

Public Information, Marketing, and Communications Special Program Review

Committee Report and Recommendations

Revised 12 June 2015

Committee members

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Introduction

Our committee convened in November 2014 to provide a Special Program Review related to public information and marketing and communications (PIM&C) activities at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The goal of the review was to recommend actions that would result in reduced campus wide spending on PIM&C, while maintaining or improving the effectiveness of these activities. Our charge included a review of not only the central Marketing and Communications department (Central M&C), but also the PIM&C-related activities carried out by the individual units distributed across the university.

Specific elements of our charge included:

- 1) Please make recommendations as to how FY15 spending on communication activities might be reduced by \$100,000 from FY14 spending levels (if it hasn't already).
- 2) Please make recommendations as to how FY16 spending on communication activities might be reduced \$250,000 from FY15 spending levels (or \$350,000 from FY14 spending levels).
- 3) Please make recommendations on ways to increase efficiency and coordination between the M&C department and the unit communication teams.
- 4) The PIM&C review should identify ways in which M&C and the unit communication teams may be most likely to increase external funding support and decrease costs.
- 5) The PIM&C review should offer recommendations on other issues as seem appropriate.

According to the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, a university's overall marketing and communications expenditures for central marketing and communication functions should be one to three percent of a university's operating budget—not including staff and benefits. UAF Central M&C expenditures in FY13 were only 0.27 percent.

Because our research showed that expenditures and staffing are already lean across campus, our initial goal was to identify areas that could be reduced with the least negative impact on student recruitment and retention, institutional reputation, development and alumni relations. In our initial report submitted on January 9, 2015, we focused on savings in communications costs that did not require major structural re-organization or personnel reduction.

After a brief review of our report by the Chancellor's Cabinet, we were asked to extend our efforts to a review of the current decentralized structure of marketing and communications across campus and to evaluate whether or not there are efficiencies or cost savings that could result from a fully centralized or hybrid model. We were also asked to evaluate what we consider an ideal model for marketing and communications for UAF and to outline what steps we can take toward that ideal model with an anticipated budget cut of as much as 25 percent.

Process

In order to carry out our charge, we reviewed the following information for the period FY08 to FY14 for Central M&C and the units:

- Number and type of events across campus, including catering expenditures
- Expenditures related to publications, including printing, freight and postage
- PIO job descriptions including percentage of responsibilities doing strictly PIO tasks
- Expenditures of M&C and unit staff
- PIM&C-related organizational charts and alignment
- An audit of PIO activities and responsibilities
- Marketing and advertising expenditures, including swag
- Organizational charts for marketing and communications units from universities across the country
- Organizational charts (both current and proposed) for marketing and communications at UAF
- Salaries and benefits costs for PIOs in individual units at UAF

Results

A. Identification of non-structural, non-personnel changes

Element 1 of our charge requested recommendations for reducing FY15 spending on communication activities by \$100,000 compared to FY14 spending levels. However, this goal has already been met. The budget for the Central M&C department was reduced by \$100,000 in FY15 compared to FY14 in order to reduce marketing-related costs. We note that this budget cut was absorbed solely by the M&C department, and not shared by the individual departments performing PIM&C-related activities at the unit level.

Our committee estimated that the \$250,000 reduction in PIM&C spending during FY16 (Element 2) can be achieved through 15 percent cuts in spending on printing and postage of marketing-related material, e.g., annual reports, as well as 15 percent cuts to events-related catering. We believe that efficiencies related to printing and postage can be achieved by relying more heavily upon electronic forms of communications. Moreover, we believe that a campaign focused on reducing the production and distribution of printed material would find broad support across campus and responds to audience preferences in how they receive information. Events catering costs can potentially be reduced by more closely coordinating and bundling events together and reducing or eliminating catering for small, stand-alone events such as lectures.

It's evident that units need to spend less time and fewer resources organizing and promoting events that offer very little return on investment (ROI). Instead, unit communicators' time should be dedicated to content generation that nets a greater ROI for the individual unit and the University of Alaska Fairbanks as a whole. Story generation on UAF students, teaching and research strengthens our brand and positions our institution as America's Arctic University.

