

Statewide Comms Committee: Report to Council, January 2023

Progress Report

Since its official inception in November 2022, UC-AFT's Statewide Communications Committee has been working to update our union's outreach and membership materials. Our agenda was based on a [specific list of requests from the staff](#), including our Know Your Rights flier, our logo, and promotional pamphlets for outreach to new members.

Our work began with a critical assessment of our existing outreach and membership materials to determine where our updating work should begin. One item we had been tasked with improving was our union logo which currently includes the Unit 18 campaign slogan, "Faculty Equity, Student Success." Unit 17 members on the committee pointed out that this slogan doesn't really resonate for librarians and couldn't be used in their upcoming campaign. Those comments opened a much deeper discussion about our identity as a union and how we talk about who we are and the work that we do. The consensus of the discussion was quite similar to one the [Unit 18 comms team arrived at during our contract campaign](#): although our current communications, including the ucaft.org website and membership materials, offer a lot of information about our activities and goals, they do not effectively connect those activities and goals to our values and identity as a union. Nor do any of our existing materials address both lecturers and librarians—not to mention our K-12 members—meaning that we end up creating separate, often duplicative, versions of all of the materials that we produce.

We have, as a result, focused much of our efforts on developing communication frames that might encompass all of our members and better reflect our shared values, identities, and goals. These frames can be called upon as we produce new outreach materials, including our logo, and as we develop materials for our librarians' upcoming contract campaign. But the thoughtful consideration and deliberation required to develop them takes time. We want to make the Communications Committee a space for that deeper reflection and encourage all campus leaders interested in participating in that work to join us.

As chair of the committee, I have also been in touch with campus and statewide leaders about how we might improve our internal communications. The compression point of the UAW strike served to highlight many of the shortcomings of our current mass accounts in regards to speed and, more importantly, spam filters. Simply put, our statewide emails are not getting through to many of our members making it difficult for us to reach them. Several campus leaders have similarly reported that other platforms, including mailchimp, have similar problems, requiring lots of additional follow-up and messaging. Those practices are worth keeping in some respects, as they encourage us to rely on more active and personal forms of communications. But the strike made clear that we need to develop more reliable and consistent ways of communicating messages statewide. It has become clear that we have a serious internal communications problem: as one member of the executive board put it, "if we cannot reach our members over email, we are dead in the water."

Moving Forward

Our goals for the Communications Committee moving forward are outlined below. The timeline towards these goals has been mapped out with the Unit 17 contract campaign in mind. To ensure that librarians' needs and interests will be met effectively, we have formed a Unit 17 communications subcommittee with the specific purview of creating the materials they will need so that they will be ready by the time they launch. Meanwhile, the standing Statewide Comms Committee will continue our framing work and longer-term agenda items. We are currently in the process of determining whether we need a budget allocated to advancing these goals and hope to have a concrete proposal in advance of our next council meeting. Those materials include a Unit 17 campaign website, slide deck for member education and outreach, and new t-shirts and other gear. All of these projects cannot be produced before we have addressed our email problem and design a new union logo.

Should council members have additional items they would like us to consider adding to our goals, we welcome their suggestions.

Internal Communications

Short term:

- Investigating alternate email/mass communications platforms that can ensure timely delivery and whether payment is required

Medium term:

- Adopting alternate email/mass communications platforms (if necessary) and organizing relevant trainings for staff and campus leaders
- Initiating regular, statewide email communications on bi-weekly basis
 - newsletter/digest format with action items, news, etc.
- Broaden internal communication channels esp. among campus leaders/activists for info sharing and debate to mitigate email fatigue
 - Slack channels
 - GroupMe/What's App??

Longer term:

- Integrating various channels/platforms to strengthen internal communications (ex. regular social media posts of bi-weekly statewide emails to members)

- Improving long-term document storage and cleaning up the UC-AFT google drive

External Communications

Short term:

- Frames and identity development:
 - written text and slogans
 - aesthetics and logo design
 - Gear (new t-shirts, other swag)

Medium term:

- New outreach materials improvement to align with brand identity adjustments
 - UC-AFT-wide materials
 - Unit 17 specific materials
 - Unit 18 specific materials
- Unit 17 campaign website design (uclibrarians.org)
 - Hosting platform assessment
 - Campaign themes
 - Bargaining priorities
 - Slides for member education and outreach
 - Channels/venues for bargaining updates with relevant templates

Longer term:

- Website redesign - ucaft.org
 - Clear out archives

- Redesign navigation for easier, more intuitive access
- Hosting platform reevaluation (for easier access to backend)