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Investigative Reporting on Campus

 cmreview.org/investigative-reporting-on-campus/

College Media Review

February 13, 2012

Kent State reporter draws national attention with unraveling of university's controversial relationship with would-be donor

By Dan Reimold

University of Tampa

Doug Brown, an enterprise reporter for the Daily Kent Stater at Ohio's Kent State University, is the most famous student journalist so far in 2012.

Early last month, Brown reported on the past legal troubles of Jason Cope, an alumnus who was preparing to donate \$1 million to the Kent State athletics program and have the school's basketball court named after him. He dove into the story after the paper's web editor received an email from a stranger with a one-sentence tip: "Google Jason Cope v SEC."

What Brown discovered: A bit more than a decade ago, as branch manager of a financial firm, Cope had been part of a Ponzi scheme that defrauded investors out of close to \$9 million. He was found guilty of breaking federal securities laws that "involved fraud and deceit" and ordered with his co-defendants "to pay a total of more than \$19 million in penalties."

Brown's investigation into this criminal activity prompted Cope to suddenly renege on the million-dollar gift. His subsequent story led to questions about Kent State's decision to accept a donation and align itself publicly with someone best known for bilking others of their investments.

As a Kent Stater editorial earlier contended, "We're wondering why Kent State would knowingly accept money from someone with a disconcerting financial background. At first glance, it makes us question the athletic department's ethical standards. Sure, the university can accept the money, but should it? It doesn't quite seem right."

Since his original piece's publication, Brown has continued digging, determined to pinpoint who at Kent State knew about Cope's past, how long it had been known, and if anyone concealed his criminal history while seeking approval for the donation and court naming.



Doug Brown



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Podcast

His follow-up story published Sunday, Feb. 13, on kentwired, the online hub for independent Kent State student media, reveals university trustees were not told by an athletics representative of Cope's past and details how Kent State officials huddled together in crisis management mode after the Kent Stater began asking its questions.

In piecing the ongoing story together, Brown has relied heavily on public records by analyzing school officials' email messages, recordings of meetings, and documents available through the SEC and FINRA.

"One of the main things that has come out of [his ongoing investigation] is that the athletic director and the university's fundraising person who presented the [donation] resolution to the Board of Trustees knew about [Cope's crimes] before the trustees meeting, yet they didn't mention it to the trustees and the trustees had no idea about the guy's past before approving it," said Brown, 23, a final-year journalism master's student. "They basically misled the Board of Trustees into approving it without their full knowledge of the real situation." Brown said the athletics director and fundraiser have not responded to multiple calls and emails requesting comment about their interaction with the trustees.

Brown has earned recognition from numerous outlets and organizations for his dogged reporting and unraveling of the real situation, including JimRomenesko.com, Rolling Stone, The Chronicle of Higher Education, and the Student Press Law Center.

In a podcast interview timed to appear with his latest account, Brown discusses his ongoing reporting efforts, the attention and impact of his initial scoop, and the power of documents and recordings to provide needed information— especially when sources are refusing to speak.


"I really love getting public records," he said. "Because the more you have, the less you can be pushed around."

Dan Reimold, Ph.D, is an assistant professor of journalism at the University of Tampa, where he also advises The Minaret student newspaper. He writes and presents frequently on the campus press and maintains the student journalism industry blog College Media Matters, affiliated with the Associated Collegiate Press. His first book, Sex and the University: Celebrity, Controversy, and a Student Journalism Revolution, was published in fall 2010 by Rutgers University Press.



Dan
Reimold

Kent State Investigation: A Student Reporter's Story

 cmreview.org/a-student-reporters-story/

College Media Review

February 13, 2012

In Doug Brown's own words on his investigative reporting:

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Kent State University student journalist Doug Brown has received national recognition in journalism circles for his coverage of the withdrawal of a \$1 million donation to the university's athletics department from an alumnus whose investment firm once defrauded investors of nearly \$9 million.



Daniel Reimold interviewed Brown about this continuing story and the reporter's use of public records in his investigative reporting.