Data show that news releases promoting event-related activity at UAF constituted 66 percent of all FY14 news releases distributed. However, the vast majority of news hits, "eyes on content" and advertising

value equivalency can be attributed to the news releases that presented topics that were not event-related. According to data collected, 93 percent of UAF’s news hits in local, national and international media are generated by releases that are not event-related.

Our 15 percent cut recommendations pertain specifically to unrestricted funds categorized by the following account codes: 3332 (Printing Non-Resale), 3351, 3444, 3448 (Freight/Postage) and 3008 (Catering Special Events). We do not recommend specific cuts to marketing/outreach activities funded by restricted funds.

Table 1: UAF Campuswide Unrestricted Fund Expenditures in Selected Account Codes

Fiscal Year	Catering (3008)	Printing (3332)	Freight/Postage (3351 + 3444 + 3448)	Total Savings
2008	\$421	\$641	\$603	
2009	\$565	\$681	\$689	
2010	\$484	\$745	\$673	
2011	\$502	\$699	\$651	
2012	\$455	\$679	\$594	
2013	\$445	\$606	\$562	
2014	\$488	\$591	\$462	
FY08-14 Average				
FY08-14 Average	\$480	\$663	\$605	
15% of Average				
15% of Average	\$72	\$99	\$91	\$262
15% of FY14				
15% of FY14	\$73	\$89	\$69	\$231
16.5% of FY14				
16.5% of FY14	\$80	\$98	\$76	\$254

All numbers in thousands.

In our analysis, we identified \$262,000 savings by applying a 15 percent cut to the FY08 to FY14 average spending in each of the cost categories identified in Table 1. If using the FY14 numbers only, then a 16.5 percent reduction would be required to achieve greater than \$250,000 in savings.

B. Analysis of communication team structure

In our evaluation of models for structuring marketing and communications efforts across UAF we made several broad observations. First, communications personnel are widely distributed across campus and operate under various titles, job descriptions and levels of FTE committed to PIM&C activities. Academic units, for instance, tend to be underrepresented by PIOs, but do tend to support PIM&C activities by employing full or part-time web technicians, content writers or other communications personnel. However in many instances these personnel perform those functions as part of other, non-PIM&C jobs. Thus, the prospect of managing or even fully evaluating the distributed PIM&C activities across all UAF units poses a significant challenge. Second, the broad nature of the UAF mission calls for specialization of PIM&C activities. This specialization is manifested in the current structure, whereby some individual units sponsor communications professionals for the purpose of meeting the unit’s specialized needs. Third, while all committee members agreed that efficiencies could likely be found by

centralizing and sharing PIM&C-related services across units, we also believe that a fully-centralized model would not meet the perceived needs or expressed desires of many individual units.

As a result of these observations, we propose a hybridized structure for PIM&C-related activities that provides shared services through specialized communications teams called “pods” while allowing individual units to sponsor additional personnel/services specifically dedicated to their own units if desired and funds are available. The model represented in this report is an example of how a shared services pod could be structured. The model is designed to be scalable, such that the idealized version described here could be implemented in phases, then expand or contract to meet identified needs or budgetary constraints. The individual pod names, the units that reside within the pods, and who each pod reports to, are an example of how the pods could be organized. If this model is implemented, the pod structure, who resides within each pod and final reporting lines would need to be determined.

Table 2: EXAMPLE: Proposed Shared Services Communication Pods

Pod Name	Primary Focus (2012-2019 Strategic Plan Goals)	Units	Reports To
Academics	Goal 6: Enhance UAF’s competitive advantage by attracting and keeping the best and brightest students, staff, faculty.	CLA, CNSM, SOE, SOM, Summer Sessions, Libraries	Provost, M&C Director
Athletics	Goal 3: Serve Alaska’s diverse communities in ways that are increasingly responsive and accessible and enhance the social, economic and environmental well-being of individuals and communities.	Athletics	Vice Chancellor for University and Student Advancement, M&C Director
Central Marketing & Communications	Goals 2 and 6: see above Goal 7: Develop innovative approaches to managing university resources to support its mission and position it to meet challenges of the future.	All units under VC for USA, Chancellor’s initiatives	Vice Chancellor for University and Student Advancement, M&C Director
Community Engagement	Goal 3: Serve Alaska’s diverse communities in ways that are increasingly responsive and accessible and enhance the social, economic and environmental well-being of individuals and communities.	CRCD, CTC, E-Learning, Museum, SNRE	Vice Chancellor for Rural, Community and Native Education, M&C Director
Research	Goal 2: Promote UAF as Alaska’s premier research enterprise in partnership with state and federal agencies, industry, Alaska Native organizations and civic groups.	CEM/INE, GI, IAB, IARC, SFOS, VCR Office	Vice Chancellor for Research, M&C Director

