

**UPAA Board Meeting
Annual Business Meeting
June 25, 2026
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI**

MEETING INFORMATION:

Date: 6/25/26

Time: 1pm EST

Duration: all day

Meeting Invite: In-Person; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
Michigan Stadium - Jack Roth Club (4th Floor)

Attendees:

Board Invitees: *Cydney Scott, Mark Carriveau, Jason Halley, Derek Eckenroth, Nate Edwards, Kristen Grace, Chris Low, Katherine Seghers*

Other Invitees : *Bri Lehan, Meredith Forrest Kulwicki, Jesse Jones*

1. Call to Order

Cydney Scott called the 2026 UPAA Annual Business Meeting to order at **1:36 p.m.**

Cydney welcomed the membership and explained that the annual business meeting provides members with an overview of how UPAA operates as an organization. She noted that the meeting would include reports from officers and chairs, followed by opportunities for member comments and questions.

She also explained:

- How UPAA board and committee leadership functions.
 - The role of elected board members and appointed committee chairs.
 - The general length and rotation of board terms.
 - The board's meeting schedule, including annual and midyear meetings.
 - How the board begins planning future symposiums.
 - How members can communicate with the board and become involved in organizational leadership.
-

2. State of UPAA

Cydney presented an overview of the organization's work and accomplishments during the preceding year.

Major developments included:

- Launching a comprehensive member survey concerning UPAA competitions.
- Appointing new leadership for UPAA's video producer initiatives.

- Launching a formal mentorship program.
- Transitioning officer and committee responsibilities to improve organizational continuity.
- Transitioning the treasurer role to Jason Halley.
- Transitioning communications responsibilities to Katherine Seghers.
- Expanding full-member eligibility and representation for video producers.
- Continuing development of the Narrative Series and other video-related programming.
- Adding the General Features category to the Monthly Image Competition.
- Expanding communication, member engagement, and opportunities for members to participate in UPAA programs.

Cydney emphasized that the board continues to seek ways to make UPAA's leadership, programs, and decision-making processes more transparent and accessible to members.

3. Committee and Officer Reports

3.1. Mentorship Program

Cydney provided an update on the mentorship program. She reviewed highlights from the program's first year and acknowledged that participants had experienced varying levels of engagement and success. Some mentor and mentee pairs had developed productive relationships, while others encountered scheduling difficulties or struggled to establish consistent communication.

The board and program leaders were evaluating ways to improve the experience, including:

- Clarifying expectations for mentors and mentees.
- Providing more flexible conversation topics and resources.
- Reducing reliance on structured prompts that may feel like assignments.
- Supporting more open-ended discussions based on each participant's interests and professional goals.
- Improving follow-up with participants during the program year.

The next mentorship sign-up period was expected to open in **August 2026**.

Members were encouraged to participate as mentors, mentees, or both, depending on their experience and professional-development needs.

3.2. Finance Report

Jason Halley presented the financial report and budget overview. The report addressed UPAA's financial position, annual operating expenses, symposium-related costs, competition expenses, awards, website operations, member services, and other organizational programs.

Members were informed that UPAA continues to maintain stable operations while facing increasing costs in several areas, particularly:

- Symposium costs that include facilities and catering, transportation and lodging support, and speaker expenses.
- Competition administration.
- Awards and recognition materials.
- Website maintenance and security.

The financial report was intended to help members understand how dues, symposium registration fees, competition fees, and corporate support contribute to UPAA's activities.

When asked, Cydney assured that actual numbers would be made available to review in the coming months.

3.3. Membership Report

Chris Low presented the membership report.

UPAA reported:

- **670 total members**
- **609 active members**
- **371 full photo members**
- **89 student members**, identified as a record
- **231 new members during the academic year**
- **141 new members since the beginning of the calendar year**
- **68 first-time symposium attendees**
- **255 symposium attendees**, identified as a symposium attendance record

Chris noted that student membership and first-time symposium participation were especially strong. The membership report reflected continued growth across the organization and demonstrated the importance of supporting newer members, student members, video producers, hybrid professionals, and first-time symposium attendees. Members were encouraged to welcome new participants, promote UPAA membership within their institutions and professional networks, and help connect first-time attendees with UPAA programs and leadership opportunities.

3.4 Website Report

Derek Eckenroth presented the website report. He explained that member feedback from the competition survey and other communications had helped identify website improvements and areas requiring additional development.

Recent work included:

- Adding captions to competition images.
- Updating membership-renewal information.
- Completing major security updates.
- Revising the About page.
- Adding clearer information about the benefits and services UPAA provides.
- Adding a more visible "Join Now" button.
- Embedding video content on Drupal-based webpages.
- Improving pages supporting competitions, membership, and organizational information.

Derek noted that UPAA continues to work with developers on both visible member-facing improvements and technical infrastructure. Members were encouraged to continue reporting problems and offering suggestions, particularly regarding competitions, membership renewals, accessibility, navigation, and video content.