Some highlights from the interview:

- **16:00 to 22:00** – Brown recalls his attempts to track down the donor, Jason Cope, for comment and Cope's subsequent withdrawal of the donation, which was to coincide with the dedication of the university's basketball in his name. The interview includes a reading of the related email Cope sent to let school officials know of his decision.
- **22:00 to 25:08** – Brown talks about the reaction to his initial story about the cancellation of the donation on Jan. 6.
- **25:08 to 26:16** – Brown closes with a quick discussion about his passion for public records. His investigative reporting has also addressed the athletics department's disciplinary measures toward men's basketball players charged with crimes and examined the results of the department's mandatory drug testing of athletes.

[BACK TO MAIN STORY](#)

Bisher a writer for the ages, for all ages

 cmreview.org/bisher-a-writer-for-the-ages-for-all-ages/

College Media Review

March 21, 2012



Sports journalism icon dead at 93

Robert Bohler

Texas Christian University

It may say the most about sports writer Furman Bisher's impact on generations of readers as well as fellow journalists that two of the greatest tributes paid to him following his death at age 93 on Sunday came from scribes who make their livings covering stock car racing and golf. Both ESPN's Ed Hinton, who covered NASCAR for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution under Bisher's guidance, and long-time golf writer Larry Dorman describe a man who respected the disciplines of the sports and their place in sporting culture, and perhaps Bisher's greatest mark was that he could embrace such separate—and disparate—cultures.

He was as equally at home writing about Richard Petty and Bill Elliott as he was Jack Nicklaus and Tom Watson. And in doing so, everything else fell in-between with equal doses of wit, warmth, respect and, if he felt the case warranted, sharpness of tongue.

And what a life he had. He, like his counterparts at the other major newspapers, served as the eyes and ears for so many at the major sporting events when commentary was limited to the printed page. He scored exclusive interviews with Shoeless Joe Jackson and Ty Cobb, he covered the funeral of Joe Louis, and he covered more than 50 editions of the Masters golf tournament and the Kentucky Derby. He was revered among Southern sports enthusiasts of the day that don't include the most rabid of University of Alabama fans, for whom he's the Antichrist to this day for his real or perceived roles in two separate articles for The Saturday Evening Post magazine that targeted Crimson Tide football coach Paul "Bear" Bryant. One of those stories, in which Bisher played a minor role as a researcher, precipitated the landmark federal court case of Curtis Publishing Co. v. Butts that's a staple in press law for its role in defining public figures and standards of actual malice.

I only briefly met him when he was a guest speaker at a Boys Club dinner in my hometown while I was a college student, but over the years and at my initiative we had sporadic email conversations

He was always cordial except for the one time I suggested, when a 'Bama reader savaged him before an upcoming Bulldogs-Crimson Tide game, that it might be a great opportunity for him to resurrect his version of events to set the record straight. I'm forever grateful to the Internet gods that his response came over the Ethernet instead of straight from the horse's mouth. But he continued to answer – once again cordially—when I would drop him a note from time to time.

And from time to time, he probably would have benefitted from having an editor—if one were so brave—or at least a sounding board for his copy when he was particularly pointed in his viewpoints. He once called transsexual tennis player Renee Richards a "mixed doubles" player." In later years he once offered a politically incorrect scenario about why "White Christmas" wasn't played at malls anymore during the Christmas season, and he got caught up in controversy a couple of years ago when he recounted on his blog an allegation that Tiger Woods' wife had struck him with a golf club.

Not his most shining moments. But, by far most of his career, he wrote with such grace and wit that it seemed as if sport was only coincidentally the beat for his commentary. Growing up, I could hardly wait each afternoon for the Atlanta Journal to arrive on my grandparents' doorstep so I could read Bisher and the news columnist Paul Hemphill, whose collective influence planted in me the concept of what a great life newspapering could be.

Judging by his followers' comments over the years, he remained a treasured presence in their lives. One of the traditions eagerly awaited his legion of admirers was his annual Thanksgiving column of more than 50 years about the many things for which he was grateful. When his didn't appear this past year, his followers noted, and several columnists from the smaller papers paid tribute to that tradition with columns of their own.

