



AUDIT AND ADVISORY SERVICES

Internal Communications Audit

Project No. 17-685

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January 24, 2018

Diana Harvey
Associate Vice Chancellor
Office of Communications and Public Affairs

Associate Vice Chancellor Harvey:

We have completed our audit of internal communications as per our annual service plan in accordance with the Institute of Internal Auditors' *Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing* and the University of California Internal Audit Charter.

Our observations with management action plans are expounded upon in the accompanying report. Please destroy all copies of draft reports and related documents. Thank you to the staff of Communications and Public Affairs for their cooperative efforts throughout the audit process. Please do not hesitate to call on Audit and Advisory Services if we can be of further assistance in this or other matters.

Respectfully reported,

Wanda Lynn Riley
Chief Audit and Risk Executive

cc: Chancellor Carol Christ
Associate Chancellor and Chief of Staff Khira Griscavage
Assistant Chancellor Christine Treadway
Executive Director Roqua Montez
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**University of California, Berkeley
Audit and Advisory Services
Internal Communications**

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OVERVIEW

Executive Summary

The focus of our audit of internal communications was on processes related to communications that are directed internally to campus faculty and staff and on communications that are disseminated on a campuswide basis.

The campus has traditionally managed internal communications on a decentralized and ad hoc basis; without a common set of guiding principles or central oversight and no dedicated resources. The Office of Communications and Public Affairs (Communications and Public Affairs) is a central campus unit that addresses various internal and external constituencies. In addition, many divisions have their own communications staff which may or may not include responsibilities related to internal divisional communications.

We observe potential benefits associated with an effective internal communications program that current campus practices do not achieve, from the ability to better maintain control of messaging to increasing employee morale and engagement. Given the current period of transition and change that the campus is navigating, employee engagement, prompted by effective internal communications, is arguably of significant importance to achieving campus objectives.

There are some widely accepted basic principles and better practices for effective internal communications that have not historically been adopted by campus. We identified potential tactical improvements that we recommend be made. Of these, we note the following to be the highest priority for management to consider.

- Articulate guiding principles and establish ownership/sponsorship for internal communications.
- Expand communications by senior leadership to all employee populations, such as through “state of the campus” addresses and regular town halls.
- Formally establish expectations for direct supervisors/managers to cascade and reinforce campus communications to their teams and to solicit employee perceptions, questions, and concerns.
- Evaluate existing campus internal communications platforms to ensure campus business requirements are met and to minimize costs.
- Explore opportunities to better ensure that communications are readily accessible and effectively conveyed to all employees.

Management agrees with the observations noted, and over the coming months, will assess options and propose plans for strengthening campus internal communications programs to best meet the needs of the campus.

Source and Purpose of the Audit

A&AS completed our audit of internal communications processes as part of our annual service plan for FY 2017. The audit was approved to be conducted in FY 2016 but was postponed due to client input.

The purpose of our audit was to assess the current state of internal communication practices for the campus. There are currently no established university policies, external regulatory requirements, or generally accepted professional standards that apply to the campus. Therefore, our audit was instead designed to evaluate the effectiveness of current campus practices to achieve a fundamental set of operational principles:

- alignment of communications with management's objectives and employee needs;
- clarity and appropriateness of roles and responsibilities related to the initiation and development of communications;
- timeliness, accuracy, clarity and relevance of communications; and
- adequacy of internal communication tools and platforms.

Our assessment was also generally informed by internal communications principles and practices, which we identified through the review of various internal and external materials (e.g., articles, whitepapers, and reports).

Scope of the Audit

The focus of our audit was on processes related to communications that are directed internally to campus faculty and staff. We did not include communications that are primarily directed to students or external audiences such as alumni or the general public. Further, our focus was on communications that are disseminated on a campuswide basis versus those that are sent at the school/college/division or department level.

To obtain an understanding of campus processes, we interviewed communication leads and key management stakeholders in various units, including Communications and Public Affairs, the Office of the Chancellor, the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Central Human Resources, the Division of Student Affairs, the Real Estate Division, and University Health Services. We also reviewed documentation from prior campus workgroups on internal communications convened during the 2012-2013 timeframe and examples of campus communications. Our assessment is based on practices in place as of March 2017.

