

A photograph of three women standing in a hallway, engaged in conversation. The woman on the left is wearing a bright blue long-sleeved top and dark pants. The woman in the center is wearing a green patterned top, a dark green cardigan, and dark pants. The woman on the right is wearing a grey blazer and dark pants. In the background, there is a black mailbox with labels 'IN', 'OUT', and 'CORE STUDY'.

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# Staff Engagement Communications Work Group

*January 13, 2014*

## Executive Summary

### STAFF ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

In 2012, CUCSA implemented a Staff Engagement Survey with the aim of understanding the current state of engagement of the UC workforce system-wide and what drives engagement at UC. By conducting the survey, CUCSA hoped to identify strengths to build on and opportunities to address; to create a shortlist of actions to respond to these issues and improve employee engagement across the system; and to involve and communicate with leaders and employees throughout the process. Non-represented UC Career staff with at least one year of service were invited to take the survey from May 31<sup>st</sup> to July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at all UC locations except Hastings, ASUCLA, and the Medical Centers.

In reviewing results of the UCOP Staff Engagement Survey, the UCOP Staff Assembly found a number of areas of opportunity that needed to be addressed with regard to communication at UCOP:

- 66% of UCOP employees agreed that UC does an excellent job of keeping employees informed about matters affecting them (69% national benchmark);
- 51% of UCOP employees agreed that they feel able to openly and honestly communicate their views upwards (75% national benchmark);
- 37% of UCOP employees agreed that in general, major organizational changes at UC have been well communicated (65% national benchmark);
- 69% of UCOP employees agreed that their supervisor communicates effectively (77% national benchmark).

To address these results, the UCOP Staff Assembly convened a Communications Work Group to develop and refine recommendations that would address these areas of opportunity and, when implemented, facilitate greater staff engagement. In developing its recommendations, the Communications Work Group (“Work Group”) met over the course of ten weeks to review and gather relevant information from internal and external sources, as well as to develop recommendations. This work included examining the results of the Staff Engagement Survey (SES), reviewing best practices related to organizational communications, and determining what communication practices at the University should be initiated, continued (or expanded), and discontinued. The Work Group also hosted a brown bag for UCOP staff in which it presented its initial recommendations and solicited feedback, and presented the draft recommendations to the UCOP Climate Council. The Work Group incorporated feedback provided by staff and by the Climate Council to inform recommendation development. The resulting recommendations include:

- Develop a UCOP Communications Resource Group
- Drive Communication Technology
- Measure Effectiveness on an Ongoing Basis
- Advance New Communication Tools and Leverage Existing Ones

## Introduction

In 2012, CUCSA implemented a Staff Engagement Survey with the aim of understanding the current state of engagement of the UC workforce system-wide and what drives engagement at UC. By conducting the survey, CUCSA hoped to identify strengths to build on and opportunities to address; to create a shortlist of actions to respond to these issues and improve employee engagement across the system; and to involve and communicate with leaders and employees throughout the process. Non-represented UC Career staff with at least one year of service were invited to take the survey from May 31<sup>st</sup> to July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at all UC locations except Hastings, ASUCLA, and the Medical Centers.

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## Process Of Inquiry

In developing its recommendations for UCOP, the Communications Work Group (“Work Group”) met over the course of ten weeks to review and gather relevant information from internal and external sources, as well as to develop recommendations. This work included examining the results of the Staff Engagement Survey, reviewing best practices related to organizational communications, and determining what communications practices at the University should be initiated, continued (or expanded), and discontinued. The Work Group also hosted a brown bag for UCOP staff in which it presented its initial recommendations and solicited feedback.

### **Examining the Objectives and Results of the Staff Engagement Survey**

The Work Group first reviewed the survey objectives related to communications, which included: (a) understanding the current state of engagement (and how it differs according to organizational components); (b) identifying strengths to build upon and opportunities to address; and (c) determining what drives engagement at the University. The Work Group then reviewed the survey results, which identified a number of communication successes (e.g., 66% of employees agreed that “UC does an excellent job of keeping employees informed about matters affecting us”); however, as outlined above

there were also several areas identified for improvement. After reviewing the survey results, the Work Group highlighted several areas of strategic opportunity to include in the draft recommendations.

### **Researching Best Practices**

The Work Group determined that reviewing (and possibly incorporating) best practices in communications in higher education and other industries would be beneficial to this process. Each Work Group member researched and presented a number of corporate and postsecondary education best practices (see Appendix B), each of which was discussed at length, with ideas to how identified best practices could be utilized to address some of the survey results.