The five communications pods constituting the model are presented in Table 2. This model will provide better service overall through more complete coverage for all units and allow for additional support as units rely on the many team members of the pod to meet their communications needs. Members of the pod are not only a dedicated resource but will provide an overall higher skill level than relying on isolated communications professionals who may not have the range of skills needed by the units represented in this structure. Additionally, pod members will have a built-in mentoring system, will develop a more thorough understanding of other pod positions and will have opportunities for promotion (not found in most units for communications professionals). As indicated in the table, we propose to assign individual UAF units to one of several communications pods designed to provide a wide range of PIM&C services. By making these shared and/or sponsored services available within the pods, we anticipate that individual units will not support these activities outside of the pod structure. In the ideal model, the core individuals in each pod will be co-located in order to maximize the benefits of combined expertise and shared purpose. The pods are organized according to areas of specialization, in rough accordance with goals set out in the UAF 2012-2019 Strategic Plan. The final composition of the communication pods would be determined at a later date.

A graphic depiction of the pod model is presented in Figure 1. The model provides shared expertise in public information, content writing, web design/social media, graphic design and events coordination. We have depicted each of these areas of expertise as individual communications professional (CP) positions; however, we recognize that further consideration may yield blended or additional positions. We recognize that it may take time to get each pod up to full strength and discuss this later in this report.

Individual positions within each communication pod are colored either gold or blue. The gold positions represent shared service CPs and reflect the skill sets necessary to adequately promote all units that comprise the pod. Gold positions will ideally include a lead communications professional who serves as strategist, manages the pod and serves in their specialty area, while a content writer, web and social media coordinator, graphic designer and events coordinator and/or other positions as needed round out the team. Units served by each pod will financially support the gold positions through a shared services model with funding coming from each unit in proportion to their overall budget. The blue positions represent positions sponsored, i.e., funded, by individual units or individual projects requiring a higher level of service than that offered via the shared model. **While Figure 1 depicts only two blue positions in each unit pod, there is no limit to the number of blue positions that could be contained within a pod.**

As noted above, individual pods are organized around a lead CP, depicted as a gold rectangle in Figure 1. We represented the lead CP in each pod as a PIO, however that individual could potentially arise from any of the CP specialties indicated in gold ovals. The lead CP will report to the appropriate vice chancellor/provost, but will also be tasked with coordinating with the M&C director. We consider this coordination between lead CPs and the M&C Director to be important, as it is intended to allow specialization in each pod while at the same time promoting and maintaining a cohesive message across UAF.

As indicated in Figure 1, individuals in the blue positions report directly to their sponsoring unit dean/director, or their sponsoring project director/PI. This is another crucial aspect of the model, as it allows units requiring extensive PIM&C services to directly sponsor and oversee those services as unit or

project funding allows. However, as members of their communications pod, sponsored CPs will be expected to coordinate closely with the lead CP not only to promote a unified message, but also to offer shared services to other units in the pod when time permits, additional funding is available, and the dean/director/PI has authorized the individual to do so.

The Central M&C Director, who oversees not only Central M&C, but also serves as a joint supervisor of each lead CP, will play a crucial bridging role between the unit pods and Central M&C. Central M&C will also provide some expertise not available in the pods, will serve as a resource for all the pods and will continue to fulfill its charge to support the chancellor's initiatives and the units under the Vice Chancellor for University and Student Advancement.

We believe the proposed model will ultimately promote system-wide savings not only by capitalizing on shared services, but also by consolidating distributed PIM&C efforts into a more well-defined and manageable structure. However, it is challenging to know at present how much savings will be found, or how soon those savings will be realized.

