

20/20 Communication Subcommittee Report

The members of the 20/20 Communication Subcommittee wish to thank all who took time to complete the 20/20 Communication Survey e-mailed to MUW employees earlier this term, Fall 2008. Our recommendations and findings are presented in the following:

- (Part 1) Our subcommittee's recommendations based upon survey responses
- (Part 2) The results and findings of that survey

Part 1: 20/20 Communication Subcommittee Recommendations

- Provide access to the 20/20 Communication Survey and final approved version of this report to the campus community;
- Develop a system of multiple means for communicating that takes into consideration the purpose or task of the communication and the audience being addressed (not all messages via all communication means);
- Develop a prioritization system for information dissemination and requests for information based upon clear published standards;
- Emphasize e-mail and e-mailed links to web pages for factual reporting;
- Develop a policy which includes the following:
 - 1.) Email will be the university's official means of communication with faculty, staff, and students
 - 2.) All MUW faculty, staff and students will be required to have a MUW email account which will be used for official university communication
 - 3.) All current faculty, staff, and students will belong (and be unable to unsubscribe) to a listserv which will be used only for official university communication
- Increase webpage interactivity (e.g., calendars with department pages and maps);
- Designate representatives from each department or unit who will have responsibility for updating web-based content either directly or in conjunction with the university Webmaster;
- Develop a prioritization system for meetings when discussion or deliberation is needed that is based upon factors such as level of issue relevance and participants' need-to-know (to be implemented from smaller group meetings up to campus-wide Town Hall style meetings);
- Develop systems that establish trust, encourage open communication, and provide alternative means for anonymous input when trust is questioned (providing factual information in a timely fashion internally and providing opportunities for discussion prior to external publication of information have been identified as factors negatively affecting trust)

Part 2: 20/20 Communication Survey Results

85 returned surveys; 309 benefits eligible employees (28% response rate)

* (exclamation points, underlines, etc. all were eliminated in these notes) *

* (percentages reported in each section are based upon the total 85 completed surveys)*

* (no percentages were assigned to sections for which individuals chose not to respond)*

1. What is the value of campus-wide meetings? Please indicate all that apply:

- a. Clears up confusion & allows discussion and questions: 57 (67%)
- b. "Town Hall" style meetings encourages collegiality: 58 (68%)
- 28 (33%) Marked both a. and b.

Notes for Question 1:

Current campus-wide meeting system works (8 responses, or 9% of 85 surveys):

- 1 person noted the value is getting to know people in other disciplines
- 1 person noted that it helps them put a face with names (as a new employee)
- 1 person indicated these meetings create a more personal, family-oriented campus environment that helps bridge the gap between faculty and staff
- 1 person indicated that we need more campus-wide meetings to discuss current issues and to set goals to be achieved
- 1 person indicated that campus-wide meetings let everyone listen to the same message—it (the message) does not get distorted or retold in a different way—we all hear the same things at the same time
- 1 person indicated campus-wide meetings provide an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification
- 1 person indicated that misconceptions and miscommunication can be handled efficiently by letting all faculty and staff know what is happening on campus and regarding sensitive information
- 1 person indicated that campus-wide meetings provide a time and place where many faculty and staff can meet and greet and also provide faculty and staff with important information, but this information should be reinforced by other means

Current meeting system does not work—Discourages discussion (10 responses; 12%):

- 2 persons noted that we don't actually have discussions and questions in our bigger meetings
- 1 person noted that there must be time allowed for questions and comments, and that needs to be done prior to decision making and press releases
- 1 person noted that are always lectures—no questions
- 1 person indicated these meetings really do not encourage collegiality because we're listening to a single speaker as a group
- 1 person indicated these meetings should try to involve everyone, not just a select group
- 1 person indicated that they do not encourage collegiality as there is much fear of saying the wrong thing and being castigated at best or fired at worst

- 1 person indicated, in response to what is the value of campus-wide meetings, “very little”
- 1 person indicated that campus-wide meetings allow the administration to present its case thoroughly, but attendees may be hesitant to reply/disagree in front of the whole campus. Not a democratic process
- 1 person indicated that face-to-face is good, but they have concerns regarding the lack of freedom folks feel to express themselves. It may not always be in an employee’s best interest to express concerns/differing opinions. Also, meetings do take valuable time; the value depends on the issue at hand