The writer Dave Kindred once recounted what happened when he, as an already well-established columnist, had the temerity, against the sage advice of his peers at the Constitution, to inquire as to just what Bisher was writing, just to make sure he and the great one were not stepping on each others' toes. "Judas Priest!" Bisher thundered. "General observations of the day."

Whether his columns were always well-received or not, his opinions on "the observations of the day" were never ambiguous, and in an era when the Atlanta Journal covered Dixie like the dew and his reporting and opinion were nationally featured in the Post, Sport magazine and The Sporting News, he never failed to deliver.

'Tweetalongs' merge social media, traditional police ridealongs

cmreview.org/tweetalongs-merge-social-media-traditional-police-ridealongs-to-engage-twitter-audiences/

College Media Review

March 23, 2012

Engaging Twitter Audiences

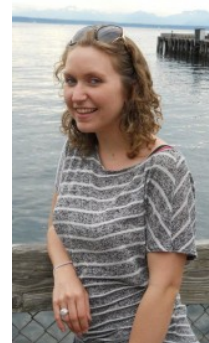
Washington State University student journalist's live observations during police calls provide followers with glimpse of the nightlife near campus. Such reporting should be considered with caution, SPLC warns.

By Dan Reimold

University of Tampa

This past academic year, Stephanie Schendel, the cops and courts reporter for ***The Daily Evergreen*** at Washington State University, has participated in occasional "tweetalongs." During these weekend ridealongs with patrolmen from the Pullman Police Department, she has tweeted live observations, providing followers with a candid, witty glimpse of quirkier after-hours community goings-on.

This innovative reporting effort has a four-fold goal: to build a relationship with local law enforcement, to begin learning the police beat, to heighten the paper's social media buzz and to provide readers with a running nighttime narrative of life in and around WSU.



Stephanie
Schendel

More than anything else, the real-time reporting experiment has revealed one immutable truth: After dark, some people in Pullman, Wash., are a bit bonkers. For example, during the first half of ***an early February tweetalong***, Schendel reported, "Girl just went by on a bike. No pants. . . . Someone got into a fight with a vacuum cleaner. The vacuum lost. . . . Group of girls screaming, don't worry— it was just a puppy. . . . Girl passed out in the women's transit car."

Student Press Law Center executive director Frank LoMonte supports the tweetalong concept, with one major caveat and two cited cases.

"It's totally fine – and, in fact, a great idea – to ride with the police to get a better understanding of their work," he confirmed via email. "But it's important to use caution in particular when following police into a private space where a journalist would not otherwise have been invited to go."

For guidance, he refers to the 1989 Supreme Court case **Wilson v. Layne**, in which the majority ruled police had violated a family's Fourth Amendment rights by having a photojournalist taking pictures while officers searched their home. Roughly a decade later, in **Hanlon v. Berger**, a couple filed a lawsuit against the government and CNN alleging similar Fourth Amendment violations. A CNN crew had accompanied and filmed federal wildlife agents during their search of the couple's ranch, on the suspicion they were poisoning bald eagles.

"That case got resolved out of court, and we therefore have no binding guidance from the Supreme Court on whether a journalist or news organization can itself be in violation of the Fourth Amendment by airing the details of a police search," LoMonte noted. "But the risk is not non-existent. ... Any reporter who is writing a blog about police ridealongs needs to be aware that these cases are out there, because it is possible that publishing intimate details of a person's life or home that were gathered as part of a ridealong of this kind will be actionable as an invasion of privacy."

Below, Schendel discusses the related ethics and audience engagement issues involved in quality "tweetalongs." She also describes how the tweetalongs began somewhat by accident, how WSU alumni have enjoyed the updates as a way of reconnecting with their alma mater and how she has received tips about criminal activity at times even before the police by her side are alerted.

Q: How did the "tweetalongs" start?

