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                  Senior Officers' Training Guide

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1    INTRODUCTION
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Welcome to the Senior Officers' Training Guide!

Cadets in UCIP are required to take the Basic SIM Guide to show them the
basics of roleplaying within our organisation. If they ever progress on

to become XOs or COs, they must take the Command Course, to show them how to lead a simulation. But between these two courses lies an enormous gulf. What do you do in between? That's where this course comes in. Many simmers are confused when they become Senior Officers (Department Heads) - how do my duties change? What are my new responsibilities? How am I supposed to run my department? This course should answer those questions. In many ways you role is just like the XO or CO: you are the CO of your department, so you must keep your assistants involved in the plot, and make their logs a significant and coherent part of the overall story. This course will show you how to do all these things, and more, and will prove a vital stepping stone in the directino of becoming a 2XO or XO.

The text in this course is largely based on the Email Command Course and the version of this guide that Prof Blokpoel wrote, using that course. It will be attempted to cover both Email and IRC simming, but the origins of the course and my personal experience are both based on Email sims. Note that sometimes the word 'logging' will be used to mean both Email logs and IRC contributions.

Being a good senior officer means two things: you need to be a good officer in general and you need to be a good leader over your junior officers, your assistants. The emphasis of this course will be on the second aspect - as the first has already been dealt with in the SIMguide - but the first chapter will focus on the officer side of the responsibilities. Obviously, the major point in being a good senior officer has to do with your contribution to running the plot or subplots in the sim. Therefor, a separate chapter has been dedicated to issues of plot direction and cohesion. Finally there will be some attention to what it means to be a senior officer not just in a sim, but in a (sub)fleet of sims.

The text of this course might be a bit serious, and the exam that follows it a bit hard to pass, but the only goal of this course is to help you improve your simming and indirectly help you have more fun doing so. When you have a good grasp of how to deal with assistants and other characters in the sim, you will find that it improves the quality and the fun of your simming. Although some people find it hard to pass this course, virtually nobody really fails. You might have to redo part of the exam, but the instructors are there to pull you thru, not to let you drop. So also when you read this guide and you have questions or things are not clear, do not hesitate to contact your instructor, whose name and email should be in the email accompanying this guide.

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2 RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN OFFICER
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2.1 ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Paying attention to details is crucial in making the plot coherent and avoid confusion. What one person does, can have an effect on nearly every crewmember of the sim. To give a few examples and see how they

translate to the duties of the department heads:

(1) In the CO or XO log (Email) or in the action-line of the CO (IRC) it is stated that the ship was hit by some shockwave.

As the ship will rock unexpectedly, people will be thrown about and things will fall, etc. This would also effect your character, hence your log in an Email sim. Besides this general scene, specific departments will have specific areas in which they should 'reply' to the log:

- Sickbay can expect minor casualties (curs and bruises);
- Engineering can expect some minor damage;
- Operations should compile the damage report and co-ordinate repair teams with Engineering;
- Science and Operations will try to find out where the shockwave came from;
- Tactical will keep its eyes open for possible threaths - we were caught off guard - and liaises with Science and Operations;
- Security will always roam the ship, they can give first aid, help co-ordinate with Sickbay and report any damage they see to Operations.

(2) A crewmember is involved in a minor explosion and is injured. He contacts Engineering and then has himself transported to sickbay.

- Operations looks after internal sensors and needs to monitor the explosion and report it;
- Engineering will have to include the details of the contact with the department in the crewmembers' log into their own logs;
- Sickbay has a patient to treat;
- Engineering and Operations need to co-ordinate that someone repairs the conduit.

(3) The turbo lifts have been reported to be malfunctioning and have been taken offline.

Everyone will be climbing through Jeffries Tubes and it is a long climb from Engineering on deck 33 to the Bridge on deck 1 ;) ... Engineering and Operations need to work at finding a cause and solution.

So as an officer it is very important to read all the logs or contributions to the IRC sim carefully and think, 'How does that affect my department?', 'Do I need to do anything in response to this?'.