Background Information

At all times, but especially during periods of organizational instability or change, there is a need for timely, transparent, credible, and understandable communication with employees. Although organizations may differ in how this is measured and achieved, effective communication with employees is broadly recognized as having the potential to yield important benefits to the organization, and conversely, if not well managed, to give rise to certain risks.

Currently, there are three primary drivers for campuswide communications: (1) the dissemination of routine information that occurs on a recurring basis (e.g., related to proposed policy changes, academic calendar updates, reminders of mandatory trainings, etc.); (2) significant initiatives or circumstances with sustained impact on the campus and its constituents, such as the Campus Shared Services implementation, the budget crisis, or leadership changes; and (3) the occurrence of single standalone events impacting the campus that are typically shorter in duration and that cannot be predicted (i.e., crises or current events).

Certain communication strategies are determined and driven by the University of California Office of the President (e.g., regarding tuition increases). For locally managed information, responsibility for determining when and how information is shared with campus faculty and staff has historically been managed on a decentralized and ad hoc basis.

Communications and Public Affairs is a central campus unit that addresses various internal and external constituencies. In addition, many divisions house their own communications staff which may or may not include responsibilities related to internal division communications. Large campus initiatives or projects may also have a dedicated communications lead. Although Communications and Public Affairs is available for optional consultation, the development and approval of communications is typically handled within the individual unit. They also coordinate an annual conference for campus communicators to promote knowledge development and in the past also hosted smaller monthly meetings. As of December 2016, there are just over 340 staff and managers in communications titles across the campus. Campus communications titles encompass a broad range of communications support activities, such as graphic design, website development, book binding, and technical writing, in addition to those functions more generally related to developing, implementing or executing a communications program. A table summarizing headcount in each communications title as of December 2016 is presented in the appendix.

There are various platforms used by the campus to support campus internal and external communications. Communications and Public Affairs is the steward for several channels including the main Berkeley website (berkeley.edu), the Berkeley News website (news.berkeley.edu), the Berkeley Blog (blogs.berkeley.edu), the Berkeley brand website (brand.berkeley.edu), the Berkeleyan e-newsletter distributed by email, the @UCBerkeleyNews Twitter handle, and the official campus accounts on other social media platforms for Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. These channels serve to communicate to both internal and external parties and subject matter is not typically segregated by intended audience.

Historically, the primary internal communication channel for the campus has been email and CalMessages is the primary channel for campuswide internal email communication. It can send emails to employees based on attributes such as job or department code or via distribution lists. There are a limited number of campus leaders who are authorized and have access to send messages to these lists. CalMessages also hosts an opt-in subscription list service available to any campus employee who wishes to create a mailing list. In lieu of these CalMessages channels, some campus communicators have opted instead to use other third party email services, such as MailChimp and Constant Contact, or to manually create standalone distribution groups to send campuswide communications. The campus typically does not use voicemail as a means of internal broadcast communications.

In recent years, the campus has identified a need to strengthen internal communications programs, and has taken a number of steps in this area, including (i) the elevation of the position of the

Associate Vice Chancellor for Communications and Public Affairs to the cabinet level, (ii) the development of an executive communications position, (iii) the development of campus branding guidelines, (iv) the inclusion of communications staff on strategic initiatives teams, (v) an annual conference for campus communicators, (vi) the launching of a newsletter to cascade important information to supervisors and managers, and (vii) efforts by Communications and Public Affairs to formalize information-sharing networks. In addition, the portfolio for the Associate Vice Chancellor for Communications and Public Affairs was expanded in fiscal year 2017 to formally include a focus on internal communications.

At the time of our audit, a separate effort led by Communications and Public Affairs was underway to explore opportunities to enhance CalMessages and related processes.

Summary Conclusion

Although the design of effective internal communication programs necessarily varies across different organizations, there are some widely accepted basic principles and practices for effective internal communications that have not historically been adopted by campus. Should management wish to further enhance and extend such programs, the following are examples of better practices found in our research. Some have been implemented at the division level and could serve as a model for campuswide processes.

