

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION

May 8, 2000

### **Recommendation of the Action Plan Team: Leadership and Communications for Issue 2-26, Item #88** (page 26 of the Action Plan):

**Summary:** (verbatim from the Action Plan)

“Produce and distribute a monthly newsletter on campus and at Headquarters that includes updates, accomplishments, etc.”

**Recommendations:**

**Time Frame:**

Currently, USFA publishes a monthly newsletter that includes articles from staff and a message from the Chief Operating Officer. The newsletter is a valuable tool in enhancing the communication with staff. After discussions, the team concluded that the newsletter might be more effective in an electronic interactive format. An interactive electronic campus newsletter would be a less time consuming way of sharing nice-to-know information and promoting additional discussion. In keeping with the Administration’s initiative to move from paper to digital media, an electronic newsletter would allow news items to be more current and would be available whenever staff had time to read it. Information pertaining to Headquarters staff could be forwarded for potential inclusion in the Director’s update.

An intranet “WebBoard” segment closed off for NETC staff and contractors would serve this purpose and provide the following additional benefits:

- interactive topic threads would allow staff to post open questions and get responses. For example, we could have an “USFA Reorg” discussion topic that would give everyone on campus the latest information, and quell rumors by allowing people to post the questions that are on their minds. To host such a discussion, Ron (or another Senior Manager) would just check in periodically at his convenience and post brief replies.
- a “Campus Events Calendar” could be included with Points of Contact for each upcoming event about which staff might want information
- a “Campus Classified” forum could be included where staff could post advertisements of items for sale
- interest profiles would allow readers to be automatically notified by email whenever anything posts in categories they identify. For example, whenever someone updates the campus events calendar, or posts a message to a discussion forum on the Action Plan, an individual might choose to have notification sent to them automatically via email.

We recommend the following tasks:

1. Ron (or another Sr. Manager) agrees to host an experimental discussion forum. by June 15, 2000

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| 2. | Leadership and Communication Team recruits 20-25 pilot participants. Pilot can use existing Web-board located on FEMA Web-server.   | by June 15, 2000   |
| 3. | Maury arranges for passwords for participants   | by June 15, 2000   |
| 4. | Maury & Tim prepare access instructions for participants and a cover letter announcing the “USFA Reorg” Forum   | by June 20, 2000   |
| 5. | Run the interactive electronic newsletter in parallel with paper newsletter to assess participant interest. A moderator from the team would check periodically to make sure postings are on topic and timely. | June and July 2000 |
| 6. | Phase in electronic version, and purchase USFA version of WebBoard software, if worthwhile. Passwords and access instructions would be provided to all USFA staff.  | Late summer 2000   |

**Background:**

Current campus news and information of the type included in the USFA newsletter is a valuable contribution to enhanced campus communication. However there are some drawbacks inherent in the paper format. Some staff feel pressure to submit articles, and it can be a big job to solicit, compile, edit, print and distribute all of them. Some articles are redundant of other project descriptions, email notices, website marketing copy, significant accomplishments report items, etc. This redundancy will only increase with regular dissemination of more team information and USFA Senior Staff notes (see recommendation # 79). Staff may have read the “news” or heard about it on campus long before it appears in the newsletter.

**Budget Impact:**

Cost of WebBoard software licenses	\$1400.00
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**Conclusion:**

There are three distinct categories of information in USFA, each requiring a different type of communication tool:

1. vitally important to all staff (e.g. USFA Senior Staff meeting notes) – would go out via email to all after management clearance,
2. nice-to-know, current information to share across divisions, and
3. significant accomplishments – marketing for external audiences, including [www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov) information.

The paper newsletter was designed as internal communications tool, not to extend beyond campus. An electronic interactive version of the newsletter would also be for internal

purposes, but would give us a more responsive communications vehicle for this second category. It would be easy to update, would be able to be tailored to an individual reader's interest profile, and would provide an opportunity for management and staff to exchange information easily.

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Approval Date \_\_\_\_\_

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