A: It was actually sort of an accident. When I started covering the crime beat in August of last year, I went down to the police station. I met with the police chief. We were having a conversation, and I mentioned I'd be interested in meeting some of the police officers who work specifically at night on College Hill, the neighborhood right next to WSU's campus where there's a lot of Greek housing, bars, and most students live. He immediately said, "Yeah, of course, that'd be great." There are two officers from the Pullman Police Department who are assigned to that neighborhood. It's their job to network with students, get to know student groups, to essentially act as a liaison between the police department and students. They were super open to having me. It was definitely an experience from the get-go. I did it one time and was just absolutely amazed at what goes on.

Q: How do you determine what is appropriate to tweet?

A: The first time I did it was probably the toughest. I had no idea what was going to happen. I honestly didn't really know what goes on in terms of crime and what police respond to. I remember being incredibly overwhelmed because you would go to a funny interaction — for

example, my first night there was a guy in a gnome costume rapping to the police officers. Then ... we got called to an overdose, not someone I knew but essentially someone who was my age, who was a classmate of mine. It was really shocking for me as a student, as a person, as a civilian, to see that. So I immediately made the decision that victims and people who are arrested for MIPs [a charge of being a minor in possession of alcohol] or other minor crimes, their names are not important in these stories, even though some of it is public record. In terms of publication, we made the decision that it's completely irrelevant. The stories that I try to create from these tweetalongs are about the issues and general things that happen to students. It's not about the individual.

Q: Why Twitter?

A: Honestly, it was kind of an experiment. We were talking about how we wanted to get more Twitter followers and interact more with our audience. I don't even know who came up with the idea. I think it was just, "Ooh, I'm doing a ridealong, maybe I'll tweet some of my observations on it." What happened was that it was a hit. People immediately started interacting with me the first night ... and reacted so positively to the whole idea of my tweets.

Q: In what ways do readers interact with you during the tweetalongs?

A: What I've realized is that a lot of alumni follow our Twitter account. A lot of them are like, "Oh, I miss Pullman. I miss WSU." And a lot of them ... would re-tweet some of my quirkier tweets and the funnier things that happen. But then as it went on people started tweeting in incidents, like, "I just saw a police officer arresting someone for an MIP." There have been a couple times, actually, where I've gotten tweets about incidents before someone even called the police. There was one incident where someone was shooting a gun in an alley, shooting it up in the air. I started getting tweets about it and I thought, "Well that's weird. I haven't heard anything." So I tweeted out, "I don't know anything. I haven't heard anything." Two minutes later, the call came over the dispatch.

Q: How did the sarcastic tone of the tweetalongs come about?

A: I go with the same two police officers each time. I think a lot of my tweets match their personalities. They're very sarcastic ... and have good senses of humor. I think you would have to in their line of work. My personality, I felt, really meshed with theirs. No one wants to be overwhelmed with tweets about overdoses and student falls and tragic things. Even though that's a really important part of [the officers'] job, there are some positive things that happen and positive interactions. I really wanted to mirror that difference, that change where they can go from laughing to five minutes later be called to a scene where sometimes my reaction was like, "I want to cry. This is horrible what's happening to people." I just really wanted to capture that.

Q: At the start, what reporting ground rules did the officers lay out for you?

A: I think a lot of it was up to my best judgment. I think after the first [tweetalong] . . . they really trusted my judgment. There was only one instance in which they asked me not to tweet something out and that was when Officer Chris Engle needed to get a search warrant for something. It was in between the point when he smelled marijuana and was going to the police station to get a search warrant. That was the only time they asked me not to tweet anything out. I mean, I was once kind of on scene for a stabbing and . . . was kept in the loop on a lot of information that otherwise would not have been told to me if I was a reporter calling the next day to ask for information. They never asked me to keep certain things to myself. I think that they trusted me to have judgment over what was acceptable to publish and what wasn't. It was a really, really good experience for me as a student. I told both of them, "I'm interested in becoming a crime reporter. This is a really fascinating thing and I love it. I want to learn as much as I can from you guys." I think they took that and put me in situations where maybe if they didn't know me they probably wouldn't have brought me into those situations. It was a lot of trust that was built up.

