

Internal Communications Design Principles

Organizational Excellence Work Group

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Executive Summary

Background:

Organizational Excellence began a review of U.Va.'s internal communications practices in fall 2014. The project aligns with and advances the Cornerstone Strategic Plan and other University priorities and initiatives. An effective internal communication strategy results in higher levels of employee engagement and retention, which in turn results in enhanced organizational effectiveness and innovation. Further, improvements to internal communications have the potential to make a positive impact on the day-to-day quality of work and professional experiences of the University community.

Finally, the University's success in achieving our goals depends, in part, on our ability to communicate value to both our public and internal stakeholders. It is commonly acknowledged that some of the best ambassadors for an organization are its employees.

The Internal Communication Working Group can think of no better place to breathe life into the aspirational priorities of the University than with the implementation of a robust internal communication strategy. Our faculty and staff deserve to know about the many changes taking place here, as well as have an avenue to celebrate the successes around Grounds—personal, pedagogical, programmatic—created by their colleagues. Investing in channels to share information with—and listen to—our faculty and staff provides us all a better path to ownership in the success of the University.

Findings:

The work group undertook both a current state analysis and a review of best practices to inform its recommendations. Current state analysis encompassed a survey of 700 randomly selected faculty and staff (garnering a 30% response rate), interviews with employees who do not have traditional “desk jobs,” and two focus groups of content providers from 16 areas across Grounds. Best practice benchmarking included conversations with nine higher education institutions, the Medical Center and four private sector businesses.

Key findings showed that employee needs and content provider challenges aligned around the need for simpler, shorter messaging, available quickly and in one place, with opportunities for giving feedback. Employees' qualitative comments highlighted the need for a “channel” just for employees, while content providers lamented the loss of UVA Today for internal news. Providers also pointed out the need for better data to measure communications success and difficulty coordinating messages across Grounds.

Successful structures in other higher education institutions and in private businesses included alignment with an overall communications strategy, tools for metrics and assessment, a consistent channel or vehicle for employee news, and at least one dedicated staff member.

Recommendations:

These findings lead the working group to recommend that the University establish a centralized Internal Communications function to develop a communications strategy that responds to the needs of the internal community and content providers and supports the Cornerstone Plan and the University branding initiative. This function would oversee an internal communications portfolio including, but not confined to, managing mass emails, creating a single location or distribution for employee news, and promoting in-person communications and feedback opportunities.

I. Introduction and Background

Organizational Excellence initiated a review of U.Va.'s internal communications practices in fall 2014. The University's administration does not have a coordinated institutional approach to communicate with faculty and staff about strategic priorities or operations-related information. Information is distributed by schools and units, and the channels, quality, and accuracy of messages varies. This results in missed opportunities, and uncoordinated and frequently inefficient or ineffective processes at work.

An effective internal communication strategy results in higher levels of employee engagement and retention, enhanced organizational effectiveness, and innovation. For example, in late 2013, Gallup polled nearly 3,500 managers on best practices for creating high-performance cultures. Their findings include:

Gallup's analysis shows that companies with the highest levels of employee engagement share a common mission and purpose, from the top of the business to the bottom. Their leaders are accessible and visible, and they:

- inspire employees with consistent and regular communication -- both company-wide and individually -- about the organization's future
- connect today's work, initiatives, and changes with where the business is heading
- provide employees with a unified message that bolsters the company's mission, and they show employees how to "live" that mission
- inspire trust and respect throughout the organization
- involve all employees in developing strategy, especially field experts and high-potential and future leaders

The real vision of the company begins to crystallize only after leaders create organization-wide buy-in from and engagement among employees.¹

Additionally, the University's success in achieving our goals depends, in part, on our ability to communicate value to both our public and internal stakeholders. It is commonly acknowledged that some of the best ambassadors for an organization are its employees. Edelman's Trust Barometer, a yearly study of 33,000 people in 27 markets around the world, shows that "employees are the most credible voices on multiple topics, including the company's work environment, integrity, innovation, and business practices," with a 'regular employee's' trust factor rising from 32% in 2009 to 52% in 2014.

These are just two examples among many that help make a case for dedicated employee engagement and internal communications programs, even in public sector non-profits like universities. At a time when U.Va. seeks to create a high-performance culture, solidify its brand, and expand its innovation, internal engagement is a critical component for success.