### **Assessing Current UCOP Communication Practices**

After examining the survey objectives and results, and reviewing best practices related to communications, the Work Group discussed which types of University communications should be implemented, expanded, or discontinued. The process, a UCOP-Coro Leadership Collaborative tool called “Stop, Start, Continue,” engaged the group in a fast-action brainstorming session followed by an in-depth discussion of the results. During the process individual Work Group members laid out ideas to answer the question: “What should UCOP stop, start, or continue with respect to communications?” Ideas were reviewed and categorized; resulting ideas formed the basis upon which recommendations were later developed. Resulting ideas are listed below:

- First, the Work Group identified existing UC communication practices that should be continued (“Continue”). These included the use of UC Link, Town Hall meetings, Lunch and Learn sessions, Speaker Series, and other venues. Also identified were authentic and concise emails, department and staff meetings, and other ways to increase cross-departmental communications and engagement.
- The Work Group also identified several new practices that should be implemented (“Start”). These included adopting a method to measure communications and their effectiveness, providing staff a mechanism to communicate to senior management, and using new technologies and platforms to increase communications.
- Finally, the Work Group identified areas that were generally perceived negatively (by both the survey results and the Work Group) and will be recommending that they be discontinued (“Stop”). These included “top down” communications (if staff is not involved), non-authentic communications, and messages that are not timely.

The Work Group subsequently held a brown bag lunch to describe the process and draft recommendations, and to solicit input from staff. The Work Group incorporated the feedback to finalize the recommendations that follow.

## **Recommendations**

The UCOP Communications Work Group developed four primary recommendations based on the results of the Staff Engagement Survey, additional research by Work Group members, and numerous discussions held by the Work Group. The intent of these recommendations is to suggest mechanisms whereby all UCOP staff can consider and contribute to the state of internal communication at UCOP.

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The Communications Work Group makes these recommendations with the hope that communication at all levels throughout UCOP can be enhanced. It means examining not only how we communicate, but also the frequency and effectiveness of our communications with regard to content, delivery, and dissemination. The UCOP community should be encouraged to identify gaps in media and interpersonal communication and to challenge the culture at UCOP to adapt and be open to innovation and change. Active participation of a broad range of UCOP employees can enhance efforts to produce and receive messaging central to our responsibilities and to improve both our work environment and community engagement at UCOP.

## **RECOMMENDATION 1: Develop a Communications Resource Group**

The Work Group recommends forming a Communications Resource Group (CRG) comprised of volunteers who would:

- provide a conduit for regular and consistent feedback about multimedia communications across the UCOP community;
- facilitate communication between staff at all levels of the organization; and
- serve as an optional, additional advisory resource to any staff interested in early feedback as part of developing large scale communications targeted at the UCOP community.

The Work Group suggests that the CRG reside under the organizational umbrella of the Staff Assembly, as the representative staff group at UCOP. The Work Group suggests that members of the CRG be chosen through a rigorous selection process and that, in order to bring a wide variety of perspectives, could also function as a development opportunity for staff at all levels. The CRG could be established using alumni from the Take Charge program, the mentorship program, and other staff development programs at UCOP, in addition to interested staff from the wider UCOP community. The Work Group suggests providing training in best practices in communication for members of the CRG to establish a common tool kit available to all members as a means of building this shared resource.

The Work Group envisions the CRG having an operational as well as advisory component. The Work Group suggests that the CRG identify “affiliates” at the departmental level that would provide a stream of feedback to the CRG about communication efforts and would be positioned to assist in the dissemination of communications of all types and from all sources at the departmental level.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2: Drive Communication Technology**

The Work Group recommends that UCOP leadership consider how staff communicates currently and how best to both communicate with staff effectively and to gather feedback on communication.

Communication is multi-faceted at UCOP and includes a variety of methods to disseminate and gather information: phone communication, postings, fliers, town halls and other gatherings, e-mail, and emerging social media venues. In the course of its study, the Work Group heard concerns from staff that communications did not effectively filter through all levels of the organization, that too much

communication was “top-down” in nature, and that communications were delivered through a narrow spectrum of technologies that did not engage all staff as widely as possible.

To address these concerns, the Work Group recommends that UCOP focus on expanding the breadth of communication technologies such as video messaging, streaming webcasts (timed so that UC staff at all locations can easily attend), and online archiving to ensure that communications reach the widest audience possible. Additionally, systems should be developed to ensure that feedback from staff on both the content of the communication as well as the process by which it was communicated can be delivered in a safe, confidential, and anonymous manner (if staff so choose).