Current meeting system does not work—Takes valuable time (10 responses; 12%):

- 1 person noted that too many meetings become a problem and that campus-wide meetings should be reserved for important items only
- 1 person indicated they are unsure the actual cost (salaries, hourly wages, lost productivity) of the staff & faculty is worth (or a good value) for the return – Is what is gained from the town hall meeting valuable enough to justify for information sharing?
- 1 person indicated that campus-wide meetings are not extremely valuable, since they take up too much time that could be better spent on “our jobs.”
- 1 person indicated that too many campus-wide meetings distract from work
- 1 person indicated that face-to-face meetings are good for family reunions and can be appropriate at certain times. However, we do not have time for any more meetings of any type.
- 1 person indicated that a few campus-wide meetings is okay; after that they become burdensome and interfere with teaching responsibilities

When meetings seem most appropriate (3 responses; 4%):

- 1 person indicated they only seem useful when there is some complicated issue to be discussed, which would require too many e-mails for clear communication
- 1 person indicated that it depends on the nature, seriousness, and controversial nature of the topic
- 1 person indicated that campus-wide meetings should be for deliberation. Most information that simply has to be transmitted can be handled and should be handled by e-mail

Suggestions/implications for improvement (3 responses; 4%):

- 1 person noted that “b” naturally should follow “a”
- 1 person noted that we need smaller groups (no more than 10 persons)
- 1 person indicated that the value is a combination of “a.” and “b.”—Town hall provides opportunity for people’s voices to be heard and to allow socializing with fellow faculty and staff. The important thing is to have clear, concise, and quick communication from top down and vice versa.

2. How do you prefer to stay informed about campus issues and events (by what process or by whom)? Please rank order all that apply “1st”, “2nd”, etc.:

E-Mail	(1st- 50, 59%) ; (2nd- 12, 14%); (3rd- 5, 6%); (4th- 1, 1%)
Webpage	(1st- 1, 1%); (2nd- 17, 20%); (3rd- 15, 18%); (4th- 17, 20%)
MUW Meetings	(1st- 4, 5%); (2nd- 9, 11%); (3rd- 21, 25%) ; (4th- 15, 18%)
Supervisor	(1st- 17, 20%); (2nd- 24, 28%) ; (3rd- 15, 18%); (4th- 3, 4%)

1st = E-Mail; 2nd = Supervisor; 3rd = MUW Town Hall Meetings; 4th = MUW Webpage

All Above (unranked) 10 (12%)

* Dropped out "All Above" if given ranking; Dropped out any data unranked unless only "All Above" indicated

Other means proposed:

- 1 person indicated committee meetings
- 2 persons indicated The Spectator
- 1 person indicated campus calendar
- 3 persons indicated campus newsletter (or monthly e-newsletter)

Notes for Question 2:

When Meetings Should Be Used (3 responses of 85 surveys, or 4%):

- 1 person indicated that campus meetings are good for big issues, but routine issues are best channeled through e-mail and department meetings
- 1 person indicated that campus meetings should be held on days when Nursing faculty are on campus, not away at clinical
- 1 person indicated committee meetings are good because we hear about issues pertaining to committee work and hear about other issues while “chit chatting” with other committee members

Improving the Utility of Webpages (4%):

- 1 person indicated that daily events should be posted and kept up-to-date on the homepage
- 1 person indicated that a university webpage should be developed for faculty/staff, students, and alumni that provides news, messages, daily schedules & events, birthdays, new hires, etc. All info should be in one location for each separate group that should be updated on a daily basis. Most colleges and universities do this already—we desperately need to catch up
- 1 person indicated that MUW should develop a university website page, “MUW News,” that has news about events and happenings for that week—Let each department submit articles/pictures to promote events—Not press releases—Don’t post minutes—Give brief summary of events and then post a link to a site that has more information—Can also put a calendar on that page that shows daily events

When Particular Methods Don't Work Well (4%):