¹ Ehssan Abdallah and Ashish Ahluwalia, "The Keys to Building a High Performance Culture," *Gallup Business Journal*, 12 December 2013, <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/166208/keys-building-high-performance-culture.aspx>

II. Project Overview - Definition, Goals, and Outcomes

Guiding Principle: To help build the University community's shared sense of value, understanding, and pride in our workplace to strengthen our culture of excellence.

For this project internal communications is defined as communications to, from, and across Academic Division faculty and staff, including information related to initiatives, announcements, policy, procedure, process, and performance. Communications to students is out-of-scope for this project; however, this initiative addresses the coordination of faculty/staff communications that overlap with student communications.

Project Goals:

1. Define current state of internal communications (IC) at UVa
2. Research best practices for IC
3. Design and propose an effective IC model. Ownership, roles and responsibilities, communication guidelines, media choices, and a defined protocol for both pan-institutional and unit-level IC are to be addressed as part of the design, as well as two-way (feedback) communications methodologies.
4. Identify metrics for success

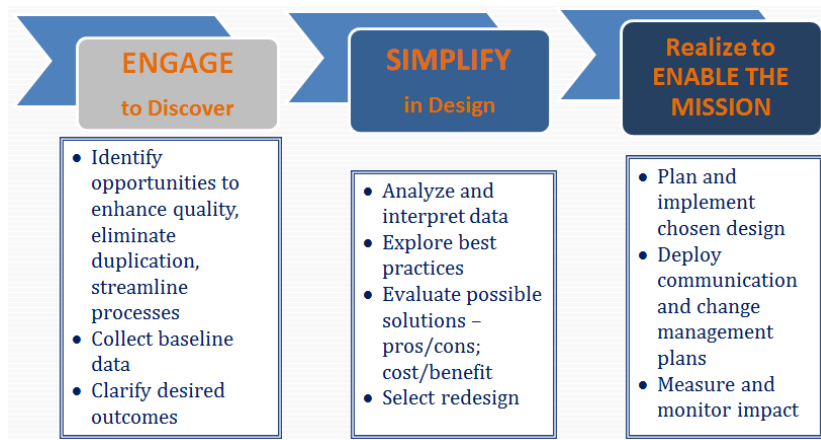
Desired Outcomes:

1. Enhanced employee understanding of institutional strategy and operations and clarity of goals and expectations
2. More engaged and committed faculty and staff, greater collaboration and teamwork
3. Open channels for two-way communication
4. More effective, productive work
Better positioning of faculty and staff to be ambassadors for University

III. Project Approach

This project follows the general Organizational Excellence methodology: Engage, Simplify, and Realize. The scope of the project was focused on discovery and design.

Implementation of recommendations will be a subsequent initiative. This initiative investigated the current state, researched best practices, and conducted a high-level gap analysis to propose design principles and elements for providing proactive, collaborative, consistent and clearly articulated internal communications across Grounds to Academic Division faculty and staff.



IV. Current State Analysis

Data were collected through multiple sources to gather a comprehensive perspective of the issue. These included reviewing previously collected data related to internal communications and conducting additional data collection.

A. Previously Collected Data

Faculty and staff feedback gathered through Organizational Excellence’s (OE) recent Benchmark Study of Administrative Services across all functions showed an opportunity to improve communications. In every function (Procurement, IT, HR, Finance, Student Services, Research Administration) a gap was reported between the importance and the effectiveness of internal communication (see Appendix A.).

The 2012 Faculty Survey and the 2011 Staff Survey also had specific questions related to communications. In the Faculty Survey, communication and transparency ranked as the third most important issue requiring attention. Communication and transparency was rated as important and of low performance and considered an area needing attention. In the 2011 Staff Survey, a third of Classified and University Staff were either Extremely Satisfied or Very Satisfied with communication at the University. However, the lowest rated statement on communications was “the existing communications within the University helps me do my job better”, with only 18.7% saying they “strongly agree.” Communication within UVa ranked as medium importance and medium performance (Appendices B and C).

