



**To:** SACUA

**From:** Cliff Lampe, Chair, Communications Advisory Committee

**Subject:** Report on Activities of the Communications Advisory Committee for 2023-2024

**Members:**

Ellen Bauerle  
Laura Beny  
William A. Calvo-Quirós  
Jim Cranford  
Stefanie Galban  
Pat Herbst  
Cliff Lampe (Chair)  
Sarah Murray  
Maheema Kohli  
Malinda Brunk

**SACUA Liaison:**

Alex Yasha Yi

**Meeting Dates:**

Thur. 11/16 from 9-10am  
Thur. 12/14 from 9-10am  
Fri. 3/8 from 1-2pm  
Tues. 4/30 from 4-5pm

**Committee Charge**

1. Develop some best practices for streamlining communication on campus and reducing email clutter.
2. Explore and offer recommendations, if needed, regarding how the University considers storytelling with the public in order to promote faculty research and greater community engagement.
3. Consider whether to have an event to provide information and advice about how faculty can effectively communicate with the media about their research—with the logistical assistance of the Faculty Senate Office.



4. Consider emergent issues or topics brought forward by CAC members or the Vice President for Communications for discussion over the course of the year. While coordinating with the Faculty Senate Office to help avoid duplicating work that SACUA has now referred to itself or to another committee, the committee may also continue discussing any issues or topics raised in the committee's most recent annual committee report.

### **Committee Actions**

The CAC committee met three times in the 23-24 AY. VP Hunter canceled two scheduled meetings that were supposed to have happened during that time period. The committee was not consulted for feedback between meetings at any point in the academic year by the Office of the Vice President.

### **Information Obtained**

The committee covered the four major charge items it was given this year. Information obtained here is included below.

1. Develop some best practices for streamlining communication on campus and reducing email clutter.

This topic was discussed in our March meeting. It was recognized as an issue felt by many people across the organization. The subcommittee recommends a separate task force to determine best practices around simplifying communication. This task force should include a broad range of faculty, including those with expertise in this area. The distributed nature of the university makes a central solution unlikely.

2. Explore and offer recommendations, if needed, regarding how the University considers storytelling with the public to promote faculty research and greater community engagement.

This topic was addressed in our December meeting. No resolution was reached though it was recognized that because of the decentralized nature of the university, this was difficult to handle centrally, and that negative news from the university is clearly swamping our ability to highlight our scholarship.

3. Consider whether to have an event to provide information and advice about how faculty can effectively communicate with the media about their research—with the logistical assistance of the Faculty Senate Office.

This item was on the agenda for our April meeting, but that meeting was abruptly canceled.

4. Consider emergent issues or topics brought forward by CAC members or the Vice President for Communications for discussion over the course of the year. While coordinating with the Faculty Senate Office to help avoid duplicating work that SACUA



has now referred to itself or to another committee, the committee may also continue discussing any issues or topics raised in the committee's most recent annual committee report.

The three hours we were able to meet with the vice president this semester were primarily taken up by issues of emergent crisis. From the GEO strike in the fall, to the campus action around the conflict in the Middle East, to LEO, to the football sign-stealing scandal; there were many opportunities to deal with crisis over this year. What became clear is that the communication from the university is driven by fear of media narratives – including what might be subject to FOIA requests. Faculty are not the primary (or secondary) audience of central administration communication except peripherally in terms of how they support students or not.

During the meetings, VP Hunter spoke clearly about the role of the university as a neutral platform – which is different than the ability of students and faculty to express their opinions. Even though the public can't often differentiate what is an official university position vs. that of an individual member, the university has re-stated its values as a neutral platform for free speech. "The institution is not a moral agent."

### **Recommendations**

It is the opinion of the Chair that within the allowed rules of the Faculty Senate, this committee should be dissolved. The committee has been not effective in communicating feedback to the administrators in this area, and as shown by the Vice President's efforts to interact with the committee as little as possible, it seems not to be an effective mechanism of feedback for them. This is understandable, as committee members represent their personal views, but don't often try and represent a broader set of the faculty. It functions as a limited focus group of a few individual faculty. It seems that faculty also feel that their feedback is not effective based on their limited participation in the meetings, and lack of response to emails.

If it is necessary to have this committee due to Senate rules, it should be reduced to the bare minimum structure necessary to meet the requirements of those rules.

Some committee members recognized the issues present with this Committee, and felt that other solutions and paths forward should be explored.