

Information Technology and Strategic Communication Committee (IT & Strat Comm)
Year End Summary 2022-23

Committee members: Stefanie Buckner, Amy Ellis, Xiaoyan Hong, Dan Joyner, Patrick Kung, Leah Lefebvre, Nathan Loewen

Co-chairs: Xiaoyan Hong, Patrick Kung

During the past year, the IT & Strat Comm Committee focused on the following tasks:

1. Bridging communications gap between Strat Comm and the Faculty Senate.
2. Coordinating with OIT and advocating for faculty on IT related technology rollouts, issues, and enhancements.

... in an effort to progress towards the goals it set at the beginning of its term:

- *Sustain dialogue with StratCom, including implementation of their Department of Web Communications and the development of their Campus Communicators Network.*
- *Review and communicate (forthcoming) OIT strategic plan to FS constituencies.*
- *Review supercomputer/cluster computing developments at the levels of campus, UA system, and SEC (e.g., AI policy/curriculum), including how/whether UA faculty research and teaching are impacted/consulted).*

1. Coordination with OIT

Committee co-chairs represented the IT & Strat Comm committee at quarterly meetings with UA OIT to go do comprehensive reviews of current and planned UA IT initiatives. The committee also worked with OIT as individual matters arose to address them in a timely manner. Topics included administrative/policy, instructional & classroom technology, IT security, research computing, campuswide software licensing, and individual requests that reached the committee, as briefly detailed below:

Administrative / policy:

- OIT 2022-2025 Strategic Plan: published in Aug. 2022 (<https://oit.ua.edu/about/strategic-plan/2022-2025-strategic-plan/>).
- Identity and Access Management (IAM) system: currently being investigated for future integration, primarily to satisfy cybersecurity insurance requirements, but will help address email / myBama access expiration / decommissioning issues faculty experienced.
- ChatGPT: OAA has taken the lead on this.
- Campuswide email: Law School email system moving into centrally managed O365, no firm timeline yet for completion.
- Preferred last name (e.g. for email): better understanding and clarity on path forward with HR.

IT Security:

- Facilitated visit to Faculty Senate by Taylor Anderson (Jan. 17, 2023).
- Risk assessment (cybersecurity insurance renewal): consultant-led penetration test (Spring 2022), phishing simulations on UA faculty/staff, to get better understanding of risks and improve procedure, more are planned.

Instructional & Classroom Technology (CIT):

- Simple Syllabus: preview, timeline (starts Summer 2023), and how CIT can support, while Online Syllabus Management remains as a repository of past information.
- Blackboard Ultra: timeline of implementation, required/optional, availability of test course for faculty, UA online courses and CCS (OTIDE) courses not being supported.
- AV technology renovation during Summer 2023: (for 24-26 classrooms, same as last year).
- Summer/Fall 2022 workshops to help faculty: available to help understand tools available, recorded and uploaded to YouTube (<https://cit.ua.edu/workshops/>) (examples: HPC, GIS, Adobe, Blackboard, O365).

Research Computing (HPC):

- Infrastructure: DCBlox, construction of the Data Center (expected completion: Jan. 2023), new website (<http://hpc.ua.edu>) which consolidates research compute information, access to HyperGator (UF's HPC environment) by any SEC institution for AI research.
- HPC staff support: status, vacancies & hiring difficulties, and means to mitigate.

Campuswide Software Licensing:

- Process: better understanding of budget proposal preparation, need for buy-in (i.e. cost-share) from colleges, and ultimately BOT approval.
- Several software requests were made.

2. Coordination with Strategic Communications

Committee met the UA Strategic Communications leadership to review current and planned activities. Topics discussed are briefly detailed below:

- Facilitated visit to Faculty Senate by Ryan Bradley, VP for Strategic Communications (Dec. 13, 2022).
- Review of the Division of Strat Comm mission and role/purview.
- Clarity on branding objectives, policies, and online resources available to faculty.
- New web policy: scope, compliance, differentiation of role of Strat Comm (policy) from role of OIT (technical implementation).
- Uniformity of unit websites across campus / loss of identity (e.g. departments, colleges): reach out to web developer in unit.
- Campus communicator network available to help faculty: web developers, Trending Tide group, Web Tide group, Microsoft Teams web forum.
- Concern about continued use of Twitter (after its being privately acquired) as one of the "apparent" official platforms for distribution of UA information.
- Prioritization of important information in lengthy UA-wide email broadcasts: try to put it front.

3. 2023-2024 Goals

1. Review on-going and new OIT developments and advocate for faculty needs in the areas of instructional IT, research computing, cybersecurity, administrative systems/tools, and software licensing.
2. Sustain dialogue with Strategic Communications to increase opportunities for engagement with Faculty Senate.