

# ASU Forum

February 26, 2009

The ASU Forum was created as an additional mode of communication between and among administrative and academic units. It builds on the premise of the former Administrative Council.

Thirty people attended the Forum.

The information presented below is in the form of a general transcription of the meeting. It should not be considered as minutes of the meeting.

**1. Topic for the day: How can we facilitate communication on Campus?**

- a. We don't talk to each other.
- b. The issue today is how we engage and share information with each other in a time where we are overwhelmed with e-mails.
- c. We need strong suggestions about communicating with each other.
- d. Changes over the last few years make everything interrelated. Decision by one department affects other departments.
- e. We are dependent on each other.
- f. Others need to be in decision making process.
- g. We are not "silo'ed" anymore.
- h. Parallel tracks instead of converging tracks.
- i. In the case of the internet, there is so much intermixing of trash and treasure that you cannot find the treasure for the trash. We need a sense of prioritization that involves individual judgment at every level. If people are unhappy with that, if they want more detail, that is why we have roundtables, administrative council, this forum, etc.
- j. All the mechanisms are in place to do what we want to do...it is just a matter of how we use them.

**2. What would you want to know beforehand in the example of parking?**

- a. We have forums for discussion. Some departments are good about giving early notice about what is going on and asking for input. Others are after the fact. Collaboration and transparency need to be early and upfront. Information out there after it is already done.

**3. What does transparency mean?**

- a. Hope that it means more information – more collaboration, asking for input. Sharing of information. Some may have that as an expectation.
- b. A promise of transparency without a follow up leads to cynicism.

**4. Shared Governance – Does it exist here?**

- a. Personal responsibility that goes into the communication process.
- b. People failed to keep up with news releases, websites, etc.
- c. Each of us needs to take responsibility for keeping up with what is going on.
- d. Transparency and shared governance go together. The most functional is a balance. There are administrative things that don't directly affect other departments that I don't waste my time with. You can interfere in their jobs by insisting that they participate in too many decisions. If you pass every bit of information by e-mail, they will quit reading your e-mails because the last 25 were about some nitpicking detail that had nothing to do with them. The problem arises when there are differences in expectations. If my behavior does not match the expectation of the faculty then there is conflict. The same thing goes to the next level up: if I don't feel like I'm getting the information or the chance to give input into decisions being made above me, I feel frustrated. I want something different to happen.

**5. Do general e-mails help?**

- a. Yes. Some departments do not know what other departments do. It could help if there was a place where people could go and see what others do and are doing.
- 6. Is the campus that fragmented? Has it grown to where everyone has gotten into their own thing?**
- a. We have grown to where it is possible to be that fragmented.
  - b. The first that you hear about something is when the answer is provided. You never hear the question in the first place. There are a lot of smart people on this campus and I think of a lot of questions, if they were put out there, would get a lot of intelligent feedback to help come up with a good solution.
  - c. What I keep running into is that people don't poll the campus when they have a question or issue.
  - d. One solution may be blogs.
  - e. We don't have a central depository for information.
- 7. Isn't that what Ramport is for? What was it originally conceived to be?**
- a. It was set up as one place to get all your information. We are still getting there.
  - b. New content management software coming will allow everyone on campus to control what is on the website. It should give departments an easy way to get information out there.
  - c. Communication is a personal choice.
- 8. If you could change one thing right now, what would you like to see done?**
- a. Get an edict that if you are doing something or have something that you know or suspect other people might be interested in; you make an honest effort to let others know. I think sometimes what we see happening is that people are working on things that they know are going to affect other people and they make a point NOT to say anything until they can present a *fait accompli* and that is what causes communication and moral issues.
  - b. Others need to think about what the ripple effect might be.
  - c. Websites are unsearchable; can't find data when needed.
- 9. Could the vice presidents answer whether or not they think something like an administrative council would be helpful?**
- a. In the original administrative council, we spent a lot of time bulletin-boarding things and they were not out there for discussion; instead, it was an announcement of what was going on. It was primarily made up of faculty. It would have to be a very large group.
  - b. Information does not trickle down.
  - c. Cluster discussions were set up to share information, but the attendance waned. Everyone would wait until it affected them before they became interested because they were so busy.
  - d. Everyone is bombarded with information. People need to take the time to read the information out there.
- 10. In the case of parking,**
- a. Texas Tech did not like students only being charged for parking. Instructions came from Texas Tech to change it. Part of the problem that we face is that there are times when we have a lot more going on than at other times. I have never experienced a time when there is more going on of more importance, more change, than we are experiencing right now.
- 11. What is going on in your area that you would like to tell us about?**
- a. Three opportunities for involvement:
    - i. Strategic Planning Council
    - ii. Environmental Scanning
    - iii. Ad Hoc Master Plan Update
  - b. NSSE survey has gone out to students.
  - c. Economic stimulus package -- Texas is getting an enormous amount of money. We submitted a request for \$22 million to fund renovation of the administration building, security cameras, and IT Infrastructure.
  - d. Back to the communication issue -- where I worked at before they would prepare a communication package when there were changes, so that when the message was released to the people that were going to be talking to the customers they could answer confidently so that it would not turn into a wildfire of negativity. It all started at the top and then filtered down...and

if there was any complaining at any level it was handled there so that the end result was a simple message.

- e. Academic Master Plan is going on.
- f. Graduate Dean search is winding up.
- g. April 3 - Texas Tech representatives coming to talk to us about their experiences; focus on course and program assessment.
- h. Graduate Studies is up in enrollment.
- i. Minutes of Deans and Department Head and CASA are on line.
- j. UIL Regional Meet will start April 19.
- k. Diversity and HSI forums are coming up.