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Policy

UNIVERSITY POLICY IT-01.04-05/23

TO: The University of West Florida Community

FROM: Dr. Martha D. Saunders, President

SUBJECT: Electronic Mail Communications

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Information Technology Services

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to provide internal University personnel with policies and procedures governing University communications including electronic mail and broadcast distribution thereof. The University of West Florida provides "electronic mail" (email) accounts for all faculty, staff, and students. These email accounts are viewed as academic and business communication tools. This policy describes the appropriate usage of those accounts.

II. Policy:

A. Use of Electronic Mail (email)

The University's email system exists primarily to accomplish the work of the University. Therefore, using it for personal communication should be done in a prudent and responsible manner. Furthermore, such use should comply with applicable law and should not interfere with the University's Information Technology infrastructure or the email user's employment or other obligations to the University. Users of the University electronic communication system should have no expectation of privacy, in that most email messages sent through a University of West Florida account are public records.

1. Electronic mail is an official means of communication with the University of West Florida. UWF provides electronic mail services and facilities to the campus community for the furthering of the University mission, which includes the support of instruction, scholarly research, and other creative activities, public service, and administrative activities of the University.

2. The University encourages the use of electronic mail as a convenient, timely, and cost-effective communications medium. Those who use University email services are expected to do so responsibly; that is, to comply with Florida and federal laws, with the policies and procedures of the University, and with normal standards of professional conduct and personal courtesy.

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3. The following are examples of appropriate use of University electronic mail services:

    a. The conducting of official University business.

    b. Electronic dissemination of information, including the distribution of bulletins, memoranda, newsletters, reports, and committee communications.

    c. Instructional use, specifically to enhance communications between students and instructors.

    d. Facilitation of distance learning.

    e. Support of research activities.

    f. Electronic publications.

    g. Service activities of faculty and staff.

    h. Such uses consistent with the traditional academic freedom accorded to faculty members.

B. Prohibited Use

The following uses of University electronic mail services are specifically prohibited. University electronic mail services may not be used for:

1. Violations of federal, state, and local laws, or of University policies and rules.

2. Commercial purposes not under the auspices of the University.

3. Personal financial gain (except as permitted under applicable policies).

4. Constructing electronic communication so it appears to be from someone else.

5. Obtaining access to the files or communications of others, unless expressly authorized to do so.

6. Harassment of others. Users should not transmit to others or display images, sounds, or messages that might be perceived by a reasonable person as being, or have been identified as, harassing.

7. Giving opinions, representing, or otherwise making statements on behalf of the University or any unit of the University unless the sender is authorized by the University to do so. However, nothing in this policy shall be construed to diminish the First Amendment rights of students, faculty, or staff when communicating on their own behalf.

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8. Direct or indirect interference with the normal conduct of University business, the operation of University information technology services, or electronic mail services.

9. Transmission of unsolicited material such as repetitive mass mailings, advertising, or chain messages.

10. Exchanging or viewing obscene or pornographic content or material.

11. Use in ways that burden the University with noticeable incremental costs or which could otherwise be damaging or costly to the University.

12. Attempting unauthorized access to any portion of the email service, other electronic services, or attempting to intercept any electronic communication transmission without proper authorization.

13. Communication in lieu of contracts or for formal agreements because of the ease of forgery or misrepresentation.

14. Interfere with the email user's employment or other obligations to the University.

15. Automatically forwarding University of West Florida employee or departmental electronic mail to a non-university provided or approved service. Student email addresses ending in @students.uwf.edu are not subject to this prohibition.

C. Standards of Use

User access privileges must not be transferred or shared, except as expressly authorized by an appropriate University official. All users of computing, networking, telecommunications, and other information technology resources of the University are required to:

1. Comply with Florida's public records law and state records retention schedules for public records, including electronic mail, as more fully set forth in Appendix A hereto.

2. Comply with legally required disclosures (e.g., pursuant to a lawfully issued subpoena or search warrant, discovery request) and cooperate in University investigations, as well as collaborative investigations with outside entities, and in access necessary for repairs, maintenance, and monitoring of University facilities.

3. Comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, copyright, trademark, and licensing laws; the Florida Computer Crimes Act (Chapter 815, Florida Statutes); state obscenity laws (Chapter 847, Florida Statutes); and applicable Florida Board of Governors and University rules, policies, and procedures. Existing University policies applicable to standards of behavior (such

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as code of conduct, ethics, sexual harassment, disruptive behavior, academic integrity, use of facilities, etc.) are incorporated in this policy by reference.

4. Protect the confidentiality, accuracy, and integrity of institutional data (such as, but not limited to, student education records) which are subject to federal and state confidentiality laws.

5. Protect the integrity of passwords. Computer accounts, passwords, access codes, and other authorizations are assigned to individual users. It is a violation of this policy to use another's account, password, access code, or other such authorization, to permit access by unauthorized users, or to otherwise misrepresent one's identity in accessing or using any information technology resource of the University.

