Communication Plan Guidelines - System Changes and Outages - Proposal

Technology Guideline

Created by: ITS Communication Committee

Introduction

This document defines the operating procedures for developing and executing a communication plan to notify impacted users and associated support areas of normal maintenance, system restarts, and upgrades that result in potential service outages for enterprise systems supported by ITS. The following list contains the currently identified enterprise systems that require notification to users when outages occur. As new systems are implemented, please make sure they are added to this list.

- Academic Room Scheduling
- Administrative Financial and Human Resource Systems
- Cable TV
- Calendar
- Campus Directory
- Digital Signage
- Drupal
- Email
- Enterprise Portal
- Facilities Management System
- Help Desk Ticketing System
- Identity Management and Authentication Services (Active Directory, CatID)
- Imaging
- Learning Management System
- Multimedia Streaming
- Network Operations
- Student Information System
- Systems and Operations services (computer rooms, main University webspace - UNI home page and 1st level down, blog server, Drupal)
- Voice Operations
- Web-based Reporting Systems (Discoverer, WebFOCUS)

Purpose

The purpose is to improve and ensure proper communication and preparation takes place when scheduling and announcing system changes and outages. Communication is imperative so potentially affected persons are aware of the impact of each

maintenance activity. This will help ensure consistency in conducting maintenance while minimizing impact.

Communication Plan Details

The following guidelines are designed to help identify timeframes for outages. Specific communication plans will vary by system.

Impact to service/Maintenance window/Timeframe for communication

	LEVEL III IMPACT	LEVEL II IMPACT	LEVEL I IMPACT
Impact to Service:	Minimal or no impact to service	Moderate impact to service	High impact to service
Impact to Service:	Does not affect service	Affects a single service	Affects multiple services
Examples:	Routine software upgrade, minor network configuration changes, system restarts in a redundant environment, adding new equipment, installing new software, re-indexing, upgrade, distributed switch re-patched	Routine software upgrade, minor network configuration changes, system restarts in a redundant environment, adding new equipment, installing new software, re-indexing, upgrade, distributed switch re-patched	Major software upgrade, major network configuration changes, system restarts in a non-redundant environment, adding new equipment, installing new software, re-indexing, upgrade, distributed switch re-patched
Maintenance Window:	Outside of peak system hours	Outside of peak system hours	Outside of peak system hours
Timeframe for Communication:	At least 24 hours in advance	At least 36 hours in advance	2-4 weeks on Scheduled Maintenance Calendar as well as high level message to IT-Forum
Communication:	Required; initiated by staff closest to the outage source	Required; initiated by staff closest to the outage source	Required; initiated by staff closest to the outage source
Communication Process:	Post to Scheduled Maintenance on ITS webspace which will automatically notify IT-Forum	Post to Scheduled Maintenance on ITS webspace which will automatically notify IT-Forum	Post to Scheduled Maintenance on ITS webspace which will automatically notify IT-Forum
Announcement:	Optional	48-72 hours in advance	1 week to community
Timeframe for Announcement:	10 days to 1 week	5 days to 48 hours	1 week
Announcement Process:	Email Special Interest Group user lists (when appropriate)	Email Special Interest Group user lists (when appropriate)	Email Special Interest Group user lists (when appropriate)
Announcement:	Submit to UNIOnline	Submit to UNIOnline	Submit to UNIOnline

Communication:	*Post to Scheduled Maintenance on ITS webspace which will automatically notify IT-Announce* Email Special Interest Group user lists (when appropriate) Submit to UNIOnline *Recommend follow-up/status report communication to Scheduled Maintenance announcement on ITS webspace*

EVENT SCHEDULING

A central IT maintenance calendar shall be automatically maintained based on scheduled maintenance submissions on the ITS website. All normally scheduled maintenance will be recorded on this centralized IT maintenance calendar.

When planning an event, it is important to be aware of other critical university events that may affect the scheduled upgrade/change/outage.

CONTENTS OF COMMUNICATION (MESSAGE FORMAT)

Outage Date and Times

Title (Subject) ? The headline should identify and capture the attention of impacted users and associated support areas and briefly summarize the event/incident/issue.

Body ? The specifics of the maintenance event of what's happening, provide the basic answers and essential information related to the questions of who, what, when, where and why. When interrelated services are impacted it may become necessary to clarify what is up and what is down.

Services Affected ? A list of the services that will be impacted by the event. The list of services should be written in terms that are easily recognized by affected users.

Additional Information ? as needed.

Standard Footnote ? directing reader to Communications Corner for additional information and announcements.

COMMUNICATION METHODS

IT-Forum for general discussion; owner: Computer Network Systems Manager; allowed to post: members-only

IT-Announce for proactive announcements; include IT-Forum, ITS, and those that want to subscribe (abandon the ITS-Liaisons); owner: Postmaster; allowed to post: ITS Staff and IT-Forum members; main editing group: responsibility of the Computer Consulting Center staff, however, in the case where CCC staff are not available, the individual is responsible for preparing and sending the announcement consistent with established standards.