Q: What is your advice for student reporters who want to carry out a tweetalong with police in their own campus community?

A: My biggest advice would be to keep an open mind. Before I started covering this beat, I didn't know any police officers. . . . The police in our town, students don't really look favorably at them. They are kind of seen as party busters. . . . So peoples' perceptions of them weren't that good. As a student, I sort of had that perspective too. Once I met them and spent more than an hour with them, my perspective on everything was completely different. . . . [There are] a lot of things civilians will never understand about what police officers do.

Dan Reimold, Ph.D, is an assistant professor of journalism at the University of Tampa, where he also advises *The Minaret* student newspaper. He writes and presents frequently on the campus press and maintains the student journalism industry blog *College Media Matters*, affiliated with the *Associated Collegiate Press*. His first book, *Sex and the University: Celebrity, Controversy, and a Student Journalism Revolution*, was published in fall 2010 by Rutgers University Press.



Dan
Reimold

The Red & Black: The making of a student media revolution

cmreview.org/the-red-black-the-making-of-a-revolution-in-student-media/

College Media Review

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The move from daily print to digital impacts advertisers, readers and, most of all, students

By Ed Morales

University of Georgia

Dynamic shifts sometimes find roots in the oddest of places, so the genesis of *The Red & Black's* move to a digital-first format can trace back to a summer night when an athletic director was caught red-handed with a pair of women's underwear resting in his lap.

It was an early Thursday in the summer of 2010 when Damon Evans, then the athletic director at the University of Georgia, was pulled over in Atlanta and charged with driving under the influence. With him in the car when the arresting trooper approached the driver's side window was a young woman who was not his wife, her red panties in his lap.

The news broke at 6 a.m., just as a weekly summer edition of *The Red & Black* (the paper was daily during the fall and spring semesters, weekly during the summer) hit the boxes.

I woke up that Thursday with an alert in my email about the arrest. The full details were not available (it would be two days before the incident report was released), but I knew it was a monster story, one *The Red & Black* had to chase with a host of other publications and update constantly on the website. Just a few days earlier a recent UGA graduate, who was serving as the designated driver for the night, had been struck and killed in a DUI accident.

"It's going to be a long couple of days," I told the editor in chief.

What followed – a contrite Evans' news conference, a shocking police report, a hasty athletic board meeting, Evans' resignation and the hiring of an interim director – happened in a matter of days, leaving the paper's weekly summer print publication out of the loop. For years, the paper had pushed the student journalists into embracing the immediacy and importance of the website, but it took a major scandal and no paper in sight for them to fully understand it. The coverage, which would win an award from the Society of Professional



The Red & Black: The Next Generation

Journalists, was proof the students were ready to take on the future of journalism. So when the publisher asked me months later if student editors would embrace a shift from a daily newspaper to a digital-first platform, my answer was simple: They already had.

A necessary change for readers and students ...

Established in 1893 and gaining independence in 1980, *The Red & Black* has been a constant and popular staple in the University of Georgia community. Ten years ago someone walking through campus would see rows of people with open newspapers in their hands – a reader survey done in 2000 revealed the biggest problem with the paper was that no one could find a *Red & Black* after 11 a.m. on any given day. But as the rise of iPods, smart phones and free Internet took hold of campus before that decade had ended, circulation had tumbled like the many journalism jobs across the national landscape. Add to that a struggling economy, lagging advertisement sales and a generation whose connection to a daily paper ranged between infrequent and nonexistent, and it was clear for *The Red & Black* that something had to be done to for it to continue being viable.

The Red & Black is governed by a 15-member board of directors, and in late 2010 it asked publisher Harry Montevideo, who has served in his role at the paper since 1983, to brainstorm ideas to keep the newspaper on the forefront. Scrapping the print product was a no-go, since its revenue kept the paper in business, but what if the printing schedule went from five days a week to an expanded one day a week while the website became the daily publication seven days a week? The main goal of the newspaper is education, after all, so why not make the experience the same as professional newsrooms across the country?

