

Guidelines for Internal Communications at Colby-Sawyer College

I. Background

Colby-Sawyer College hired communication consultants Wilson/Gould to review our communications and public relations functions. The consultants conducted interviews and surveys of faculty, staff, and students to examine a number of important issues, including internal communications. In their February 2001 report, Wilson/Gould cited concerns among campus community members about current protocols for campus-wide communications.

According to the report, many community members felt the college uses mass voice-mail excessively, and that this practice has inadvertently created a disincentive for attentive listening to campus-wide announcements. Community members expressed a preference for e-mail, a communications vehicle they perceive as less invasive and a more appropriate way of communicating across campus.

In regard to other communication needs, community members expressed a need for timely, interactive, and less formal vehicles for campus communications. For example, they cited the need for a venue to announce current news such as faculty/staff accomplishments or the arrival of new staff or faculty members. To address these concerns and streamline our campus communications, Wilson/Gould recommended that we limit our use of mass voice mail in favor of mass e-mail, and that we expand our use of the college web site in a variety of new ways.

After reviewing the consultants report, researching the issues further, and producing draft guidelines, Vice Presidents Don Hasseltine and Doug Atkins, and Director of Communications Kimberly Slover met early in 2002 with representatives from the various offices on campus that most often utilize campus-wide communications, including Human Resources, Information Resources, Student Development, and Academic Affairs. The discussion revealed serious concerns from Student Development about whether the policy should apply to their communications with students; as well as concerns that imminent advances in our technological systems would soon alter and improve our modes of electronic communication across campus.

In the summer of 2002, Information Resources completed some upgrades to our technology, which enable this department to easily manage and update e-mail addresses for faculty, staff, and students. Information Resources can now provide departments/offices/individuals on campus with easy access to mass e-mail distribution across campus.

Additionally, the college has continued to expand and improve our web site. Individual departments and offices are using their sites to communicate with both on-campus and external constituencies. The Communications Office has introduced a new on-line publication, which seeks to provide a timelier and more interactive communications vehicle for the campus community. *Colby-Sawyer Currents* resides on the college web site and is accessible from the home page, offering a centralized location for community news, upcoming events, and links to popular areas on our web site. *Currents* seeks to address the community's need for a less formal way to communicate

with the entire campus and decrease the use of voice-mail or e-mail for non-urgent news. The Communications Office regularly sends out e-mail messages that provide a direct link to *Currents*, alerts readers to updates, and solicits their news.

The **Guidelines for Internal Communications**, which seek to streamline our mass communications across campus, are provided below.

II. Recommendations

- Limit use of **mass voice mail** as a public address system to rare and special occasions. Mass voice-mail should be reserved for urgent, sensitive, or highly important matters. For example, the closure of the college due to inclement weather would be considered an appropriate use of mass voice mail, as would time-sensitive parking instructions, and technical problems with the college's computer system. The college has designated a spokesperson (and several designees) to deliver mass voice-mail announcements as a way to ensure the community will recognize these as high-priority messages. Please note: Campus Activities will continue to use mass voice-mail to communicate with the student body about events, athletics and recreation, student clubs, and to provide other student-related information.
- Use **e-mail** and the **Colby-Sawyer College web site** as the primary vehicles for standard campus-wide communications. Utilize **e-mail** to communicate non-urgent, but time-sensitive, campus-wide information. Use the **web site**, including ***Colby-Sawyer Currents***, to alert the community to athletic, academic, social, and cultural events and to announce faculty, staff, and student achievements.
- The campus should continue to communicate **in print** for appropriate official documents that require more formality and greater attention to style and form, including, but not limited to, high-level communications with benefactors; confidential or sensitive personnel- or student-related information; documents that require a signature; and invitations to formal events.
- Encourage greater use of our **web site** as the primary medium to communicate non-urgent information, and consider publishing on-line versions of print publications. (The college has begun this process, placing the *Student Handbook*, *Faculty/Staff Handbook*, *Faculty/Staff Directory*, *Colby-Sawyer Currents*, and the *College Calendar* on the college web site. This process should continue, with the Web Council serving the community as advisors on issues from technical/editorial training to expansion and development of the college web site.)

III. Implementation

The above recommendations will require some operational changes, including the following:

- **Treasurer Doug Lyon and his designees are authorized to alert the campus community to high-priority announcements through mass voice-mail messages. Student Development and Campus Activities are authorized to communicate with the student body via mass voice-mail messages.**
- **Information Resources will manage and provide authorized access to college's mass e-mail distribution lists (to faculty, staff, students).**
- **The president and vice presidents' offices and departments/offices that are required to communicate frequently with campus constituencies (Human Resources; Information Resources; and Communications Office) will maintain authorized access to the e-mail distribution lists.**
- **Other departments/offices/individuals with prior approval from their area vice president may gain access to the distribution lists.**

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