B. Survey of Faculty and Staff

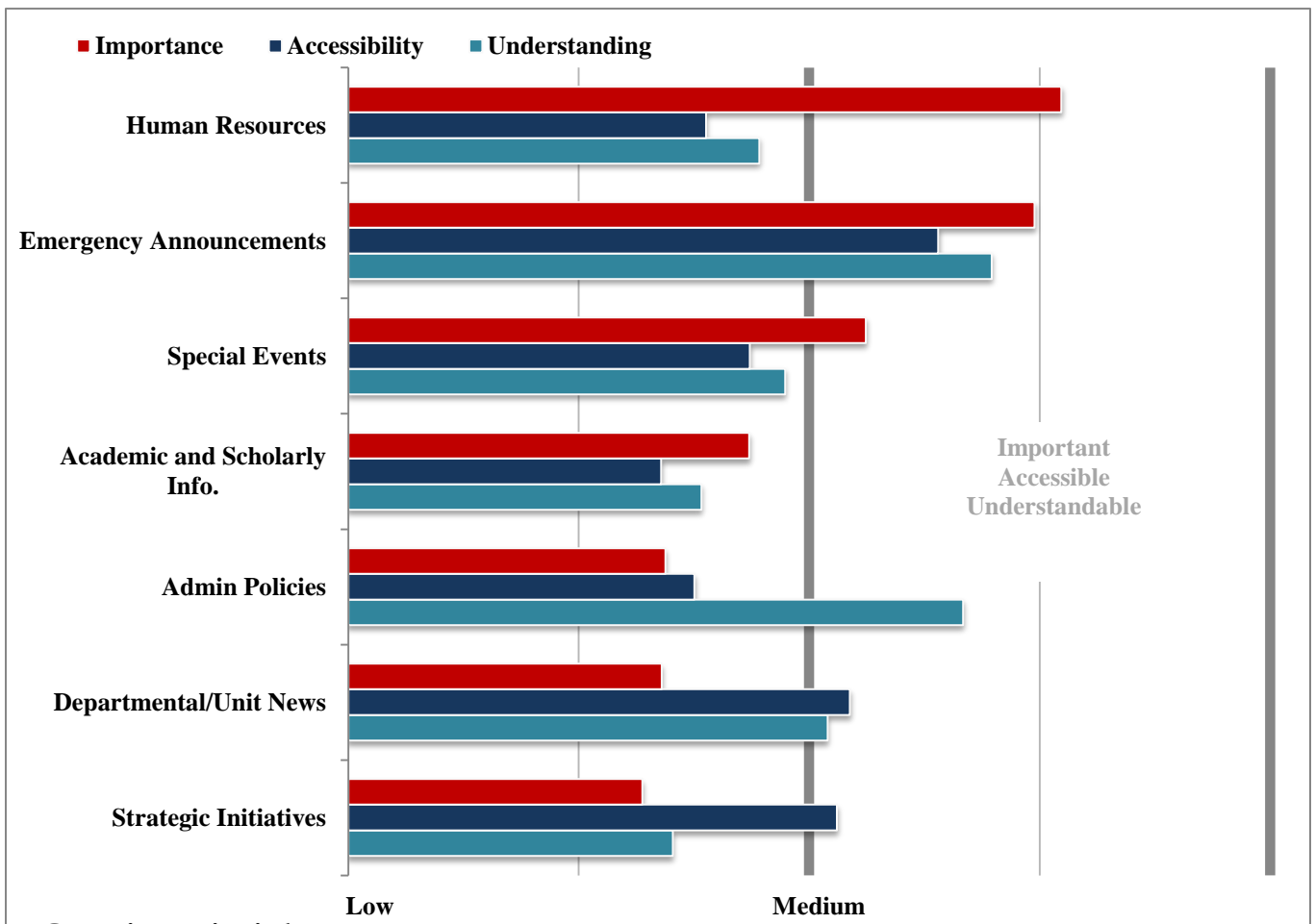
The purpose of this survey was to gain a better understanding of how faculty and staff currently use and experience communications at the University, as well as their preferences and priorities for improvement. The survey was sent to a representative sample of 703 (361 staff or administrative faculty, 342 faculty) and yielded a 29.6% response rate. Of those that responded, participants spent between 81% and 100% of their time in a traditional office environment at a desk (43.2%) and have been employed at UVa for 10-19 years (30.8%) or 20+ years (30.2%). Results were analyzed by population of

faculty and staff/administrative faculty. Overall results cited reflect a weighted response to ensure the groups were equally represented. In general, there were few differences in responses between the populations of faculty and staff.

