

2009 Classified Connection Communication Survey Results

In 2005-2006, classified academic and administrative support personnel at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater were offered the opportunity to participate in an on-line professional needs assessment survey. Based on the feedback from that survey, COMMUNICATION was overwhelmingly the most important issue facing the classified staff at UW-Whitewater.

The purpose of this follow-up survey was to collect and share information regarding the communication needs of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater classified staff. The survey was conducted in February 2009 and 87 individuals participated.

Classified Connection Committee

Kari Borne, Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice

Jessica Cole, Registrar's Office

Eunice Lehner, Career and Leadership Development

Kathy Mather, Human Resources and Diversity

Cheryl Miritz, Project SWEETT

Jan Nordin, Registrar's Office

Pat Waege, Registrar's Office

<http://www.uww.edu/classifiedconnection/>

INFORMATION

The questions in this section of the survey were about how information flows between classified administrative staff and others in their department/division, and other offices on campus.

70% of respondents indicated that information is conveyed in a timely manner.

63% of respondents felt information is effectively communicated.

93% of respondents indicated they were good at communicating information to others.

57% of respondents noted that co-workers come to them for information.

94% of respondents actively seek out the information to do their job effectively. Places classified staff look for information include:

- Key web pages on the UWW site (Registrar, Budget & Finance, Human Resources, iCIT, University News, the Chancellor's blog)
- UWW databases (WINS, WISDM)
- Through training sessions at UWW
- Contacts on campus (classified co-workers in other departments, supervisors)
- Official UWW documents (Academic Calendar, Course Catalog)

82% of respondents indicated that email was their preferred method of communication. 13% preferred the phone.

Participants were asked to provide comments on this section of questions related to how INFORMATION flows between them and others in their department/division, and other offices on campus. Comments included:

- Email is best if I need a record of exactly what was said - phone is best when I need a fast answer.
- We do our best to keep our website up to date and to notify other offices, primarily by email, of information we think is relevant. We also schedule meetings with offices around the campus when email is not sufficient.
- I feel a little left out of the loop sometimes. I am responsible for the day-to-day running of my office for many people but I do not sit in on meetings, so sometimes I do not know the details of some information that would help me do my job better.
- I wish more people attended the CCC meetings so communication there could be more effective.
- I think it has been working quite well.
- We usually prefer email, as we can refer to it at a later time if needed.
- Because my job crosses over into the other colleges/departments I have lots of contact with other offices - good communication.
- Information does not always get from the top down to the classified staff. It has to pass through several people before it gets to me, so I often do not hear the information unless I ask or there is a problem.

INCLUSION

The questions in this section concerned inclusion. By the term "inclusion," we meant how much classified administrative staff feel included in issues such as decision-making, in their current position at UWW.

27% of respondents felt included in the decision-making process regarding staffing in their department/division.

23% of respondents felt included in the decision-making process regarding the staffing of leaders on this campus (e.g., search and screen committees).

44% of respondents indicated that they are invited to join committees (e.g., Classified Connection Committee).

81% of respondents indicated that their immediate supervisor allows them to participate on committees/groups.

92% of respondents indicated that their supervisor allows them to attend events (e.g., Chancellor's listening sessions, holiday gatherings).

9% of respondents indicated that they participate on committees/in groups on campus (e.g., LGBT Task Force, Women's Issues Committee).

17% of respondents felt they have been given opportunities to participate in decision-making on this campus.

45% of respondents indicated that they feel they are a valued member of the UW-Whitewater community.

64% of respondents indicated that their department/office has regular staff meetings, and that they regularly attend; 75% of these staff members indicated that their staff meetings convey pertinent information.

4% of respondents indicated that their department/office has staff meetings, but they choose not to attend.

22% of respondents indicated that their department/office has staff meetings, but they do not attend because they are for faculty only.

10% of respondents indicated that their department/office does not have staff meetings.

Participants were asked to provide comments on this section of questions related to INCLUSION (how much they feel included in issues such as decision-making at UWW). The following is a selection of representative comments.

- I feel relatively included, but I think there is room for improvement.
- Extremely included in all or most decisions in our department. I choose to stay away from the decision making on campus, so I don't know if I would even be included in such things.
- I attend staff meetings, but very seldom do they pass on the information I need at them.
- I do not feel included. I don't think the Search & Screens are valid in all situations. I do not feel my opinion is valued at any level.
- At a unit level I am more included in decision-making than I sometimes feel is appropriate. Beyond the college level I don't feel I am valued at all.
- I'm included because I take notes and write up the minutes.
- I often choose not to participate in things because I am not very social by nature.
- I would like to feel more included in the departmental decisions. Information is provided to me mostly after the fact.
- I serve on committees, but my supervisor isn't appreciative of my service outside the office.
- I feel there could be a more concerted effort to include classified staff on committees and to seek their opinions on items related to their workload, performance, employment.
- I believe a position on a search/screen committee is really just a token position - with the number of faculty/staff, the clerical position doesn't really register a serious input
- I would like to see classified staff included more in upper level searches.
- My supervisors made an extra effort to keep me informed of not only the issues pertaining to the job but also campus issues and encourage participation to any meeting we feel important.
- I feel that administration has given all staff, including classified staff many more opportunities to be involved in decision-making in recent years

SAFETY

The questions in this section were about how information regarding safety on campus is conveyed.