2.2 ORDERS AND THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

In order to organise things efficiently in UCIP, there is a clear Chain of Command. Assistants are responsible to their Department Heads, Department Heads report to the XO, the XO to the CO, and the CO is responsible to the Subfleet Commander, who is in turn responsible to the Starfleet Commander. (OOCly, the chain then continues upwards to the Deputy Commander in Chief and the Commander in Chief of UCIP.) As a senior officer, you are expected to follow the orders of the CO and XO. When they write a plot starting log, or a log with orders, or when they

issue orders or use an ACTION in IRC, you must react. That means,
passing orders down to your department to start your departmental
subplot, reporting anything new that your department picks up as a
result, and so on. Be careful not to stray too far from those orders. If
you do, the plot can easily be thrown off-track.

Another important point is: don't jump the chain. If an assistant has a
problem, OOCly, they should speak to their Department Head, XO or CO.
They should not jump the chain and speak directly to the Subfleet or
Fleet Commander. Usually people are quite upset when you bypass them and
take several steps in the Chain at once. Always try to avoid ignoring
someone in the Chain, unless you have a clear reason to do so. Of course
it is allowed to speak to officers several steps above you - they're not
saints - but being a good senior officer will be a disaster when people
under you do not tell you what is going on or what their problems are.
So never ignore your direct senior officer. In most cases when you do,
you will be told to follow the chain appropriately. This is because many
problems can be solved at the lower end of the chain. Only the big
issues should need passing upwards. Likewise, you wouldn't find Subfleet
Commanders issuing orders to assistants in your department.

IRC sims are based heavily on interaction, whilst email sims tend to
have more depth, but less interaction. This is because of the problem of
speaking for other characters. Sometimes, this might be necessary, or
completely benign, but you must take care not to speak too heavily for
other departments and never issue orders from the CO in your log. You
can make a recommendation, but leave it to them to follow it or not, so
that they can stir the plot ... or perhaps more accurately steer the
plot in the direction they want. Many logs in exams for this course have
students put several orders or very clear reactions from the CO in the
mouth of that CO, so that the CO is given very little room to go in his
or her own direction. If you have ideas of what direction the plot
should go into, but you're not in charge, you can just write ICly how
your officer gives a recommendation to the CO and then wait until the CO
or XO replies.

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3 RESPONSIBILITIES AS A LEADER
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Now lets turn to your task as being the head of your department - the
core of this course. According to the Command Course there are four
things that are required to be a good senior officer: (1) flexibility
and adaptability, (2) creativity (the 'Everything fits, otherwise we'll
make it fit' approach), (3) attention to detail and (4) looking at the
bigger picture. These four aspects will be explained in this chapter and
I will add one more: communicating. Most of the points mentioned in this
and the next chapter are directly taken from guides for and experiences
of COs and XOs in how they run their sim, as running a department is in
essence just the same thing as running a miniature sim. It requires the
same capacities and you can see it as the perfect training ground if you
ever wish to get higher up in the Chain of Command.

3.1 FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

The fun of simming is the interaction with other simmers. You can log or play some parts of the story, and others will add their parts. The surprising effect this can have is one of the most fun things in simming. However, it also means that others might steer the story in a somewhat different direction that you did not intend as a CO or as a department head. A bad CO can easily solve this - using his authoritative position to decide that what that player did never happened and getting the story back in exactly the direction he or she wanted. Such a CO could do better writing a novel himself - this is not what simming is about. Good CO'ing - either at sim or at department level - means that you accept the fact that the plot has its own life, independent of you. The story flows in a direction, and you simply have to adapt.

Of course there are still some general aspects of the plot that you have to watch. For example, you do not want the problem that should be keeping the crew busy for the coming few weeks to be solved in a day. Or maybe you have very interesting plans in the plot that the story should gradually evolve into. Here the trick is to write your own log or actions in such a way as that you can steer the plot back into the right direction. Try to find a way to incorporate the plot twists your crew or your assistants wrote into the plotline you had in mind. This is not easy and it is exactly what requires the next characteristic of a good leader:

3.2 CREATIVITY

Creativity is needed to adapt the story to all the twists and turns the crew will inevitably produce, whilst keeping the plot coherent. Even the most wild twists can often be incorporated if we adopt Commo Blokpoel's slogan, 'everything fits or we'll make it fit'. By contrast, if you retract logs or contradict people in IRC sims, you will crush their confidence and morale, no one will dare to contribute to the plot, and the crew that will be left after most of them leave will be mindless slaves. Not much fun. So, if something has been SIMmed, it has happened! Deal with it! The key of doing this is in the creation of a 'sequence of events'. Creating a sequence of events means that you incorporate many details from your crew into your log and that you create a sort of time frame but putting the events in the right order and the right context. For example, you can in an email sim write about your assistant reporting to you about the work he or she just did in his or her log. With some creativity you can make nearly anything fit into your sequence of events and thus incorporate it into the main plot. In an IRC sim you cannot really speak of a 'sequence of events' as the timing is already created by the fact that the sim itself is more or less realtime in speed. However, you can still try in your contributions to the sim to steer the plot in the right direction while still keeping as much in tact as possible of what your assistants or crew do.