Key Findings

- The primary ways faculty and staff receive information about the university: email (92%); UVA websites (38%); conversations with colleagues (29%); UVA Today (24%)
- Respondents, on average, agreed that, at U.Va. we communicate openly about issues that impact each other’s work and discuss issues and decisions to get better results.
- Respondents were asked to rate various types of information in regards to whether or not the information was important, easily accessible and understandable. The results for each type of information are available in Figure 1.
 - o Out of the three types of information that respondents rated important, only “Emergency Announcements” was also rated easily accessible and understandable.
 - o On average, respondents indicated that although Human Resources information and Special Events information is important, neither type of information is accessible nor understandable.

Figure 1: Importance, Accessibility & Understandability Ratings by Type of Information



Suggestions for Improvement: When asked to rank “The most important next step to improve IC?” the following three suggestions appeared most frequently for both faculty and staff: 1) Access to Information in Simpler, Shorter Messages, 2) Receiving Information More Quickly and 3) being able to See Information in One Place.

Next Step	Teaching & Research Faculty		Staff or Administrative Faculty	
	n	%	n	%
Access Info. in Simpler, Shorter Messages	37	60.7%	79	70.5%
Receive Info. More Quickly	33	54.1%	77	68.8%
See All Info. in One Place	32	52.5%	71	63.4%
Filter Info. According to My Preferences	28	45.9%	43	38.4%
Offer Feedback Quickly and Easily	26	42.6%	28	25.0%
Get Info. Visually	12	19.7%	21	18.8%
Hear More Info. in Person	15	24.6%	17	15.2%
Total	61	100%	112	100%

Respondents were asked an open-ended question, “If you could change one aspect about IC at UVa what would it be?” Of the 208 respondents, 89 (42.79%) provided qualitative feedback to this question. Content analysis by category revealed the majority of comments to be associated with the channel of communication (37.08%) and the quality of communication (21.35%). Sample quotes appear below by theme. Further examples of can be found in Appendix D.

Channel of Communication:

- 1) Would like to see an internal comms working group, composed of those across Grounds whose job it is to communicate and maintain information. Should involve Univ. Comms to ensure alignment with overall branding strategy.
- 2) Communication and information is decentralized. It would be helpful if there were a central place to locate information.
- 3) Have pertinent information in one location that is easily accessible.
- 4) The only regularly occurring message that I receive regarding news, events, etc. is UVA Today which is written for external audiences. Is there a similar daily digest intended for internal communication? University of Richmond has Spider Bytes which I found to be quite helpful in knowing what was happening around campus and it was very easy to contribute your department's events to the master list. It was a win/win as reader and contributor.
- 5) It would be helpful if changes were communicated more widely and employees could opt in to hear more if they needed that. There have been several instances when I definitely needed to know something new was coming in order to be able to plan ahead, train, and be ready, and I was totally left 'out of the loop' -- probably because somewhere along the way I was not classified or coded or otherwise put on some list, and because people who should have thought -- 'Who in our department uses this?' -- didn't think or communicate. This caused a lot of needless stress and hassle and impacted my ability to perform as well as

usual while I hurried to catch-up. Staff for University-wide functions should not assume that departmental staff will relay information to others on their own initiative.

Quality of Communication:

- 1) Have all material presented in a basic, but professional way. Make sure to go the extra mile in order to reach out to everyone with all information at UVA.
- 2) Need clear, precise information communicated effectively to all personnel
- 3) Consistency of the message communicated. For instance, during inclement weather this past year the messages about reporting to work were inconsistent, the left hand didn't seem to know what the right hand was doing, and communication was confusing. Everyone in our department was very confused. We were told clinic were open and they were not, or they were and we were told the opposite. Having the Medical Center policies vs the SOM policies is often daunting, i.e., SOM employees have one explanation, but does not always include all employees.

Two-Way Communication:

- 1) Communication to all faculty should be easier. Cross communication across departments and schools should be easier. Innovative cross-collaboration should be encouraged and remunerated more easily. Create one site where performances, lectures, social events, and community wide events are posted. We shouldn't have to get our information through Facebook to know what's happening. If there is a group of university community members making a symbolic walk--we should have one place to find that information. It should be searchable, and we should not have to resort to personal social media to find out what's going on here on grounds. MUCH more communication about the internal workings of administrative branches.