For this reason, the pod model is designed to be scalable. Indeed, if it is implemented during tight budgetary times, the first incarnation may not include all of the gold positions listed, and the blue positions may be relatively few. As we become accustomed to working within this framework, individual units or UAF as a whole may elect to add positions as necessary and funding becomes available.

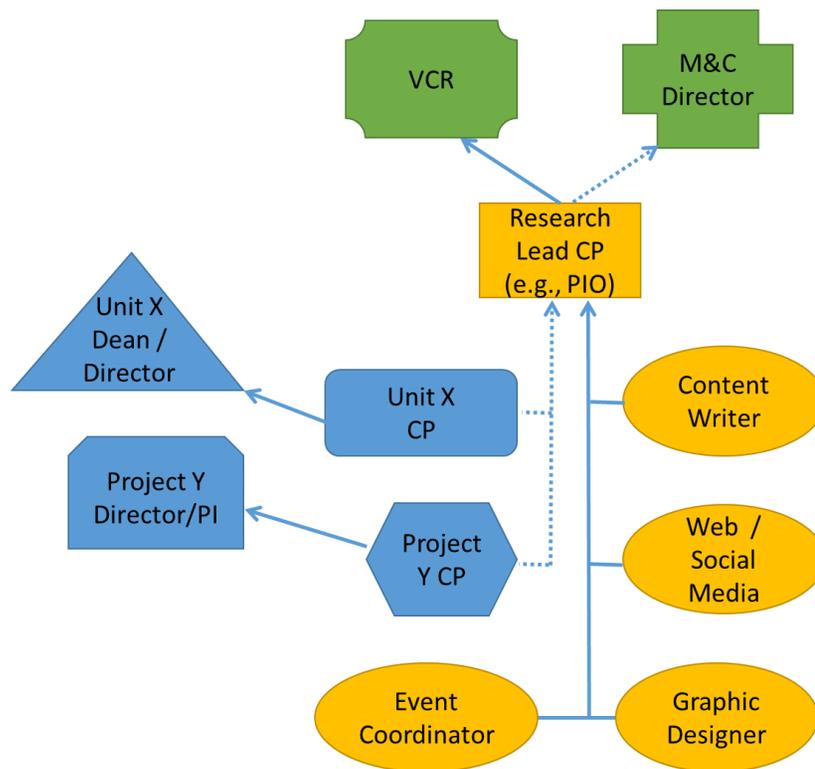
Implementation of the pod model in FY16 for FY17 would require significant effort on the part of its proponents. It would likely be less robust than that outlined in Figure 1 at the start and, instead, be realized through a series of phases. The final composition of the pod would not be fully realized for several years.

Phase one would consist of deans and directors conducting a detailed review of their respective PIM&C efforts in cooperation with Central M&C. As individual units know their specific needs best (web design, conference coordination, content writing) it's important for them to be intricately involved in the process. Once the evaluation is complete, deans and directors should determine how many blue positions are required (if any) and share that information with Chancellor's Cabinet and Central M&C for phase two of the implementation process.

In Phase Two the level of funding needed from units within each pod will be proportional to their budget. Larger units may invest in additional positions as needed. As information is relayed from deans and directors, pods reflected in Figure 1 may be adjusted. Based on unit input, there may be a need for additional gold positions, e.g. more content writers, etc. to fulfill needs of a specific pod. As mentioned earlier, this ability to expand or contract is one of the benefits of this hybrid model.

Once pod size is determined, space will be determined for the core members of the pod (gold positions) to co-locate. Pods would ideally be situated near their units for close access by unit or project CPs, as well as deans, directors, faculty, staff and students of the various units represented by the pod.

Figure 1: Example of a shared services Communication Pod (“Research” is used as the example). The number of gold positions and blue positions is not yet known, nor are the specific areas of expertise defined for the individuals holding those positions (e.g., content writer, graphic designer, etc.). Such are the questions to be answered prior to pod model development and implementation.



EXAMPLE:

Unit Pods: Four pods, each serving a group of related units.