Creativity is also important in a more direct way. As a department head,

you should have creative input to the sim. In other words, if you're a Chief of Science, give your assistants a really interesting research project to work on, with plenty of opportunity for creativity, rather than telling them to go clean the test tubes. If you're a Chief Engineer, get your assistants to work on improving the ship's systems to give teh ships interesting new quirks, rather than getting them to go clean the plasma manifolds. When assigning assistants order, think: is this going to be fun for them? Is it going to allow them to contribute to the plot in an interesting and creative way? Never forget, however, that you have a whole crew of creative minds - give some interesting orders and put creativity in the game, but leave lots of space for your assistants to add their own creative plot twists. It's the surprising result of many creative minds writing together that creates the fun of simming, not the good writing of one member.

3.3 ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Attention to detail is very crucial. If simmers do things and you don't notice them and write completely different, it will be very confusing for the crew and assistants will also feel worthless. You need to make sure no details contradict other details, and you need to make your crew feel involved in the sim by confirming the details in their logs, when you're Email simming, or by interacting with them or indeed also confirm details in an IRC sim. For example, if your assistant reports to you in your office, don't ignore them! Listen to what they have to say, and respond to it. If they need something new to do, assign them a new task. Make them feel part of the team.

It has already been explained in the previous chapter how important this paying attention is - many actions by fellow simmers require you to react, whether you are an assistant or a CO. And for a CO - or department head - that is even more so the case as you are involved in more separate subplots than is an assistant. Attention to the details in the logs from your crew is crucial, and whenever possible you should use them. The contributions from the crew need to be confirmed in those from the CO and XO and the department heads. Not necessarily by quoting them literally (in email), but by using the information given in those contributions to move the plot forward and dealing with the situations in the subplots created by the crew. The crew wants and needs to have the freedom to add to the plot, move it forward with their own ideas as well. They will become disillusioned and eventually drop out if they can't or if they feel they can't, and if they are always only filling in the bits after the event so to speak. They each have a great imagination, let them help you write the plot and unfold the story.

3.4 LOOKING AT THE BIGGER PICTURE

As a good officer you need to be always conscious of your environment, that is, not only of your own department, but also the SIM as a whole. Be careful to pay attention to the details not only in your own log, but also in those of other departments, or, when in a plot with several sims together, those of the other sims. The same way your XO and CO are

responsible to take care of the coherence between the plot on the sim itself and the one in the subfleet. So, always keep in mind the bigger picture of the whole sim, and in some cases even beyond that. Be conscious of how your actions influence what others can or have to do.

3.5 COMMUNICATING

Proper communication is crucial to have fun with simming. To me it seems a lot of things that go wrong in simming - arguments, frustration - have everything to do with miscommunication. It is both crucial to communicate a lot and to do so properly. You need out-of-character communication with you senior officers, your fellow officers and your crew. Communicate when you experience problems, feel bad about something, have ideas, expect others to do something, etc. That way people know what you are thinking and what they can expect when dealing with you. Simming is to a large part teamwork and teamwork needs communication.

And, as said, it is not only important to communicate a lot, it is also important to do so properly. Show respect to others - treat them as you would like to be treated - and always try to be patient. Listen carefully to what others are telling you. Do not immediately think what they say is probably nonsense, but assume by default that they might have a good point. And if you disagree, make clear first that you like their input and explain why you disagree (in case they are your crew, not when you are talking up the Chain of Command). Always try to be friendly and clear and giving arguments for the things you are saying.

If there are specific things you notice that (new) assistants or crew members keep getting wrong, send them a private email or contact them in private messages and for example guide them to the relevant section of the sim guide or advanced course guide. Make sure you are positive in your approach is you need to correct them and be careful not to correct them on every little thing. Only if it is major stuff. Tell them they are doing a good job, and that there is a way to do even better and proceed to show them in a constructive way what you mean. What we want to try and do, is build crew members' self-confidence, not break it with constant criticism.