I will admit, the plan took me aback. I've spent my entire professional life working for a daily newspaper, and the thought of taking away the everyday product both conflicted and saddened me. But it was obvious, from talking with former students at newspapers in Washington, D.C., Chattanooga, Annapolis, Nashville and Atlanta, that they spent more than half their time producing for the web. "If they aren't ready to work for the newspaper website, they shouldn't bother," one former student told me. "I do a blog, videos, audio clips and constant updates. There are weeks my name doesn't appear in print, but it does online every day."



The Red & Black before the revolution

It didn't take long for me to understand it was the right way to go. Both Harry and I worried how the students would respond if the opportunities to see their names in print lessened and thought the idea of a monthly magazine would help to sweeten the pot. The paper has sought more magazine majors – the largest of journalism majors at the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication – and this would be a way to bring more into the fold. It was much to our surprise when, after bringing the top editors in to tell them of the plan in March 2011, they were on board right away. “Students are on their cell phones all the time,” editor in chief Mimi Ensley said. “That’s where most people get their news.”

A plan was to be developed to unveil the new platform in August for the start of the fall semester. Incoming EIC Rachel Bowers was to work on a schedule of how the daily digital/weekly print publications would function, while putting together a magazine staff to produce the initial magazine, slated for a Sept. 1 release. There was one other main question to answer: Would it work financially?

... but would advertisers support it?

Some days in the spring 2011 semester, the ad revenue from the daily newspaper didn't pay the cost to print and distribute it. Most of the newspaper's advertisers were in the paper once a week (90 percent), choosing the day that best suited them. Many times they didn't care which day the ad appeared, so would dictating the day make much a difference?

Advertising director Natalie McClure had her orders: To see if advertisers would continue to stay with a weekly *Red & Black*, and if so, would it matter which day? She was to determine if our online advertising could be ramped up as the website became the paper's main arm of daily news. Because moving the paper's print frequency from five days a week to one would cut costs on printing and distribution, *The Red & Black* didn't have to keep 100 percent of its advertisers. But it needed to keep more than half to remain fiscally viable.

“We went to our top 50 customers and asked them what they would do if we went to an expanded weekly,” McClure said. “Ninety percent of them said they would spend the same amount. We benchmarked a goal of 75 percent of ROP and 200 percent for online sales.”

It turned out that reducing the press run to once a week didn't bother advertisers, and many of them were ready to move ahead with online advertising as well.

“I think we both arrived at the party at the same time,” McClure said of the move. “Advertisers were ready to push ahead with the paper as it moved to digital first.”



The Red & Black: The Next Generation

Unique products, unique plans for content

So, what to do with the weekly print product and the monthly magazine?

The magazine was easier to figure, since the staff was starting from scratch. The idea was for it to be its own entity – the name *Ampersand* was chosen and trademarked – while taking a certain theme each month to tie the content together (and give the ad crew a leg up on selling to possible buyers). It would be a full glossy, using themed topics such as football, food, sex and holidays, with fashion spreads in each edition (employing the goods from advertisers). Long-form articles would join 300-word features, all punctuated by tasteful design and top photography. There was no publication of this kind in the Athens market, so there was an opportunity to fill a much-needed niche.

But the direction of the weekly publication was not as easy to ascertain. First off, it had to look different – there’s no sense unveiling a new product without putting a fresh look to it. A freelance designer was brought in to take a look at the plan and worked with the student editors come up with new design across the four sections – News, Sports, Variety and Out & About. The design, based on award-winning papers in Europe and South America, relied on splashy fronts with a more subdued but clean inside set of pages. The publication couldn’t be a telling of the week’s previous events – that’s what the website is for. It had to offer fresh information packaged differently from the website – whether it be investigative stories, in-depth features and profiles – as well as giving the audience a larger level of news they can use – calendar of events and analyses of upcoming issues.

Led by Bowers, the editors went about creating criteria for the weekly newspapers while maintaining a daily set of stories for the website. This led to another aspect of journalism the paper sought to engender among the staff: Competition. Getting a story in the print publication was not easy, the stories had to be strong and well-researched, and there were fewer spots for stories in the sections. Because the pay scale at *The Red & Black* is based more on a story’s merit than its size, those appearing in the print publication also earned more per story.