3.5. Corporate Relations Report

Kristen Grace presented the corporate relations report. She explained the important role corporate partners play in supporting UPAA through:

- Financial sponsorships.
- Equipment support.
- Symposium programming.
- Speakers and educational opportunities.
- Product demonstrations.
- Competition prizes.
- Member giveaways.
- Networking opportunities.

Kristen reported that representatives from **14 companies** were attending the symposium. An additional **three companies** were supporting the organization but were not present. Lumix was recognized as a new corporate partner. Kristen also announced that Nikon was providing a Nikon Z-series camera in support of the Photographer of the Year recognition. Members were encouraged to visit the corporate showcase, thank participating companies, learn about their products and services, and communicate appreciation for their support of UPAA. Two giveaway prizes were also announced as part of the business meeting.

3.6. Communications Report

Katherine Seghers presented the communications report and explained that she had assumed communications responsibilities previously handled by Jason Halley. She discussed efforts to improve the consistency and coordination of UPAA communications, including:

- Member emails.
- Program announcements.
- Symposium communications.
- Competition reminders.
- Corporate partner recognition.
- Board and committee updates.
- Social media content.

The communications team planned to continue coordinating with board members, committee chairs, corporate relations, competitions, publications, and symposium planners to ensure that members receive timely and useful information.

3.7. Social Media Report

Katherine also presented the social media report. She discussed current and planned content, including a “Get to Know the Board” series designed to help members become more familiar with UPAA leadership.

Other areas of focus included:

- Highlighting corporate partners.
- Promoting member accomplishments.
- Sharing symposium content.
- Supporting competition participation.
- Introducing members to board and committee leaders.
- Increasing awareness of UPAA programs and volunteer opportunities.

UPAA’s social media audience had grown to approximately **6,600 followers**, compared with fewer than 3,000 approximately two years earlier. Katherine credited consistent

content, stronger member engagement, symposium coverage, and collaboration with corporate partners for the growth.

4. Additional Reports

4.1 Survey Report

Nate Edwards presented updates on several member surveys.

Salary Survey

The salary survey was being reviewed and updated. Future versions would seek to clarify the reporting periods used by members, including differences among institutional fiscal years, academic years, and calendar years.

Symposium Survey

Members were asked to complete the post-symposium survey.

The survey would be used to evaluate:

- Educational sessions.
- Speakers.
- Symposium facilities.
- Transportation.
- Meals and events.
- Corporate partner activities.
- Competitions.
- Publications.
- Video programming.
- Overall member experience.

Members were encouraged to provide both positive feedback and constructive criticism.

Competition Survey

Nate reported that **134 members** completed the competition survey. The survey results had been released or were being prepared for release to members. Some minor changes had already been implemented. More complex recommendations would require additional evaluation because changes to one part of a competition could create unintended consequences elsewhere. The board planned to form committees in the fall to evaluate specific competitions and proposals in greater detail.

Topics identified through the survey included:

- Competition categories.
- Voting procedures.
- Judging.
- Written comments and critiques.
- Entry limits.
- Student participation.
- Annual and monthly competition structures.
- Photographer of the Year calculations.
- Narrative and video competitions.
- Technical improvements to the competition system.

Nate encouraged members to participate in future committees and continue providing detailed feedback.

4.2. Monthly Image Competition Report

Jay Ferchaud presented the Monthly Image Competition report. The report reviewed participation in the competition and addressed member feedback regarding categories, voting, judging, entry procedures, and competition refinements.

Members were reminded to:

- Review competition rules before entering.
- Select categories carefully.
- Complete entries before the deadline.
- Report technical problems promptly.
- Participate in voting.
- Provide constructive feedback when requested.

The MIC leadership team planned to work with the board and future competition-review committees to evaluate recommendations from the member survey.

4.3. Annual Photo Competition and Narrative Competition Report

Jesse Jones presented competition statistics and entry reminders.

Reported participation included:

- **406 entries in the 2025 Annual Photo Competition**
- **370 entries in the 2026 Annual Photo Competition**
 - **78 publication entries in 2026**
 - **112 narrative entries in 2026**

Jesse reminded members to pay close attention to:

- Entry deadlines.
- Submission instructions.
- Category requirements.
- File preparation.
- Caption and supporting-information requirements.
- Technical troubleshooting.

Members were encouraged not to wait until the final hours before a deadline to begin or complete their entries. The competition team would continue evaluating ways to make the submission process clearer and more reliable.

4.4 Contact Sheet/Depth in Field/Creative Partners

Meredith Forrest Kulwicki presented an update on *Contact Sheet*, *Depth in Field*, and the *Society of Creative Partners*.

4.4.1 Contact Sheet Report

This was the first year of producing the publication in its revised format. The team had received substantial feedback and planned to survey members about their experience. The publication was moving toward an annual-report approach rather than functioning solely as a traditional newsletter or magazine.