When contacting a junior officer like this, feel free to ask the CO or XO for advice first. And when mailing, CC or BCC (if more appropriate as not to scare him/her off) it to either the CO or XO or both. Keep them informed of issues that are being addressed by you so they won't duplicate the effort or have the crew member feel inadequate because of more than one person addressing them over something.

IRC-specific point: remember in the Basic SIM Guide, it tells you not to /msg the CO during the SIM because he's too busy? So who do assistants /msg if they are stuck? Well... it should be you! Their department head. Make sure they're aware of this before the SIM, and keep communications with them during the SIM friendly - as all communications should be friendly ;) ...

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4 RUNNING A PLOT
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As said, simming is about writing a good plot together and have fun.
Thus, many important aspects of good CO'ing or being a good department
head come down to good plot direction. And also the major problems you
can encounter fall under this heading. For that reason, a separate
chapter is here devoted to plot direction, cohesion and correction.

4.1 START

Either in an Email or an IRC sim, what has been logged or written has
happened, and when it has not been written, is has not happened. That is
the simple and main thing you should always keep in mind.

The setting for the start of a plot is dependent on the Chain of
Command. The CO receives IC orders from the subfleet commander, and
looks at the bigger picture on subfleet level, i.e., how does this plot
affect the ofther sims in the (sub)fleet? Starting a war with the
Romulans or Cardassians is NOT a good idea without prior consultation
and approval up the Chain of Command ;). The XO is a key interface
between the CO and the department heads. An XO needs to be a bit of both
- keeping a close eye on the orders that were given by the CO and then
check up with the department heads to make sure the orders are passed
on. If there is a technical OOC problem - like being disconnected from
the internet - with the department head, the XO can log for this senior
officer and make sure the assistants in that department are kept
involved. If a senior officer hasn't quite grasped the bigger picture
yet, a log from the XO can help tie up some ofthe subplots and help the
senior officer IC to deal with the situation at hand. In this way, the
XO can be seen as a 'super senior officer', since the Department Heads
can be seen as his 'assistants', in a way. At other times the XO is to
lead a subplot with specific orders from the CO, e.g. an away team
mission. The same way the CO gets the orders from the subfleet commander
and looks at the bigger picture of the subfleet, the department heads
receives orders from the CO or XO and has to be looking at how it
affects the sim and other departments.

A plot will usually start by a plot starting log in email, or with a
Mission Briefing in IRC from the CO. This introduction should contain
enough background information and specific orders to set the scene, such
that the rest of the crew has an indication of where the plot will be
heading and what they need to do to get started in the plot. In the case
of an IRC sim the introduction might be somewhat smaller, with the CO
giving clear orders pretty soon after the start of the sim. To introduce
a subplot in your department you can do the same thing - write an
introductiory log to describe the setting in which it takes place. Note
that you always need to talk directly to your crew, ICly, before they
know things. If you don't organise a meeting, talk to them directly or
through commbadge, they will not ICly know what is happening and will
not be able to react. Either as a CO or as a department head, it is

important to make sure that you involve all crew members under you in the (sub)plot you are creating, or make sure they're involved in another, simultanously running (sub)plot.

When you are a department head and your CO starts a plot, you should receive direct orders from your CO. Or you will for example be called to a senior officers' meeting. What is expected from you is first of all to respond to these orders - acknowledge them. The next step is to get your assistants (active or NPC) involved. Please note that although the use of NPCs is a great tool to bring depth to the picture in your department, the active assistants go first. At all times you need to check if your active assistants have something to do. Looking at the bigger picture, basically. And note that this bigger picture is rather big - even a small vessel will have several decks and dozens of crew members (although most NPC, of course). In most plots, most departments and hence most of these crewmembers will be someway involved. For example, in a typical science oriented mission, operations and engineering will still be responsible to keep te ship in tip top shape and engineering, science and medical will often work together in their research endeavours, and tactical and security will keep watching over the safety of the ship and advice the others about the safety risks of their research ideas. And, obviously, helm still has to steer and counselling to watch over the mental health of all crew members.

