Caleb Ren

e: [calebren@college.harvard.edu](mailto:calebren@college.harvard.edu) | c: 206-849-5804

**REFLECTION**

1. My proudest achievement this past year was probably my.hauscr.org. This project was both personally fulfilling as a chance to practice my development skills but I also believe it was a worthwhile endeavor for students. The purpose of creating a student portal was two-fold: to generate student schedules dynamically while maintaining privacy; and to consolidate information for students into a single outlet. In my opinion, my.hauscr.org was successful both as a proof as a concept to create student schedules and push them out to students, and as a way to release general conference schedules, thesis information, campus maps, and even student paper dropboxes. I believe that it greatly simplified how students were able to access information and made it easier for us to collect deliverables from the students, thus fulfilling several goals that I aimed for as DOT in one swoop. Additionally, the portal looks much more polished than a simple text document or multiple communications through email and elevates the standing of HAUSCR.
2. From my experiences both as an Associate, as DOT and as Dean’s List Co-Director, I’ve found that my greatest strengths lie in generating ideas and diplomacy with China team. This was most apparent during my stint as Dean’s List Co-Director with Vivian, where one of the feedbacks that I took to heart was that I am a good source of innovative ideas, like the PD Lookaheads. I find that in group settings, I am very comfortable in searching for solutions to problems and being resourceful within the constraints of the problem, which came into use last year during HSYLC Hangzhou where I was as involved with crisis management as I was in Edu. However, where I falter in leadership would be in following through and asking for help. My schedule this past year was busy and there were many instances during Dean’s List and throughout the year where I would have benefitted the most from being more communicative with Vivian or the rest of Board. I plan on improving as a leader by working on my communication skills with my counterpart on Board, focusing on organization and timeliness, and always staying in contact.
3. I can honestly say that I’ve had a great time working with everyone on HAUSCR’s board. However, because of my relative strengths in ideation, I would be best paired with someone who can execute a vision and who is open about communicating concerns and limitations to me. I thought that Vivian and I made a great pair for Dean’s List. I also thought that Justin and I worked very well together on-site at CTB in Beijing, where we helped each other a lot during the work day and had the candor to debrief each other honestly at the end of each day.

**PRINCIPLES**

1. Top three goals for HAUSCR:
   1. *Engage students*. We have done a great job in the past years of making programming that really draw students in and hand-making class schedules for students. We can continue on this trend by extending this tailored-education experience to other conferences like CTB and HSYLC. We can better incorporate the Chinese and US judges for National Finals and determine a more rigorous way to assign students to classes. Ultimately, in every conference, we should seek to both streamline and engage students.
   2. *Reduce churn*. This is a larger goal that involves both finding an enthusiastic, well-rounded board and also finding Associates who represent diverse interests at the beginning of the year. As I will later outline, finding a committed and varied group of Associates through recruiting efforts may help with this, as well as new and more consistent social initiatives such as weekly group-wide study breaks/hangouts led by Board members.
   3. *Boost visibility*. This is mainly for on-campus recruiting. By more heavily stressing postering/marketing efforts, publicly wearing $wag, and otherwise engaging in guerilla marketing tactics (lol), we can make our jobs easier come Associate and SL recruitment season. Brand awareness on campus and attracting a diverse group of SLs and Associates is paramount to HAUSCR’s mission of providing quality education to Chinese students.
2. In general, we can elevate standards of conferences by preparing more pre-conference materials to give students time to acclimate to an HAUSCR conference. We are on a very tight timeline all the time as we move from one conference to the next, but I feel that we can begin sending materials out to students much earlier than we already do. We are of course limited in every conference by aspects of the academic year but we can make more of an effort to stick to timelines and communicate with students through China team so they can know what to expect in a conference, reducing on-campus stress and confusion. Release class schedules to students ahead of time, refine the algorithm for assigning classes, etc.

I do want to focus on one specific conference for specific improvement and that is CTB. As noted by several members of HAUSCR, it seems that CTB changes significantly from year to year in requirements for students. Additionally, the bilingual nature of the competition means that Chinese judging rooms during CTB Nationals seems to be a sticking point between China team and US staff. As such, I believe that one aspect to address during summer retreat is to really hash out the best practices going forward in CTB in judging. One other consideration is to curtail the number of WeChat survey-type projects which are increasingly prevalent in CTB projects. Thus, goals I hope to achieve in CTB are: 1) students are fairly judged during National Finals, 2) the most deserving teams receive recognition, and 3) the implementation aspect of CTB projects moves away from WeChat surveys and “raising awareness”.

