Using New Technology for Targeted Communication Statewide
Final Report

Faculty and staff in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities face an overwhelming amount of communication each day. We awaken to dozens of email messages from students or colleagues, have several memos waiting in our mailbox and when we reach the office have voicemail messages waiting for our attention. And there is always the colleague or student waiting to speak with us before we turn on our computer.

We are expected to receive and act on important information—whether from the Office of the Chancellor, student correspondence, or a colleague down the hall. These communication activities are centered around two main purposes:

> To disseminate information, such as announcements, conference invitations, and policy implementation;
> To deliberate about policies and procedures, expressing our opinions through media channels;

While striving for effectiveness and efficiency we filter and file our email, read RSS feeds, and manage paperwork and appointments with precision and clarity; however, messages remain unanswered in our email boxes, memos are filed or disposed of before being read, and stacks of paperwork consume our offices. When we fail to attend to messages or to quickly retrieve messages in our environment, we miss valuable opportunities to stay informed on important campus policy decisions, best practices, and information that will aid in our decision making processes and planning.

We are also now confronted with new forms of communication each day. In particular, we are increasingly using synchronous forms of communication. But, we do not have clear standards for these technologies and are not using them consistently, even on the same campus. Underlying the challenges facing communication today is a need to develop clear policies for using communication technologies and a need to train System personnel in using communication technology.

Team Charge

To address these challenges, a Luoma Leadership Academy project working group was assigned to answer the following questions:
- How can communications with various constituencies be more effective, reach people where they are, and get read?
- Inventory and assess currently used communication tools and strategies.
- Find out which audiences are using what and how they are using it.
- Make recommendations as to how communication can be quickly and effectively targeted to local as well as statewide faculty, staff, administrators, and interest/affiliate groups.
- Answer this question: What modes, tools channels, and processes are most effective, and how should they be used?

Appendix A contains information on the project sponsors and working group participants.

Methodology

We conducted a survey of all Minnesota State College and University (MnSCU) college and university Chief Information Officers (CIOs). The survey helped us gain an understanding of what communication methods are currently in place at colleges and universities and which communication methods are the most effective. We asked CIOs to complete the survey by focusing on communication methods with staff and faculty. We chose to exclude students from our analysis. Appendix B contains a copy of the questions asked of college and university CIOs. Appendix C contains the specific results from the survey of CIOs.

In addition, we completed research on what higher education systems are doing regarding internal communication.

Project Conclusion

Our survey and a review of internal communication policies of selected colleges and universities across the country revealed a lack of consistency in how information is communicated on campuses and across the system; we found that there appear to be few official policies for official communication. We also found that new and efficient technologies for communication are underutilized. We recommend that the System develop a strategic plan for internal communication.

Recommended Outline for System Strategic Plan on Internal Communications

The following section outlines the major communication functions, needs, barriers, and recommendations that could serve to guide a system-wide strategic planning process for internal communication. The major themes from the survey have been incorporated into the development of the outline below.

1. **Develop system-wide policies for internal communication.**

   Need
   > There is a lack of consistency in how information is communicated across campuses and throughout the System. While it appears that email is used most frequently—and many believe effectively—it is not used for all communication. With inconsistency comes difficulty in knowing which information is important and how to regularly and systematically access that information. Ultimately if there is no policy for how communication occurs, it is difficult to hold people accountable for that communication.
   > There are not clear policies at the system level or at most institutions about the official use of email, Web or paper communications. There is a need for official statements on how communications should be accessed by System personnel as well as the public.
   > There are also no clear policies about message archiving. It is likely that resources are used inefficiently because there are not consistent ways of archiving

messages. For instance, people will fill email servers with messages that could be stored on a central server that all can access.

Barriers to Effectiveness
There are many ways of communicating across the System and a lack of consistency from campus to campus and within the Office of the Chancellor. Individual practices and abilities as well as institutional cultures have created disparate methods for communication.
Budget constraints have forced less than optimal ways of communication (for instance, choosing the least expensive communication technology instead of the most useful).
People are overwhelmed with communication and the sheer amount of System-wide communication causes information overload.