When the CO has launched the plot and you have your department's orders, you've got to pass those orders down to your assistants to get them involved in the plot. There are plenty of ways to do it. In email, you typically have a lot of time, so you can log a departmental meeting where you explain the situation and hand out orders. In IRC, you can do this if time permits, but also valid (and faster) is to simply contact them via commbadge to get them working asap. This might be a better method if you only sim for an hour. It doesn't really matter how you do it, so long as it fits into the plot, explains things to your assistants, and gets them going. Remember - NPCs come last, after active assistants.

But what happens if I don't get any orders from the CO? I hear you cry. Well, this shouldn't happen too often. It's a CO's job to keep every department busy. However, if it does, it is your responsibility to keep your department busy. Look at the bigger picture: is there some way you can support another department in their work? E.g. if Science has been ordered to build a special probe, but Engineering hasn't been told to do anything, you as Chief Engineer could have your department help Science. If there's no way to get involved in the main plot, then create a subplot. You might want to check with the CO or XO first (XO in RIC is better since the CO has a lot on his plate). Some subplots can link back into the main plot at a later stage, some might be interrupted suddenly because the department is called to action (this can often happen in IRC).

4.2 DIRECTION

Although OOC communication is important, IC communication is even more

important. Whenever you can, handle things ICly, especially when directing the plot. Issuing orders ICly, for instance, creates far more plot cohesion than telling people what to do in /msg or over an OOC listserv, and it also allows for more plot freedom. The crew comes up with recommendations and plot twists, and teh CO picks and chooses, creating a part forwards. This can slow things down somewhat in email sims, but gives more opportunity for character development, which in turn creates higher quality simming, and more fun. Because of the quick pace of IRC sims, OOC comments and clarifications might be more necessary, but still, the more IC the better, and the more plot freedom, the happier the crew will be.

Having said that, there are of course exceptions. For instance, when the plot is part of a larger (sub)fleetplot and has therefor to stay a bit tighter within certain limits, it might be a good idea to send a basic plot outline over the out-of-character senior officers' list so that all senior officers can keep this basic outline in mind when they are simming. However, this should never go so far as to be a mere script that everyone must follow.

When the plot has started it is the responsibility of the CO and department heads to contribute in such a way as to clarify situations, make decisions, and in doing so steer the plot in the direction they want it to go. Be aware that fellow simmers need some time to react - in Email simming even at least 48 hours or so. In Email simming, you can, and at times, will need to speak for some of your officers in your logs to ensure that your orders are carried out and for the plot to be moved forward. Care should be taken though that when you do, you portray the character correctly. Play it on the side of caution if you are unsure, and keep the conversation to a minimum without harming the log or the plot.

Here comes also the important aspect of paying attention to details again. Confirm plot twists by your assistants so that you keep them involved and show your appreciating for their contribution to the story. However, the crew should also be made aware that major changes to the plot should be cleared by the CO and/or XO before being simmed.

One thing to beware of is creating cliffhangers, especially at the end of email logs, but also in IRC. For instance, if you say there's an imminent warp core breach, this will have one of two effects: (a) fifteen people will, panic-stricken, sim all kinds of things, some ejecting the warp core, some stopping the breach, some abandoning ship or whatever, creating utter confusion; or (b) no-one will know what they are supposed to do and the plot will be stopped dead in the water until someone can resolve the situation.

4.3 SLOW SIM

At times, a simulation may run slowly. Primarily this is due to key officers not having much to do, being incompetent in playing their role, or experiencing networking/Email or OOC RL trouble. When the simulation is going slowly, and you do not suspect networking trouble, try to

prompt key assistants into getting more involved. Ask for more input from them, or order them into doing a long-term activity like keeping watch for certain conditions, going to a part of the ship to fix something, etc. In case of simwide slow down, the XO should also be watching for occasions such as this and should handle them personally if possible.

Please note that among the suggestions was not to create a new subplot. One should be careful creating subplots in an attempt to speed up the plot in these circumstances. This could only cause (more) confusion with the officers involved and even the rest of the crew. Remember to leave enough time for the existing subplots to develop. Too many subplots make the plot too complicated and confuse the crew. They won't know what to focus on and the result is half finished subplots that haven't had the opportunity to be properly developed. This in turn will harm the overall quality of the plot and the sim.