In an inclement weather situation, respondents prefer to be notified:

- 62% Broadcast email
- 14% Personalized email
- 7% Statement on UWW home page
- 0% Call to my office phone
- 7% Alarm (such as a fire alarm)
- 9% Other
 - Broadcast email + statement on homepage
 - Building voice-alert system

In case of utility/service interruptions (e.g., power/water outage, pesticide application), respondents prefer to be notified (if advance notice is an option):

- 74% Broadcast email
- 14% Personalized email
- 4% Statement on UWW home page
- 4% Call to my office phone
- 0% Alarm (such as a fire alarm)
- 3% Other
 - Broadcast email + statement on homepage

In a violent situation / security threat (e.g., active shooter), respondents prefer to be notified:

- 39% Broadcast email
- 17% Personalized email
- 0% Statement on UWW home page
- 23% Call to my office phone
- 16% Alarm (such as a fire alarm)
- 6% Other
 - Building broadcast system
 - as many methods as possible
 - through my supervisor
 - Alarm different than fire alarm

For other crime incidents (i.e. theft), respondents prefer to be notified:

- 69% Broadcast email
- 17% Personalized email
- 6% Statement on UWW home page
- 6% Call to my office phone
- 1% Alarm (such as a fire alarm)
- 1% Other
 - Building broadcast system

Regarding campus construction, respondents prefer to be notified:

- 74% Broadcast email
- 10% Personalized email
- 16% Statement on UWW home page
- 0% Call to my office phone
- 0% Alarm (such as a fire alarm)
- 0% Other

SAFETY (continued)

When they are at work, 59% of respondents feel well-informed about inclement weather that may affect them while they are at UWW.

57% of respondents feel well-informed about any power outages or disruption of utility services that may affect them while they are at work.

57% of respondents are confident that they will be informed if a violent situation erupts on campus.

58% of respondents feel well-informed about the changes on campus due to construction (e.g., sidewalk closures, parking changes).

58% of respondents indicated that information that affects their safety while at UWW is conveyed to them in a timely manner.

94% of respondents inform others when they receive information that may affect the building they work in.

Participants were asked to provide comments on this section of questions related to how information regarding SAFETY on campus is conveyed. The following is a selection of representative comments.

- Communication regarding construction could be A LOT better.
- In general I would want an email about important information however in an emergency, the fastest way to get out the information is preferred, however that may be.
- What is important to one may not be important to all. However, that shouldn't stop the campus from putting out broadcast emails. If it doesn't pertain to me, I'll delete it. If it pertains to me, I'll remember it.
- How does the general public get information about issues in buildings or on campus (ie visitors, alumni, etc)
- I'm usually well-informed when it comes to issues that are not time-sensitive (i.e. power outages and inclement weather broadcasts), however, I am not convinced that I would be notified quickly enough of a shooter on our campus to make informed decisions for myself. A good example is the boiler explosion. My first information about this event came almost immediately from a social-networking website (our students were posting). It was substantially longer for the campus to put out notification of this situation.
- I think broadcast email works well. It does for our department, if there is information that needs to be conveyed building-wide, because of broadcast email, the office staff usually receives the information right away.
- In the department I work in, my office mate and I have specific staff members we are to notify of inclement weather.
- We have a leader in each department that contacts us. Sometimes notifications are on done on e-mail in a timely manner.
- Too often, it's heard about "through the grapevine" and not necessarily accurate.
- During the mall construction last summer I often was providing notifications to my dept. upon discovering exit or sidewalk closures for which we did not receive prior notification.
- Usually, the building supervisor advises; if that person isn't here - no one is aware of the issue. Not a good system.
- I think that Broadcast e-mail will be/is the most effective way to get this information out regarding any safety issue on campus. If perhaps there is a present danger to the building I work in, then I would expect a phone call to the office.
- Accurately. (i.e., TMJ4 recently reported that UWW was closed so I stayed home to later find out that I had to burn a vacation day.)

TECHNOLOGY

The questions in this section are about how information regarding technology is communicated on campus.

72% of respondents indicated that they feel well-informed about technological issues at UWW (e.g., server outages, software upgrades).

74% of respondents indicated that the notices they get from iCIT (Instructional, Communication, and Information Technology) are easy to understand.