1. What worked well: consistent call times of conference directors with China teams, China team offering feedback over Google documents. What could be better: reducing call times (CTB calls often ran very long), face-to-face time with China team leadership at least once a semester (maybe once after fall retreat (around H/XWeek) and another time right before Dean’s List in spring semester). Clear roadmaps at the beginning of the year with both China team and the entire HAUSCR board looped in would be very helpful in both building team morale and creating clear and consisting visions for the entire organization. To foster this relationship, it would actually be very helpful to do an organization review of HAUSCR at the beginning of the year or a group dinner with China team (leadership + volunteers) during H/XWeek.
2. A president: Someone who is both the administrative, visionary, and social head of the organization. A president has to both deal with internal responsibilities (managing group dynamics, conference planning, etc.) and also serve as an external proxy of the organization as a whole. Overarching responsibilities include: determining overall educational aims and organizational development in conjunction with the other Co-President + China team, selecting board, planning conferences, and being a problem solver. On an operational level, the most important thing I can do to support the rest of Board is to stay organized and communicative, both of which are traits I am folding into my natural leadership style. Additionally, as a social head of HAUSCR, I aim to always be my enthusiastic Gilelo self in front of the organization!
3. I have 7 concrete goals moving forward for HAUSCR within five years (in decreasing priority):
   1. **Fully subsidize SL trips to China through sponsorships.** This will help boost both Associate and SL recruitment and make HAUSCR a much more legitimate organization on campus
   2. **Reduce churn rate to less than 5 drops from fall to spring semester.** Important in maintaining group cohesion and morale throughout the second half of the school year.
   3. **Incentivize CTB Global Finals awards (add’l: National Finals awards?).** Will increase legitimacy of CTB within China and hopefully generate some newsworthy buzz for CTB. CTB right now seems to be missing that “something” that really marks achievement for the teams at the end of a year-long journey—offering incentives such as mentorship from a Harvard professor or seed money for a startup may be interesting paths to explore.
   4. **Move Shanghai HSYLC site out of Shanghai No. 2.** Shanghai No. 2 doesn’t seem to be getting better year after year. The challenge in moving away from No. 2 is that perception within China—this is a conversation to have over summer retreat with the China team leads.
   5. **Build strong relationships with campus administrative staff (SOCH, looking at you).** This comes from the challenges we faced during Dean’s List and building stronger relationships early on in the year with the SOCH/admin staff will help to alleviate operations bottlenecks and pain points.
   6. **Expand HSYLC to a 4th site (Guangzhou).** This is more of a reach goal. It’s in the works and I’d like to see a 4th site of HSYLC within the next five years if possible.
   7. **Consolidate CTB to a single site (Shanghai Tech?).** Another reach goal. The Shanghai Tech site seemed more than capable of hosting CTB but we also have to consider travel convenience for Chinese students.

**ORGANIZATION**

1. I very much liked the size of this past year’s board. I think the division of labor between conference-specific roles and cross-functional roles was relatively equal. I would like to reexamine the necessity of 3 CTB directors, seeing if the DOD and DOT roles can be consolidated, and expanding or redistributing the work of the Director of Social Affairs. My ideal board would most likely consist of: 2 Co-Presidents, 2 H/XWeek Directors, 2 (or 3) CTB Directors, 3 HSYLC Directors, 1 Director of Internal Affairs, 1 Director of External Affairs, 1 Director of Technology, 1 Director of Design, 1 Director of Finance.

* The two new positions are the Director of Internal Affairs (DIA) and the Director of External Affairs (DEA), who together share many responsibilities. Shared responsibilities include: organizing RoomBook and other venue booking considerations before and during conferences, maintaining a social media presence showcasing both social bonding and productive aspects of HAUSCR, and other responsibilities that may arise.
* The DIA’s responsibilities include: setting up social initiatives and events for members of HAUSCR and organizing both fall and summer retreats. The DIA also inherits some responsibility from the Director of Development role, including preparing skill-based presentations and organizing professional development presentations and opportunities for the group at-large. The DIA also will handle intra-organizational conflicts (go/complain) should they arise.
* The DEA’s responsibilities mostly revolve around those with external contact: securing external sponsorships for CTB/HSYLC/transportation, working with the Director of Design in creating marketing and brand materials for HAUSCR, jointly coordinating and managing Associate and SL recruitment logistics and marketing, as well as working with the DIA in creating social events and organizing the more logistically complex events like retreats and excursions.
* The Director of Technology incorporates aspects of both the previous DOT and DOD roles: identifying and executing visions for automation, adopting new technology and training members of HAUSCR, and executing any other technological considerations that HAUSCR may encounter.
* As per usual, Dean’s List Directors will be selected from existing Board. We may consider selecting Dean’s List Directors earlier on (after the school year begins, rather than in November) to give them more time to plan.
* Other Board positions remain largely the same from past years in terms of responsibility.

1. I want to place more emphasis on capability and technical qualification in the incoming Associate class. This past year, applicants were graded on a 1-10 scale of interest in HAUSCR, personality fit, and commitment. While I think those 3 aspects are important, I think they missed other fundamental traits like relevant past experience, personal goals/interests, and any technical skills that they bring to the table. Yes, many of the skills we require in HAUSCR are very easily teachable and develop through repetition and hands-on experience. However, we still do need Associates proficient in Photoshop and InDesign (or at least have some inclination to the art), have some photography interest or background, or are capable of writing basic HTML/scripting. Some of this is in direct response to the dearth of design- and technology-oriented Associates in the past year, but also because it seemed that the professional interests of some of the Associates didn’t fully align with what HAUSCR was doing. I want to thoroughly judge Associates not just on their force of personality. Some traits of Associates that I hope to include are:
   1. Very capable Associates that would function great as ***all-arounders***, demonstrating good communication skills, responsibility, and commitment to HAUSCR (e.g. April, Benji);
   2. ***Technologist*** Associates that have past experience in web development, web design, photography, digital content, scripting/automation (e.g. Anna, Zeel);
   3. Education-oriented and ***researcher*** Associates who understand the research process and would contribute the most to CTB and HSYLC (e.g. Esther);
   4. Associates who demonstrate infectious personality and enthusiasm for HAUSCR as a social environment and would act as ***influencers*** to other peers (e.g. Ryan Rose).

