



beyond expectations

University Communications Strategic Plan



Indiana University of Pennsylvania

I. Purpose

"The newest computer can merely compound, at speed, the oldest problem in the relations between human beings, and in the end the communicator will be confronted with the old problem, of what to say and how to say it."

Edward R. Murrow

The purpose of this strategic communications plan is outlined in the identification of the following strategic goal:

- To effectively enhance awareness and understanding of events, policies, issues, and developments by members of the university community (employees and students)

This strategic plan will serve as the principal roadmap to ensure that the broad strategies and tactics herein are achieved. It should also be noted that this plan is intended to be a living, breathing document that can and will be altered as circumstances change and as strategies, goals, and objectives are achieved.

II. Target Audiences

"Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy, and mutual valuing."

Rollo May

The primary target audiences of this plan were identified by the senior leadership in order to effectively enhance awareness and understanding of events, policies, issues, and developments by members of the university community. These audiences are prioritized as follows:

1. Employees – All employees of the university community, including administration, staff, and faculty.
2. Students – All students enrolled in the university, including the Indiana campus and other regional IUP campuses.

III. Scope

"The more elaborate our means of communications, the less we communicate."

Joseph Priestley

This plan is limited in scope to the internal audiences identified in the previous section. It is also limited in scope in terms of its purpose, which is to effectively enhance awareness and understanding of events, policies, issues, and developments by members of the university community. This plan does not seek to address or replace procedures and protocols as they relate to crisis communications, as such structured and systematic communications channels and tools already exist in IUP's Emergency Communications Plan, which was drafted in June 2007.

IV. Strategies and Tactics

"The key to success is to get out into the store and listen to what the associates have to say. It's terribly important for everyone to get involved. Our best ideas come from clerks and stock boys."

Sam Walton

The following strategies and tactics are identified to meet the overarching strategic goal of this plan. They provide the framework necessary to implement this plan across the university community:

Strategy 1

Implement a system of communiqué that provides guidance to the university community in terms of understanding what internal messages are and how to deliver those messages across the community.

Tactics

- a. Develop a system of categorical communiqué for events, policies, issues, and developments. For the purposes of internal communication, the following levels of communiqué are defined:

Level 1 – Public Safety Announcements: Such announcements are of the highest priority and include but are not limited to urgent security (physical or computer) matters, such as bomb or terrorist threats and computer system threats, health and safety, natural disaster alerts, and impending inclement weather. They might also include campuswide policy changes that are time-critical, such as, in the case of students, a new immunization requirement or other legal requirement that must be met for continuing matriculation at the university or, in the case of employees, widespread power outages or a situation in which computing accounts are affected. The time sensitivity associated with these announcements often necessitates immediate communication.

Level 2 – University Policies & Policy Changes: Such announcements are of high importance, as they affect large numbers of the university community. Key here is the fact that immediate notification is most often not required (though in some instances it may be). Communication can occur in a planned manner, even if that means hours or days. Such announcements can include but aren't limited to PASSHE or university policies, regulations, and rules that need to be communicated. Such policy announcements are generally sent by senior administrators.

Level 3 – Events: Such announcements are generally those nonacademic and/or academic events that can be planned well in advance and include but are not limited to university functions such as presidential events, alumni events, award ceremonies, public forums, concerts, athletic events, symposiums, dinners, luncheons, and so forth (under certain circumstances immediate notification may be required).

Level 4 – News: Such announcements are generally related to news, past, present or future, that deals with events, policies, issues, and developments by or related to members of the university community. Such news includes but is not limited to university functions such as presidential events, alumni events, award ceremonies, public forums, concerts, athletic events, professional accomplishments, symposiums, dinners, luncheons, and so forth. Under certain circumstances immediate notification may be required and may be of high importance, such as announcements related to serious injury or death of university personnel or student(s). In such cases, these news items would be classified as Level 1 communiqué.

- b. Develop communication matrices to support the successful dissemination of the various communiqué to identified target audiences¹

¹ Matrices include procedures and protocols for structured and systematic communications. Please see the communications matrices labeled "Communication Plan Matrix – Employees" and "Communication Plan Matrix – Students" located in the Supporting Documentation section.

Strategy 2

Identify systematic vehicles of communication in order to provide reliable sources of communication so that internal constituencies are aware of events, policies, issues, and developments with the university community. Attaining this goal will provide members of the university community with the greatest opportunity to be actively engaged in the life of the university.

