

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Handwritten notes:
11/5/99
C. Coleman



November 5, 1999

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to make you aware of an important new strategic communications initiative, and to request your active support. As the University and the environments in which we operate grow more complex, our need to communicate clearly and concisely on many fronts grows ever more urgent. We are faced with increased competition for faculty, staff and students, state and federal funding, and more, and the looming demands of our comprehensive fund-raising campaign. The constituencies we must reach--our faculty, staff, students, and a host of external audiences--have progressively less time and patience to interpret and respond to our messages; even the means to reach our key audiences have multiplied in recent years, with electronic forms of communication now competing for time and attention.

At the same time, we have a pressing need to communicate efficiently, with optimum utilization of resources. In order to do more with less, we must understand what we are doing well, and what we could do better (e.g. determine whether various UI units are sending multiple and duplicative, perhaps even contradictory messages to the same audiences; whether we use our best communications pieces too narrowly, missing opportunities for sharing them with a broader range of constituencies; and whether we could benefit from access to a communications calendar to enable strategic considerations of timing to occur more readily).

To help us assess what we know about our constituents--or still need to learn, in order to target our communications more effectively--and to assess the structure, coordination, and effectiveness of our current systems, we have engaged Lipman Hearne, a leading communications firm based in Chicago, that serves the non-profit sector. Lipman Hearne has worked with many institutions of higher learning, including Duke, University of California at San Francisco, and MIT. The Lipman Hearne team will be headed by Managing Partner Rob Moore, and will include Jeanne Lockridge (formerly of Northwestern), Joselyn Zivin (Drake), and Will Dix (Amherst). These consultants will be spending extensive time on campus in the coming weeks, gaining understanding of our centralized and constituent-based communications programs, ranging from publications to web sites.

I encourage you to assist us with this important initiative--whether by providing information, taking time for an interview, and/or encouraging your colleagues and staff to participate. This project will be coordinated by a campus team led by Gerhild Krapf Greenhoe, Assistant Vice President for University Relations. As it unfolds, a member of the team will probably contact you to participate. Thank you for your help!

Sincerely,

Mary Sue Coleman
President