- 1 person indicated webpage is a PR tool and shouldn't be relied upon for critical communication
- 1 person indicated that supervisors don't share all the information they get so staff get a filtered version
- 1 person indicated that we receive too much e-mail now

General Suggestions for Selecting a Particular Medium (5%):

- 1 person indicated that it probably will take multiple means to reach everyone on campus
- 1 person indicated that events and issues are different--events are easily posted, e-mailed, or published; issues need clarification, identification, plans of action, and FAQs--Some issues can never be discussed publicly
- 1 person indicated which medium or process used should depend upon the importance of the information
- 1 person indicated that campus meetings are good for big issues such as Vision 20/20, but routine issues are best channeled through e-mail and department meetings. Webpage is a PR tool—shouldn't be relied on for critical communications.

3. What is the best way to improve communication to the campus on issues that may be perceived as controversial?

Notes for Question 3 (77 total responses from 85 completed surveys, or 91%):

Responses Emphasizing Method of Delivery, or “Method” (47, or 55% of 85 surveys)

Method—E-Mail (7%):

- 5 persons indicated e-mail (generally)
- 1 person indicated blind e-mail and/or using “Survey Monkey” to evaluate university faculty and leaders to assure anonymity

Method—Supervisor, Unit Representative, Etc. (8%):

- 1 person indicated through department heads
- 1 person indicated communication by immediate supervisor in person so clarification can occur
- 1 person indicated supervisor or administration
- 1 person indicated quietly with need to know personnel, then that person should tell his/her office, department, etc.
- 1 person indicated immediate supervisor
- 1 person indicated “pre-buffers” from the supervisors; hearing the issues directly and in person to better understand the idea
- 1 person indicated through supervisors

Method—Meetings (includes Faculty Senate participation) (26%):

- 3 persons indicated staff meetings within each department or simply department meetings
- 2 persons indicated Town Hall meetings
- 1 person indicated entire faculty meet at one time so that all questions may come to the floor
- 1 person indicated that Faculty Senate should present in Town Hall meetings and should be involved in other (press?) releases
- 1 person indicated department faculty meetings, workshops, and campus presentations
- 1 person indicated to discuss issues together
- 1 person indicated a campus-wide meeting at 5:00 or time when all offices are able to close, and to allow time for questions
- 1 person indicated using small focus groups with faculty/staff from all departments
- 1 person indicated Town Hall meetings or small group meetings maybe by college
- 1 person indicated meetings
- 1 person indicated campus meetings
- 1 person indicated to start with department-level discussions until all issues have been addressed—Bring issues to larger community at that point

- 1 person indicated through administrative meetings (face-to-face) with small groups at a time—for example, the President or Provost may meet with the faculty and staff from 1-2 colleges at a time
- 1 person indicated through personal contact with the most knowledgeable person in affected area
- 1 person indicated a meeting within the department or college to “air out” issues
- 1 person indicated face-to-face minimizes misunderstandings
- 1 person indicated through college meetings, generally, and faculty senators communicating with faculty in college or department meetings
- 1 person indicated through college faculty meetings and university-wide faculty meetings
- 1 person indicated probably department/unit meetings followed by a campus-wide meeting

Method—Webpages (2%):

- 1 person indicated a Web post blog type of forum
- 1 person indicated to put all information on MUW webpages and keep pages updated

Method—Multiple Media (12%):

- 1 person indicated e-mail and immediate supervisors
- 1 person indicated direct rebuttal by e-mail or news release
- 1 person indicated to circulate all the views through e-mail and then call a meeting for discussion if necessary (let it be on vote)
- 1 person indicated a campus newsletter along with other forms of communication such as e-mail—However, a moderator would be a must, especially when dealing with controversial issues
- 1 person indicated Town Hall style meetings and up to date e-mails
- 1 person indicated e-mail or electronic newsletter; a campus-wide meeting if discussion is wanted
- 1 person indicated professional e-mail and Webpage
- 1 person indicated e-mails updating faculty/staff on a situation, and then meetings if more information is needed
- 1 person indicated e-mail and meetings if necessary
- 1 person indicated e-mail explanations, supervisor discussions, opportunities for those that are interested to attend face-to-face meetings

