Electronic Distribution of Campus Community Information

1. Purpose

Texas A&M University-Kingsville recognizes the need for the campus community to send electronic communications of both a critical and a general nature to various groups on campus. The University is aware, at the same time, of the need to protect the privacy of the campus community and to ensure that mass electronic communications to campus groups are essential and relevant to its academic mission.

2. Audience

This procedure focuses on the use of mass electronic communication and mass e-mail and applies to all members of the campus community. Users should also be familiar with the E-Mail Standard Administrative Procedure [1.060.0] which describes other e-mail requirements.

3. Information Distribution Procedures

The University prohibits any member of the campus community from using University resources to send unsolicited, mass electronic communications or “Spam” on-campus or off-campus for any content outside the scope of its university mission. This prohibition extends to all mail servers within the campus network domain. To ensure that a message is seen by all intended parties, more than one channel of communication may be used. When using the various channels of communication, there is no guarantee that everyone in a campus group will receive the electronic message. All electronic communication from the campus community must adhere to the Acceptable Use Policy [1.010.0] and the E-Mail Standard Administrative Procedure. This policy does not supersede the Acceptable Use Policy or the E-Mail Standard Administrative Procedure.

To facilitate appropriate mass electronic communication, the University has defined four channels along with directives for their appropriate use and management. Special considerations have been prescribed for surveys, research, and for off-campus mass-email communication.

With few exceptions, mass-electronic communications require permission from the recipients and the communication must offer an option to be removed from the list at any time. The exceptions include campus administrators and instructors as follows:

- Persons in an official administrative position have the right to contact staff or students under their scope of administrative responsibility without prior permission.
- The President and Vice Presidents maintain authority over special mass-communication channels designed to contact large sectors of the campus community without prior permission.
- Instructors retain the right to use mass-electronic communication to contact students registered for their classes during the current semester without prior permission.

4. Campus Channels for Mass Electronic Communication

The University provides six channels of electronic communication for members of the University community to send information to, and engage in discussions with, selected campus groups. Those six mass communication channels are as follows:

- President’s all-campus mass email (opt-out not permitted)
- Vice Presidents’ mass e-mail groups (opt-out not permitted)
- General campus mass-email groups (opt-out permission optional)
- Portal announcements (opt-out permission optional)
- Individual emails to fewer than 100 recipients (opt-out by request)
• University Police/Crisis Management Team mass e-mail (opt-out not permitted)

4.1. President’s All-Campus Mass Email

This communications channel is reserved for messages where urgency is necessary or where the message is of sufficient importance that all members of the campus community need to be informed. Examples include:

• Crisis or urgent announcements: bomb or terrorist threat, natural disasters, weather closures or delays, crime alerts.
• Major campus events: major class registration changes, major payroll or financial alerts, any other situation that may have an impact on the functioning of the University as a whole.
• Policy and procedure updates
• Faculty, staff, or student governance issues
• Personnel appointments
• Strategic messages
• Financial, administrative, or event deadlines that are time critical
• Announcements of time-sensitive importance that are critical for a given group
• Weekly informative announcements

This is an announcement-only channel. The membership setting for this channel is subscribed-without-permission for the entire campus community; opt-out is not permitted.

The President or his/her designee shall be the administrator of this communications channel. The subject heading should begin with the prefix “PRES-ALERT:” and the first sentence of the campus-wide email should read: “This email is being sent to all members of the University community from the Office of the President.”

4.2. Vice Presidents’ Mass-Email Groups

This communications channel is reserved for transmitting urgent messages or messages of sufficient importance that all members of predefined University populations need to be contacted. Examples include:

• Policy and procedure updates
• Faculty, staff, or student governance issues
• Personnel appointments
• Strategic messages from one of the vice presidents
• Financial, administrative, or event deadlines that are time critical
• Announcements of time-sensitive importance that are critical for a given group
• Crisis or urgent announcements: bomb or terrorist threat, natural disasters, weather closures or delays, crime alerts.
• Major campus events: major class registration changes, major payroll or financial alerts, any other situation that may have an impact on the functioning of the University as a whole.

