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## Academic Affairs Update, April 2017

University of Northern Iowa. Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

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## Signing Off

Newsletters can be a tricky publication. Unlike flyers, which are supposed to offer time-sensitive, single-idea messages, and brochures, which typically are informational and may be read by a variety of audiences, the newsletter genre is meant to reach out to new readers while cultivating and maintaining a sense of connection with current constituents.

Add to this purpose a consideration of technological evolution in publication design and distribution--including related changes in audiences' reading habits--and a newsletter becomes much more than just a pretty document.

At UNI, the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs has been publishing its *Academic Affairs Update* newsletter since 2011. Susan Hill, who was a Provost's Office Administrative Fellow at the time, served as the first editor. The publication was emailed as a multi-page PDF attachment once per semester, a project involving faculty and staff contributors, administrative review, several editing iterations, and an external contract with a graphic designer. Adrienne Lamberti became the Administrative Fellow in charge of *Academic Affairs Update* in Fall 2013.

In Fall 2014, the newsletter underwent both visual and media transformations and began to be distributed as monthly email blasts. This migration was in keeping with the university's larger efforts to coordinate its public presence into a distinctive and immediately recognizable brand.

Using University Relations' Lyris distribution system also enabled systematic record keeping, to determine the "open rate" (the percentage of recipients who opened the newsletter) and "click rate" (the number of times an issue's hotlinks were clicked). During its first year as a digital blast, *Academic Affairs Update* was distributed to an average of 1500 recipients and averaged a 63% open rate. This year so far, the newsletter has been sent to an average of 1675 recipients and averages a 70% open rate.

Statistical analysis of the newsletter's reception allowed a greater understanding of the topics that UNI's campus wished to read, prevented overexposure of topics already covered by other university publications, and honed the timing of each issue's distribution. Style too was impacted by readers' focus on punctuation and mechanics as much as on article content.

Three years may not seem like a long life span, but for a professional, digitized publication, they do suggest a successful run for *Academic Affairs Update*. By now, members of the UNI community receive digital mass communications on a daily basis. Given the current publication landscape, this will be the final issue of *Academic Affairs Update* in this form. The Office of the Provost looks forward to other opportunities by which it can share news, provide information, and most of all continue its relationship with university readers.

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*Academic Affairs Update* is edited by Dr. Adrienne Lamberti (Languages & Literatures)

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**Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs**

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