Emphasizing Process/Current System, or “Process” (30, or 35% of 85 surveys)

Process—Timeliness of Information (7%):

- 1 person indicated not being sure of the method, but the earlier we are notified the better we can be when approached by the community—really bad not even to be aware of issues

- 1 person indicated to let faculty and staff know of issues and decisions prior to releasing information in the media—often we find out what is happening through the media
- 1 person indicated getting info out earlier, “before the horse has left the barn”
- 1 person indicated to make sure the campus is notified first—for example, the faculty and staff heard the kickoff speech, but the transcript was posted on wcbi.com hours before it was e-mailed or posted on the “W” homepage
- 1 person indicated that timely e-mail announcements and web page articles are better than seeing issues on TV or in the newspaper
- 1 person indicated a preference for the President or Vice Presidents to send out e-mails, but that needs to be done before the outside community is informed

Process—Type of Info. (How Controversial or Consistency) and Audience (7%):

- 1 person indicated that the best way is to confront issues head-on; however, the biggest problem is with what is “perceived” to be controversial. Something controversial to one person or group of people may not even rate on another’s scale. It can never be perfect. Unfortunately, there will always be issues that cannot be discussed publicly. The campus has to trust that the administration is making the right decisions.
- 1 person indicated e-mail, Webpage (MUW), Town Hall meetings, immediate supervisor—all of the above. How are the controversial issues identified?
Example: Fried chicken day in the cafeteria versus name change of school—Both are controversial, but which really needs to be discussed?
- 1 person indicated that it depends on whom it would be perceived as controversial—Students? Staff?
- 1 person indicated that it depends on which group or part of campus you’re trying to reach
- 1 person indicated that Public Affairs needs to play a much more active and aggressive role when controversial issues arise such as the alumni situation and the name change debate—The should be proactive about getting statements to the press and should send regular e-mail and website updates to faculty and staff as things arise—It is important for the university to be saying the same thing across the board about controversial issues
- 1 person indicated to provide information on what we should say if asked by someone what the situation is (i.e., potential students)

Process—Trust and Transparency of Process (12%):

- 1 person indicated to provide as much information related to the facts as is feasible
- 1 person indicated, “Tell us what is going on. Don’t ignore the campus family and have us read it in the newspaper.”
- 1 person indicated that it is important for people to know that all of the possibilities have been covered and whatever decision has been made is the best one possible—The administration should be transparent in dealing with these kind of issues—so they have accountability
- 1 person indicated open, honest communication that focuses on the facts

- 1 person indicated to communicate more often—This MUW Administration holds information “secret” for too long—MUW personnel often hear through the local media instead of from the administration—Controversial topics should be discussed openly via web pages and immediate supervisors
- 1 person indicated campus-wide meetings and administrative transparency
- 1 person indicated to keep us all informed
- 1 person indicated, “please, please—the administration needs to be transparent and answer questions—we need to know about issues in a timely manner”
- 1 person indicated to be sure that people on campus know before it hits the newspaper—we need to know what and why
- 1 person indicated, “tell the truth”

Process—Other Suggestions (11%):

- 1 person indicated to use as plain of a language as possible—Stay away from legalisms—Discuss only facts pertaining to the issue, and refrain from trying to lead campus public opinion—Be more diligent in presenting both sides of the issue rather than just the approved side or opinion—Speak to the other side, and explain why the other side’s case on the issue is unjustified based solely on facts and events and trends—Refrain from emotionally speaking on an issue; instead, use logic to present the issue to the campus community
- 1 person indicated to be open and honest, and accept disagreement as part of the process
- 1 person indicated to allow written comments and questions submitted anonymously beforehand and handled by a non-administrative official—after the “town hall” presentation, these matters could be raised and addressed one by one
- 1 person indicated a combination of campus-wide meetings and having administrative figures talk at individual department meetings
- 1 person indicated if a town hall meeting is going to be held, have it in a place that can accommodate all faculty and staff and use a means by which “reservations” are not necessary
- 1 person indicated that town hall meetings can be beneficial, as well as a press release on the issue—Town hall meetings are only beneficial, however, if faculty and staff get an opportunity and then take the opportunity to discuss the issues
- 1 person indicated that the President or a Cabinet member e-mail the faculty and staff and keep everyone informed—if an issue becomes extremely controversial, then hosting a town hall meeting would give people an opportunity to voice their concerns
- 1 person indicated that it depends on what the issue is and whether the campus really has any control in the matter—prior knowledge for the campus can be helpful to diffuse “situations”
- 1 person indicated to disseminate the facts from the factual parties involved

