

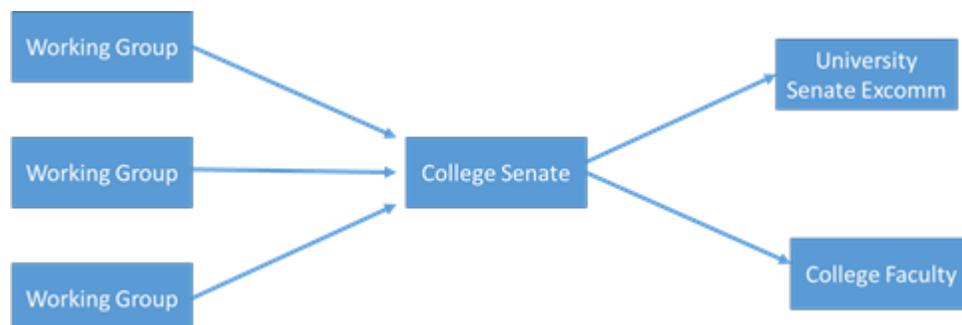
## Report from the Subcommittee on Communication

Collegiate Senators Subcommittee: Claudia Kairoff (Chair), Will Fleeson, Stavroula Glezakos, Simeon Ilesanmi, Nina Lucas.

The Collegiate Senators' Subcommittee on Communication was convened to suggest ways of breaking the "silo" effect (information shared only within discrete groups) caused by the University's growth from a small community to a collection of large departments and units. The University Senate can potentially serve as a link between the administration and faculty, and among faculty groups and committees, providing up-to-date information about issues of importance to faculty members. The administration has expressed a wish for the Senate to be a resource for communicating about, for example, the recent background check policy or the health-care dependents audit. In order for that communication to take place, however, various issues need to be resolved, and perhaps the Collegiate Senate needs to change its schedule in order to fulfill its proposed role as disseminator of accurate and timely information.

We believe that the College Senate, and the Senate at large, need to decide what kinds of information we should be communicating to our colleagues. Should we ask the Provost to charge us with informing the campus about issues at appropriate times, and with ensuring that our communications are accurate? Since the Senate is often given information about sensitive issues, and sometimes even told not to share the information until an appropriate time, it seems preferable that the Senate be given some guidance about the information we share. We also need to decide exactly with whom we should be communicating. Should communication be general or directed to Chairs of departments / Program directors? Should information be posted on our web site or otherwise disseminated? Should we be communicating Senate votes, topics of our discussions, or the outcomes of our discussions? Should we inform the campus about which issues we take up and the results of our deliberations? We think the College Senators, and probably the University Senate as well, needs to decide the answers to these questions in order to facilitate the desired communication.

A related issue is the need for a timely flow of information to and from the University Senate to the College Senate and on to the College faculty. Our monthly College Senate meetings occur after the Executive Committee and University Senate have met, which may be the wrong order if we are to serve as an effective link in the information chain. The following chart outlines a possible order for effective reports:



To accomplish the timely flow of information, should we determine a more efficient calendar, or develop a kind of “chat room” for College Senators to be able to discuss and vote on issues when timeliness is crucial? If, for example, the College Senate were to meet and discuss items on the College faculty meeting agenda before those meetings, we could perhaps save some discussion at meetings by indicating our group responses, whether positive or negative, to agenda items. We envision the College faculty viewing us as a neutral and representative body responding to various proposals.

We also discussed what kinds of input and queries we would like to receive from colleagues. We decided the best option might be a portal on the Senate home page that would allow faculty members to raise or respond to issues. These comments or queries would not be directed to specific Senators but to committees or the Senate as a whole.

We discussed at length various options for better communication between the University Senate and the University community. The options included:

**A Senate Facebook Page:** We vetoed this concept due to lack of images, material for continual updates, etc. We understand how a member of the U.S. Congress, for example, might have a Facebook Page to record her recent activities, allow supporters to follow her various appearances, etc., but we thought that a body meeting only three times a semester (and three meetings for Collegiate Senators) could not sustain such a page.