- The ongoing, routine, proactive, and open communication by senior leadership to all employee populations, through multiple channels including “state of the campus” addresses and regular town halls. Such a robust approach to executive communication can serve to (i) model and cultivate a culture of transparency, and (ii) promote employee understanding of the organization’s mission, values, goals, priorities, and strategies.
- A centrally coordinated and multi-faceted communication plan that is aligned with organizational strategies and goals. Such a plan extends beyond the communication of basic organizational information to also include the sharing of information to strengthen employee morale, promote a common sense of community, and considers the communication needs of different employee populations.
- The coordinated use of multiple methods and channels of communication targeted to reach employees in a format/medium most accessible and meaningful to them provides greater assurance that information is successfully conveyed. Methods/channels might include social media and multimedia, such as use of graphics and video. In addition, opportunities for two-way communication, such as town halls and employee surveys, are also valuable in supporting employee engagement with and trust in the organization.
- The formal engagement of direct supervisors/managers to cascade and reinforce campus communications to their teams. Communications from a direct supervisor have been shown to carry greater weight and credibility than executive leaders who may be perceived as distant. This engagement can also provide an effective platform for obtaining an understanding of employee perceptions and for soliciting employee questions and concerns.

We acknowledge that the implementation of at least some of these practices would likely entail a degree of cultural change and resource investment that the campus may not be in a position to prioritize at this juncture; however, we note these as opportunities that we believe are important for management to consider in moving forward.

In addition, A&AS has identified the following potential improvements to current campus communication practices that are more tactical in nature and that are likely more feasible to address in the nearer term.

- Articulate principles and establish ownership/sponsorship for internal communications, including
 - Defining the categories of organizational information that leadership agrees should be shared with the campus and what guiding principles for communications exist within each category.
 - Delineating protocols and roles/responsibilities to enable the effective and efficient coordination of internal communications.
 - Considering opportunities to adjust organizational reporting lines or staffing models for communications staff to eliminate redundancies, promote economies of scale, and enhance central oversight.
- Evaluate existing campus internal communications platforms (e.g., CalMessages, bConnected) to ensure campus business requirements are met, minimize licensing and maintenance costs, and simplify system lifecycle development and support.
- Explore opportunities to better ensure that communications are readily accessible and effectively conveyed to all employees, including employees without access to campus email, people with disabilities, and those whose primary language is not English.

Management agrees with the observations noted, and over the coming months, will assess options and propose plans for strengthening campus internal communications programs to best meet the needs of the campus.

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS & MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN

Internal Communications Goals and Protocols

Observation

The campus has traditionally managed internal communications on a decentralized and ad hoc basis, without a common set of guiding principles or protocols to help ensure the effectiveness of communications with employees. Although no policy or regulatory requirements currently exist for managing communications programs in a given manner, there are benefits associated with an effective internal communications program that current campus practices do not achieve, as has been noted in campus surveys. These benefits range from the ability to better maintain control of messaging and ensure its accuracy to increasing employee morale and engagement. These primary outcomes also have important potential secondary benefits, such as reduced employee turnover and enhanced employee productivity.

Given the current period of transition and change that the campus is navigating, employee engagement, as prompted by effective internal communications, is arguably of significant importance to achieving campus objectives. Some opportunities to address this need do not require additional funding and may enable cost savings due to process streamlining.

- Define the categories of organizational information that leadership agrees should be shared with the campus (e.g., strategic initiatives, significant issues or occurrences, policy updates, professional development opportunities, event announcements), and what guiding principles for communications exist within each category (e.g., principles around when and what information should generally be shared, by what level of the organization, and to which employee constituencies). This understanding will help provide a platform for ensuring that information is brought forth and that communications are aligned with management priorities and objectives.
- Delineate protocols and roles/responsibilities to enable the effective and efficient coordination of internal communications. Protocols should (1) address the initiation and approval of communications, (2) clarify the role of division-level communicators in campuswide communications, (3) define how existing channels of communication (e.g., CalMessages, Berkeleyan, and Berkeley Manager News) are to be used, and (4) promote consistency in messages.
- Consider opportunities to adjust organizational reporting lines or staffing models for communications staff to eliminate redundancies, promote economies of scale, and enhance central oversight, for both on-going and project-related communication activities.

Cabinet-level engagement and support, as well as input from key functional leaders and communication managers, is recommended for successful execution. Communication workgroups comprised of division-level and Communications and Public Affairs communications professionals have previously assessed campus internal communications opportunities and developed action plans, most recently during the 2012-2013 timeframe, that can potentially be leveraged.