Handling the website was also at issue, for most of the editors weren’t sure how much they should be supplying to it each day. As a general rule, we wanted each sections editor – news, sports, variety and opinions – to add four stories a day to the site, but the key was to run them only when they were ready. One of the heightened aspects of the change was to ensure we adopted quality over quantity – at times the responsibility of filling a daily paper made the staff run stories not fit to print. Without having to fill a set print hole each day, the stories ran only when they were ready. Editors also pushed for more multimedia – photo galleries, videos, podcasts – to bolster the copy online. The editing process would be the same as with a daily paper, without the pages and design.

We didn’t tell anyone. A campaign was created to unveil the new shift, dubbed “Red & Black (version 2.0): Witness a media revolution.” The four-page pullout section accompanied the first newspaper of the fall semester, explaining the supped up website, weekly paper and monthly magazine. We were off.

One semester in, a revolution realized

It’s been a little more than a semester since the change, and the common question I hear is: How’s it going?

From a financial perspective, it’s great. The advertising department surpassed both its goals in the fall semester, reaching 79 percent retention for ROP and 204 percent for online sales – putting the tally at 87 percent for the semester as a whole. The goal for advertising on *Ampersand* was to make the money to pay for it, which has been the case for every edition

so far (the November issue made a modest profit). Combined with other *Red & Black* revenue streams – an on-campus Housing Fair, seasonal *Athens Living* magazine and annual UGA Visitor's Guide (which is the main guide used in the UGA Visitor's Office on campus) – the newspaper has turned a profit in tough times.

We expected pushback from the faculty and the student body – some students and professors in the journalism department didn't like the idea at all. One professor lamented that there would no longer be a paper of record, and everyone, it seemed, missed the daily crossword. Despite a marketing push to make the campus aware of the Thursday arrival of the paper – street teams passing out papers, tables at the student union showcasing the weekly product and constant mentions on our various social media sites – some students still aren't aware when the paper comes out.



Ampersand at UGa

We have seen an increase in website readership, though not as much as we expected. Comparing online statistics from August 15, 2010 to Feb. 15, 2011 and August 15, 2011 to Feb. 15, 2012 shows an increase of 932,000 page views and 288,000 unique visitors. We saw a 10 percent increase in visitors from the Athens area as well.

Our student staff, as always, has been up to the task. The revamped weekly edition has included some of the best investigative stories we've had during my time at the newspaper, and the website is updated constantly with fresh and important news. Others have noticed. The revamped paper won Best in Show at the annual CMA/ACP Convention in Orlando, while *Editor & Publisher* awarded redandblack.com a Webby Award for the Best Collegiate Newspaper in the country.

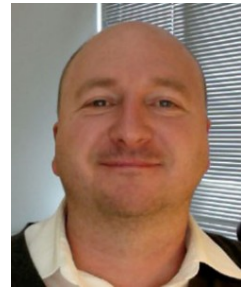
But the main indication the newspaper is doing what's right for its educational mission came during the application time to fill the top editor positions. The process to become the paper's editor in chief or managing editor is not an easy one: students must provide a résumé, cover letter, transcript, two letters of recommendation, provide a paper on what they wish to achieve as a top manager and face an intensive interview with three board members.

Usually no more than three people apply for the two slots, and on a rare occasion it's been four. But the tally of applications for the spring semester reached six, with each candidate bringing forth a wealth of good ideas.

The current that ran through each application was the same: *The Red & Black* is preparing them for the next step.

It's reason enough.

About Ed Morales: Ed Morales has served as the editorial adviser at *The Red & Black*, the independent student newspaper at the University of Georgia since 2006. Originally from Miami, Fla., he graduated from the University of Maryland too long ago to remember and has worked for six newspapers, accumulated hundreds of bylines, and covered hurricanes on both the football field and from the Atlantic Ocean. Morales has worked as a news editor (Palm Beach Post and Milledgeville Union-Recorder), sports copy desk chief (Tallahassee Democrat), sportswriter and designer (Centre Daily Times) and soccer columnist and agate clerk (Washington Times).