63% of respondents indicated that people in their department/division come to them for information about technology, and 35% of those respondents indicated that they are able answer questions based on the information they receive from iCIT.

Participants were asked to provide comments on this section of questions related to TECHNOLOGY (how information regarding technology is conveyed). The following is a selection of representative comments.

- I'm informed of most issues and outages. However most things seem to happen on the weekends and evenings when I'm not in the office.
- I appreciate the outage notices. They are extremely helpful when trying to prioritize my work schedule. However, not all technology communication has been good.
- I think every building should have their own help desks like they do in Carlson.
- It is my job to know about developments in technology that affect our office. I am well informed in this area.
- I need it explained to me in person.
- Since information is sent to all, by iCIT, which is proper – I do not have people asking me questions.
- What we are getting now seems ok with me.
- Their webpage is very hard to navigate through.

IMPROVEMENTS

Since the last survey, several changes have been made in an attempt to improve communication at UWW. Classified administrative staff were asked to indicate how much they agree with the following statements.

42% of respondents indicated that the Chancellor's listening sessions have improved communication on campus (36% have not experienced).

25% of respondents indicated that the reduction of broadcast emails has improved communication on campus (5% have not experienced).

36% of respondents indicated that the implementation of the UW-Whitewater This Week (weekly broadcast email newsletter) has improved communication on campus (4% have not experienced).

3% of respondents indicated that the use of blogs has improved communication on campus (37% have not experienced).

52% of respondents indicated that the emergency updates on the UWW web site have improved communication on campus (12% have not experienced).

64% of respondents indicated that monthly Classified Connection meetings have improved communication on campus (18% have not experienced).

49% of respondents indicated that iCIT workshops have improved communication on campus. (15% have not experienced).

Participants were asked to provide comments on this section of questions related to how recent IMPROVEMENTS implemented on campus improved communication. The following is a selection of representative comments.

- I think replacing broadcast emails with UW-Whitewater This Week was a bad idea. "This Week" simply isn't as effective.
- UW-Whitewater This Week seems to give me more information that I didn't have before.
- I strongly disagree about the broadcast emails. There were not that many before, but I felt more informed. They should not have been reduced.
- I find the UW-Whitewater This Week difficult to read. I miss the broadcast emails related to departmental newsletters, I forget to look for them.
- I LOVE the Chancellor's BLOG!!!
- I love going to the Classified Connection meetings.
- Reduction of broadcast e-mails has made it easier to pay attention to messages that are of high priority, however, they have cut out an important means of sending out important, time sensitive messages to students who are unlikely to read the weekly campus information site.
- I like the UW Whitewater this week emails rather than a lot of individual emails announcing all the events happening on campus.

SUGGESTIONS

Classified administrative staff were asked what they would change about the way their supervisor communicates with them.

- The majority of the respondents indicated they wouldn't change anything about the way their supervisor communicates with them. Comments included "she makes me feel valued," "I appreciate his open, honest way of communicating," "she's incredibly available despite her very busy schedule," and "our system works well for both of us."
- Some respondents indicated they wished their supervisor would fill them in more often (i.e. when something is discussed at meetings that classified staff do not attend, people want that information shared after the meeting).
- Some respondents want more consistency in communicating with their supervisor.
- Some respondents would change the timeliness of the communication they receive from their supervisor.
- Some respondents want less emails, others wanted more communicating in writing.

Classified administrative staff were asked what they would change about the way their division/college communicates with them.

- The majority of the respondents indicated they wouldn't change anything about the way their division/college communicates with them. Comments included "I think my college does a great job at disseminating info to all the departments" and "the Dean does a great job in communicating."
- Some respondents wanted more information directly from "the source" and not passed through supervisors.
- Some respondents indicated that more inclusion and respect were needed in their division/college.
- Some respondents wanted more meetings and/or listservs that also included administrative staff.

Classified administrative staff were asked what they would change about the way the university leaders communicate with them.

- Many of the respondents indicated they wouldn't change anything about the way university leaders communicate with them.
- Many of the respondents indicated that they would like more emails from university leaders. Comments included they would like "individual communication on specific topics, not lumped into one weekly e-mail," "allowing broadcast emails again" and "more emails about happenings."
- Some respondents wanted to be more engaged with university leaders on decision-making.
- Some respondents indicated that information could be conveyed more timely by university leaders.

Classified administrative staff were asked what they could change to improve communication.

- Many of the respondents indicated that if they changed their own attitude, communication would likely improve.
- Many of the respondents indicated that if they asked for more information, communication would likely improve.
- Some respondents noted that they could make phone calls instead of always emailing.

Classified administrative staff were asked to list other types of communication methods not addressed on this survey.

- Some respondents indicated that in-person communication wasn't specifically addressed in the survey.
- Some respondents noted that their department/division uses WIKIs, and that they work well.