Management Response and Action Plan

Effective internal communications is a priority of senior campus leadership. Over the coming months, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Communications and Public Affairs, working together with key campus partners and stakeholders, will assess options and propose plans for strengthening campus internal communications programs to best meet the needs of the campus. Specific plans will leverage the recommendations of prior campus workgroups wherever appropriate to do so, and will address the specific issues raised in the audit observation, including

- guiding principles for what information should be shared, when, by whom, and how; and
- specific protocols and roles/responsibilities for developing and sending internal communications, including opportunities to clarify and/or better leverage the engagement of division-level communicators and line management, as well as the different communications channels in place across the campus.

It is expected that plans will be developed and approved by March 1, 2018 so that any additional resources required for implementation can be requested as part of the fiscal year 2019 budget planning process.

Internal Communications Platform

Observation

The primary channel for campuswide internal communications is CalMessages, a web-based email client originally developed at UC Irvine and adopted by the campus around 2001. Since then, CalMessages has provided a cost effective platform (i.e., with no current licensing fees and minimal IT maintenance requirements) for sending communications to faculty and staff. However, there is a belief held by many communicators that the tool does not adequately meet campus internal communication needs. Perceived limitations include message formatting constraints (i.e., limited to plain text), difficulty in segmenting employees for targeted communications, and the inability to track message open rates. We noted, however, that at least some of these limitations are not technical and that it is feasible to further develop the system or enhance user training to address these needs. For example, contrary to the belief of some stakeholders we interviewed, CalMessages already has the capability to include graphics and html formatted content and the employee grouping tool has the capability to segment the employee population to a greater degree than is commonly believed.

A potential root cause for this misunderstanding regarding CalMessages capabilities is the current gap in functional ownership for CalMessages. CalMessages is currently owned by the Chancellor's Office; however, a senior-level functional sponsor/owner for the system has not been designated. Senior-level functional ownership of systems is necessary to identify and prioritize user requirements and to drive necessary systems changes or training/communication to serve campus business needs.

Coincidental to our audit, a separate effort has recently been undertaken by the Office of Communications and Public Affairs to explore opportunities for enhancements to CalMessages. In addition to, or as part of, this effort

- We recommend that management designate a senior-level functional owner for CalMessages to support the on-going identification and execution of evolving business and functional requirements, or to drive replacement system selection should it be determined that CalMessages cannot meet current or future campus needs. As an alternative or adjunct to CalMessages, management may wish to consider opportunities to leverage the bConnected platform, which was not in place when CalMessages was first implemented and which may be a more flexible and sustainable communications platform going forward. In addition, non-email based platforms might also be considered.
- Further, because of the perceived limitations of CalMessages and/or because of current protocols limiting its broader use, some campus communicators have opted instead to use other third party email services, such as MailChimp and Constant Contact, or to manually create standalone distribution groups within bConnected. To minimize overall campus costs associated internal communications tools and simplify current and future campus efforts to better meet communication needs, the campus would likely benefit from promoting the use of a single platform for internal communication.
- As the campus considers communication platform needs, use and security protocols should be developed, such as who has the delegated authority and access to send communications to different employee groups. There are already efforts underway by Information Services and Technology staff to develop and promote the use of a single tool for creating employee groups. The ability of this tool to cost-effectively integrate with many communications platforms should be considered.

Management Response and Action Plan

As noted above, plans to further develop campus internal communications programs are expected to be developed and approved by March 1, 2018. Plans will address the issues raised in the audit observation, specifically whether the CalMessages platform adequately meets the needs of campus communicators, and if not, what options exist for system enhancement or replacement.

Internal Communications Accessibility and Reach

Observation

Although it is not feasible to expect that all employees will access and read all internal campus communications, we noted a number of operational opportunities to potentially enhance the reach and accessibility of communications. Communications and Public Affairs also noted some of these same observations as part of their separate assessment of CalMessages.