Also check whether an officer that seems quiet or hesitant is such because of their incompetence in playing their role. You may need to coach them in what they need to do. Part of the job of the XO for the sim as a whole and of a department head for his or her department is to make sure that the crew is able to do their duties. Senior officers are an extension of the Academy in the effect that it is their responsibility to ensure the training at the Academy took hold and that individual is ready to do their job; if not... train them. Make sure that your assistants are kept busy IC. A more experienced simmer won't need much in the way of orders and IC guidance to be kept busy, but the new simmers will. Encourage your assistants to take advanced courses, especially the one relating to their department. But also the others, so they get a better understanding how the different departments work and how they interact.

A way to keep your assistants busy is to have them choose a specific area of expertise within the department to look after. For example, in a science department one can think of stellar cartography, biological sciences, geological sciences, etc. You can make them sub department head, and give them an office and some NPCs in their little department to play with. The idea behind this is, that it is, at times, difficult to keep all your active assistants directly involved in the plot. Or you have to take an unexpected LOA for a few days or a week. This way, they are not stuck for something to log about or to sim as they have their own little area to write about. They also get the chance to practice their leadership skills on the NPCs, and learn to look at the bigger picture. Also, when the plot asks for expertise in a certain field, we can use that particular assistant and give him or her the chance to get a bit of the lime light and show off that expertise.

The sim can be slow plotwise, but this also leaves some space for more personal logs. Especially in email simming this is of crucial importance. They build the characters, they give an insight into them which will make it easier for other crew members to interact. As such, personal logs, promote interaction among the crew, which in turn will help make them feel part of the team and that improves the overall quality of the sim. So, at times, if it fits in the plot, go off duty.

Have the beta shift come on. Build IC friendships with your assistants and the other crew members. Talk to them. Make them feel part of the team. And not only ICly are these contacts important, but also OOCly - send them emails and ask them for input and ideas. Give them praise and encourage them. Do the odd joint log with them. As department head, don't be afraid to knock on the CO's Ready Room door and interact with him/her on and/or off duty. They generally don't bite ...

4.4 COHESION

It is the CO's and XO's responsibility to ensure that the contributions of the crew are tied into the main plot line and story. However, the senior officers can be of important assistance in this. In email simming this is done by creating a sequence of events from the crew logs, confirming details established in those logs from the crew and on a regular basis establishing an overview of what has happened in your logs (the latter can be achievd by reflecting back briefly over what has happened in the last few hours/days for example) before moving the plot forward again. This is to make sure that the logs posted by the crew make sense within the plot, show some cohesion and become a story rather than stay loose and 'bitty'. In IRC simming, this can be reflected in paying attention to assistants' inputs, repeating or confirming key points, and reporting them to superiors where necessary. Keep an eye on what your assistants are doing during the SIM, and whilst making sure they have enough freedom to be creative, don't have them go wild and throw the plot off-track.

4.5 WAYWARD LOGS

If a simmer introduces a subplot or event that is light years away from the plot and throws the sim badly off-track, the CO has the option of voiding that contribution. In email, this is known as 'retracting a lot' (in whole or in part), whilst in IRC a CO can denounce something in <<OOC>> or simply write an ACTION countermanding the input from the crewmember. Note that ONLY the CO can take these drastic OOC actions. By contrast, senior officers only have IC tools at their disposal... but these are by far the most effective. Rather than voiding the input, it is far better to acknowledge it and try to work it back into the plot, by incorporating some or all of the wayward input in their own input. In email, the key tool is the creation of a sequence of events which acknowledges the wayward event but then gets the plot rolling in the right direction again. In IRC, it's often possible to explain away quite outrageous problems. Here's an example. Cated Botchworthy is an assistant engineer, Lt Sparts is teh CEO and Capt Packard is the CO. The following occurs out of the blue:

Bad scenario:

CdtBotchworthy> ::taks console:: Sir, warp core breach is imminent!!
LtSparks> ::raises an eyebrow::
CaptPackard> ACTION: the warp-core breach is averted

(in email, Packard would post an OOC notice across the listserv
retracting Botchworthy's log)

Good scenario:

CptBotchworthy> ::taps console:: Sir, warp core breach imminent!!
LtSparks> ::frowns:: What? We've just serviced the warp core.. let me
see ::moves over to the console::
CaptPackard> ::turns to look at them with concern::
LtSparks> ::taps console:: Hmm, Botchworthy was right, that's what this
console shows.. but there are no alarms on the sensor grid ::taps a
different console and sighs with relief:: It's okay, Captain, the warp
core is fine. It looks like there's being a server outage on Deck 19,
it's causing problems with sensor routing.
CaptPackard> ::heart stops palpitating:: I see.. perhaps you should fix
that?
LtSparks> Aye, sir. Mr Botchworthy, please attend to the server.
CdtBotchworthy> Yes, Lieutenant ::leaves the bridge::

(in email, a similar response would be fine: Sparks would respond to the
log, confirm the details, and work out some way to get around it by
creating a sequence of events. Particularly when a wayward log comes
before a very important expected plot development, a sequence of events
is useful for acknowledging the wayward event, then smoothly working the
plot back around to anticipate the coming development.)