Outcomes
The development of policy statements for System-wide communications would be an outcome for this goal.
A subsequent outcome would be that behaviors would change and more effective communication would occur.

Metrics
Effectiveness could be measured by compliance with communication policies and satisfaction surveys of System personnel with communication practices.

Tools Used:
MnSCU task force that will disseminate information about new internal communication system and policies.
OOC memo to each college and university that outlines policies for internal communications

Potential Task Force Recommendations
Individual campuses should appoint work groups that will create implementation methods for the internal communication policies for their campus and develop a timeline for implementation.

2. **Develop more efficient and streamlined ways of communicating information.**

Need
One of the goals of System communications is to make people aware of important system information requiring action. For instance, communicating new policies and procedures requires that all affected by those actions know of their implementation. Frequently personnel, including new personnel aren't aware of System actions.
In addition, it is important to make people aware of training, grant opportunities, conferences, and other items of interest. People who are subscribed to the right listservs learn about these events, but clearly not everyone who may need the information receives it.

Barriers to Effectiveness:

    A key reason for this problem is information overload: People delete emails without reading them or cannot effectively file email messages for later use. Staffing changes are not always communicated broadly, so the right people aren't always informed of important information that relates to them.

    There are varying preferences for employees to receive information—some prefer memos, some email, some use social networking tools. As a result, there is no "one size fits all" for communicating information.

    MnSCU does not have a common e-mail system, so messages aren't coordinated in ways that would promote easy directory access, for instance.

Outcomes:

    We would see more timely responses to information and more people would be aware of information.

Metrics:

    Improved satisfaction with MnSCU communication and perhaps greater compliance with policies and more attendance at System events and activities.

Potential Tools that could be Used:

    Facebook
    Listservs
    MnSpace
    MnSCU website
    RSS Streams

Potential Task Force Recommendations

    Campuses should develop user-based emails that can be included in System listservs (such as cao@institution.edu). The institution would be responsible for directing that email address to the appropriate campus official(s).

    System should create listservs that pull members from HR databases that include common naming conventions.

    Multiple methods of communication should be used, including memos for important information, email and RSS feeds. Or, if a policy is created that specifies one method of communication, all should use that method.

    OOC divisions that communicate with campuses should create archives of messages for later reference and communicate how those messages are archived. The OOC and campus groups should identify timelines for implementation of this action.

3. **Develop effective methods of using technology to facilitate policy discussion and communication.**

Need

Communication technology can be used to facilitate discussion of stakeholders of policies being discussed without necessarily having face to face meetings. These methods are available, through means such as the academic program approval listserv, but given previous concerns, it is not clear if all know about or participate in these discussions.

Communicate the agendas, minutes, and reports of various decision-making bodies within the System, with clear archives for locating past communications.

Barriers to Effectiveness

Over half of MnSCU colleges and universities do not have a formal communication policy.

Only four colleges and universities have a process to archive official communications sent to employees.

Previous areas of need are relevant here as well, since people are overwhelmed with information or do not have good personal methods of retrieving information.

Outcomes

Communicators would utilize common strategies to reach audience within MnSCU to enhance buy-in on important policies or initiatives.

Metrics

Increased awareness and participation;

Improved satisfaction with system-wide communications.

Tools Used

Email

Listservs

Web

Printed memos

Social networking technology

Potential Task Force Recommendations

Individual campuses should appoint work teams to develop a plan for a formal communication policy. The plan needs to include official methods for communicating and a process for archiving communications.

Develop a timeline for implementation.

4. **Develop methods for conducting synchronous communication.**

Need

Consistent use of affordable and easy-to-use technology could allow MnSCU employees from around the state to hold "virtual" meetings rather than gather

people in a single physical location. This would save on travel costs and give more time for work in the office, instead of driving.

Must be able to include individual users in offices as well as multiple users in conference or classroom.

There is potential for classroom use as well. As more and more instruction is taking place online, having the right tools for synchronous online communication would benefit a larger population and help achieve System goals.

