

Information Technology and Strategic Communication Committee (IT & Strat Comm)

Year End Summary 2018-19

Committee members: Elliott Blair; Greg Cottrell; Robert Gaines; Diana Gomez; Matthew Hudnall; Paige Johnson; Patrick Kung; Daniel Meissner

Co-chairs: Matthew Hudnall; Dan Meissner

The IT & Strat Comm Committee focused on the following tasks during the year:

1. UA voice over IP (VoIP) rollout update and clarification
2. Coordinating with Strategic Communications on UA website changes
3. UA Procurement (Concur) advisement
4. UA logo usage and CMS updates
5. OIT strategic plan committee

1. UA voice over IP (VoIP) rollout update and clarification

In response to a number of questions raised by faculty and staff, the committee co-chairs met with Mike Tierney from UA telecom (OIT) to discuss the VoIP rollout on 7/12/2018. The key points of the meeting were:

Attendees – Matthew Hudnall, Dan Meissner, Mike Tierney

Notes: The rollout of the UA Voice over IP (VoIP) system is approximately 60% complete. There is no specific end date for the rollout. Older lines that are more susceptible to damage are being targeted first.

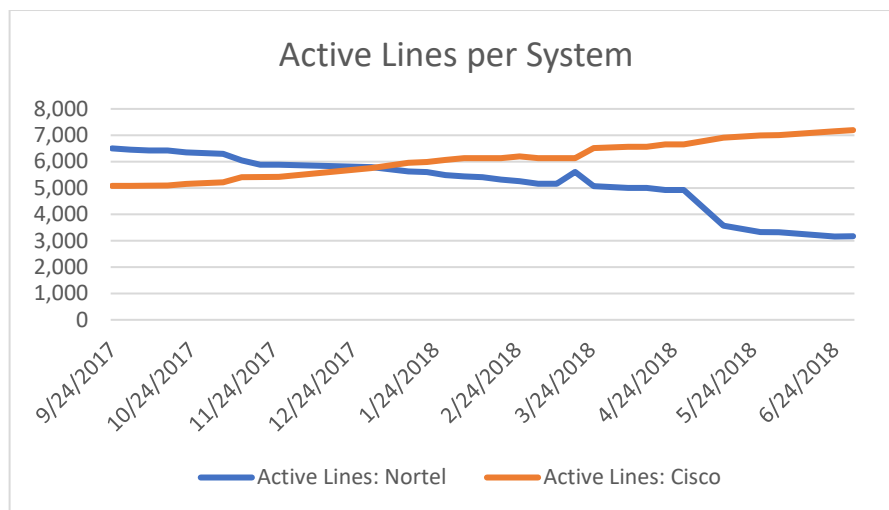


Figure 1- Number of UA Old Telephones vs VoIP

UA uses AT&T as their main VoIP provider (SIP trunk). UA uses Earthlink for VoIP long distance, which is the same provider that UA uses for traditional plain old telephone service (POTS). The rate for long distance, which is defined as outside of Alabama, is \$0.05 per minute. This rate is high considering current industry trends, so UA is considering in the future looking into other providers for long distance.

VoIP provides a number of benefits over POTS, with redundancy being one of the most significant. All POTS lines terminate in Gordon Palmer, which creates a centralized point of failure. With VoIP, UA has 8 call manager servers and two of those are located at the disaster recovery/failover site in Atlanta.

UA VoIP runs on Cisco's Unified Communication server, which has a license fee per-user for voicemail. That is the reason that voicemail still costs \$5 per line per month.

Cost Differences Between VoIP and POTS:

- Click [here for current VoIP rates](#) and [here for current POTS rates](#)
- Long distance is billed at the same rate of \$0.05 per minute.
- Voicemail is the same for both, \$5.00 per line per month.
- CallerID is free for VoIP, \$5.00 per line per month for POTS.
- The "service charge" is the same at \$20 per month. This includes free calling statewide in Alabama.
- The "hardware charge" is the cost of the line per month minus the \$20 line charge. Hardware with VoIP is expected to last approximately 7 years due to the circuitry and need to update the technology to remain secure and current.
- A "line" is the cost of the hardware + service (\$20). On the POTS side, lines cost between \$22 and \$60 per month. On the VoIP side, lines cost \$22 for a courtesy/break room phone, \$30 for a 4-line office phone, or \$40 for a receptionist phone.