Retracting a log should always be avoided for several reasons. For one
thing, it crushes the self-confidence of the officer involved. He or she
may not have been aware of the implications of the log. Retracting is
also a message to the rest of the crew that will stifle their creative
endeavours and their willingness to add to the plot for fear of a public
retraction. If a log needs to be retracted or changed because it is
impossible to 'fix' it in your own log - which is a very unusual case -,
it would be better to contact the officer in question in private
explaining the problem and asking them to change their log themselves,
assuming that the circumstances in the plot allow for this of course.
Another problem of retraction - or moving the log over the timeline - is
that it can confuse fellow simmers. People might already have responded
to the actions or might not notice the retraction and respond after all,
while others might not do so, so that a chaotic situation arises. To
avoid confusion, the best solution is always to make the subplot fit
after all, at that moment on the timeline.

As a department head you can of course not retract logs. However, you
can still recognize them - as you will notice the little attention that
has been paid to other logs - and react. You can react by helping the
commanding officers to get the actions fit in the plot, for example. Or
talk to your assistant about the situation, so as to explain him or her
what is going wrong - of course, in a positive way as described above
under the heading of 'communicating'. For example, imagine your
assistant in the security department logging about an intruder, while it
had been logged earlier that the shields were up at all times - thus,
your assistants did not pay attention to the details. This situation you
can handle ICly by reporting it to the bridge and recommend them to be

cautious and investigate, but in this particular instant you can also
ask the crew member in question ICly since when it is possible to beam
through our shields ;) ... In the meantime, get hold of the CO or XO
OOCly and ask them if it is ok to go ahead with the subplot or not. So,
summarizing, use your creativity and apply the 'everything fits,
otherwise we'll make it fit'-approach. Also, as stated before, the CO
and XO direct the plot by choosing between the various recommendations
and report that are sent in. So leave it to them to make the big
decisions please.


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5 (SUB)FLEET ISSUES
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Simming is basically about writing a story together, as a team, in a sim
- for example a vessel, or starbase, or a colony. However, being in a
sim in UCIP means more than that - you are not only part of one sim, but
also of a sim group. Some sim groups are only groups in the sense that
they combined some tasks for a sim, like having a website for the group
and one academy. In UCIP however, we want to go one step further and
form a group IC also. Therefore we have subfleets and above that fleets
and all sims together form one big IC environment. This has been the
case for a long time already, but especially recently there is more and
more focus on improving this aspect of the sim group. Effort is taken to
make sure that people know what is going on around them - for example by
creating the universe mailinglist for logs that have an impact outside
the sim in which the log is written. Another aspect of this is that we
now do not only have characters in the sims themselves - with possible
OOC duties at higher levels - but that we are trying to get more IC
simming at higher levels too. So, there will be officers simming at
subfleet or fleet level. What does this mean?

In general a subfleet or fleet will be comparable to a regular sim.
There will be a mailinglist to work through and there will be a
commanding officer, either a subfleet commander or the starfleet
commander. However, there are more differences than similarities.
First of all, the 'bigger picture' is bigger and more important. As a
(sub)fleet level simmer you will need to pay attention to what is
happening in all sims under you. Or at least, you need to find a way to
know everything that is relevant for your department. There will also be
different OOC duties attached to your position, depending on the
department you are in. One could imagine the following system - but this
will differ a lot per (sub)fleet, so if you ever get into a position
like this, it is a matter of clear communication with your (sub)fleet
commander to get an idea of what is asked from you. But to give an idea,
a rough list of departments:

Fleet Operations - This department would be directly responsible for the
day to day running of the fleet. It can, subject to the approval of the
(sub)fleet commander, run certain fleet operations, such as special
patrols, war-games, exploratory missions, and so forth. This department
would also be responsible for the general overview of the operations of
the (sub)fleet. What vessels (remember that there are many NPC vessels

next to the active ones in your (sub)fleet) are put in when and where? What are their current mission statuses. What is the status of their maintenance? What materials, vessels, etc. are needed where? The fleet officer can work closely together with the operations officers on the vessels to be kept up-to-date about the maintenance status of the vessels.