4. Other suggestions for improving communication practices at MUW:

Notes for Question 4 (63 total responses from 85 completed surveys, or 74%):

Responses Emphasizing Method of Delivery, or “Method” (26, or 31% of 85 surveys)

Method—Effectiveness of Meetings (7%):

- 1 indicated allowing faculty senate to be more involved in "Town Hall" meetings and with the release of information
- 1 indicated having semester divisional meetings where all members come together and share information about their areas
- 1 indicated more face-to-face meetings
- 1 indicated mandatory departmental and division meetings
- 1 indicated value of campus-wide meetings
- 1 indicated college meetings

Method—New or Updated (14%):

- 3 indicated voice mail on all phones
- 3 indicated a weekly or periodic electronic newsletter
- 1 indicated call forward
- 1 indicated each department or unit should designate a person or persons responsible for reporting activities about their departments
- 1 indicated encouraging each staff member to spend time with other offices to get a 1st-hand appreciation for those offices' functions
- 1 indicated that Public Affairs should take an active role in training faculty and staff about how to communicate with the public
- 1 person indicated written memos distributed to office mailboxes
- 1 indicated e-mail weekly updates

Method—When Method or Medium Doesn't Work Well (9%):

- 3 indicated to keep the number of meetings and committees to the bare minimum (too many meetings to stay informed and caught-up with primary tasks)
- 1 indicated relying too heavily on e-mail and posting minutes are poor and ineffective communication practices
- 1 person indicated not to use The Commercial Dispatch, TV stations, or The Spectator as a first source for disseminating information of major or critical importance to MUW faculty and staff
- 1 person indicated to reestablish the traditional alumnae association
- 1 person indicated that some offices on campus have employees who are rude and are not helpful—Students, other employees and outside people do not want to play phone tag—We need to all keep up with things that are going on
- 1 person indicated not being a big fan of consulting firms—When they are involved in communicating change, the campus community should revisit their conclusions to be sure we are comfortable with the direction they give us

Emphasizing Process/Current System, or “Process” (37, or 44% of 85 surveys):

Process—Timeliness of Information (5%):

- 3 indicated importance of allowing faculty and staff to be aware of issues ahead of time or before they are picked up in the media
- 1 indicated being more proactive about getting information out earlier

Process—Trust and Transparency of Process (13%):

- 1 indicated trust has to be developed before communication will improve
- 1 indicated any communication is better than none
- 1 indicated keeping everyone as informed as possible and engaged in the campus conversation
- 1 indicated to include only necessary information, not to turn the message into a "pep-talk"
- 1 indicated to allow for reasonable dissent from the campus community
- 1 encouraged openness to encourage trust of both the message and messenger
- 1 indicated to try to begin a process and work to improve it
- 1 indicated that communication has to be improved because the current climate and methods convey that opinions of faculty and staff are not valued
- 1 indicated the need for a willingness by all parties involved to compromise
- 1 person indicated to give faculty input a real voice
- 1 person indicated that there may be more of a communication breakdown between the community and MUW than within MUW itself

Process—Evaluation/Comparison of Current System (Making Better Use of What We Have In Place Now, etc.) (26%):

- 4 indicated employees should be required to sign-up for listservs or be required to have membership in one in which they are not allowed to opt-out
- 4 indicated all department websites should be updated consistently with the most up-to-date information and to showcase programs
- 1 indicated comparing best practices at other universities that are successful in communicating
- 1 indicated that calendar and events should be linked to webpages
- 1 indicated to make sure the e-mail system works properly
- 1 indicated campus-wide surveys allow everyone to voice her/his opinion-please use more often
- 1 indicated using the faculty/staff listserv as a way to share information (as opposed to relying on press releases and office announcements)
- 1 indicated there should be a limit enforced concerning what types of e-mails can be sent on listservs so that people will be more likely to pay attention to those listservs
- 1 indicated using media the campus trusts, including the campus media
- 1 indicated that the person sending information should sign that document or email rather than having a subordinate write and send the message