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: Measure Effectiveness on an Ongoing Basis**

The Work Group recommends that regular assessment of communication effectiveness at UCOP be conducted on an on-going basis. This could include assessing the effectiveness of deliberate changes made to communication processes and tools as a result of ongoing intervention. The Work Group suggests that either the CRG or Staff Assembly take the lead in this area to ensure that communication plans and enhancements are consistent with, and responsive to, the concerns voiced in the Staff Engagement Survey in the arena of communication and to set appropriate target benchmarks. The Work Group suggests that these interim assessments between larger efforts such as the Staff Engagement Survey or the Climate Survey can be simple and somewhat informal in nature and done through web-based survey instruments, such as Survey Monkey or similar mechanisms. The Work Group strongly believes that assessments that consistently measure incremental change over short periods of time will prove to be a powerful tool in responding to the communication concerns of the staff at UCOP as the organization works to meet national benchmark standards over the longer term.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4: Advance New Communication Tools and Leverage Existing Ones**

The Work Group suggests, in addition to those recommendations already made, that we dedicate greater time and effort to making such a base and essential function as communicating effectively and thoroughly a priority. UCOP Learning and Development courses such as Essentials of Communication and Influencing Without Authority are existing offerings that could be leveraged to build employee communication skills, but may not address the extent of the need for communication training for all staff and supervisors at UCOP. The Work Group recommends expansion of coursework offered at UCOP to include assertiveness training, specific communication training required for supervisors at all levels, and a communication component for staff and supervisors as part of the performance evaluation process.

## **What Does Success Look Like**

The Communications Work Group recommends repeating the communications-associated portion of the Staff Engagement Survey every two to three years under the auspices of the Staff Assembly in order to measure whether there are improvements in perception among UCOP staff regarding being kept informed about matters affecting them and comfort with openly and honestly communicating views upwards. This could be formally accomplished by using a consultant or informally accomplished by using

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an online survey mechanism such as Survey Monkey, as long as anonymity and sufficient confidentiality of responses could be assured. Feedback from participants in a Brown Bag held by the Working Group on November 6, 2013 indicated that staff would like for there to be focus within UCOP on improvements in the content of communication as well as its format.

Accordingly, success would be evidenced by more authentic, two-way communication within the UC Office of the President, with staff expressing that they feel more comfortable taking risks to state their opinions and that they receive more timely and relevant communication regarding matters that impact them. Although mechanisms to gather feedback in an anonymous and confidential manner will be needed initially, an indicator of success will be the extent to which those mechanisms are no longer deemed necessary as effective and constructive two-way communication becomes more prevalent. Other success factors suggested by participants in the November 6<sup>th</sup> Brown Bag included improved morale overall at UCOP and a greater sense of community as viewpoints of employees from all levels of the organization are included within decision-making on issues that affect them. While the latter exceeds the scope of this Working Group, the Staff Assembly could recommend continuing the entire Towers Watson survey in order to more fully measure improvements in engagement, morale and a sense of community.

## Conclusion

Following the 2012 Staff Engagement Survey sponsored by CUCSA, the Communications Work Group was convened to develop and refine recommendations that would address areas of opportunity and, when implemented, facilitate greater staff engagement and improvements in the area of communications. Over the course of two months, the group met to examine the results of the survey, review best practices, assess current UCOP practices and develop recommendations to be shared with UCOP leadership.

The following four recommendations came out of these meetings:

- Develop a Communications Resource Group
- Drive Communication Technology
- Measure Effectiveness on an Ongoing Basis
- Advance New Communication Tools and Leverage Existing Ones

The Work Group is grateful to have had the opportunity to develop and put forth these recommendations and hopes that staff engagement and communications will be continuing priorities at UCOP.

**Appendix A**  
**Staff Engagement Communications Work Group**

**Members of the Staff Engagement Communications Work Group include:**

**Patricia Osorio-O'Dea, Facilitator:** Deputy to the Vice Provost, Academic Programs

**Emily Rader, Co-Facilitator:** Senior Analyst, Research Investments Studies and Analysis, Office of Research and Graduate Studies