C. Content Provider Focus Groups

Two focus group sessions were conducted in October with a stratified sample of representatives across Grounds, who need to communicate either strategic, operational or both types of information to the University community. Attendees were from the following 16 areas:

- Internal Financial Model
- Strategic Planning
- Managerial Reporting Project
- Open Grounds
- Information Technology Services
- Emergency Preparedness
- Provost's Office
- EVP-COO's Office
- Staff Senate (Communications Officer)
- Faculty Senate (Liaison)
- Center for Leadership Excellence
- Business Operations
- Parking & Transportation
- VP for Research
- IM-Rec Sports
- Hoo's Well

All participants are responsible for some level of communications to faculty and/or staff. In the focus group sessions, attendees were asked to consider these questions: 'what works well?', 'what are your challenges?', and 'in an ideal world, what would internal communications look like?' The following common themes emerged from the sessions:

Table 2

What Works Well	Challenges
Technology: email, iContact, localized blogs, newsletters	Lack of resources and support for Web design and development, writing and editing, social media, graphic design
Approach: in person, having communications 'specialists', regular meetings	Current mass email has significant limitations
	Lack of analytics in tools prevent measurement of effectiveness
	Lack of ability to segment audiences, no access to affinity groups, no ability to contact people based on topical interest
	Lack of coordination between groups
	Communication methods are largely one way
	University email servers are not standardized, so messages are difficult to send and meetings are difficult to schedule.

An ideal world would include:

- Centralized communications office with resources for departments
- Multiple communication tools
- Authenticity and trust within the community
- Upgraded email platform available for all departments that includes data analytics, audience segmenting, better graphic options, mobile ready, ability to opt in or opt out for various types
- University intranet
- Implement analytics, including web analytics
- Templates for frequent communications
- Email message priority system so recipients know what they need to open and what can wait

In short, focus group attendees cited common challenges around lack of resources, lack of standardized communications tools, and lack of a prioritization framework. The groups aligned around the need for a **centralized communication service delivery model** and an **enhanced toolset**, including an **upgraded email platform**.

D. Non-office or Charlottesville-based Staff Focus Group

A small focus group of six employees, who do not have traditional desk jobs or not geographically located in Charlottesville, was conducted to supplement the faculty and staff survey. The group comprised two groundskeepers, two animal care workers, a bus driver and a staff member based in U.Va.'s SCPS location in Quantico.

The Quantico-based staff member experiences are different from the other five because she does have regular access to email and information, albeit with no access to Grounds.

Therefore, a fair amount of the communications she receives is irrelevant information based on her location.

The following observations are about the Charlottesville-based employees. While all these staff receive emails from U.Va., their ability to access those emails in a timely fashion varies. Several have no access to a computer during working hours. Other technology was similarly underused: none use Twitter, only half have a Facebook account. Texting was used only for personal correspondence with family. Their information comes to them solely through their supervisor. Staff meetings provide some larger context but are largely focused on their direct work unit. Some do not have staff meetings at all. Much of the information they do get is confusing or ill-explained, particularly news related to human resources. None attend University events other than occasional staff appreciation events. By and large all were unaware of large, institutional initiatives.

The group advocated for their colleagues without a great deal of computer skills or, in some cases, even a good grasp of English. All agreed that they would give feedback willingly and openly if it was solicited. Several cited their eagerness to improve work processes but that they were unsure “how far it would go.” None felt they needed to give feedback or suggestions anonymously.

E. Scan of Institutional Resources

Currently, the function of internal communications is highly distributed among the schools and units, with no one office or dedicated staff coordinating messages or overseeing infrastructure. Many schools and units have dedicated communicators who may handle both internal and external communications, whereas other areas simply have communications as an add-on assignment for a staff member with other responsibilities.

There are few institutionally supported tools available for internal communicators and a heavy reliance on single-subject email, leading to email saturation. The proprietary mass email system managed by ITS has seen significant technical improvement over the last year but does not offer metrics such as click-through and open rates, or features such as list management. There are at least six known email systems in use by several schools and units around Grounds, since contracts with outside vendors offer those services.

Further, there is no coordination of how frequently mass emails are sent and to which audiences. As a result, mass email users are often unaware that the system is being used to send critical information to smaller subsets of the employee population at the same time as large-scale, truly “mass” emails are sent.