Fleet Strategic Operations - This department would be responsible for a general tactical overview of the (sub)fleet. Where are the strengths, and weaknesses? Are our defence capabilities up to scratch? What are the (sub)fleet's current threats? NPC vessels will play a big part in this area, particular with the maintenance of regular patrols. A (sub)fleet officer in this department can of course work together with tactical or security officers of vessels in the (sub)fleet when they experience specific security problems the (sub)fleet could assist or advice in.

Fleet Security and Intelligence - Sometimes this department is merged with Strategic Operations, sometimes it is separate. This department is responsible for the overall integrity of the (sub)fleet in security matters. They deal with intelligence reports from those ships assigned to intelligence gathering, and keep an eye on developing situations to ensure that the (sub)fleet is not caught unaware. The department will be very busy during fleetwide security scares, e.g. anything like the plot from TNG where parasites were taking control of key personnel.

Fleet Engineering - This department would be responsible for the grand repairs and upgradings of vessels and will thus usually be stationed at some starbase. Officers from this department will work closely together with engineering departments on the vessels to advice and assist in the more complicated repair tasks.

Fleet Counselling - This department would be responsible for the mental health of the (sub)fleet officers and assist the ships' counsellors when they experience problems or have difficult cases. One could also imagine an OOC duty of assisting in conflicts between members of the (sub)fleet, as mediator or advisor.

Fleet Medical (Fleet Surgeon) - This department would advise and assist medical departments across the (sub)fleet. It keeps track of new deseases, therapies and cures, and keeps everyone abreast of the most recent developments in medical technology and research. They should also work closely with the Fleet Engineer to make sure ships' medical facilities are kept up to scratch.

Fleet Science - This department can also work as advisor and assistant when there are difficult cases. And it will also collect all scientific discoveries of the different vessels (again, both active sims and NPC ones) and help creating this one big universe. They are also responsible, like the Fleet Surgeon, for keeping up with new developments in the field of science and sharing this knowledge with the vessels in the (sub)fleet to further scientific endeavour.

For all these departments one can say that the (sub)fleet level officers could - in close cooperation with and with approval of all the COs -

start subplots that run simultanously with the individual sim plots, that are specific for their department. For example, medical could sim about an epidemic going through the fleet, or engineering could log about a specific upgrade that should be done to all vessels in the fleet, or strategic operations can log about a specific threat. Also, COs could ask (sub)fleet level officers to assist in their plot when the plot is somewhat department specific. For example, when there is a science related plot, it is very well imaginable that (sub)fleet science will be involved and assist the CO and XO in directing the plot. This way a (sub)fleet level officer would be sort of detached to a certain sim, for the duration of the plot.

It must be remembered, however, that the individual sims are run by their CO, not by (Sub)fleet Command. Not everybody is very supportive of (sub)fleet level simming. It is a matter of mutual respect and working out boundaries within your (sub)fleets. Be careful not to overstep your bounds when simming at (sub)fleet level. Always try to work closely with the COs. The bottom line is, (Sub)fleet Command is there to support the sims, not the other way around.

In other words, although the exact way this will be done will differ from (sub)fleet commander to (sub)fleet commander, there are lots of possibilities to get extra interesting simming at (sub)fleet levels. And there is thus an alternative career to the common assistant -> department head -> executive officer -> commanding officer one; instead you could think of a career like assistant -> department head -> subfleet level simmer -> etc. It gives room for lots of interesting simming and makes the 'bigger picture' of UCIP more interesting.


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6 CONCLUSION
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The end ;) ... These are the very basics behind the IC side of email and IRC CO'ing and how you can use those principles within your department. Applying them will help you become a better officer and polish your abilities, so when the opportunity for promotion to 2XO and XO arrives, you'll be ready to be considered for it.

So, give your assistants something to do. If you can't get them involved in the main plot ... think of something. There is always general maintenance to do, research to carry out, NPC patients to treat - whatever it is, make sue that they are involved and get to know them, IC and OOC. Thank you for reading this far. Keep this guide handy for future reference, as a training manual. And, above all, remember one thing - we are all here to have fun!