

Improving Communication between Advisors, Staff, and Student Workers

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Ice Breaker



- o **Communication:** the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs. (dictionary.com)

Session approach to Communication

- o This session will focus on communication within an office at the macro-level: not communication between individuals in an office
- o We will focus on communication between different groups in the office, and how all staff members can stay informed

Session Goals/Objectives

- o Identify communication barriers within an office.
- o Identify ways to improve office communication.
- o Identify 2-3 strategies you can employ to improve your office communication.

● ● ● | Presentation Outline

- Barriers to Effective Communication
 - Case Studies
 - List of barriers
- Office communication strategies/methods
 - ISSS WORLD
 - Other Office Strategies (technical and non-technical)
- Real World Application
 - Small Group Discussion
 - Take Away Materials

● ● ● | Case Study #1

- In recent years, the Study Abroad programs staff was comprised primarily of long-time employees (having worked in the office for 10, 20, 30 years). These individuals possessed a great deal of knowledge, but much of that knowledge left with them upon retirements, transfers, etc.
- What communication barriers exist in this situation?
- How can the office set-up systems to ensure that policy decisions (including rationale), details of serious incidents abroad, etc. are recorded for the future?

● ● ● | Case Study #1: Solutions suggested during group discussion

- Continually cross-train staff
- Mentoring
- Create procedures for saving electronic docs
- Assign one staff to be an office “historian”
- Continually document policies & procedures
- Out of office retreats to “check-in” with e/o
- Hold regular meetings to provide updates

● ● ● | Case Study #2

- Regulations and policies for international students and scholars have frequent changes and updates, which need to be communicated to the whole staff so that students are advised accurately.
- What communication barriers exist in this situation?
- How can all the staff (advisors, office staff, student workers) be kept up-to-date on the numerous programs and their changes?
- Who should have what information?

Case study #2: Solutions suggested during group discussion

- Hold weekly staff mtgs. & give updates on regs
- Share responsibility to update info. in all necessary places
- Continually cross check each others' information

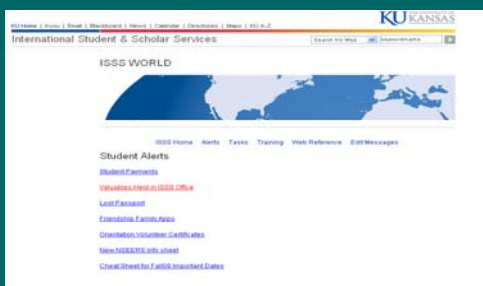
Barriers to Effective Communication

(From presentation and group discussion)

- Office Structure/School Structure
- General Office Attitude
- Training
- Schedules and lack of time
- Funding
- Access to Information
- Technological Barriers
- Language Barriers
- Cultural Barriers
 - Different concepts of time
 - Need to "save face"
- Poor Retention
- Loss of knowledge upon retirements, resignations
- Different learning styles
- Generational differences
- Office tradition (it's always been this way)
- Staff "hoarding" knowledge
- Staff split in different physical spaces
- New staff want to change everything
- Info. gets "stuck" with one person
- One person office challenges
- Complexity of Information

ISSS WORLD

(ISSS Workers' Online Resource, Library, and Database)



ISSS WORLD – Why?

- Important information was not being relayed to all necessary parties in a timely fashion.
- It was difficult to touch base with student workers on various projects due to schedules.
- Training

ISSS WORLD – Creation and Access

- o Creation
 - Interviews
 - Research
 - State of our employee training
 - Worked with our Web Manager to develop the program
- o Access
 - Secure log in from our main page
 - Only daily staff, advisors, and a few student worker positions can post alerts, tasks, and quizzes
 - Hourly student workers can only post responses

ISSS WORLD – Alerts Page

ISSS WORLD – Creating Alerts

ISSS WORLD – Tasks Page

ISSS WORLD – Creating Tasks

Administrator Edit

Please use the links to the left to navigate through the editable site content.

To replace the current messages, please type and submit a new one below:

Currently logged in as: emilias@no.edu

File: File: Fall09 ISSS CIS Sheets Due Date: 16-Oct-09 Normal: 48AMMM-yy (03-May-09)

Priority: High

Task Section

- Office Manager/Staff
- Advisor

Quiz Section

- Add Quiz Material
- Create Quiz Material
- View Quizzes

Alerts Section

- Edit Alerts

Please go ahead and File away all the Fall 09 pink/blue/purple ISSS CIS Sheets sitting in the accordion folder in the filing area. THANKS!

ISSS WORLD – Quizzes

ISSS Home Alerts Tasks **Training** Web Reference Manage Messages

Training Links View Quizzes

View Quizzes

Student Manual

Welcome!

1) Expectations and Policies

2) General Office Training

3) Immigration Basics

4) Front Desk

Current Quizzes:

- Sports
- F-1 Staying Legal
- J-1 Staying Legal
- Colors

ISSS WORLD – Quiz Example

ISSS Home Alerts Tasks **Training** Web Reference Edit Messages

View Quizzes

Current Quizzes:

F-1 Staying Legal

1. It is OK for a student's I-20 to expire as long as their visa has not expired.

- TRUE - As long as their visa is valid their I-20 can expire.
- FALSE- A student should NEVER let their I-20 expire during their studies.

2. A student must have their I-20 signed by their academic advisor before they travel out of the U.S. if they wish to return to resume the same program.