Barriers to effectiveness

Tools are needed both for teaching and learning as well as for MnSCU operations and a single system may not work for both.

Systems can be complex and aren't used optimally without specialized training.

Systems tend to be expensive and don't necessarily interoperate, which ends up costing more.

Campuses may choose different technologies, which makes it difficult to communicate from campus to campus and with the Office of the Chancellor.

Outcomes

Identify and implement a system or systems that allow individuals and groups that are separated by distances to participate in meetings and work sessions

The chosen system or systems must be cost effective.

Metrics

Usage of the system(s) could be measured, with targets set.

User satisfaction with systems could be surveyed.

Cost savings could be identified for online meetings.

Tools Used

ITV (Interactive Television)

WebEx

Adobe Connect

Cisco Telepresence (just beginning pilot implementations)

Potential Task Force Recommendations

MnSCU should continue the use of WebEx and ITV in the near term.

MnSCU should review other technologies to compare functionality and cost.

5. Provide System-wide training opportunities for using communication technologies.

Need

A great part of the problem is that new technologies have surpassed the typical user's ability to keep up with the advances. Greater efficiencies could be achieved if System employees knew how to use functions associated with email clients, web browsers, and calendar tools.

By learning "best practices," email and other technology could be used more effectively. For instance, if people knew how to effectively write email messages, they would be more likely to be read and acted upon.

Barriers to effectiveness
Many different technologies are used, so there is no standardization.
Users do not take full advantage of the technology they use.
There are not uniform training programs in place and people don't take the time to learn how to use new technology.

Outcomes
Personnel would have greater satisfaction with technology.
There would be increased effectiveness of communication.

Metrics
Improved skills could be measured.
Increased knowledge of communication technology could be assessed with further training needs identified.

Tools Used
D2L for training modules

Potential Task Force Recommendations
OOC should develop training modules that could be used throughout the System.

Communication Retrieval, Disclosure and Retention

Since we work in a public setting all data regardless of media must follow state statutory requirements regarding disclosure and retention. While not directly related to the topic at hand, these statutory requirements should be kept in mind when making decisions on communication:

- Minnesota Statute 13.02, subd. 7 defines government data as: "all data collected, created, received, maintained or disseminated by any government entity regardless of its physical form, storage media or conditions of use."

- Minnesota Statute 13.01 on government data, states in subdivision 3 that:

  this chapter regulates the collection, creation, storage, maintenance, dissemination, and access to government data in government entities. It establishes a presumption that government data are public and are accessible by the public for both inspection and copying unless there is federal law, a state statute, or a temporary classification of data that provides that certain data are not public.

The Minnesota Historical Society created a document titled Preserving and Disposing of Government Records in May 2008, the document can be found at:

http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/docs_pdfs/PandD_may2008.pdf. If college and university staff have additional questions they should consult the Office of General Counsel on specific questions related to data retention and disclosure.

Research on Other College and University Internal Communication Practices

As we researched internal communication practices across the nation, we found a common theme in that colleges and universities are addressing and assessing strategic internal communications at their institutions. They are uncovering processes to assist in the overall success of internal communications on campus. Higher education surveys on communication have become more prevalent as institutions try to uncover trends and needs. Communication plans are emerging due to this conscious effort to improve internal communication and have produced some very detailed recommendations that institutions are implementing. An example close to home, the University of Minnesota developed recommendations and best practices for the implementation of an internal communication plan within the last year.

Appendix D provides reference information on many of the resources we reviewed.

Recommended Next Steps:

- Distribute "Using New Technology for Targeted Communication Statewide" Final Report to Vice Chancellors.

- Assemble a cross functional group of college and university leaders to coordinate strategic plan for internal communication.

- Develop and implement timeframe to continuously monitor and revise communication needs via annual survey and best practices research.

- Complete integration of StarID program.

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Appendix A
Project Participants

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Executive Sponsors:

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Team Advisors:

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Appendix B
Employee Communication Survey completed by college and university CIOs

1. Contact Information

   Name
   Institution
   Email Address
   Phone Number

2. Does your institution have a formal policy on how to communicate with employees?

   Yes
   No

3. Please take a look at the following list of communications modes. Please tell us how frequently each of the following is used by employees at your institution.