Predefined groups have been designated:
   Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
      All campus faculty (FacultyMail@tamuk.edu)
      All campus graduate students (GradMail@tamuk.edu)
   Vice President for Finance and Administration
All campus administrative/professional staff ([StaffMail@tamuk.edu](mailto:StaffMail@tamuk.edu))
Vice President for Student Affairs
All campus students ([StudentsMail@tamuk.edu](mailto:StudentsMail@tamuk.edu))
All campus undergraduate students ([StudentsMail@tamuk.edu](mailto:StudentsMail@tamuk.edu))
All campus seniors ([StudentsMail@tamuk.edu](mailto:StudentsMail@tamuk.edu))
All campus freshmen ([StudentsMail@tamuk.edu](mailto:StudentsMail@tamuk.edu))
Vice President for Enrollment Management
All prospects ([ProspectsMail@tamuk.edu](mailto:ProspectsMail@tamuk.edu))
Vice President for Institutional Advancement
All alumni ([AlumniMail@tamuk.edu](mailto:AlumniMail@tamuk.edu))

This is an announcement only channel. The membership setting for this channel is subscribed-without-permission for the entire campus community; opt-out is not permitted.

The mass-email channels are administered by the designated vice president or his/her designee, and officially transmitted under the vice president’s name. The subject heading should begin with the prefix “VP-Communication:” and the first sentence of the campus-wide email should read: “This email is being sent to all <insert group> from the Office of the <insert VP’s title and name>.”

4.3. General Campus Mass-Email Groups. [Faculty, Staff and Student groups would be in this category.]

This communications channel is the preferred channel for sharing campus information of mutual interest among a wide variety of groups within the campus community. It is the most flexible of the campus mass electronic communication options and uses email listserv technology for implementation. All mass-email groups require designating a person to be the owner of the group. Several options are available:

4.3.1. Subscribed-with-permission, opt-out permitted. Anyone on campus may establish such a communications channel for any group of staff and/or students with a common interest. Membership in the listserv may not be pre-subscribed, and members must have the option to opt-out of the listserv at any time. No approval is needed to establish this type of electronic communication.

4.3.2. Subscribed-without-permission, opt-out permission optional. Any administrator may establish such a communications channel for faculty, staff, and students under their scope of responsibility. The administrator may decide if the list members may opt-out. Choosing to not permit opt-out should be used with discretion.

4.3.3. Announcement versus Discussion. Any email listserv within the mass-email group channel may be established for announcements only (read-only list) or as a discussion listserv. With a discussion mass-email group, members of the group may respond to postings from the group. With a discussion group, the owner, or designated moderator, has responsibility for managing the electronic discussions. This person has the responsibility of keeping the discussion on topic and ensuring that the email postings adhere to the campus Acceptable Use Policy. Campus webboards and chat groups may be considered as another alternative to discussion listservs.

4.4. Campus Portal Announcements.

The Campus Portal provides personalized access to campus information.

A person using Campus Portal sees only the information targeted to the role or roles that person holds within the campus community (student, faculty, staff, etc.) and membership within degree programs, committees, groups, organizations, departments and units, and the like. The Campus portal announcements are technically more efficient to implement and manage and are therefore recommended over other forms of mass electronic communication.
whenever possible. Campus-wide Campus portal announcements will be administered by the President and Vice Presidents and follow the same guidelines as the mass email channels detailed in Sections 4.1 and 4.2. The default membership setting for this channel is subscribed-without-permission; opt-out not permitted within the Campus portal preferences. Group announcements will follow the same guidelines as the mass-email group channel detailed in Section 4.3. The default membership setting for this channel will default to optional within the Campus portal preferences, except if designated not-optional by an authorized administrator.

4.5 Individual Emails to Fewer Than 100 Recipients

Any member of the University community can send individual email messages to one or more individuals; current restrictions limit the number of recipients to fewer than 100, either in a single mailing or in multiple mailings of the same or similar message. People needing to communicate with 100 or more recipients should use the General Campus Email Groups channel (4.3 or 4.4 above). Originators of email to fewer than 100 recipients should use discretion when sending to groups of people without their permission. Sensitivity should be shown to the sender–receiver relationship, and the sender should discontinue sending to anyone who indicates he or she does not wish to receive further communications. Failure to acknowledge such a request will be in violation of the campus Acceptable Use Policy.

4.6. University Police/Crisis Management Team

This communications channel is reserved for messages where urgency is necessary or where the message is of sufficient importance that all members of the campus community need to be informed. Examples include:

- Crisis or urgent announcements: bomb or terrorist threat, natural disasters, mechanical failures, weather closures or delays, crime alerts, major computer or network alerts.
- Logistic announcements: construction closures, traffic routing and environmental alert notices.

The Director of Campus Safety or his/her designee shall be the administrator of this communications channel. The subject heading should begin with the prefix “PUBLIC SAFETY-ALERT:” and the first sentence of the campus-wide email should read: “This email is being sent to all members of the University community from the University Campus Public Safety Officer.” This is an announcement-only channel. The membership setting for this channel is subscribed-without-permission for the entire campus community; opt-out is not permitted.