Ed Morales,
University of
Georgia

Red & Black newspaper reinvents itself as Version 2.0

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Student editor: I helmed a revolution

By Rachel Bowers

University of Georgia

I walked into *The Red & Black* newsroom with one goal: To cover the University of Georgia football team.

But I left having helmed a media revolution, transitioning from printing a newspaper five days a week to publishing daily online, along with printing a 24- to-28-page newspaper once a week and a new monthly magazine.

The day Ed Morales, the editorial adviser, told me *The Red & Black* would change from a daily publication to a weekly one, my jaw dropped.

I was standing in his office in front of him as he sat at his desk. He let the idea resonant before continuing. After a long, in-depth conversation in which Ed explained the ideas of the new website, the magazine and the weekly format, I left his office bursting at the seams with excitement. I knew what *The Red & Black* was going to do would be innovative. I wanted to be a part of it, in whatever role — it just so happened my role would be as editor in chief.

After a week of interviews for desk editor positions with Managing Editor

Joe Williams, we chose a staff of the hardest working student editors in the pool of candidates. However, we did not reveal to them the approaching changes — and we didn't until we were given the OK from the powers that be.



Red & Black Version 2.0 (University of Georgia)

Then reality hit: Joe was going to be in Seattle all summer doing an internship with *Seattle Weekly*, and I was meant to overhaul how *The Red & Black* had functioned editorially for the last 20 years.

I then broke the news to each desk editor, trying to keep them apprised each step of the way. Each reacted favorably and enthusiastically. They understood the sole responsibility of the paper was to provide the best hands-on experience for student journalists in the country, something the new format would foster.

They believed we could pull it off.

They believed that we could do so successfully.

My next step was to create a detailed guide of how the website would function each day. I flipped through a few semesters' worth of papers, counting how many stories each section averaged in the print product. (Most papers were six-to-eight pages; sometimes they were 10 and big days were 12.) I translated those numbers to what the website should have each day: News with approximately five, variety with three and sports with two to five. Deadlines were pushed up for all stories (website or paper) and read-throughs would be mandatory. Competition would be emphasized to get into the paper.

But more than any other detail or component, I emphasized planning. Among other things, the photo department had to be on the same page with every section, as the new design of the paper would rely heavily on strong art and colorful photos for the fronts. So every Sunday before budget, we held a planning meeting in which section editors would run down their stories for the paper for the upcoming two weeks. They would coordinate with the photo editor and make sure the story idea was fully fleshed out. We continued our daily budget meetings to discuss the next day's online stories and determine what time we should publish each story.

The two weeks leading up to the launch date of Red & Black 2.0, the editors diligently worked on the new product. It was one of the most trying times in my life — we published two papers the first week of school. There was no other option but for them to be stellar.

That Monday, the first day of school, we published a 20-page newspaper with a four-page wrap to introduce our new format.

Four words introduced the new *Red & Black*: "Welcome to the Revolution."

In addition to the four-section paper, the website boasted 25 new items on the first day of class. As excited as all the editors were, we knew it would be a long semester. In week two, we found our routine. Staffers adjusted. Our multimedia presence online grew.

And the third newspaper in the new format won *The Red & Black* the Best In Show award at the annual CMA/ACP Convention in Orlando.

The cherry on top came in December, my last month as EIC: My face popped out of an envelope. *Editor & Publisher* awarded redanblack.com a Webby Award for the Best Collegiate Newspaper in the country. All our hard work had been validated — the revolution had come to fruition.

About Bowers: Rachel Bowers is a winter 2011 graduate from the Grady College of Journalism at the University of Georgia and served as The Red & Black's editor-in-chief in fall 2011 to finish out her nearly four year stint with the college media outlet. During her time at The Red & Black she held the posts of managing Editor, sports editor, page designer and lead football beat writer. The Athens native is now a paginator for The Villages Daily Sun in Florida.



Rachel Bowers