   Email
   Email-ListServ
   Email-links to content
   Email-attached newsletter
   Online Collaboration-SharePoint or similar
   Broadcast Voicemail
   RSS feeds of campus information
   Printed Newsletter
   Printed Memo
   D2L or Moodle (in use for communication not training)
   Employee Portal
   Employee Intranet
   Blogs-Internal Only
   Blogs
   Wikis
   Facebook
   MySpace
   MnSpace
   Twitter
   WebEX
   Adobe Connect
   Skype

4. Please take a look at the following list of communications modes. Please tell us how effective each is used at your institution.

    Email
    Email-ListServ
    Email-links to content
    Email-attached newsletter
    Online Collaboration-SharePoint or similar
    Broadcast Voicemail
    RSS feeds of campus information
    Printed Newsletter
    Printed Memo
    D2L or Moodle (in use for communication not training)
    Employee Portal
    Employee Intranet
    Blogs-Internal Only
    Blogs
    Wikis
    Facebook
    MySpace
    MnSpace
    Twitter
    WebEX
    Adobe Connect
    Skype

5. Does your institution have an archive of official messages sent to employees?

    Yes
    No

6. Does your institution use role based emails such as: president@institution.edu, financialaid@institution.edu, etc?

    Yes
    No

7. Have you collected any data on the effectiveness of communication at your institution that you would share with us?

8. Please share any best practices or good ideas you have in the area of effective communication.

A total of 29 CIOs from MnSCU colleges and universities completed the survey in late calendar year 2009. The responses are distributed according to the table that follows.

Institution Type	Number
State University	6
College	22
Unknown	1

Does your institution have a formal policy on how to communicate with employees?

Response	Number
Yes	14
No	15

Please take a look at the following list of communications modes. Please tell us how frequently each of the following is used by employees at your institution. Scores are reported as means, with 1 low and 5 high.

Answer Options	Rating Average
Email	4.79
Email-links to content	3.45
Email-ListServ	3.29
Employee Intranet	2.90
Email-attached newsletter	2.86
Printed Memo	2.69
WebEx	2.59
Facebook	2.39
Printed Newsletter	2.34
Adobe Connect	2.18
Employee Portal	2.00
Twitter	1.96
Online Collaboration-SharePoint or similar	1.93
Blogs	1.89
RSS feeds of campus information	1.86
D2L or Moodle (in use for communication not training)	1.86
Skype	1.83
Wikis	1.71
Broadcast Voicemail	1.69
MySpace	1.68
MnSpace	1.68
Blogs-Internal Only	1.46

Please take a look at the following list of communications modes. Please tell us how effective each is used at your institution. Scores are reported as means, with 1 low and 5 high.

Answer Options	Rating Average
Email	4.24
Email-links to content	3.69
Email-ListServ	3.43
WebEx	3.34
Printed Memo	3.17
Email-attached newsletter	3.00
Printed Newsletter	2.86
Employee Intranet	2.72
Facebook	2.48
Adobe Connect	2.43
Broadcast Voicemail	2.25
Skype	2.17
Online Collaboration-SharePoint or similar	2.14
Blogs	2.04
Employee Portal	2.00
MnSpace	1.96
Twitter	1.89
D2L or Moodle (in use for communication not training)	1.86
RSS feeds of campus information	1.85
Wikis	1.82
Blogs-Internal Only	1.59
MySpace	1.56

Does your institution have an archive of official messages sent to employees?

Response	Number
Yes	4
No	24
No Response	1

Does your institution use role based emails such as: president@institution.edu, financialaid@institution.edu, etc?

