

Campus Communication and Mass E-mail

University Email Communications Policy

Purpose

This policy establishes e-mail as the official channel of communication for Minnesota State University, Mankato for communications that do not require physical delivery of a document. Individuals wishing to send mass e-mails or messages conduct university business and share information essential to the <All> Staff, <All> Students, or <All> Current Students distribution groups must have authorization. Mass unsolicited e-mail sent to or from non-University entities or individuals must comply with the federal CAN-SPAM Act.

This policy applies to any person or entity sending mass e-mail through Minnesota State Mankato e-mail systems on behalf of the University. Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted to expand, diminish or alter academic freedom, articulated under Minnesota State Board Policy, Minnesota State Mankato Policy, collective bargaining agreements, or the terms of any charter establishing a system library as a community or public library, administrative, operational, and safety functions.

Official Communications Delivery

Minnesota State University, Mankato e-mail systems will only deliver official university communications only to @msu.edu e-mail addresses. Although @msu.edu e-mail addresses are able to be forwarded to other e-mail addresses, those messages will be handled on a best effort basis and delivery to the forwarded email address cannot be guaranteed.

For best practices and recommendations on the use of mass e-mail, please see the IT Solutions Website.

Authorization to send e-mail to <All> Staff and/or <All> Students

Individuals within the Academic Affairs division wishing to send mass e-mails or messages to the <All> Staff, <All> Students, or <All> Current Students distribution groups must have the authorization of the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs or designee. Individuals within administrative divisions must have the authorization of their respective Vice President or designee.

Campus-Related Emergencies

Messages relating to a campus-related emergency must follow emergency communications protocols. Students.

Definitions

<All> Staff, <All> Student and <All> Current Students distribution groups – These distribution groups are pre-established groups for communicating with campus faculty, and staff and students are responsible for checking their university email regularly.

CAN-SPAM Act – federal law enacted in 2003, regulates the use of electronic mail in which the primary purpose is commercial advertisement or promotion of a commercial product or service.

Mass e-mail – an e-mail sent to a group of more than 100 recipients.

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External mass e-mail service—any mass e-mail system or service that is not provided by IT Solutions.

Individual communications will not be sent to personal email accounts. The only exception is when an individual does not yet have an assigned university email address, for example, before becoming an official student or employee.

Rationale

E-mail-University email systems must be used in ways that support timely, secure, and managed responsibly in order to ensure faculty, staff, and students are able to give appropriate attention to these essential communications. Use compliant communication. The use of university e-mail-university email systems are governed by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (MGDPA), the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and Minnesota State Policy 5.22 "Acceptable Use of Computers and Information Technology Resources."

Definitions (for purposes of this policy)

- Mass Email:** Any message distributed to a large audience beyond the sender's regular operational scope, generally for informational, promotional, or institutional purposes. Examples include all-campus announcements, divisional updates sent outside the unit, or outreach to broad groups of students not directly affiliated with the sender's program or area.
- Not considered mass emails:** Messages sent within a department, office, or class as part of regular operations (e.g., course announcements, team or committee updates, automated messages from approved university systems such as D2L Brightspace, Workday, or StarAlert, or approved communications sent through established tools such as Navigate 360).
- Regular Operational Scope:** The departments, programs, or individuals a sender routinely communicates with as part of their official role and day-to-day responsibilities.

Mass Email and Authorization

Because mass emails represent the university at an institutional level, authorization is required before distribution. Approval must be obtained through the appropriate administrative process as outlined in the University Email Communications Procedures.

All university email communications must align with the university's mission, brand standards and comply with all applicable laws, policies, and procedures, including the University Digital Accessibility Policy.

Campus-Related Emergencies

Messages relating to a campus-related emergency must follow the university's Emergency Notification Policy and Procedures.

Applicability

This policy applies to any person or entity sending email communications through Minnesota State University, Mankato systems or on behalf of the university. Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted to expand, diminish, or alter academic freedom, collective bargaining agreements, or other applicable Minnesota State Board or university policies.

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References

- Microsoft Copilot (2025). Used to assist in updating language and refining definitions during policy revision process.

Policy History

2025: Modernized the policy language and clarified expectations for official university email communications. Expanded definitions, clarified delivery to @mnsu.edu accounts, and aligned requirements with brand, accessibility, and legal standards. Updated custodianship from the Vice President for Technology (IT Solutions) to the Vice President for Administrative Services to reflect current organizational responsibilities.

Procedures

Authorization Process

- Authorization is required before distributing any message to audiences beyond a sender's regular operational scope.
- Anyone wishing to send a mass email must obtain authorization from their respective Vice President or designee before distribution.
- Vice Presidents and the Provost are encouraged to coordinate with University Marketing and Communications and IT Solutions to ensure consistency, accessibility, and awareness of other planned communications.

What Approvers Consider When Reviewing a Mass Email

To support consistent decision-making and help senders prepare effective requests, the following criteria outline what Vice Presidents, or their designees will consider when reviewing a proposed mass email. Senders should use these same criteria as a guide before submitting a request.

1. **Purpose and Alignment** — The message supports university's mission, operations, compliance, or an official initiative.
2. **Audience Appropriateness** — The recipients are clearly defined and have a legitimate need for the information.
3. **Timeliness and Necessity** — The message is time-sensitive, essential, or critical to university functioning or community awareness.
4. **Compliance and Accessibility** — The content follows the University Digital Accessibility Policy, privacy standards, and applicable legal requirements.
5. **Brand and Messaging Standards** — The email reflects the university's brand identity and messaging framework, maintaining a clear, consistent, and professional tone aligned with the university's Brand Style Guide and Editorial Style Guide.
6. **Coordination and Awareness** — Vice Presidents are encouraged to coordinate with University Marketing and Communications and IT Solutions to ensure awareness of other planned communications to the same audience.

Senders should submit draft content to the appropriate Vice President or designee for review and authorization, allowing adequate time for feedback and coordination, especially for messages involving cross-divisional or campus-wide audiences. Each submission should include the proposed audience, requested send date, whether the message is a one-time or recurring communication, and any relevant context or background that may assist the approver during review.

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