Tactics

- a. Develop a list of communication vehicles for dissemination of internal messages. Implement "required" and "optional" labels for identified systematic vehicles of communication.

Required Vehicles (as denoted on the attached communications matrices)

- *IUP Daily* (graphically enhanced HTML e-letter; target audience: employees)
- Central Calendar
- IUP web site (appropriate news section)
- Campus Events Digest (target audience: students)²
- All univ-e-mail lists (including univ-student-all).

Optional Vehicles³

Strategy 3

Enhance communications at and between all levels of the university community by informing and educating members about the plan. Critical to achieving success here is ensuring that all members of the university community understand that they are communicators on a daily basis.

Tactics

- a. Develop presentation to be delivered to key university leadership outlining the strategic communications plan
- b. Deliver presentation to divisions and colleges
- c. Develop communication plan to inform university community leadership of systematic vehicles identified and employed to

² **Note:** It is recommended that Student Affairs implement an HTML e-letter similar to that of *IUP Daily* on a weekly basis. A more graphically pleasing and organized (and designed) e-letter would not only enhance and highlight student news and events, but it would additionally serve to better market student life at IUP. Moving this information from the confines of an e-mail digest and pushing it to the web highlights news and events to prospective students, parents, alumni, employees, the community, and various other constituencies. It additionally provides content that increases our "Google-ability" so the world can find out how truly vibrant a community IUP is.

³ See the Supporting Documentation section for a representative list of optional communication vehicles.

enhance awareness and understanding of events, policies, issues, and developments by members of the university community

Strategy 4

Utilize quantitative/qualitative research methods to measure the effectiveness of the strategic communications plan, employing outcome goals to gauge effectiveness.

Tactics

- a. Develop survey mechanism to measure attitudes and opinions of employees regarding IUP's internal communications to determine their sources of information and their informational preferences and needs and fine tune the communications plan according to findings after a one-year period
- b. Develop set of outcome goals as a baseline for measuring effectiveness of internal communications

Outcome Goals:

1. Enhance the sense of community among employees and students by better informing the university community of events, policies, issues, and developments so that they are provided with an opportunity to be wholly engaged in university life
2. Break down feelings of we-they between IUP administration, staff, and faculty by developing and encouraging open communications principles
3. Enhance pride among university employees and staff by better informing them of noteworthy accomplishments on a regular basis
4. Increase awareness of events, policies, issues, and developments by the university community by deploying a modern media-style approach to internal communication
5. Enhance the understanding by community members of the critical role they play in contributing to the information flow as it relates to developing and sustaining messages related to events, policies, issues, and developments that impact the IUP community

University Relations Division Strategic Communications Plan: Supporting Documentation

- I. Guiding Principals
- II. Challenges to be Addressed
- III. Optional Communication Vehicles
- IV. Internal Communications Operational Rollout Plan
- V. Communication Matrices: Employees and Students

I. Guiding Principles

“There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication... Try the experiment of communicating, with fullness and accuracy, some experience to another, especially if it be somewhat complicated, and you will find your own attitude toward your experience changing.”

John Dewey

This strategic plan is based on communications principles that offer the greatest likelihood of success, given the nature and scope of the environment in which the university community operates and functions. These principles state that proactive communication is more effective than reactive, that open communication is more effective than closed communication, and that decentralized systems (coupled with centralized distribution methods) best complement open systems of communication. This plan employs systematic, centralized communication vehicles that allow the disparate divisions and units within the university community to contribute to the information flow.

A proactive vs. reactive approach provides the university community the opportunity to implement communications channels and tools that the university community can effectively rely upon to disseminate news related to events, issues, and developments that impact the members therein. Moreover, it ensures that events, issues, and developments are communicated in advance using formally identified channels of communication so that, first, members of the community can be actively engaged in the life of the university, and second, they understand the formal structure identified to communicate.

Layering an open communications approach on top of this provides a means for the disparate divisions and units within the university community to contribute to the information flow. A fundamental characteristic of successful communication suggests that information needs to be shared throughout an organization. An open system will allow information to be shared top-down, laterally, and bottom-up. Such a system necessitates that members of the university understand that each plays a role in disseminating events, policies, issues, and developments that affect others in the university community.

A decentralized communications system best complements open communications. This is attributable to the fact that the best source of information is likely the individuals that compose the greater university community, whether that person is a senior or midlevel administrator, faculty member, manager, or staff member. **To ensure that information is communicated, however, this plan provides a centralized vehicle that collects and disseminates the information** provided by the disparate divisions and units that compose the university community. It is of critical importance that members of the university community are equipped to successfully engage this centralized vehicle, and this plan addresses this point.