**Arthur Barker:** Executive Assistant, Human Resources Benefits Programs and Strategy

**Mary Croughan:** Executive Director, Research Grants Programs Office, Office of Research and Graduate Studies

**Cate Hutton:** Director, Business Planning and Operations, Office of General Counsel

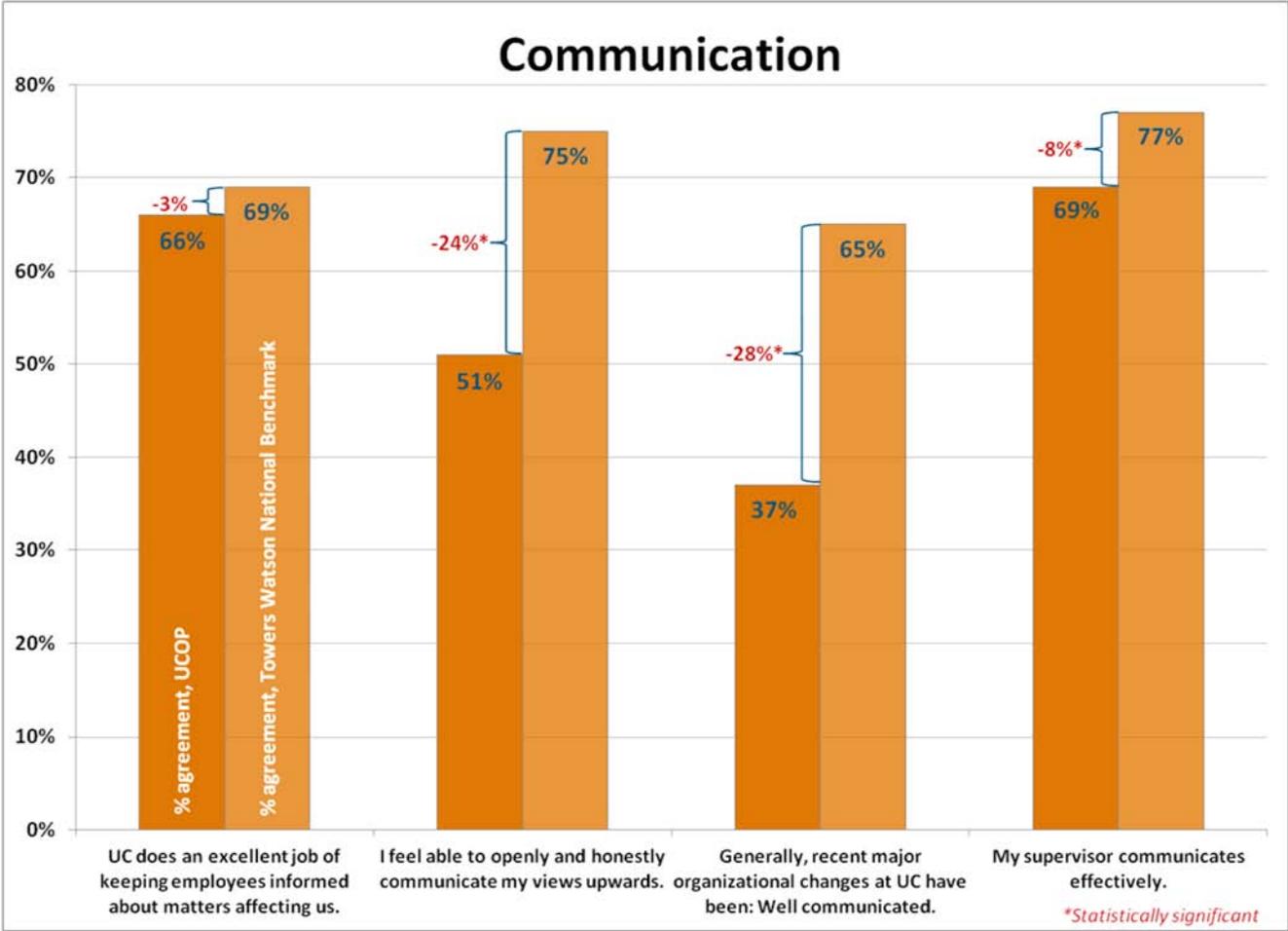
**Kevin McCauley:** Deputy Chief of Staff, President's Executive Office

**Alan Moloney:** Director, Procurement Services

**Laureen O'Connell:** Human Resources Business Manager, Human Resources

**Dan Scannell:** COI-PRA Coordinator, Office of General Counsel

Appendix B  
Responses to the Staff Engagement Survey and National Benchmarking



## Appendix C Selected Background Documents on Best Practices

Barrows, Sydney. "What's in It for Me?" *Entrepreneur.com*. Last modified April 19, 2010. <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/206228>.

"Employee Communication," *CIPD.co.uk*. Last modified September 2012. <http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/employee-communication.aspx>.