IT-Alert for reactive announcements; include IT-Forum, ITS, ResNet manager, and those that want to subscribe; owner: Postmaster; allowed to post: members-only

Special Interest Groups (MEMFIS-Users, Calendar, Collab, etc)

IT-Comm-Corner for announcements to be posted to the Communications Corner website; owner: ITS US Director

Email Lists

These mail lists have been set up to be used with the Scheduled Maintenance and Alert notices submitted through the ITS website. In the case of an emergency alert, or if the website is unavailable, users may communicate directly with these groups via email to the following email lists:

- **IT-Forum** for general discussion; owner: Computer Network Systems Manager; only members are allowed to post
- **IT-Announce** for proactive announcements; include IT-Forum, ITS, and those who want to subscribe; owner: Postmaster; allowed to post: ITS Staff and IT-Forum members; Computer Consulting Center staff will provide assistance with preparing and amending announcements as needed, however, in the case where CCC staff are not available, the individual is responsible for preparing and sending the announcement consistent with established standards.
- **IT-Alert** for reactive announcements; include IT-Forum, ITS, ResNet manager, and those that want to subscribe; owner: Postmaster; allowed to post: members-only
- **Special Interest Groups** (MEMFIS-Users, Calendar, Collab, etc)

Web

- **Alert:** Area on ITS homepage to announce IT outages that impact university faculty, staff & students. Staff are encouraged to post information through the ITS website (requires a Drupal account); CCC staff will monitor and provide additional information as necessary.
- **Scheduled Maintenance:** Area on ITS homepage to announce all known scheduled maintenance; ITS Staff and CCC staff will be responsible for posting notices to this section of the ITS web site. Staff should post information directly to the ITS website (requires a Drupal account); CCC staff will monitor and provide additional information as necessary.
- **MyUNIverse Portal Announcement:** contact Data Access team
- **System Login Pages:** contact the appropriate system administrator

RSS

RSS Feeds: The university community can subscribe to RSS feeds for schedule maintenance and alert announcements. All posts to these areas will automatically go out to those who have subscribed.

Instant Messaging and Twitter

Undefined at this time

Electronic Publications

- **UNI Online:** www.uni.edu/unionline [2]
- **MyUNIverse News:** www.uni.edu/unionline [2]

- **My UNI Weekend:** www.uni.edu/unionline [2]
- **Additional methods to consider:** University home page, table tents, bulletin boards, digital signage, blogs, etc.

Post Maintenance/Outage Follow-up

Follow-up messages are optional; unless there has been a significant change in the anticipated outage. Follow-up announcements are the responsibility of the originator. Once an event is completed or if an event is cancelled or rescheduled, the original message (on the Scheduled Maintenance page) should be appended to clearly show the event has been cancelled, rescheduled, or completed.

Alerts: Emergency Notifications

In the case of an IT-related emergency or unplanned system outage, staff are encouraged to post such notices on the Alert area of the ITS webspace. CCC staff will monitor postings to ensure the information is accurate and appropriate for disclosure. Announcements posted to the Alert area will automatically be sent, via email, to the IT-Alert mailing list and the RSS feed.

APPENDIX A - SAMPLE MESSAGES

Sample Message - LMS

Outage Date and Time: Wednesday, April 15, 2009, 6:00 a.m. ? 7:00 a.m.

eLearning (Blackboard/WebCT) Maintenance

The Blackboard/WebCT learning management and electronic portfolio system will be restarted Wednesday, April 15, 2009 at 6:00 a.m. to apply a system patch to the application servers. The system will be available by 7:00 a.m.

Services Affected: Learning Management System and ePortfolios

Additional Information: NA

Sample Message ? Email

Email Outage, 7:00pm Friday, May 15th through 9:00am, Saturday, May 16th

ITS is upgrading the CatID and Email environment beginning Friday May 15th starting at 7:00PM and ending at 9:00AM Saturday May 16th.

During the maintenance all Email access will be unavailable. All other services using CatID (MyUNIverse, eLearning/WebCT, etc.) will continue to function normally, however, users will not be able to change their CatID password starting 1 hour prior to the upgrade nor during the upgrade process.

Sample Message ? Network Operations

Network Outage 5/20, 6-6:30 am

The core campus network router will be upgraded May 20th from 6-6:30 am. At least one Internet outage lasting approximately 5 minutes will occur during this time. This will impact UNI campus traffic both inbound and outbound including core services like DNS and e-mail.

Approved: April 30, 2009, Revised: September 14, 2010

Source URL: http://uni.edu/its/policies/communication-plan

Links:
[1] mailto:IT-Forum@uni.edu
[2] http://www.uni.edu/unionline