For departments that would incur line charges that are above the costs currently paid for multiple office lines due to the switch from POTS to VOIP:

A request for a budget change for 11XXX funds can be made to Mike Tierney (mjtierney@ua.edu) can be made that will increase a department's funding to handle a difference in line costs for the VoIP changeover. Mike calculates the delta and sends the request to OIT. OIT drafts a letter that John McGowan signs and that letter is sent to Adam Tate in the budget office where the requested allocation is made. Departments that save money switching to VoIP do not experience a reduction in budget.

For multi-party conference calls:

Zoom is the solution for UA. Since Zoom does not offer toll-free calling, this can be an issue. Cost per hour for zoom calling is \$3 due to the long-distance charges. If UA switches to a different long-distance provider, that cost savings would be passed down to departments and that cost would go down significantly.

Faxes:

Fax lines are a problem for VoIP. There is no ability to share a single line with VoIP between a fax machine and a voice line. Adapters that cost \$20 per month are available. It was suggested that Telecom look into an email-to-fax, or similar cloud-based service to address the needs of faculty that need to send a receive faxes from their desktops.

2. Coordinating with Strategic Communications on UA website change

In response to increasing concerns by faculty over dead links, inconsistent formatting/content, and other web-related factors, the IT & Strat Comm co-chairs met with Stat Comm on 7/24/2018 to seek clarification. Below are the key takeaways:

Attendees – *Matthew Hudnall, Dan Meissner, Linda Bonnin, Monica Watts, Jason McGuffey*

Notes:

UA Strategic Communications (Strat Comm) currently has 63 staff positions that are located in the Rose Administration building. Strat Comm is just beginning a migration to a new content management system (CMS) known as [OUCampus, which was announced last year](#). OUCampus is a commercial CMS provided by [OmniUpdate](#). OUCampus, unlike other CMS solutions, is focused solely on higher education. Numerous colleges and universities utilize OUCampus including Arkansas, Georgia, LSU, Kansas State, and [many others](#). The effort to consolidate all of UA's sites into OUCampus is quite significant, but the motivations for doing so include greater security, unified design/branding, maintainability, and reduced resource requirements.

Strat Comm is addressing the massive migration via a 3-pronged approach:

- Building standardized site architectures
- Global branding and design
- CMS & affiliated policies to handle content migration

UA currently has 800+ websites under a multitude of domains with the *.ua.edu structure, including some with their own unique domain names. Many of these sites have been orphaned and are no longer maintained and represent significant security issues. The overall goal is to merge these 800+ sites into OUCampus and maintain approximately 50 "core" sites. For example, apr.ua.edu (advertising & public relations), is currently a top-level domain name, meaning it exists as a subdomain to the ua.edu site. After consolidation, this site and sites similar to it would fall underneath their respective college. So apr.ua.edu would physically exist under the OUCampus site of the College of Communication & Information Sciences (cis.ua.edu). The site apr.ua.edu would then be found via the URL cis.ua.edu/apr (or something similar depending on the college's site map). This will drastically reduce the number of physical websites (800+) occupying hundreds of servers across campus.

To alleviate concerns of marketing materials and existing content pointing to sites like apr.ua.edu, domain name system (DNS) redirects will be in place so that if a user browses to apr.ua.edu, they are seamlessly redirected to the new site at cis.ua.edu/apr (or something similar). By combining DNS

redirects along with the consolidation of sites, the migration to OUCampus ensures compatibility while increasing security and maintainability across campus.

Strat Comm will also be introducing a “brand bar” header designed to provide global branding and direct links to key institutional sites on every page within the CMS. Updating the existing web policy to incorporate the changes involved in the CMS migrations will also be a priority in the coming months.

The first sites scheduled to be migrated to the new CMS are:

- UA.edu main site
- The President’s site
- Strat Comm
- Undergraduate Admissions
- Graduate School
- Research (VPR)
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (new site, not finished yet)

Faculty member pages in Weebly will be the last sites to be migrated. The timetable for these sites are unknown but will likely be 2+ years out as the effort to migrate all other sites will take multiple years.