In addition to the opportunities related to the current campus platform outlined below, we further note that management may wish to prioritize the development of an intranet or a central information hub for the campus. The campus maintains a website (“blu”) that currently serves as a portal for accessing certain campus systems; however, it is not universally used by employees and is not currently leveraged by management as a communications platform. Although likely requiring an additional investment of resources, a fully adopted and supported intranet would allow for the more efficient culling and dissemination of communications to employees, for communications to be tailored to an internal (versus external) audience, and would promote employee awareness of, and facilitate employee access to, information. Specific observations include

- Not all employees have CalNet credentials and, therefore, likely do not have bConnected email accounts. Others do not have regular access to digital communications at work. Although supervisors and managers are requested to relay information sent via CalMessages to employees, there is no assurance that department-level processes exist to ensure that employees receive this information.
- There are no standard protocols in place for ensuring that communications sent via CalMessages or other campus channels are adequately accessible to people with disabilities. Similarly, communications are not currently translated in languages other than English that are commonly spoken by non-native English speaking staff.
- Decisions regarding whether information can or should be sent via CalMessages are made by the sender (i.e., an individual with the authority to send a CalMessage). In those cases, where the sender deems that a CalMessage is not warranted, there are no other means to reach the entire campus. Further, determinations regarding to which employee groups messages are addressed are also made by the individual sender. We understand that it is not always clear to senders which employees comprise each group and, therefore, messages may be sent more broadly than intended or is necessary, or may not reach intended constituents. Given this, the development of criteria related to the sending of campuswide messages is warranted. In addition, as noted earlier in the report, clarifying and further building awareness regarding how alternative channels of communication (e.g., Berkeleyan, Berkeley Manager News) are to be used is also suggested.
- To maximize email readership and/or to better ensure that information is successfully conveyed, emails should ideally conform to established best practices for email communication. No such guidance is currently provided to CalMessage senders and many emails, as written, are long and complex, potentially impacting their readability for some employees. In addition, there are currently no standard conventions or mechanisms for categorizing or prioritizing CalMessages for readers. As a result, employees do not have an easy way to identify and filter those communications based on their importance or relevance to them.
- As noted, CalMessage email open rates are not currently measured and other processes to obtain employee feedback are not in place. Absent such information, management cannot discern or analyze drivers for which communications are more or less successful in reaching employees. Although this information could be helpful, decisions regarding whether to monitor email open rates, etc. may have privacy policy implications that need to be considered. Alternative approaches to measuring the success of campus communications, such as surveys, could also yield helpful information.

Management Response and Action Plan

As noted above, plans to further develop campus internal communications programs are expected to be developed and approved by March 1, 2018. Plans will address the specific issues raised in the audit observation, including

- the need for and feasibility of developing an employee intranet;

- strategies and tools for ensuring that communications are adequately accessible to all employees, including employees with disabilities, and those who do not have access to email or for whom English is a second language;
- criteria and protocols for the sending of communications initiated by non-cabinet level faculty and administrators to campuswide constituencies;
- the development of procedures or guidelines to facilitate the readability and clarity of communications, and to better convey the relevance and priority of email communications for readers; and
- opportunities to measure the effectiveness of internal communications.

APPENDIX – Campus Employees in Communications Job Titles¹

Job Title	Number of Employees in Title
Artist	1
Artist, Sr	3
Bookbinder, Library	7
Bookbinder, Library, Prin	9
Bookbinder, Library, Sr	8
Broadcast Comm Mgr 1	1
Broadcast Comm Supr 1	1
Broadcast Communication Spec 1	1
CART Captionist	4
Communications Manager 1	6
Communications Specialist 3	24
Communications Specialist 4	36
Communications Supervisor 2	4
Digital Comm Mgr 1	5
Digital Comm Spec 3	47
Digital Comm Spec 4	20
Digital Comm Spec 5	2
Editor	7
Editor, Asst	2
Illustrator, Sr	1
Language Asst	2
Media Communications Mgr 1	3
Media Communications Spec 1	1
Media Communications Spec 2	13
Media Communications Spec 3	12
Media Communications Spec 4	7
Media Communications Spec 5	4
Photographer, Sr	1
Publications & Prod Spec 2	9
Publications & Prod Spec 3	22
Publications & Prod Spec 4	6
Publications & Productn Mgr 1	1
Publications & Productn Supr 2	1
Visual Communications Spec 4	16

¹ As of December 2016, number of employees in communications field job titles as classified in the campus job classification system (Career Compass).

Job Title	Number of Employees in Title
Writer/Editor 3	37
Writer/Editor 4	17
Written Communications Mgr 1	1
Grand Total	342