D. Violations and Enforcement

Failure to comply with the appropriate use of computing and information technology resources threatens the atmosphere for the sharing of information, the free exchange of ideas, and the secure environment for creating and maintaining information, and subjects users to the possibility of disciplinary action. Any member of the University community found using computing and information technology resources in violation of this policy is subject to disciplinary procedures including, without limitation, suspension of system privileges, expulsion, termination of employment and/or legal action as may be appropriate.

E. Privacy

Employees should have no expectation of privacy in email. Although personal email unrelated to University business generally is not a public record, most email sent through the UWF email system is a public record, and may be publicly disclosed upon request in accordance with Florida's public records law.

Although the University does not actively monitor electronic communications, it reserves the right to monitor or retrieve without notice in appropriate circumstances as established in written procedures, including, but not limited to the following situations:

1. It reasonably appears necessary or appropriate to do so to protect the integrity, security, or functionality of University operations and resources.

2. It reasonably appears necessary or appropriate to do so to comply with legal or contractual requirements or to protect the University from liability or disruption.

3. An account appears to be engaged in unusual or unusually excessive activity.

4. It reasonably appears necessary for litigation purposes.

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The privacy of email may be compromised by unintended redistribution or inadequacy of current technologies to protect against unauthorized users. Users should keep in mind that email messages can be easily printed, forwarded to others, or delivered to the wrong address. Extreme caution should be exercised when using email to communicate confidential or sensitive items.

Users of electronic mail services should be aware that although the sender and recipient may have deleted their copies of an email record, UWF maintains an email retention service which retains all electronic mail (including staff, faculty, and students) for a period of ten years.

F. Broadcast Distribution

UWF's email system is often used for distribution of information to broad groups of faculty, staff, and students for teaching, learning, research, communication engagement, administrative, and emergency purposes. UWF's Office of Institutional Communications has developed procedures setting forth standards for the type of information that may be distributed via broadcast email and describing the process for message generation, authorization, and distribution. These Broadcast Distribution Standards may be accessed at https://uwf.edu/offices/institutional-communications/resources/broadcast-distribution-standards/.

Emergency situations compel UWF to offer a Mobile Alert system that employs text messaging in addition to email communications. For more information, see https://www.uwf.edu/mobilealert.

Approved by: DocuSigned by: Martha Saunders D54A387C376848D... Dr. Martha D. Saunders **Date:** 05/10/2023

Authority: BOG Reg. 1.001
Chapter 815, Florida Statutes
Chapter 847, Florida Statutes

Cross Ref.: FIN-03, Records Management, as it may be amended
GC-01, Public Records, as it may be amended
HR-15, Employee Code of Conduct, as it may be amended
HR-22, Standards of Conduct, as it may be amended
P-14, Sexual Harassment and Misconduct, as it may be amended
UWF/REG 2.016, Disruptive Conduct
UWF Broadcast Distribution Standards

History: IT-01.00-05/98 Electronic Mail Policy adopted May 1998; renamed and revised August 2015; renamed and revised May 2023

Last Review: May 2023

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APPENDIX A
RETENTION, DISPOSITION, AND PUBLIC ACCESS

University records are public records (as described in Chapter 119, Florida Statutes). They are subject to retention periods and disposition requirements established by the Florida Department of State, Division of Library and Information Services. Retention periods are based on a record's informational content, not its format. Therefore, as with any University records, email must be retained and disposed of in accordance with state records retention and disposition requirements. The requirements and specific procedures for complying with them are provided by UWF Records Management. Users with questions regarding public records issues and record retention requirements should seek answers to these questions prior to deleting email messages.

Email is often used as a modern substitute for telephonic and printed communications, as well as a substitute for direct oral communications. The Florida Department of State has defined such messages as "transitory records." While these messages constitute public records, they are not required to be retained after the communication value is lost. They may be deleted at will without filing a records disposition report, once the user determines that the communication value is obsolete, superseded, or administrative value is lost.

All other University email must be retained for the required period of time according to State of Florida records retention schedules, and a records disposition report must be filed with UWF Records Management to initiate disposal.

While methods for reviewing, storing, or deleting email vary, compliance with the retention requirements of the public records law can be achieved by doing one of the following:

1. Electronically store the email according to the conventions of your email system and retain it electronically pursuant to the required retention periods. The technical details and methods of storing, retrieving, and printing your email depend on the email system you use. Consult with your LAN administrator, departmental computer support personnel, or the Information Resource Manager for details.

2. Print the email and store the hard copy in the relevant subject matter file, as you would any other hard-copy communication.

The user and user's department have the responsibility for storage and retention of email. Prior to leaving University employment, employees should take care to transfer any information constituting a public record to others as appropriate. Questions regarding storage and backups should be directed to the Information Resources Manager.