Use of social media feeds within the new architecture is a definite concern, especially with the new GDPR privacy regulations issued by the EU. If social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) is included on a site, it may not be raw feeds. It is good practice to require a local college/division administrator to approve/curate social media posts before they appear on a UA site. The current plan is to remove social media feeds from the UA.edu homepage and instead just provide links to the University’s official.

The rollout of OUCampus is a monumental task, but one that is definitely needed as most students and parents visit UA’s site while considering what higher education institution they want to attend. Consistent branding and navigation is key to providing a professional web experience for the users. Strat Comm currently has 3 open positions, including the director position, which has contributed to the delay in the OUCampus rollout. Strat Comm faces many hiring challenges that others like OIT and CAPS face when trying to hire talented web professionals at restricted UA campus position pay rates.

The use of a dead link checker was also discussed, and it was recommended that a commercial solution be purchased. Commercial dead link checkers can scan an entire site and email an administrator a report of the dead links so that personnel can triage the dead links. Consolidation of no longer maintained sites will help reduce dead links. Dead links at the core of UA’s site can leave a negative image of UA to prospective students, parents, and donors. Strat Comm has agreed to look at the dead link issue and is actively looking at scanning solutions to help mitigate broken links, especially at top-level highly used UA sites.

3. UA Procurement (Concur) advisement

On 8/20/2018, the IT & Strat Comm Committee in conjunction with the Academic Affairs Committee met with UA Procurement Director Kevin Stevens and his staff. Procurement updated both groups with the progress and improvements associated with the new travel management system “Concur”. The groups served as a sounding board and feedback panel for improvements to Concur.

4. UA logo usage and CMS updates

The IT & Strat Comm Committee reached out to UA Strat Comm to seek answers to questions about appropriate UA logo usage. The co-chairs met with Jennifer Rodrigues (Director of Brand Strategy) to discuss appropriate usage of UA logos on 11/26/2018. In summary, UA has the right to approve anything with the UA logo or UA trademarked terms. In practice though, this governance is only typically extended towards materials that are public facing (marketing, handouts, booth materials, etc.). While Strat Comm is happy to help review PowerPoint presentations, they are not in the business to police them. Similarly, internal UA-only departmental handouts/flyers are not evaluated. The general rule of thumb is that if the content is public facing OR is paid for with UA funds, then the logo/name usage needs to be approved. To streamline approval, templates are provided to help bootstrap the process:

High-quality downloadable UA logos: <https://strategiccommunications.ua.edu/resources/logos-wordmarks>

Downloadable design templates: <https://strategiccommunications.ua.edu/resources/design-templates> this includes PowerPoint presentations as well as research solicitation flyers. If they click on the tab, several options are available.

Brand Strategy page: <https://strategiccommunications.ua.edu/departments/brand-strategy>

It was also discussed during the 11/26/2018 meeting with Strat Comm that the CMS direction would be shifted from the projected consolidation to OUCampus. The new direction is targeting a hybrid approach between the new version of WordPress and OUCampus.

5. OIT Strategic Plan Committee

UA OIT reached out to the co-chairs of the IT & Strat Comm committee to ask them to serve in an advisory capacity for a new 5-year strategic plan for the future of UA OIT. On 2/21/2019, the co-chairs met with Meagan Bennett and Mike Shelton, the OIT Deputy CIO. The group discussed the objectives for the 5-year plan and provided feedback. The groups are set to meet a number of times over the upcoming year.

2019-2020 Goals

1. Committee proposals – The IT & Strat Comm committee would like to see proposals come before the senate that improve the security of all at UA. Working with the CISO of OIT, the committee will seek to put forth a resolution to the full senate that improves information security at UA based on OIT recommendations.
2. Improved IT campus research profiles – The committee, in conjunction with the Research Committee, will work with OIT to establish a common “facilities and resources” IT profile that will be hosted on OIT’s website. This profile will help all at UA who submit grants as this is a common requirement.
3. Feedback loops – The committee will continue to work with both OIT and Strategic Communications to make sure that the full senate is aware of any pending or proposed changes that these organizations are seeking and work to provide a strong voice back that echoes the needs of the senate.