A separate mass mail steering committee has been working for the past several years to better define and deliver on the email needs of U.Va. content providers. There is a six-month pilot with a vendor that offers centralized mass emails with the data mining features cited above, and other vendors are being considered as well.

Due to limited internal support, schools and units use external vendors for other communication services, such as web development, photography, design and printing.

With wide distribution, the University is unable to leverage common standards and economies of scale. While it is difficult to mine expense data in the Integrated System in these specific categories and there is no ability to distinguish whether the information is primarily for an internal or external audience, preliminary analysis shows the distribution of spend among numerous vendors:

- 17 vendors for web design;
- 94 vendors for photography;
- 102 for editorial;
- 72 graphic design; and
- 20 vendors for printing and copying services

Photography presents a particular challenge for designers and content providers. The University's procurement rules and legal position on the "click-through agreements" commonly in place on Web sites offering stock photography precludes purchase of such photos without individual employees exposing themselves to liability. The same issue affects Google Analytics, the most common tool in use for Web analytics and data mining. This "ban" (never formally posted but understood by web and communications managers) has been communicated and repeated solely by word-of-mouth, creating confusion and concern about job security and potential litigation (see Appendix G.) As a result, staff who are expected to produce visually engaging collateral at low cost, or who must determine success of web communications, are at a loss of how to proceed without being in jeopardy.

V. Best Practices

Nine higher education institutions, the UVa Medical Center, and four private sector businesses were consulted. All were asked eight questions about their IC practices, including organizational structure, channel selection, measurement, and feedback from employees. Many supplied additional information from their own experience to augment the interview, some of which is available in the appendices.

- Boston University
- University of California System, Office of the President
- UC- Berkeley
- Colorado College
- Duke University
- University of Minnesota
- University of Notre Dame
- University of Tennessee System
- University of Wisconsin-Madison²
- Dow Jones
- Pinnacle Financial Partners,
- Belkin
- Aramark

² UW-Madison is implementing all recommendations from their recent Internal Communications Report, managed by their office of Administrative Process Design (see <http://www.apr.wisc.edu/commimplement.htm>). See report/recommendations at <http://www.apr.wisc.edu/documents/Projects/Int-Comm-Final.pdf>.

Table 3: Summary Observations on four industry leaders:

	Internally focused communications vehicle	Location	Town Halls as in-person option	Strategic Alignment with comms
Duke	Working@Duke-- print newsletter 6x a year, weekly email newsletter, Working@Duke FB account and other social media, Managing at Duke emails http://today.duke.edu/working	Central communications office, Asst VP of Communications Services reports to Assoc VP for News and Communications. 6.5 FTE for internal comms	New format is the quarterly “prime time” – a venue for staff to hear directly from senior administrators	Strong. Led by senior comms staff and part of the U’s strategy.
Boston U	http://www.bu.edu/today mainly internal news, everyone receives via email and you have to opt out if you don’t want it. Community based story sourcing, comments enabled but moderated if offensive.	One central office consolidated under an AVP for Strategic Comms, reporting to a Sr. VP for External Affairs.	One large town hall meeting/ speech per year	De facto—part of the strat comms team
Colorado College	Weekly newsletter email	In central communications office. Director of Internal Comms (new position in 2014) reports to VP for Communications. IC can draw on the staff and resources of the larger unit, and works very closely other people in the unit, for all projects (i.e., if she needs a writer, editor, photographer, those are all shared resources within the larger communications group.	Every other month there are open “staff” meetings that the President speaks at. They also do events for the faculty and staff in order to facilitate and energize people around specific projects or initiatives or as community building efforts.	At two meetings per week the senior staff discuss priorities and the allocation of resources, emerging stories, etc.
UVa Medical Center	Weekly digest email, http://uvaconnect.com other emails as needed	In central Marketing/ Communications	Managers’ meetings and employee council meetings as well as many events coordinated by	MC has just undertaken a new partnership with an outside vendor specifically

			their dedicated reward/rec program staff	charged with strengthening the connection btw IC and their other communication efforts.
Dow Jones	Series of color coded emails that advise the reader as to the type of content. Emails usually push to or are repeated on their intranet.	part of the DJ Corporate Communications team	As a global company they have regional events only	Internal comms was mandated by leadership. Idea was to create a community for a global company. Strong intentional branding/identity association.

