

Date: November 10, 2004
To: John McGarrigle, ITS, et al
From: Carolina Consulting
Re: Our participation in new MyUNC initiative

Carolina Consulting and the MyUNC Initiative

Carolina Consulting, a student organization dedicated to serving the campus community through business-style consulting services, is aiding an effort by the Student Body President to increase the use of MyUNC among students. Carolina Consulting is excited to be part of this initiative; our involvement brings unique, student-centered insights, a multi-disciplinary approach to solving problems, and close ties to the major student groups that could realize MyUNC's true potential. We hope to see MyUNC become a groundbreaking, marketable institution of UNC that will facilitate student life and the activities of student organizations to an unprecedented degree.

Our Approach

After an initial round of research, surveys, and informal interviews, we envision four stages in our collaborative effort to increase student use of MyUNC:

- (1) gather more information and define the problem
- (2) formalize and implement initial recommendations
- (3) build ties with pilot student groups
- (4) develop higher-end functionality of MyUNC

Stage 1 – Gather Information

Our current understanding of the MyUNC project at present comes from our own personal use of MyUNC, a survey conducted by the Business and Technology chairs, and an informal meeting with Mr. John McGarrigle that helped us better understand the technology behind the portal. Some student-centered information gathering is still necessary in the short term. Specific information will also be gathered as we work with student organizations in stage 3.

MyUNC is under-utilized. We know that publicity of the website has been sparse, that current MyUNC users have already made some helpful suggestions for improvement, and that students (and student groups) simply haven't recognized or been introduced to the full capabilities of MyUNC. We hope to address some of these surface issues in stage 2. We also feel that increasing the capabilities of MyUNC and making it an integral part in the operation of student organizations will be the most effective way to increase a base of solid student users. This ultimate goal we hope to achieve in stages 3 and 4.

Stage 2 – Initial Recommendations

Based on the information we've gathered, we've begun identifying areas on which to focus for the advancement of the project:

- (1) *Publicity.* Based on our experience, we feel that student use of technology resources is often characterized by force-of-habit. Early and repeated exposure to MyUNC as a tool to guide student life is crucial to gaining student acceptance of the site. We suggest the creation of a

brand identity for the portal. Student websites can show their affiliation in the form of a logo.

Early examples:



- (2) *Surface Improvements*. Current student users have made suggestions ranging from simple cosmetic changes to the website to ones addressing functionality. Based on these surveys, further research, and our own use of MyUNC, Carolina Consulting hopes to work directly with ITS to develop and implement specific surface improvements to the website.

We hope that these changes can be painlessly implemented and that usage can be measured afterwards, before we begin to collaborate on making MyUNC an unparalleled University asset. Certainly we hope to grow our relationship with ITS so that this tool can help more students. During this stage, we hope to formalize the roles of the various parties (ITS, the Business and Technology Chairs, and Carolina Consulting). We'd also like to develop a timetable and learn about ITS resources available for this stage and the ones to follow.

Stage 3 – Collaborate With Student Organizations

Eventually, we hope to also work directly with student organizations to understand their needs and apply MyUNC's capabilities (such as the calendar and the ability to provide exclusive content) to meet those needs. This process should benefit not only student organizations but, once we've worked with enough groups, it will increase the long-term user base of MyUNC tremendously.

In stage 3, Carolina Consulting sees itself acting as a liason between student groups and technology services. We aim to work with individual student groups, finding out how they contact their members and conduct business, while introducing to them the current (and potential) capabilities of MyUNC. Our goals are to create a portal-accessible web presence for 2-3 major student organizations, such as

- Student Congress
- Campus Y
- Greek Affairs
- Senior Marshalls

The existing organization websites will be extended to MyUNC via RSS syndication. For example, bills on the docket of the next session of Student Congress could show up as a docklet within MyUNC.

We aim to develop these links before the spring membership drives. Once relationships between key groups and MyUNC have been established, we then envision working with those organizations and ITS together to develop the new and powerful capabilities that will allow MyUNC to realize its potential.

Stage 4 – Solidify User Base

Much like teachers driving the use of blackboard.unc.edu, we envision our key pilot organizations serving as the necessary force that will bring students to use MyUNC repeatedly and discover its power. Carolina Consulting would advise groups on using the existing calendar client while at the same time guiding a group's development of specific content. This will be a slow process but one with huge potential benefits. We also wish to explore the possibility of integration with the PID database to provide privileged information based on students' PIDs. For instance, access to Greek Affairs news could be restricted to fraternity and sorority members.

We'd also monitor our progress at this stage to ensure student user comfort, positive student organization leadership attitudes, and overall level of MyUNC use.

The Next Step

The next stage in this process must be the formalization of the roles of all the interested parties. Carolina Consulting would like to continue contact with ITS and begin to develop and implement some of the initial recommendations (from stage 2). If our ideas have enough support, we'll also begin establishing working partnerships with one or two pilot organizations (as in stage 3). With the above outline, we believe the Student Body President's initiative has been given the proper focus so that our joint visions can be realized.