- 1 indicated to be specific if asking for assistance from the campus
- 1 indicated to be clear about where to go to get questions/concerns answered
- 1 indicated a need to improve telephone etiquette across campus
- 1 indicated to keep information about community and campus events and MUW campus map at the MUW Police gatehouse for visitors (and MUW community)
- 1 person indicated that faculty should communicate their concerns to their deans and faculty senators, asking that questions be brought up and answered in the appropriate forums; i.e., Administrative Council, Faculty Senate, etc.
- 1 person indicated that we can no longer just depend on the listservs because many do not use them correctly and therefore many ignore the important messages—We need to get caught up with other universities/colleges and have all info in an accessible place that we can go to—Website—Sending a daily/weekly e-mail highlighting the newest news or important info and that gives a link to the rest of the story on that website

Summary

Respondents who reported that campus-wide meetings have value indicated that they do so for both clarity and collegiality in equal proportion (67% and 68% respectfully). Of those who provided additional notes, however, 24% reported that campus-wide meetings often are ineffective because they either do more to discourage discussion (12%) or take too much valuable time from other tasks (12%); only eight respondents (9%) provided additional notes indicating that campus-wide meetings facilitate communication. Three respondents indicated that campus-wide meetings are best reserved for times when e-mail or other means cannot be used because issues are too complicated, too controversial, or when deliberation is needed. Additional suggestions address a greater need for smaller group meetings and the need to have an efficient flow of communication, both “top-down” and vice versa.

Based upon our current system, respondents show a clear preference for most campus communication via e-mail (59%), with all other communication via direct supervisor (28%), campus/group meetings (25%), and then webpages last (20%). There is indication of frustration for the sheer number of e-mails some receive (a cautious interpretation of that may be that too much time is spent determining which messages are relevant and which are not). Additional notes illustrate that the MUW homepage, in particular, is not being used as effectively as respondents would like, and the overarching concern appears to be the timeliness of posted updates. Other suggestions relate to the interactivity and specificity of information that should be available online (on a “news” site and via audience or group-specific sites), and to whom this responsibility should fall (e.g., this information could be managed by a representative from each department or unit). One respondent reported a concern that supervisors do not provide enough information, but it is difficult to determine how localized or wide-spread of an issue this may be. While “multiple means” of communication may be necessary, e-mail again seems to be the preference for reporting information and meetings seem to be the preference for deliberation over issues that should involve discussion. Other means of communication that respondents value include specific committee meetings, the campus

student media, the campus calendar, and the need to use some form of campus print or online newsletter.

The third survey item encouraged suggestions for improving communication to the campus about issues that may be perceived as controversial, and the fourth encouraged suggestions for improving communication practices at MUW. Respondents give clear indication that perceived controversial issues should not be treated as information “matter of fact” reports (for which e-mails seem to be the preference), but should be presented as matters requiring discussion (for which meetings and discussions with supervisors seem to be the preference). Some specific tools were proposed (e.g., campus-wide access and usage of voice mail, call forwarding, and print or online newsletters or updates). The value of webpages was indicated infrequently for controversial issues and proposed only if used as an interactive forum (e.g., blogs), moderated, and/or updated frequently. Particular concerns about the process or flow of communication stressed the timeliness of information and the transparency of decision-making processes (as much as is possible give issues of confidentiality, depending upon the controversial or perceived controversial nature of the issue, and to whom the information is being directed). Trust appears to be the primary concern for matters that may be perceived as controversial, and the timing, factual nature of information, and the amount of information provided (or explanation about why some information cannot be provided) appear to be key factors impacting trust. A repeated concern is frustration with discovering issues first in the local press, not via internal campus communication channels.

Please see the committee’s recommendations noted in Part 1 of this document.