Response	Number
Yes	22
No	6
No Response	1

Questions for Further Discussion

➢ What are the advantages of using Really Simple Syndicate (RSS) and obstacles that inhibit its widespread use?
➢ Does a policy about an official form of communication result in more users reading their email messages?
➢ How feasible is using an employee portal on campuses?
➢ How can campuses make best use of a communication archive?
➢ How can the System maximize the use of role-based email addresses?
➢ With personnel changes—how do people get caught up on past messages if using role-based email?
➢ Given the lack of understanding of campus communication, how can the System do more to develop employees in use of effective communication messages?
➢ Should the campus or the Office of the Chancellor decide who the appropriate individuals are to receive messages at the campus?
➢ What should people do with the communication when they receive it on the campus? Do they know they should send this out to others? Do they know who else on campus has received the same message? Mass messages mean that people feel like they are being "spammed".

- ➢ Receivers of messages are not necessarily the "doers." Complexity of system means that communication doesn't get rolled to the right person.
- ➢ Clearly define what sort of information is coming through in this message? CFO Listserv, for instance, doesn't indicate who should handle the message. Maybe need to add others to the listserv. Some listservs are so big that people don't necessarily share as well. Listservs should have mission statements.
- ➢ Who does and who does not have a listserv?
- ➢ Messages should clearly identify purpose: FYI, Response Required, and Urgent Response Required.

Appendix D
List of Additional Resources

Higher Education
Bowie State University - October 2006 Communication Task Force report:
http://www.bowiestate.edu/about/message/reports/comm_task_force/
http://www.bowiestate.edu/about/message/reports/comm_task_force/
Heartland Community College - AQIP Campus Communication Project website:
http://www.heartland.edu/aqip/campusCommunication.jsp
http://www.heartland.edu/aqip/campusCommunication.jsp
Miami University Middletown - Communication Plan:
http://www.mid.muohio.edu/publications/CommunicationPlan.pdf
http://www.mid.muohio.edu/publications/CommunicationPlan.pdf
University of Wisconsin Stout - June 18, 2009 Communication Plan:
http://www3.uwstout.edu/asls/upload/20092010ASLSCommunicationPlan.pdf
http://www3.uwstout.edu/asls/upload/20092010ASLSCommunicationPlan.pdf
    Integrated Marketing and Communication website: http://www.uwosh.edu/imc
University of Wisconsin Superior - July 2006 Policy on e-mail and other electronic communications:
http://www.uwsuper.edu/iits/policies/emailpolicy.cfm
http://www.uwsuper.edu/iits/policies/emailpolicy.cfm
    Communications methods:
     http://www.uwsuper.edu/iits/policies/upload/Communication_methods.pdf
    http://www.uwsuper.edu/iits/policies/upload/Communication_methods.pdf
Brookdale Community College - March 2006 Internal Communications Survey:
http://ux.brookdalecc.edu/governance/Governance%20Gazette%20Page_files/2005-
2006/ColLifeSurv.pdf
College of the North Atlantic - April 2002 Internal Communication:
http://www.cna.nl.ca/employees/PD/pdf/InternalCommunications.pdf
    University of Minnesota - August 2009 Reinventing Internal Communication Phase 1 Final
    Recommendations: http://www1.umn.edu/urelate/pdf/phase_one_details.pdf
    http://www1.umn.edu/urelate/pdf/phase_one_details.pdf

Tools
Star Tribune article - November 2009 Many computer users hesitate to ride the wave:
http://www.startribune.com/business/69436017.html?elr=KArksDyycyUtyycyUiD3aPc:_Yyc:aU
U
http://www.startribune.com/business/69436017.html?elr=KArksDyycyUtyycyUiD3aPc:_Yyc:aU
U

Internal Communication Strategies
    The Neglected Strategic Element by Robert Bacal
    http://performance-appraisals.org/Bacalsappraisalarticles/articles/comstrat.htm

Communicating Metrics

Measuring Internal Communication Effectiveness
http://www.employee-communication.com.au/util/doc.jsp?i=133&f=blob2&c=5
Is measurement measuring up?
http://www.internalcommshub.com/open/measuring/casestudies/measuringup.shtml

Presidents Who Blog

Northland College: http://northlandpresident.wordpress.com
Normandale Community College: http://newsroom.normandale.edu/president