Of additional importance is the fact that this plan embraces technology as its primary means of delivering the university's messages. This makes sense for two reasons: 1) The various new media employed best allow for systematic delivery of communication characterized by a proactive, open, and decentralized model; and 2) This plan allows the university to leverage existing resources during a time of great economic uncertainty.

It should be noted that electronic communications do not equate to less effective communications, but rather modern media are more and more the accepted norm. No greater example of this can be seen than at Washington State University, where President Elson Floyd recently issued a directive stating that "all internal communications at Washington State University will be shifted from paper to electronic formats." He also said, "I view this as one important step toward saving money and resources. However, I certainly do not view it as an attempt to downplay the importance of robust internal communications. Never has it been more important for people around the university to be informed of and included in the decisions we are making."

Like Washington State University, IUP is presented with an opportunity to modernize its communication strategy, while at the same time saving valuable resources. (See more of Washington State University's initiative here: <http://president.wsu.edu/perspectives/021009.html>.)

II. Challenges to Be Addressed

"Communication works for those who work at it."

John Powell

The following is a list of identified challenges to implementing this strategic communications plan. This plan offers an opportunity to positively enhance communications to the end of meeting the identified strategic goal outlined in section one. It represents a different and more effective way of communicating to members of the university community. In short, it is a change in culture. These challenges can be overcome by leadership's continued support for bold initiatives that seek to effect positive change across campus.

Challenge 1 – Achieving buy-in. This plan represents, as suggested earlier, a change in culture, a different way of communicating. It requires complete support and buy-in from senior leadership.

Challenge 2 – Some identified channels of communication do not yet exist (e.g., An enhanced student e-letter), require further development (e.g., *IUP Daily* is currently being developed to meet the needs of this plan and will be completed within 4-6 weeks), or currently need revamping (e.g., univ-e-mail lists moderated and nonmoderated). To effectively meet the strategic goal of this plan, different ways of communicating have been proposed with the idea that successful communication can be achieved not by employing the current set of tools available to disseminate information but by employing a set of

tools and strategies that can best achieve the strategic goal identified herein. Leadership's support for such tools and strategies is critical.

Challenge 3 – Resources are scarce. Those responsible for allocating resources will need to refocus priorities to ensure that the resources required to implement this plan are available to meet and achieve the strategic goal, strategies, and tactics herein.

Challenge 4 – This plan's reliance on new media builds upon a previous directive identified by the president, which articulates that the web should be a priority for all divisions, units, colleges, and departments. Many of the required channels of systematic communication identified in this plan meet this directive.

Support for the plan sends a clear signal to all members of the university community that the university's web presence plays a primary role in how the university communicates, not only internally but to the world. Additionally, support of this plan allows electronic communications to further be leveraged with other strategic external groups who either visit the university on the web to find information or by developing targeted communications in the present (e.g., the alumni e-letter, *IUP Alumni Connections*) or that could be developed in the future such as an electronic form of *Parent Connections* or a subscribed-to community e-letter that promotes the university in terms of public outreach and community involvement. For this to occur, divisions, units, colleges, and departments must identify human resources that will be formally delegated with posting news and events for their particular area(s).

Such goals are achievable in the future only if a foundation is in place to support further development. This plan provides that foundation. This plan or any communications plan cannot be successful without personnel formally delegated with such responsibility.

III. Optional Communication Vehicles

This is not an exhaustive listing of optional communication vehicles. This representative list is provided in order to create awareness of the various vehicles beyond the required vehicles of communication that will allow various divisions, units, etc., to build an effective communications mix in order to expand and/or reinforce awareness of messages:

- *IUP Magazine*
- *IUP Reporter*
- *IUP Parent Connections*
- Letters
- Division, unit, college, department print newsletters
- Flyers
- Posters, banners, table tents, similar media
- WIUP TV
- Division, unit, college, department electronic newsletters

- Electronic boards, messaging and communication software
- Marquees
- Multimedia presentations
- Town Meetings
- Lunch-and-learn events
- Face-to-face small meetings
- Off site meetings, retreats, and events
- On-site events, speeches, training sessions
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Youtube
- Various other social media



