projects within GWUP that will also have opportunities for students

to get involved. If we can provide more initiatives like this to students, they can enter the publishing workforce on a more level playing field.

What strategies or initiatives have you proposed or worked on that you're particularly proud of?

My work with getting GWUP off the ground has been particularly rewarding. I started looking for funding opportunities when the press was initially approved, and we recently received our first book proposal. Being a small part of that progress has confirmed my interest in university presses, and I plan to keep pursuing work in that sphere after I graduate.

How do you strategize with each committee in an efficient way?

Strategizing with the other committees of the *GWJEP* requires a long-term vision. Right now, my work with GWUP feels very separate from *GWJEP*, but they are actually intertwined. In the very near future, GWUP will be bigger and fully off the ground, and *GWJEP* will fall under its editorial umbrella as one of its student-led publications. Any strategizing that we do for GWUP is also a strategy for *GWJEP*; they develop and evolve together. Even the work that the S&S committee does specifically with *GWJEP*---like this semester we are beginning the indexing process---operates with a future vision in mind. By maintaining that mindset, our goals strategize for the journal as a whole and affect the other committees cohesively.

In your strategic planning, how do you consider the journal's growth without compromising its ethical values?

This is the most essential part of my role as committee lead. It's always been extremely important to us that we keep the journal as accessible as possible by maintaining its open-access status. We want to incorporate those values into our strategies both for the journal and for the university press as well, which raises some important questions like "how do we find enough funding to develop the university press and maintain the journal while also upholding our ethical standards and keeping everything accessible to all readers?" This is where my grant writing experience is the most applicable; by helping the press and the journal find grants, the S&S committee is able to create funding strategies without compromising the commitments we've made to our values, like keeping the *GWJEP* open access.