* These traits are by no means mutually exclusive, but as an organization, we should actively seek to bring these Associates into the fold and reconsider Associates that do not hit any of these traits. We should aim to have at least 5-7 Associates in each category in the incoming Associate class as a guideline.
* Design/Technology Associates are automatically put onto the Design team for H/XWeek under the Director of Design. However, the remainder of Associates will get to rank which committee they would prefer for H/XWeek. For the remaining conferences, Design/Technology Associates may choose to rotate to a different committee, but still will be expected to contribute to any design/technology work at the Directors of Design or Technology request.
* Last year, we tried small sibfams. The year before, we tried large sibfams. Both models had varying degrees of success. I think what will help with Associate retention is 1) throwing a great fall retreat experience, 2) finding a sweet spot of “sibfam” in terms of size, frequency of meeting, and Board involvement, and 3) encouraging more informal bonding sessions like HAUSCRoutings.
* #goodassdecisions didn’t quite make a comeback last year because I think the best HAUSCRoutings are spontaneous and between 5 – 15 people in size. Encouraging these HAUSCRoutings *informally* through the #goodassdecisions channel is paramount, rather than making them another HAUSCR commitment for Associates.

1. Besides the regular recruiting efforts of postering, Facebook posts, etc., the DEA is also responsible for coming up with new marketing initiatives for Associate and SL recruitment.

In terms of brand, outwardly, HAUSCR does very little to cause controversy—we do not throw parties, we are not known as a purely social organization, and most of the direct beneficiaries of operations is abroad. However, we can spice up recruitment by stressing more of the opportunities that HAUSCR provides, like international travel opportunities, a professional network second to none, and a very tight, familial group dynamic. We are very good at communicating these aspects in face-to-face interactions (activities fair tabling, info session), but our challenge is getting people in the door. I think by generating posters/social media posts that are a little more casual, generational-appealing, and eye-catching in nature, we can really attract a large audience to info sessions to boost recruitment.

To that end, we can create targeted posters for each of the types of Associates we aim to capture: All-Arounders, Technologists, Researchers, and Influencers. Some sample slugs for each population:

* All-Arounders: “**Take your talents to China**.”
* Technologists: **“do { HAUSCR } while { atHarvard };**”
* Researchers: “**1,000 teams. 10,000 participants. 1 life-changing competition.**”
* Influencers: “**Come for the boba. Stay for the best friends.**”

**OTHER**

1. I believe that a comprehensive review of the entire year is in order for summer retreat. Two deliverables I would like to see: a short-term roadmap for the year with performance indicators for each conference (around 5-7); a long-term 5-year plan from 2020 to 2025 with 5 large goals at the end. Here’s a sample schedule:

**Day 1: Yearly review**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **10:00 – 11:00** | HAUSCR history by China team |
| **11:00 – 12:00** | Yearly review by HAUSCR board, walkthrough/reminder of conferences/what we accomplished this year, highlights |
| **12:00 – 12:45** | Lunch, informal bonding |
| **12:45 – 14:45** | Conference rotations (H/XWeek, HSYLC), 1 hour on each conference |
| **14:45 – 15:00** | Transition back to large group, Board shares notes |
| **15:00 – 16:00** | Moderated large group, sharing reflections, successes/failures, agreeing on performance indicators for each conference |

**Day 2: The Big Picture**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **10:00 – 10:30** | Morning expectation setting, bigger picture/behind the scenes introduction |
| **10:30 – 12:30** | Conference rotations (Dean’s List, CTB), 1 hour on each conference |
| **12:30 – 13:15** | Lunch, informal bonding |
| **13:15 – 15:15** | Long-term rotations (aim: generate a 5 year plan), 30 min rotations with Board small groups |
| **15:15 – 15:30** | Transition back to large group, Board shares notes |
| **15:30 - whenever** | Moderated large group, sharing reflections, successes/failures, agreeing on long-term goals/takeaways |

And then afterwards we can watch the annual slideshow!

1. I have drastically cut back on other commitments in the upcoming school year. I have already informed my academic dean that I am taking only 3 classes this upcoming semester and have temporarily paused my other main commitment, which is HCCG. I anticipate having only 3 classes, HAUSCR, summer internship recruitment, and music-related ad hoc engagements to worry about in this upcoming year.
2. I am interested in Director of Finance or Director of Technology if not selected. Other positions may also be acceptable.