**A Senate Blog:** Similarly to a Facebook Page, a blog would require regular installments. Most blogs that we know about offer advice about child-rearing, relationships, cooking, or other ongoing topics. Since many Senate activities are confidential, it would be difficult to produce a weekly blog.

**Question:** Since the Senators themselves are all tenured or Associate Teaching Professionals, are we likely to miss the most effective way of reaching out to younger faculty members? If there is a way younger faculty and staff members prefer to communicate, we would be glad to consider it. One issue is that these trends change often, so we would have to be prepared to migrate from one platform to the next.

**Question:** Would any Senate member be willing to undertake development and maintenance of communications based on one of the new social media? (In addition to the above, Instagram and Twitter come to mind but are subject to the same criticisms as above.) What do we hope to accomplish if we adopt any of these new technologies, and how do we wish to frame our self-presentation to the campus?

We concluded that our new practice of giving monthly reports at the College Faculty meeting, preserved as an Appendix to the meeting’s minutes, is the best way to keep ourselves in the minds of faculty and inform them of our activities and accomplishments on their behalf. We also think an attractive, accessible Homepage is needed to convey information to the Faculty. Our current web site is not particularly engaging or user-friendly. We have a number of suggestions that we think will improve the Senate Homepage.

1. The current picture on the first page is generic. We advise switching to an annual group photo of all the senators.
2. The President could write a brief “welcome” message each semester, laying out her or his agenda for the upcoming meetings and reminding visitors to the site that they can contact us. She or he should define the kinds of queries and issues faculty members might submit: matters of University-wide concern regarding planning and the welfare of the institution.
3. The explanation of the Senate’s mission could be made clearer.
4. The page should list recent projects that we have been involved with and outcomes.
5. In keeping with the above report, the page should inform the campus about selected initiatives of which the campus should be aware.
6. We should somehow highlight the invitation to “contact your senators” regarding an issue (there is currently a tab, but perhaps this option can be more visible.) Is this a place for a link to a kind of “chat room” or space where faculty members can express comments and questions and receive an answer from the appropriate Senate subcommittee chair or from the Senate President? We prefer that this space does not invite comments directed at any individual Senator.
7. Update the subcommittee members each year. Many of our 2015-16 Senate committees were only recently listed, and at least one is out of date (Paul Escott is not the current President of CAFR).
8. Include a calendar with the dates and places of events like the President’s, Provost’s, and Vice-President for Finance’s annual reports to the campus.
9. Engage a technological assistant to refresh the information on our home page at least once a semester, or as events / communications warrant.

We look forward to discussing and defining the goals of effective communication and our desired outcome, which should be reflected in our redesigned homepage.

#### Proposals and Questions for Executive Committee:

1. We propose the creation of a more active University Senate webpage, as described above. We believe a staff member in the Provost’s office can create the page, and the University Senate Secretary can work with the Staff Member to update the page regularly.
2. Since the Senators themselves are all tenured or Associate Teaching Professionals, are we likely to miss the most effective way of reaching out to younger faculty members? If there is a way younger faculty and staff members prefer to communicate, we would be glad to consider it. One issue is that these trends change often, so we would have to be prepared to migrate from one platform to the next.
3. Would any Senate member be willing to undertake development and maintenance of communications based on one of the new social media? (In addition to the above, Instagram and Twitter come to mind but are subject to the same criticisms as above.) What do we hope to accomplish if we adopt any of these new technologies, and how do we wish to frame our self-presentation to the campus?
4. Would the University Senate consider taking up the task of outlining when to communicate, how to communicate, and to whom to communicate about matters before the Senate?

5. We are considering deliberating on matters slotted on College Faculty Agendas. This would allow for us to share our opinion in those meetings. Do you have reactions to this?