



**A REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT ON
Maintaining a High-Functioning
UTSC Communications
Framework and Promoting
Outreach in the University
Community**



Presented by
The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council
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Approved by The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council
and sent forward to the President

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Committee on Communications

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Executive Summary

At the August 2012 annual UT Staff Council retreat, during which newly elected Staff Council representatives decide on topics of interest and priorities for the following year, an annual Communications Committee was formed. The committee prioritized several goals:

- strengthening internal communication within Staff Council;
- enhancing communication from Staff Council representatives to their constituents;
- reviewing and enhancing Staff Council's social media profile;
- highlighting the achievements and accomplishments of UT staff members; and
- extending awareness of Staff Council via outreach efforts.

Because of the annual turnover among Staff Council representatives and officers, it became apparent that a permanent committee dedicated to continuity and maintenance of institutional knowledge was critical, so the Communications Committee made an interim goal of creating a standing committee. To that end, the committee proposed modifications to Staff Council bylaws in 2013 to establish a standing committee dedicated to improved communication. Staff Council officially voted and unanimously approved the creation of a standing committee.

Since becoming a permanent committee last year, the Communications Committee has continued to make progress on its highest priority from the previous year – establishing a systematic method of maintaining existing avenues of communication within Staff Council. Having begun to address this goal, the committee was also able to begin engaging in outreach and strengthening awareness of staff contributions and Staff Council on campus.

More specifically, the Communications Committee accomplished the following:

1. Maintained a virtual committee handbook to serve as an archive of committee institutional knowledge from year to year.
2. Drafted summaries of monthly Staff Council meetings to distribute to representatives, facilitating dissemination of information about Staff Council from representatives.
3. Created an informational flier highlighting Staff Council accomplishments that can be posted across campus.
4. Beta tested and utilized a new group email system to communicate information to representatives.
5. Established a blog to serve as an interim website until Staff Council can create a new university website, in an effort to better communicate information about Staff Council and generate interest in the organization.
6. Established Twitter and Facebook sites to raise the profile of Staff Council via social media.
7. Contacted staff-related organizations on campus about speaking at their next meeting with the aim of strengthening awareness of Staff Council and how the organization supports staff.

Communications Committee Handbook

To ensure continuity, the committee maintains a Communications Committee Handbook. This resource is a virtual document, internal to the Communications Committee. It includes basic contact information for various modes and means of communication and allows future Councils to focus on important projects. The handbook incorporates the Communications Committee mission statement, a list of current members with contact information, essential tasks to perform every year, instructions for creating the monthly meeting summary, and ideas for future outreach projects.

Meeting Summaries

The Communications Committee produces a summary of each Staff Council monthly meeting to disseminate among the representatives, who will be encouraged to forward it on to their constituents. Staff members are more likely to read messages from their colleagues than they are institutional emails, and summaries will aid those representatives who find their time constrained.

Flier

The Communications Committee created a flier that identifies significant Staff Council accomplishments and includes organizational contact information. Members of the Communications Committee distributed this flier to Staff Council representatives and building managers to send to and post in their districts as a way to spread information about Staff Council beyond the monthly summaries and to encourage staff to engage with issues and events on campus that pertain to them.

Regroup

This past year, the university rolled out a new group email system, Regroup. The Communications Committee attended Regroup meetings and learned how to use the technology. Members of the Communications Committee use this new system to send out meeting summaries. They also drafted instructions for Staff Council representatives that describe how to use Regroup to communicate with their districts.

Blog

Communication is largely virtual these days, and Staff Council's current web support is being moved to other university initiatives. Human Resources, which had handled much of Staff Council's website maintenance for years, had fewer resources to devote to the Staff Council web page. Additionally, the university now sponsors several different paths to maintaining an official online presence that do not require much technical expertise, including managed Drupal and UT blog service.

In an attempt to allow Staff Council to manage its own content on the web in an immediate and timely manner, the Communications Committee explored UT blog service as a way to disseminate information about upcoming meetings and events. The committee created a blog, which is intended to serve as a placeholder website for Staff Council until it is possible to create a new university website.

Social Media

Staff Council improved its social media presence. The Communications Committee created a Twitter account and live tweets the monthly Staff Council meetings. The account, @UTStaffCouncil, has approximately 800 followers. The committee also established a Facebook page in December and updates it with timely posts. The number of viewers reached has steadily increased since the page's inception.

Outreach

The Communications Committee contacted staff or staff-related organizations on campus via email, with a letter introducing Staff Council and informing them that a member of Staff Council would be happy to speak at their next meeting. The Committee received a positive response, with several organizations requesting presentations. Presentations to these organizations began in the spring, and we to the committee plans to continue presentations this summer.

Conclusion

The Communications Committee aims to continue working to solidify communication within Staff Council by submitting meeting summaries to representatives every month, creating helpful visuals, contributing to the blog, as well as communicating and working with other committees to share information and keep representatives updated on current events. The Communications Committee will also strengthen its reach beyond Staff Council by engaging in outreach efforts designed to raise understanding of the importance and valuable contributions of staff and Staff Council on campus and beyond, collaborating with other campus organizations to further these goals when appropriate.