"Five Best Practices for Unified Communications." *Business.ATT.com*. Last modified June 21, 2010. [http://www.business.att.com/content/article/BB-5\\_Best\\_Practices\\_20585\\_v1\\_6-21-10.pdf](http://www.business.att.com/content/article/BB-5_Best_Practices_20585_v1_6-21-10.pdf).

Hansen, Arik, "4 corporate communication tips that will help build engaged communities," *Communications Conversations by Arik Hanson* (blog), August 24, 2010, <http://www.arikhanson.com/2010/08/24/4-corporate-communication-tips-that-will-help-build-engaged-communities/>.

Tucker, Elissa. "5 Best Practices for Fostering a Culture of Communication." *HCI.org*. Last modified July 24, 2013. <http://www.hci.org/blog/5-best-practices-fostering-culture-communication>.

Appendix D  
Stop, Start, Continue Exercise

UCOP Should <u>Discontinue</u> These Practices (STOP LIST)				
Area:	Comments:			
Spinning Stories	Non-authentic communications (i.e. If something is done to save \$ it is always said to be a "Best Practice")	Stop sharing info based on personal speculation		
Top Down Communication	Stop this practice especially if it is not involving staff			
Timing of Messages	Don't send messages after grapevine is in full swing	Stop being reactive and try to get proactive and timely		
Communication Styles	Don't use just one message and style	Stop filling Outlook in boxes with unimportant communications	Overly detailed updates on initiatives	Stop focusing communication for those outside UCOP and craft messages appropriately for internal to UCOP, even if it conveys the same message

<b>UCOP Should <u>Continue</u> These Practices (Best Practices LIST)</b>						
<b>Area:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>					
<b>Communication Methods and Channels:</b>	Continue to use elevator area message board but promote the online site where you can get info	UC Link and other online Tools	UCOP News as a Channel for communications	Town Halls - both at the department level and with senior leadership	Lunch and Learn Sessions	Spotlight and provide a place and time for subject matter experts to share knowledge (speaker series, departmental meetings, staff meetings, etc.)
<b>Communication Styles</b>	Expect well written and articulate emails (or other messaging?) at all levels of the organization		Good humor in senior leaders			
<b>Information Sharing</b>	Share information as it becomes available and not "after the fall out"			Continue to support and encourage work groups which include employees from multiple levels and cross departmental involvement		

<b>UCOP Should <u>Start</u> These Practices</b>				
<b>Area:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>			
<b>Develop a Voice</b>	Encourage all level of staff to have a voice and a mechanism for providing it to senior management	Start consultation across employee work groups to gather information and increase communications - give the employee groups a voice and a mechanism to have it heard	Change organizational culture to provide more opportunities for input	Develop/identify in-house resources to help managers (or any level?) with difficult communications or to develop communication strategies
	Make senior management more accessible to all other levels for sharing opinions and ideas and do this in a "safe" environment			
<b>Communication Standards and Styles</b>	Expand detail in UC Link articles	Create ways for UCOP staff to reach to the campuses to get expertise, to assist campuses, and to engage a culture of UCOP/Campus activities	Leave no constituents behind , with a communications plan	Use multiple methods (electronic, social media, email, news letter, posters, etc) to reach all groups
	Offer "Influencing without Authority" classes to all employees	Develop a greater "Lunch and Learn" program	Require regular staff meetings which cover all levels from senior management down	Create annual communication calendar plans for each area to create "forward thinking and planning"
	Develop a "toolset" for communications and make this available to all employees	Use a multi-pronged approach to reaching each group using their preferred method of communication	Expand the expertise in "crisis communications" and share knowledge with campuses	

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<b>Measure Communications and Effectiveness</b>	Develop feedback mechanism by asking employees "What is the best form of communication?"	Continually measure the effectiveness of communication strategies across all levels at UCOP and campuses	Measure the satisfaction of how we are communicating	Use multiple methods (electronic, social media, email, news letter, posters, etc) to reach all groups
	Use a 360 degree evaluation program to ask for feedback	Incorporate communication quality, clarity, value, and quantity into all performance management and assessment tools		Consistent messaging from senior leadership
<b>Be Effective in How We Communicate</b>	Highlight and advertise the role the Communications Unit plays internally (within UCOP) and externally. Make it easy to find the names of the resources you need for assistance.		Develop a better system for promoting new activities and updating when planned activates are cancelled or changed	Consistent messaging at all levels
	Give the rationale and data to support a decision, action, or policy change		Fact or Fiction... Develop a simple way to debunk rumors if you hear them	