

Report of the Communications Study Group – January 2007

Background:

During their 2005 and 2006 Planning Retreats ASEC identified multiple issues regarding communication between academic staff governance and academic staff as well as the need to strengthen communication about the contributions of academic staff. In response, ASEC appointed a communications study group to address these issues. Members of this group are Jo Ann Carr, Greg Iaccarino, and Lisa Jansen.

The Communications Study Group completed the following activities:

1. Reviewed current communication activities and identified strengths and shortcomings.

Internal Communication

Current Activities:

- The current communications plan is for Greg and Lisa to assist when needed with website and distribution list revisions.
- Lisa and Greg formerly co-chaired an Assembly ad hoc Communications Committee, which existed between 2003 and 2006. This committee assisted in the development of the Assembly listserv and sent welcome messages to members on how to use it, created a repository of sample email messages between Assembly representatives and their district members, held pre-Assembly listening sessions on communications topics, reformatted mail messages containing district email lists, and wrote and distributed instructions for using the email lists in a variety of email clients. In addition, the committee helped modify the format of the orientation session for Assembly representatives and updated the Academic staff Frequently Asked Questions section on the academic staff website.
- ASEC and Assembly minutes are distributed by Colleen to ASEC, standing committee chairs, and Assembly representatives. Assembly reps are responsible for forwarding to their district members.
- Standing committee minutes. Although there is no requirement for distribution of minutes, annual reports are presented to the Assembly. We are uncertain if these reports are in the attachments sent to districts members.

Strengths and shortcomings:

- Strengths:
 - The distribution lists provide for communication to all academic staff.
 - Minutes of ASEC and the Assembly are distributed in a timely manner.
- Shortcomings:
 - Activities outlined in minutes may not be seen as relevant to academic staff not familiar with academic staff governance.
 - The web site structure does not provide for ease of updating.

- Delegation of distribution of information does not provide a consistent brand or level of communication to all academic staff.
- Academic staff that have not been involved or informed about academic staff governance may be apathetic or unaware of the value of this communication.

External Communication [Note External is defined as both external to other campus constituencies and beyond the campus.]

Current Activities:

- Reports of campus initiatives are shared with ASEC and, occasionally, with the Assembly.
- No standard structure is in place for sharing information about academic staff with external audiences resulting in a reactive mode of communication.

2. Examined what channels and partnerships are appropriate to communicating with and about academic staff.

- Functional-based groups with a large academic staff membership such as COMETS and the L&S Advising Group are non-governance groups that are natural venues for communication of academic staff issues.
- The Campus Communicators group includes many academic staff with expertise in communication who should be invited to participate in communication activities.
- Multiple channels are currently being used for communication. Rather than working in new channels we need to improve our current efforts.

3. Examined the communication structures for other governance groups on campus, within the System, and within the CIC. Communication structures across the System vary widely from meetings that engage all academic staff, to print newsletters, to listservs. Responses regarding communication challenges and best practices are still being gathered from the System and from the CIC.

4. Developed a proposal for a long term communications plans. In order to meet the needs for communicating to and about academic staff the Study Committee recommends that the Academic staff Assembly establish a standing committee for communications. This committee would advance efforts to foster a climate of clear and open communication among academic staff members regarding academic staff governance as well as promote communication about academic staff to the campus and external communities.

A resolution to implement this recommendation follows.

Resolution on the Establishment of an Academic Staff Assembly Standing Committee on Communication

Whereas, the Academic Staff Executive Committee and the chairs of the Academic Staff Assembly standing committees identified multiple issues regarding communication to and about UW Madison Academic staff at their 2005 and 2006 annual planning retreats, and

Whereas, communication to UW Madison academic staff is necessary for the development and maintenance of strong academic staff governance, and

Whereas, communication about UW Madison Academic staff to internal university audiences is vital to fostering a climate in which the contributions of the UW Madison academic staff are recognized by the other members of the university community, and

Whereas, communication about UW Madison academic staff to audiences external to the university will contribute to greater understanding and support of the contributions of the UW Madison, especially those of the academic staff, among legislators, students, Wisconsin residents, and others.

Be it resolved that the UW Madison Academic Staff Assembly approve the establishment of an Academic Staff Assembly standing committee on communications.

And, let it be further resolved that the Academic Staff Assembly charge the Communications Committee to be responsible for working with other campus entities to coordinate communication about and relevant to academic staff to both internal and external audiences as well as for identifying strategies to address communication gaps. External responsibilities would include the development of strategies to communicate the story of academic staff, the receipt of information appropriate to academic staff, and the communication of this information to targeted communities within academic staff. Internal communication responsibilities would include engagement in the development and revision of the academic staff website, listservs, and distribution lists as communication vehicles. Six elected academic staff members would comprise the committee membership.

And, let it be further resolved that the Academic Staff Assembly direct ASEC to coordinate the efforts of the Personnel Policies and Procedures Committee and the Communications Study Group to finalize the committee charge, to develop the language necessary to effect this change in the UW Madison *Academic Staff Personnel Policies and Procedures* and other necessary components of governance and to bring these changes back to the Assembly for approval.

Communication Study Group members

Jo Ann Carr (chair)

Greg Iaccarino

Lisa Jansen

