

# Student Electronic Communications Policy

<b>Subject:</b>	Student Success
<b>Policy:</b>	Use of electronic communications for official correspondence with students.
<b>Revised:</b>	July 2011
<b>Effective Date:</b>	August 15, 2005
<b>Review Date:</b>	August 2011
<b>Responsible Party:</b>	Office of the Registrar and <del>Enrollment Services</del>

## Introduction and Purpose:

There is an expanding reliance on electronic communication among students, faculty, staff, and administrators at Montana State University. This is motivated by the convenience, speed, cost-effectiveness, and environmental advantages of using electronic communications rather than printed communication. Further, MSU has experienced a wider geographic dispersion of students resulting in a direct need to communicate reliably and consistently via email as well as electronic messaging. Because of this increasing reliance on and acceptance of electronic communication, it is considered an official means for communication within MSU.

Implementation of this policy ensures that students have access to this critical—if not essential—form of communication. This policy will ensure that all students can access, and be accessed by email and other electronic means of communications, as the need arises. This is especially relevant as it relates to disseminating critical university-related information.

## Policy:

The student email policy provides guidelines regarding the following aspects of electronic communications as an official means of communication with students:

- University use of email;
- Assignment of student email addresses;
- Expectations of email communication between faculty and student, staff and student, and administrators and students.
- Announcements and targeted messages

**1. All students currently enrolled at Montana State University are required to have email addresses, as outlined below.**

## **2. University use of email**

All students currently enrolled at Montana State University are assigned an email address. Email is a mechanism for official communication within Montana State University. Official email communications are intended only to meet the academic and administrative needs of the campus community. Students must check regularly for targeted announcements and email communication from the university at a minimum of twice per week. Students have the

responsibility to recognize that certain communications may be time-critical. As steward of the email system, the Registrar's Office, under the auspices of the Vice President for Student Success, is responsible for approving the usage of student email directed through the Banner Student Information System. (See, Board of Regents Guidelines located at <http://mus.edu/borpol/bor1300/1304-3.htm>.)

### **3. Assignment of student email**

Official University email accounts will be created automatically for all enrolled students in MSU Google Apps where the students logon from the link for Student E-mail on the MSU home page (<http://www.montana.edu>) with their NetID and password. Passwords can be set from the link for My Passwords off the MSU home page. Students may elect to update and change their Official University E-mail Address to a personal account for purposes of receiving official university communications. If a personal account is elected, it becomes the official university email account for the student.

### **4. Expectations about student use of email**

Students are expected to check their email no less frequently than twice a week in order to stay current with University-related communications. Students have the responsibility to recognize that certain communications may be time-critical. Faculty will determine how electronic forms of communication will be used in their classes, and will specify their requirements in the course syllabus. Faculty can therefore make the assumption that students' official e-mail is being accessed and they can use email, chats and message boards for their classes accordingly. Failure to check for messages and failure to receive messages due to full mailboxes or auto-forwarded email are not acceptable excuses for missing official University communications. Students may auto-forward email to an outside email client at their own risk. The university IT staff and Help Desk do not support auto-forwarding of email and will not assist in troubleshooting problems with outside email clients or forwarded email.

### **5. Authentication for confidential information**

It is a violation of University policy (reference Paragraph 638.00.4 in the *MSU Student Conduct Code*: [http://www2.montana.edu/policy/student\\_conduct/](http://www2.montana.edu/policy/student_conduct/)) for any user of official email addresses to impersonate a University office, faculty/staff member, or student. To minimize this risk, some confidential information may be made available only through MyInfo, which is password protected. In these cases, students will receive email correspondence directing them to MyInfo, where they can access the confidential information only by supplying their Student IDs and PINs. The confidential information will not be available in the email message.

### **6. Privacy**

Email users should exercise extreme caution in using email to communicate confidential or sensitive matters, and should not assume that email is private and confidential. It is especially important that users be careful to send messages only to the intended recipient(s). Particular care should be taken when using the "reply" command during email correspondence, because many mailing lists are configured to deliver replies to the entire list, not just the author of a given message.

- All use of email, including use for sensitive or confidential information, will be consistent with the Board of Regents policy statement on use of electronic email by students.
- Confidentiality of student records is protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). All use of email, including use for sensitive or confidential information, will be consistent with FERPA.

- Email shall not be the sole method for notification of any official university action.

## 7. Educational uses of email

Faculty will determine how electronic forms of communication (e.g., email, course announcements, chats and message boards) will be used in their classes, and will specify their requirements in the course syllabus. This official student electronic communications policy will ensure that all students are able to comply with electronic-based course requirements specified by faculty. Faculty can therefore make the assumption that students' official email is being accessed and they can use email, chats and message boards for their classes accordingly.

### Procedures:

Official University email accounts will be created automatically for all enrolled students in MSU Google Apps where the students logon from the link for Student E-mail on the MSU home page (<http://www.montana.edu>) with their NetID and password. If a student elects to use a private email account, it becomes the official university email account for the student and the requirements of this policy apply to that email account.

### Internal control considerations, if applicable:

It is a violation of University policy (reference Paragraph 638.00.4 in the *MSU Student Conduct Code*: [http://www2.montana.edu/policy/student\\_conduct/](http://www2.montana.edu/policy/student_conduct/)) for any user of official email addresses to impersonate a University office, faculty/staff member, or student. To minimize this risk, some confidential information may be made available only through MyInfo, which is password protected. In these cases, students will receive electronic communications directing them to MyInfo, where they can access the confidential information only by supplying their Student ID and PIN. The confidential information will not be available in the email message.

Users should exercise extreme caution in using electronic means to communicate confidential or sensitive matters, and should not assume that electronic communications is private and confidential. It is especially important that users are careful to send messages only to the intended recipient(s). Particular care should be taken when using the "reply" command during email correspondence.

- All use of e-mail, chats and message boards, including use for sensitive or confidential information, will be consistent with the Board of Regents Policy Statement on Use of Electronic E-mail
- Confidentiality regarding student records is protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). All use of e-mail, including use for sensitive or confidential information, will be consistent with FERPA.
- Electronic communications shall not be the sole method for notification of any legal action.