The revised format was intended to:

- Report on UPAA's organizational work.

- Highlight members and programs.
- Share financial and membership information.
- Document competition and symposium activity.
- Preserve a record of UPAA's year.
- Explain how dues and other resources support the organization.

Members were encouraged to provide feedback regarding readability, usefulness, content, and technical accessibility.

4.4.2. *Depth in Field Report*

Dakota and Mitch were assisting with Q&A-based and member-focused content. The publication's purpose is to share stories about UPAA members, their work, their professional experiences, and the ideas or techniques that may benefit other members.

The team was seeking additional content, including:

- Member profiles.
- Technical articles.
- Behind-the-scenes stories.
- Professional-development topics.
- Project case studies.
- Creative-process features.
- Interviews and Q&As.

Members were invited to propose stories, volunteer as contributors, or recommend colleagues whose work should be featured.

4.4.3. *Society of Creative Partners Report*

The program is intended to connect members in small collaborative groups for conversation, professional support, idea sharing, critique, accountability, and creative development. Unlike the mentorship program, which generally focuses on individual mentor-and-mentee relationships, the Society of Creative Partners is structured around peer groups.

Program leaders were evaluating ways to:

- Improve group formation.
- Clarify expectations.
- Support regular meetings.
- Gather feedback.
- Identify successful group practices.
- Reorganize inactive groups.
- Recruit members for the next program cycle.

Members interested in participating were encouraged to watch for future announcements.

4.5. *Video Report*

Cydney presented the video report on behalf of Bri Lehan. Bri had assumed a new leadership role supporting UPAA's video initiatives. The organization was seeking an additional video co-chair.

Bri's responsibilities included:

- Supporting symposium video planning.
- Advocating for video producers within UPAA.

- Recruiting video members.
- Developing programming.
- Exploring recurring or monthly video meetings.
- Improving video-related communication.
- Supporting video competitions and recognition.
- Developing resources for members.

The B&H Video Shootout had adopted a new approach during the symposium. Members were asked to provide feedback through the symposium survey. The video team was also considering developing an FAQ or similar resource to explain:

- Video membership.
- Competition requirements.
- Narrative Series participation.
- Institutional versus individual recognition.
- Available programming and volunteer opportunities.

Cydney thanked members for their patience as the organization develops and expands its video programs.

5. Member Voices

Jason Halley explained that two member concerns had been submitted regarding possible refinements to the Monthly Image Competition. Nate had addressed or incorporated those topics within the competition survey report.

The concerns related generally to:

- Competition voting and submission functionality.
- Category information and competition structure.
- Opportunities for future competition refinements.

After the submitted concerns were addressed, Bill Bitzinger spoke during this portion of the meeting to express appreciation for UPAA, its leadership, and the work involved in organizing the symposium and member programs.

Jason invited members to continue submitting feedback, questions, and concerns to the board.

6. Open Questions and Answers

The meeting was opened for questions and comments from the membership.

Members were invited to ask about:

- UPAA governance.
- Board elections.
- Membership.
- Finances.
- Competitions.
- Symposium planning.
- Corporate partnerships.
- Publications.
- Communications.

- Video programming.
- Volunteer opportunities.

No formal motions or policy decisions were recorded during the open question-and-answer period.

7. Giveaways

Two giveaway winners were announced:

- **Kelley Maas**
 - **Chris Nagle**
-

8. Board Elections

The results of the 2026 UPAA Board of Directors election were announced.

The elected board members were:

- **Derek Eckenroth** (*Incumbent*)
- **Darren Van Dyke**

Cydney explained that board members serve staggered terms to maintain organizational continuity. Members were encouraged to consider future board service and other leadership roles.

9. 2027 Symposium Announcement

UPAA announced that the **2027 UPAA Symposium** would be held in **Chicago, Illinois**, from: **June 21–25, 2027**

The symposium would be associated with the University of Illinois Chicago host team.

Members were encouraged to save the dates and watch for future information concerning registration, lodging, programming, transportation, speakers, and activities.

10. Giant Tripod Host Tradition

The meeting included recognition of UPAA's giant tripod tradition.

The tripod had belonged to Phil and was given to UPAA as a tribute to him and his contributions to the organization. The tripod is ceremonially passed from the current symposium host to the next host institution. The presentation recognized both UPAA's history and the responsibility of each host institution to carry the symposium tradition forward. The next symposium host accepted responsibility for the tripod as part of the transition to the 2027 Chicago Symposium.

11. Adjournment

Motion: Jay Ferchaud moved to adjourn the meeting.

Second: Nick Romenesko seconded the motion.

The meeting adjourned at **2:29 p.m. Eastern Time**.

Minutes prepared by:

Jason Halley, Secretary/Treasurer

Approval status:

Draft—subject to review and approval by the UPAA Board of Directors at the mid-year meeting in late 2026.