



2019-02-11

To: Marco Valtorta, Chair, Faculty Senate
From: Simon Tarr, Chair, Faculty Senate IT Committee
Re: Committee response to web concerns

In the Faculty Senate's October 2018 meeting, the Senate IT committee was charged with investigating matters relating to processes and procedures surrounding the university's "OUCampus" web content management tool, and to report back to the Senate. This charge to the Senate IT committee was pursuant to a September 2018 letter to the Senate from Prof. Michael Dickson.

The Senate IT Committee scheduled Director of Brand Strategy J.C. Huggins and Director of Owned Media Melissa Spring to speak with the committee on Nov. 11, 2019 to discuss issues raised in Prof. Dickson's letter as well as other matters related to web communications at the university.

It was tempting to go into a deep critique of the myriad technical and usability shortfalls of the OUCampus tool that the university uses to manage and publish web content—indeed, we agree with many of Prof. Dickson's complaints regarding the effectiveness of the tool. However, we wanted to remove ourselves from questions of "why this particular tool?" and to focus on larger matters of process ("how can units affect the changes indicated by Prof. Dickson?") and epistemology ("how would anyone know how to know these processes?").

It became clear in our conversations with Mr. Huggins and Ms. Spring that (at least in theory) many of the complaints identified by Prof. Dickson are indeed solvable by individual units, but that this fact is likely not known by those units.

Mr. Huggins and Ms. Spring enacted changes immediately after our meeting. First, they published on sc.edu/toolbox a list of all site managers at the university, so that any individual could look up who they should contact who would have access to enact the changes they desire to their web space. Second, then began a process of actively communicating with this network of site managers to encourage them to send internal communications on their process for web updates for faculty.

While this may not address the specific technical issues that sparked the September letter, we hope that this begins to clarify the levels of authority that individuals have for editing web content, and that this will begin a process of proactive communication from those individuals with authority to the people they represent.