Of the ten higher eds, seven have an IC function that resides in a centralized communications office. In most cases it is part of a larger media relations/communications/marketing shop. Of the ten, five have undergone a concerted, intentional examination of IC such as the one UVA is undertaking. All of those established guiding principles or missions that identify engagement, connectivity, community, and support of the institution’s broader mission as part of the purpose of IC.

All four private sector businesses have an IC function, as a standalone or in human resources. Private sector businesses were much more explicit about the retention implications of good IC. Pinnacle stated explicitly that they wanted to avoid the cutthroat corporate culture of big banking and instead create a workplace where if they “engage and excite associates” (their employees), those associates will in turn pass that enthusiasm on to clients, and by extension, shareholders: “It is internal communication’s job to keep employees engaged, excited about working in that culture, and feeling in the know.”

Not surprisingly, the higher eds with a stronger sense of IC’s purpose—to get employees to know, understand, feel or do something—had concrete processes in place. Seven have an editorial process in place for employee communications and five have an overall, integrated strategy. Six use technical tools such as Google Analytics or email stats as well as surveys to gauge their success.

Three of the four private businesses have strong policies and a coordinated calendar for communications, while all had integrated strategies and used tools to measure IC success. All have access to data such as open and click through rates, Web traffic (Google analytics), surveys, or a combination of all of those. There were varying levels of engagement and usage around data mining.

Across the board, the most popular tools for reaching employees are email, area or departmental newsletters, and in three cases, a print newsletter. While not surveyed, Vanderbilt, Villanova, Xavier and University of Portland are just four universities that

recently shared their faculty/staff newsletters through CASE, while the bar is set by Duke University, where the Working@Duke portfolio includes a Facebook page, a print newsletter six times a year, the Working@Duke Web pages, and emails that link to stories on those pages (See Appendix E).

Several of the interviewees have an email platform that allowed for robust HTML and open, tracking and click-through rates. Dow Jones won a PRSA award in 2013 for their email platform, which identifies emails by topical subject lines and color coding (See Appendix F).

Seven out of 10 of the educational institutions and all of the privates have large-scale, town-hall-style meetings at least once a year or more often.

Strong support for managers' communications was featured by a smaller number of interviewees, but with significant support. Notre Dame hosts a tutorial for managers on how to communicate; more information is available in Appendix H.

VI. Summary of Data Findings

Key findings showed that faculty and staff needs and content provider challenges aligned around the need for simpler, shorter messaging, available quickly and in one place, with opportunities for giving feedback. Both parties, senders and receivers, highlighted the need for a "channel" just for faculty and staff. Providers also pointed out the need for better data to measure communications success and difficulty coordinating messages across Grounds.

Best practice research reveals that without question, understanding the value of internal communications in support of mission was essential for a well-built, successful platform. Best practices include alignment with an overall communications strategy, tools that allow for metrics and assessment of successful communications, a consistent vehicle—whether that be an email digest, a newsletter, or a Web site—and at least one dedicated in-person component.

Employees whose jobs are not at a desk made observations worthy of note: they primarily receive operational information they need to do their jobs day-to-day. They are not aware of larger institutional priorities. They have challenges accessing the University's primary communications vehicle of email, and as a result often get information when it is no longer timely or relevant. They are willing contributors but do not have an avenue to do so.

VII. Design Recommendations

A. Critical Success Factors

Leadership commitment

The true benefits of an internal communications strategy are felt “when communication is recognized as a key element of change, when leaders help employees see the vision and their personal contribution... and when messages are consistent with the actions of the organization.”³ U.Va. leadership commitment to sharing information with internal audiences first, in ways that best reach them, is essential in a time of major change at the University. Authentic internal communications is critical to forging connections between employees and the values of the organization. The working group puts forth the bold claim that institutional goals and priorities and elements of the Cornerstone Plan cannot succeed without better and more consistent internal communications, enlivening the precepts and making them a demonstrable reality to the staff and faculty across Grounds.

Community collaboration/support

Similar to leadership support, internal communications must have strong support from and direct collaboration with the many U.Va. communicators within schools and units. Just as these communicators provide ideas and material to University Communications for external purposes, so too they would ideally share with internal communications staff. This will ensure that the most relevant content is available to staff and faculty.