- TRUE- An academic advisor must sign their document.
- FALSE- An ISSS advisor must sign their document.

ISSS WORLD – Quiz Results

ISSS Home Alerts Tasks **Training** Web Reference Edit Messages

View Quizzes

Current Quizzes:

F-1 Staying Legal

1. It is OK for a student's I-20 to expire as long as their visa has not expired.

Your answer: TRUE - As long as their visa is valid their I-20 can expire.

Incorrect

Answer: FALSE- A student should NEVER let their I-20 expire during their studies.

2. A student must have their I-20 signed by their academic advisor before they travel out of the U.S. if they wish to return to resume the same program.

Your answer: FALSE- An ISSS advisor must sign their document.

Correct

ISSS WORLD – Training Manual

ISSS Home Alerts Tasks **Training** Web Reference EDM Messages

Training Links

View Quizzes

Student Manual

Welcome!

1) Expectations and Policies

2) General Office Training

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Expectations

Be Cheerful

- Be cheerful and find ways to enjoy your job! Smiling faces and a positive outlook make for satisfied clients and an enjoyable work environment.

Create a Positive First Impression for KU and ISSS

- Remember that this may be the first, and in certain cases, the only contact the individual has with The University of Kansas. Strive to make the interaction as positive as possible.
- Your greeting is the "first impression" that sets the tone for the present and future.

ISSS WORLD – Web References

ISSS Home Alerts Tasks Training **Web Reference** Manage Messages

Reference for Internal Procedures

- Internal Procedures for Handling SSN Requests
- Advising Schedule 2009 on

ISSS WORLD – Challenges/Positives


- o Challenges
 - Start up bugs
 - Not everyone checks it everyday
 - Postings staying on too long
 - Mainly improves communication with just student workers
- o Positives
 - Has improved office knowledge of what is happening
 - Student workers like having tasks & alerts posted so they know what they need to do
 - Has allowed for projects to get done that otherwise would have taken longer to coordinate due to schedules

ISSS WORLD – Future Components

- o Student Message Board
- o More Editing Capabilities
- o Archives

Other Office Strategies

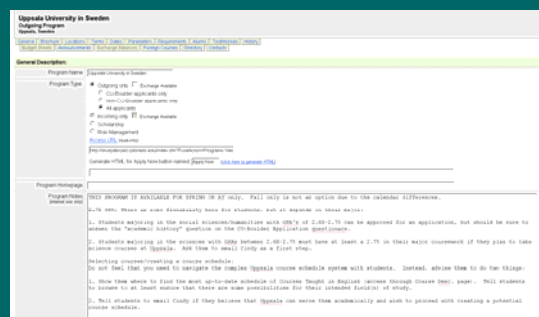
- StudioAbroad – a helpful tool for EA
 - Tracking comments from student visits
 - Tracking program info. not being advertised to public



The screenshot shows a user interface for StudioAbroad. At the top, it identifies the user as 'Lindbergh, Levi Christopher' with a 'Comments' tab selected. Below this, there are sections for 'Application Comments' and a table with columns for 'Comments', 'Date', and 'Comments'. The table contains several entries with dates ranging from 12/15/2010 to 12/16/2010, each with a corresponding comment text.

Other Office Strategies

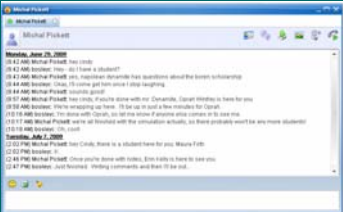
Internal program notes



The screenshot displays a document titled 'Uppsala University in Sweden' with a 'Program Notes' section. The notes describe the program's availability for Spring or Fall study, mentioning that Fall only is not an option due to the calendar. It also details the program type as 'Applying only' and lists various requirements and contact information for the program.

Other Office Strategies

- Use of IM technology to communicate b/w front & back office
 - Have a clear procedure that is simple, but strictly followed
 - Conduct a simulation



The screenshot shows an instant messaging window with a chat log. The messages are dated 'Monday, June 21, 2010' and 'Tuesday, July 1, 2010'. The chat log contains several messages discussing a simulation, with participants like 'Michael Pickett' and 'Cynthia' mentioned. The messages include questions and answers related to the simulation process.

Other Office Strategies

- Staff meetings: waste of time, or efficient use of time?
 - If small groups have regular meetings, the group should have a clear purpose/focus
 - Make an agenda
 - Put someone in charge of running the meeting
 - Take notes (rotate taking turns)
 - Focus on decisions (w/brief rationale) and action items
 - Start meetings on time – don't cater to late-comers



Office-wide vs. individual?

- When analyzing a communication problem, consider whether it is isolated to one individual (or perhaps two individuals), vs. an office-wide problem
- Address individual problems with individuals, rather than implementing all-office changes



Real World Application – Small Group Discussion

- What has worked in your office for improving communication among the various members?
- What has not worked?
- Identify a current or on-going communication problem in your office, and brainstorm possible solutions.
- Report back to whole group on one way you plan to improve communication in your office.



Real World Application: Other solutions from group discussion

- Microsoft Outlook's "task" feature can function as a shared to-do list
- Google docs. can also work well to share info. & track tasks/projects
- Hold regular "check-in" mtgs. where each staff member gives an update
- Schedule mtgs. when staff are most energized



Questions?

Thank you!