Internal Communications Operational Rollout Plan

Issue	Action	Accountability	Delivery Date	Measurement
Events, policies, issues, and developments involving members of the university community are not consistently communicated	Effectively enhance dissemination of events, policies, issues, and developments by members of the university community (to employees and students) by developing strategic communications plan	Vice President of University Relations, AVP for Communications	Draft completed 2/28/09	Approval from the President
University community needs to be aware of the existence of the strategic communications plan	Share plan with the following groups: COT, President's Cabinet, Deans' Council, College Dept. Chairs, UR, Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, Admin & Finance, Northpointe, Punxsy, Graduate School	Vice President of University Relations, AVP for Communications	All groups by 8/1/09	All presentations delivered
Accountability system must be developed by key areas for strategic communications plan	Develop process/procedures for ensuring compliance with the required channels of communication, including delegation of posting various levels of communiqué to appropriate web site and central calendar	Vice Presidents, Deans	8/1/09	Accountability plans delivered to VP for UR
No centralized communication system is in place	Develop <i>IUP Daily</i> (electronic newsletter) and integrate push/pull strategies with IUP web and central calendar to put in place centralized communication vehicles	AVP for Communications, Director of Web Services	6/1/09	Fully functional electronic newsletter developed
Funding for delivery vehicle for <i>IUP Daily</i> must be procured.	Determine cost for delivery vehicle and procure funding	President, Vice President of University Relations, AVP for Communications	7/01/09	E-mail delivery system obtained
Plan must be formally launched	Develop launch plan and communicate to university community	Vice President of University Relations, AVP for Communications	7/01/09	Plan developed; action steps completed
	Official launch of communications plan, including moderated e-mail list and <i>IUP Daily</i>	Vice President of University Relations, AVP for Communications	9/01/09	Plan in action
Is this new communications strategy effective?	Develop quantitative/qualitative to show whether plan is effective in terms of achieving the goal stated herein. Adjust accordingly	Vice President of University Relations, AVP for Communications, VP for Student Affairs	7/01/10	Survey of internal target audiences,



Communication Plan Implementation Matrix – Employee

Purpose	Audience(s)	Timing Frequency	Protocol	Method Channel(s)	Accountability
Level 1 – Public Safety/Crisis Announcements	Employees	Immediate notification required	Extensively outlined in the “University Communications Plan”	Extensively outlined in the “University Communications Plan”	President’s Leadership Team
Level 2 – University Policies & Policy Changes	Employees	Immediate notification generally not required	Notification through methods outlined under the heading methods channels	Required: <i>IUP Daily</i> *; Central Calendar; appropriate website news section; univ- e-mail lists Optional: TBD	Leadership or designee responsible for communicating the administrative directive
Level 3 – Events	Employees	Immediate notification generally not required	Notification through methods outlined under the heading methods channels	Required: <i>IUP Daily</i> *; Central Calendar; appropriate website news section Optional: univ- e-mail lists; TBD	Division, unit, college, or department responsible for event
Level 4 – News	Employees	Immediate notification generally not required	Notification through methods outlined under the heading methods channels	Required: <i>IUP Daily</i> *; Central Calendar; appropriate website news section Optional: univ- e-mail lists; TBD	Division, unit, college, or department to which the news item relates

*Administrative Directives, News, and Events posted to the Central Calendar or appropriate division, unit, college, or department web site are automatically fed to *IUP Daily*.



Communication Plan Implementation Matrix – Students

Purpose	Audience	Timing Frequency	Protocol	Method Channel	Accountability
Level 1 – Public Safety/Crisis Announcements	Students	Immediate notification required	Extensively outlined in the "University Communications Plan"	Extensively outlined in the "University Communications Plan"	Vice President for Student Affairs or designee
Level 2 – Administrative Directives	Students	Immediate notification generally not required	Notification through methods outlined under the heading methods channels	Required: Univ-student-all e-mail list; and Campus Events Digest or replacement student e-letter; Central Calendar; appropriate website news section Optional: TBD by VP for Student Affairs or designee	Vice President for Student Affairs or designee
Level 3 – Events	Students	Immediate notification generally not required	Notification through methods outlined under the heading methods channels	Required: Univ-student-all e-mail list; and Campus Events Digest or replacement student e-letter; Central Calendar; appropriate website news section Optional: TBD by VP for Student Affairs or designee	Division, unit, college, department, or student group responsible for event
Level 4 – News	Students	Immediate notification generally not required	Notification through methods outlined under the heading methods channels	Required: Univ-student-all e-mail list; Campus Events Digest or replacement student e-letter; Central Calendar; appropriate website news section Optional: TBD by VP for Student Affairs or designee	Division, unit, college, department, or student group to which the news item relates