Governance

The working group proposes that a group of selected communicators and advisors act as a governing body to help guide U.Va. internal communications, particularly in its earliest stages. This small group would help determine what is in and out of scope for this role or group, create realistic expectations, and forge connections with their “home” schools and units.

Dedicated Resources

In order for internal communications to provide timely, accurate information—ranging from the critical to the “nice-to-know”—on a variety of channels or platforms, adequate funding and staff are necessary.

B. Primary Functions

Develop Communications Strategy

The internal communications team lead would develop a short- and long-term integrated strategy that recognizes the University’s goals and challenges and addresses key concerns raised by its employees and content providers. This strategy would directly support the Cornerstone Plan and dovetail with the University’s branding initiative.

³ FitzPatrick, Liam and Klavs Valskov. *Internal Communications: A Manual for Practitioners*. Print. London: Kogan Page Limited, 2014.

1. Create IC portfolio

The portfolio should comprise multiple channels and create and coordinate an enabling infrastructure for the institution. Elements should include:

a) Intranet/newsletter/news aggregator

Benchmarking has shown that the most successful institutions and private sector businesses are able to offer one consistent access point for employees. Internal communications at U.Va. should select the best methodology to support messaging and recipients' needs and preferences.

b) Social media

A social media component would allow for feedback and employee engagement campaigns, as well as support the primary communication platform.

c) Feedback opportunities built into each portfolio component

Research shows that two-way communication is essential for successfully integrating internal communications into the organization. Offering simple feedback mechanisms and—equally important—responding to them would fall under the internal communications portfolio.

2. Oversee Internal Mass Email

Currently there is no one function or role that coordinates how frequently mass emails are sent and to which audiences. A central point of contact with a responsibility for tracking and coordinating would reduce email saturation, as would a newsletter or news aggregator, as suggested above.

3. Coordinate Editorial Calendar

Structures that enable collaboration and coordination for internal messaging from key offices and initiatives around Grounds would allow for messages to reinforce rather than conflict with each other. A common solution is an editorial calendar that takes into account the academic year as well as unpredicted messaging needs.

4. Promote and enable in-person communications

a) Town hall or other large-scale meeting

While not rated as highly as other factors on the employee survey, other schools and businesses have had significant success with and positive feedback from an annual or semi-annual large scale meeting that has a two-way component. Similarly, the focus group participants who are engaged in strategic initiatives at U.Va. cited in-person meetings as highly successful for providing new insights and connections with faculty and staff around their work.

b) Manager support

Managers are one of the most common sources of information for faculty and staff. As such, consistent preparation for their role as communicators is a key factor for successful internal communications. Supervisors need guidance on their role in information sharing and tips for how to communicate well. Internal communications could assist with preparing these materials.

5. Use Metrics

The most successful internal communicators surveyed have a data-centric approach to understanding communications outcomes. This includes access to mass email data, as outlined above; web analytics; survey instruments; and other feedback mechanisms such as social media.

C. Production Services

In both focus groups, content providers expressed the need for a centralized service bureau for design, writing and Web support. Historically, some limited services were provided by University Communications, but in the last few years their focus—and therefore their staff time—has shifted to external priorities. An analysis of expenditures would be critical in assessing the cost-effectiveness of building a service bureau. If the University chooses to put those resources into place, staffing and funding would be significantly more than for just the functions outlined here.

D. Organizational Location

After reviewing other examples, and carefully considering U.Va.'s current organizational structure, the working group recommends two possible organizational locations for the IC function: University Communications or University Human Resources. These are the two most common reporting structures in the benchmarking group. Advantages and disadvantages to each are summarized below.

University Communications		University Human Resources	
Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages
Easier to align internal and external messages, esp. around issues mgmt	Current focus and resources is on external priorities	Home to leadership development – for integration of communications support for mgrs.	Less access to centrally available content
Ready access to most relevant content	Possible mistrust of source – “it’s just PR”	Already providing Staff Senate support, can engage them	Less in-house resources and expertise available
Strong communications capability/bench strength		Home to employee engagement efforts , events	Possible mistrust of source – “it’s coming from HR”
Knowledge about latest communications technologies		Natural policy/procedural alignment (“need to know” info)	
Home to branding initiative (for internal alignment)			