INDIANA UNIVERSITY

47 – Student Communication

Action Item Template Response

General Action Item Information

Lead Division/Office: Communication and Support
Action Item Number: 47
Action Item Short Name: Student Communication
Dependencies with other EP Action Items: 18, 26, 28, 43
Implementation leader (name & email): Charles (Chip) Rondot (crondot@indiana.edu)

I. DESCRIBE YOUR PLANS FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS ACTION.

Undergraduate and graduate students represent the single largest audience for UITS, and communicating with them presents many opportunities and challenges. Students have particular needs and uses for the breadth of information technology tools and services available across the university, making them eager and informed partners in using technology. Targeted communication that is relevant to students and incorporates an array of outlets is critical to empowering students to fully leverage their IT options at IU. *"Students view IT as an ally in helping them use their time efficiently for learning and participating in various student activities."* But in a world of information overload and service overlap, how do we get — and keep — their attention long enough to tell them where to find the technology, how to use it, and where to go when they need help?

Student communication is by its nature iterative and ongoing, employing old-school tactics, delivery of repetitive and evolving messages, and embracing new technologies, requiring some trial and error to determine the right balance. Measurements of success are often imprecise – it isn't just the number of clicks, it's the intrinsic association of the question "How do I…" with the answer "UITS."

UITS will create a strategic, unified student communication plan. The plan will include core messages to communicate across the academic year and establish a unified look and feel for content, including electronic, printed, and other materials. The plan will assess the relevance of various points of service outlets (technology centers, campus signage, online resources, etc.) across all units within UITS and embrace those that are most successful. This plan will include the following:

1. Visual and textual branding to emphasize a comprehensive set of IT resources for students, and allow for seamless carryover between semesters

2. Mutli-campus unification of communication planning, production, and activities, while maintaining appropriate campus-distinct messaging

3. Leveraging the Student IT Ambassadors (see Action Item 43, Student Liaisons) to assist in distributing messages and soliciting student feedback as a means of tailoring UITS communications to students and educating peers about UITS services, resources, and opportunities

4. Expanding UITS campus visibility and engagement through sponsorships, paid advertising and participating in campus events

5. More broadly engaging with fellow campus communicators to share relevant information for distribution in peer communication channels

6. Creating a student communications coordination body to include UITS and regional partners to unify and plan communications activities on a regular basis. This group would supplant the current "Student Awareness Group" and expand its current membership to include regional IT communications peers. The goal is to enhance relationships with communications partners at UITS and with regional campuses by identifying key communicators and creating a conduit for sharing information and coordinating communications activities (see Action Item 28, IT News).

7. Enhancing and expanding university-wide New Student Orientation activities (planning, development, production, and distribution of mailings, materials, flash drives, posters, NU2IT@IU campaign, videos, podcasts, and more) to more successfully map this collateral to the overall IT communications plan (see item 1, above).

8. Expanding and renaming the Make IT Happen events across all campuses. The re-envisioned, expanded "Tech Fest," implemented in fall 2009, included a constellation of communications and outreach activities beyond the confines of a single day, greatly increasing its exposure to students, and allowing for more and broader opportunities for student engagement with UITS and IT resources.

9. Exploring and leveraging new technologies (social networking, proximity software, etc.) to engage students with IT news and resources in whatever venues currently engage them. This will require remaining continually aware of current venues for student activity and leveraging whatever technologies they embrace at any given time. Implementation of the new UITS News sites reflects early progress and great promise.

10. Leveraging IU's planned Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) system when implemented to provide more efficiency, effectiveness, and analysis.

Note: The IT Communication Office now owns this Action.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The materials for Orientation have been redesigned and enhanced, including NU2IT@IU, and include flash drives with software, links to online resources, etc. A Resident Assistant poster kit for dorm floors promotes UITS services. A new series of HotTopic videos (a SIGUCCS award winner) features a UITS student intern, and is posted on YouTube. Monthly student outreach to the Student Ambassadors liaison group helps spread awareness of UITS and its services and resources. Student Ambassadors are also being leveraged to create postings to Facebook and other social media. Discussions are underway with the IDS and other student news media for IT-related feature articles.

II. WHAT ARE THE POLICY AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS OF YOUR PLANS?

In order to increase coverage and expand audiences, UITS will continue to explore working traditional means of communications into the overall communications strategy. While keeping in mind the EP goal of sustainability, UITS should look into leveraging such communications media as

posters, fliers, newspaper advertising, and other types of communication opportunities. Pieces can be created to serve beyond a single use, and can be leveraged for other activities and initiatives. The principles of targeted use and of re-use can help deploy media that extend audience reach, provide a unified, easily identifiable look and feel, and adhere to the university's "green" values.

Student communication initiatives should also be leveraged and referenced in communications to faculty and staff, many of whom serve as information conduits with students. Informing faculty and staff serves the end result of informing students.

Activities connected to this initiative will impact Action Item 28 (IT News) in that broader communications with students will likely provide information on IT news delivery vehicles, content, timing, preferences, and the like.

III. IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS.

Stakeholders will include graduate and undergraduate students across the university-wide system.