Academics: CLA, CNSM, Libraries, SOE, SOM, Summer Sessions

Athletics

Community Engagement: CRCD, CTE, E-learning, Museum, SNRE

Research: CEM/INE, Geophysical Institute, IAB, IARC, SFOS, VCR office

Recommendations

Based upon the above analysis, we recommend that UAF pursue a 15 percent reduction in average spending (or a 16.5 percent reduction in FY14 spending) in the cost codes listed in Table 1. This will likely satisfy the immediate goal of reducing PIM&C costs by \$250,000.

Our committee also discussed a number of cost-savings/efficiency measures (Elements 3, 4, and 5) that merit consideration going forward. While we did not calculate the anticipated savings that might be generated by such measures, we believe that UAF would benefit by considering the following actions:

- 1) Reduce the number of events at UAF by combining related events.
 - a) Examples include combining annual awards events (Usibelli, alumni, staff) into one major event and combining research-related events (Arctic Day, Undergraduate Research Day, etc.) into one major event. Combined events could provide cost and effort efficiencies and broaden the visibility and impact of each event.
- 2) Reduce the amount of marketing-related promotional material (swag) purchased in the units. We recommend that Central M&C review all swag orders on campus to ensure brand consistency and research ways to bring swag-related costs down for campus units.
- 3) Share e-tools such as MailChimp (used for blast emails) and Cvent. From a cursory survey we see that there are e-tools that are widely used on campus and a single annual subscription, available across campus, would save money.
- 4) Promote alignment/cooperation/collaboration between Central M&C and PIM&C-related activities in the individual units.
 - a) Collaboration of marketing and communications activities across campus should be enhanced through a continued partnership between Central M&C and the units. More consistency among units, i.e., services provided, expertise, and prioritization of content generation and story ideas, is clearly needed. Thus, it is essential that Central M&C continue to provide frequent communication, guidance and support to units to collaboratively achieve the UAF mission.
 - i) At present, PIOs meet monthly to share information. We recommend that deans and directors be trained in basic marketing and information principles.
 - ii) An online survey could be used by Central M&C to get a better idea of what tools and training unit PIOs feel would assist them in doing their jobs more efficiently.
 - b) Central M&C should collaborate with Human Resources (HR) to develop standardized language in PIO job descriptions so as to ensure that people serving as PIOs have appropriate experience in this specialized field. In addition, Central M&C should draft a few standardized interview questions for position descriptions that include PIO duties.
 - c) Before a new PIO is hired, units should be required to address a series of questions outlining the anticipated services to be provided and benefits to be gained from the hire. A seasoned PIO should be on hiring committees for PIO positions.

- d) Before a PIO is hired, units should work with Central M&C and HR to determine if there is benefit to a shared-service model with another unit. The first step in this direction could be to have units collaborate if they do not have the budget to fund a full-time PIO.
 - e) Consider the best long-term model of marketing and communications structure at UAF, including decentralized, centralized and hybrid models.
 - f) Coordination would be enhanced by recommending that all unit PIOs, working with their immediate supervisors (generally a dean or director), prepare an annual plan. This plan will be shared with Central M&C for informational purposes and align with the UAF Integrated Marketing and Communications Plan developed annually for UAF by Central M&C.
- 5) Recommendation(s) about structure: The shared services communication pod structure will provide all units on campus with a specialized team of communications professionals to support their PIM&C functions. These communicators will be experts in the areas of public and media relations, writing, web design and social media, graphic design and event planning. With these skill sets represented, the pod structure will provide better equity in PIM&C across the various units and will support cohesive messages across UAF.
- a) The communications pod structure will increase collaboration among like units and Central M&C. This model retains a stronger link to units and allows for specialized, unit-funded CPs as deemed appropriate in contrast to the fully centralized model.
 - b) This structure ensures that communication moves up from the units and down from Central M&C and the respective VC or Provost. There is an individual in place, the lead CP, that manages these lines of communication and thereby aligns and prioritizes messaging and the management of pod activity.
 - c) The pod structure invites cross-training opportunities among CPs, which improves efficiency and thereby reduces the cost of PIM&C across campus. The Communications Professionals that were once locked into very specialized niches can expand their skills through the pod structure.
 - d) Additionally, this structure provides opportunities for professional growth for UAF communicators.
 - e) This structure is customizable and scalable and can contract and expand as needed.