

# URIC Communications

*Standard Operating Procedures by Activity*

## Overview

The Office for Research, University Research Institutes and Centers Administration (URICA) and the Research Communications office partner to support University Research Institutes and Centers (URICs) communication initiatives and activities. This guidance is intended to provide standard operating procedures by activity for categories of communications and their subsequent dissemination

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## Communication Categories

Broad communication with faculty and staff affiliated with the University Research Institutes and Centers (URICs) will typically take three major forms:

1. Local: URICA communications directed to URICs
  - Regarding operational matters, including deadlines, quarterly or other meetings, etc.
2. Office-wide: unit-level VPR/OR communications directed to “all-OR”
  - Including URIC affiliates whose formal HR reporting is to OR
3. University-wide: institution-level VPR/OR communications directed to “all-NU”
  - Includes faculty, staff, and graduate students

Each section below will define key parameters for communication methods and expectations to ensure alignment and clarity of roles for each office and position involved.

## Local: URICA to URICs Communications

### Definition

“Local” communications are defined as URICA initiated communications that are specifically addressed to URICs about issues specific to URICs, or passing along other (non-Office for Research) information. This category of communication is utilized for standard for day-to-day business operations.

### Disseminating Office

URICA

### Procedures

URICA team, at its discretion and via its unit-level channels (i.e. listservs, SmartSheet lists, administrative meetings), will communicate with faculty and staff directly regarding local business issues (e.g. budget) and URIC specific processes (e.g. Annual Reports). URICA leadership leverages and manages its [cultivated and updated list](#), making determinations about audience segmentation based on the specifics of the communication and the role/function of affiliates on the list. Additional details on the composition of each list category are published on the URICA website.

### Special Considerations

- For communications to URIC Faculty Directors: URICA will consult with the AVP for Research overseeing URICs. Such consultation may either be as part of regular process (e.g. budget packets), or ad hoc for specific issues, with the goal that the AVP will always be aware of communications that may initiate faculty question or concerns.

## Office-wide: “all-OR” Communications

### Definition

“Office-wide” communications are defined as those communications initiated and to be disseminated to an audience including all employees in the Office for Research. URICs are grouping of units within the Office for Research and should receive such communications in concurrence with all other Office for Research staff. If necessary, the Comms Director will manually add individuals to the main list for a given communication. Comms Director uploads the distribution list into the NU bulkmail system, formats the message in HTML template, tests, and schedules for delivery.

### Disseminating Office

#### Research Communications

### Procedures

Office-wide communication efforts are coordinated by the Research Communications Director who solicits the current *all-OR mailing list* from the OR Research Administrative Services Business Manager.

### Special Considerations

- URIC-specific considerations: the Research Communications Director should consult with URICA leadership as needed to modify/customize messaging to address any URIC-specific considerations.
- For any questions regarding distribution: In consultation with URICA, the Research Communications Director reviews the *all-OR* distribution list to ensure that any key affiliates from the URICA list appear as part of the *all-OR* list.
  - If issues are identified, Research Communications Director will notify URICA and URICA will provide guidance and solution
- Single-message: Ideally, any URIC messaging specifics will be integrated into the main office-wide communication to allow us to send a *single* message to all OR stakeholders.
  - However, if necessary, we can segment messaging and send a modified version of the main communication to URIC affiliates separately.
  - If this step is required, we first would remove URIC affiliates from the main *all-OR* distribution to avoid individuals receive two versions of largely the same message.

## Director-level: “OR Directors” Communications

### Definition

“Director-level” communications are defined as OR-wide communications, that are disseminated at a to individual office leads, which typically have the title of “Director” in the position. Similarly, URICs are led by a “Director of Operations and Outreach” position and are codified in URICA’s distributions lists as “Leader of Administration” and is further defined on the [URICA Staff Contacts website](#).

### Disseminating Office

Research Communications

### Procedures

Director-level communication efforts are coordinated by the Research Communications, and will utilize the [Leader of Administration \(link\)](#) to disseminate to URIC Directors at the same time as all other Office for Research (operational office) Directors. The URICA office is responsible, in combination with URIC staff, for maintaining the URIC Staff Contacts list, and the list can be used for immediate dissemination by the Research Communications office.

### Special Considerations

- In the case of particularly sensitive communications: the Research Communications office should request that URICA review and refresh the Leader of Administration ahead of sending
- URIC-specific considerations: the Research Communications Director should consult with URICA leadership as needed to modify/customize messaging to address any URIC-specific considerations.
  - Note, the Research Financial Administration office should be aware if there may be special considerations or arrangements for URICs in many cases and be able to alert Research Communications; however, whenever in question URICA is always available to pre-review communications.

## University-wide: “All–Northwestern” Communications

### Definition

“University-wide” communications are defined as messages for dissemination to audience by role or function, regardless of unit.

### Disseminating Office

Research Communications

### Procedures

Research Communications Director prepares messaging for distribution via NU bulkmail, using the system’s automatically updated “targeted groups” to define audience. These targeted groups are “all faculty,” “all staff,” and “graduate students,” which should include all URIC affiliates identified by the University’s HR system.

### Special Considerations

- URIC-specific considerations: the Research Communications Director should work with URICA leadership as needed to modify/customize messaging to address any URIC-specific considerations.

## URIC Responsibilities

URIC units and staff also have a few key responsibilities regarding communications, in addition to local business processes. URICs and URIC staff are expected to:

- Be aware of, and utilize, **Northwestern brand tools** and guidance for all materials
  - <https://www.northwestern.edu/brand/>
- Ensure **all staff are appropriately added and maintained on relevant listservs and distribution lists**; for URICs this should always include the following in addition to any functional groups:
  - Always include administrative staff on the URIC Administrators Listserv  
URIC\_ADMINSTAFF@LISTSERV.IT.NORTHWESTERN.EDU
  - Always ensure staff are added to the staff contacts page for URICA
    - This list drives URIC Administrators meeting attendance (all), Leader's of Administration receive OR Director-Level communications, and specific communications points-of-contact can be identified (regardless of role)
  - <https://urica.northwestern.edu/institutes-and-centers/uric-staff-contacts.html>
- Provide and review annually the "URIC Tile" information
  - Includes short description and image; if link changes it is URIC responsibility to notify URICA/OR to adjust the linked-to page
  - <https://www.research.northwestern.edu/university-research-institutes-and-centers/>
- Maintain URIC website(s) that is/are "on-brand" for Northwestern, is functional (no broken links), and maintains up-to-date information
- Identified communications contacts for the URIC should:
  - Monitor for and pass along major items of interest and possible news stories to the Research Communications office
  - Attend Office for Research communications forums and events
  - Maintain up-to-date knowledge of Northwestern policies, procedures, and branding as it related to communication initiatives