5. Restrictions on Composing Messages for Mass Communication

When composing an email message to send through any of the mass-email channels, the following restrictions apply:

- Subject line. Subject header must be clear and concise. This line must not be left blank.
- Mass email approval notification. All messages that are subscribed-without-permission/no-opt-out, must state that the message is authorized under the Campus Mass-Electronic Communications policy and provide a web link to that policy. The list owner should be clearly identified.
- Opt-out notification. All messages that have subscribed-with-permission/opt-out membership must state that recipients may opt-out of additional messages and provide a contact and a Web link for instructions for doing so.
- Identification. Sender identification is critical and all email messages must contain a valid reply-to email address.
- Message length. The message length should be kept as short as possible. Detailed information should be placed on a web page with a web link in the email message.
- Attachments. Do not include attachments with mass emails. Information should be placed on a web page with a web link in the email message.
• Messages should be written using proper grammar, language, punctuation, and adhere to university Marketing and Communications standards.
• The content of the Web site referred to in the message approved by the appropriate administrator at the time of the request will not be substantially altered after approval has been granted.

6. Communications between Instructor and Students

The mass electronic communication policy is not meant to interfere with the ability of an instructor to establish communication with students in a class. The General Campus Email Group policy should be followed (Section 4.3). Instructors may choose subscribed-without-permission, opt-out not permitted, for students in their classes for the current semester only. Webboards and chat groups may also be considered as alternatives for a class listserv.

7. Requesting Mass-Email Communication Lists or Portal Announcements

Requests for creating mass-email lists for the Mass-Email Group channel (Section 4.3) or for Campus portal announcements (Section 4.4) are made through an automated campus web form created for this purpose. The form requests information concerning the scope of the campus membership to be used, the choice of communication channel, opt-in or opt-out status, and other information necessary for constructing the list and determining the list’s scope and appropriateness. Subscribe-without-permission/no-opt-out lists must be approved by the appropriate Vice President or designee with the exception of lists for class instruction. The person requesting the list will receive email notification when the list has been reviewed and approved, or not approved.

8. Sending Surveys to On-campus Recipients

The University recognizes the importance of research as part of its academic mission. This policy supports the need for administrative staff and academic researchers to use mass-electronic communications as a research tool. Procedures are defined for deploying these tools for on-campus and off-campus research in appropriate ways to ensure that such communication is viewed by the recipient as an academic activity, and not as unsolicited and unwanted e-mail. To facilitate on-campus surveys for institutional and instructional research needs, all members of the campus community will be pre-subscribed to a campus-wide pool from which survey samples may be drawn. When a person activates his/her campus ID, it will automatically be added to the central survey pool. All campus users will have the option to opt-out of this pool. The following restrictions apply to the use of the campus-wide survey pool:

• All surveys must have any approvals required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to being administered. Surveys that do not require IRB approval must be approved by the administrator that oversees the sample population (e.g., a department chair for students within their academic area or the Vice President for Student Affairs for a campus-wide survey of students).
• Samples drawn from the survey pool will be provided as a subscribed-with-permission/opt-out listserv to be used only for the duration of the survey.
• The sample survey listserv may only be used for communication to the sample population, not for the survey instrument itself.
• To maximize resource efficiency, Survey instruments should not be embedded or attached to the mass emails (e.g., use web-based surveys). However, a link to the survey may be embedded in the e-mail.
• The principal investigator must be clearly identified in all communications.
• The Subject line of the mass-email must use the prefix “RESEARCH:” for IRB approved research projects and “SURVEY:” for all other campus survey activities.
• All communications to the survey sample must make clear that there are two methods to opt-out of surveys, for the present survey or for future campus surveys. To opt out of a single survey, the recipient should be given a way to contact the principal investigator.

9. Sending Communications and Surveys to Off-campus
Given the sensitive issues surrounding mass-emails in the Internet community at large, discretion needs to be used when considering this channel of communication. With the University’s dual role as ISP and educational institution, any unsolicited mass-email sent off-campus may be interpreted as Spam mail. The ramifications of this are far-reaching and include negative publicity for the University, potential violation of state law, violation of Internet carrier appropriate use policies, and electronic blacklisting by Spam filtering services. To minimize the likelihood of these events, the following rules should be followed for off-campus mass-email including the use of mass email for survey and research purposes:

9.1. The communication must be related to the mission of the University.

9.2. Subscribed-without-permission, no-opt-out membership for off-campus mass-email is not permitted.

9.3. Subscribed-with-permission, opt-out membership is to be used in all circumstances except those noted in 9.4. No approval is needed to establish the channel of off-campus communication. Research surveys do require IRB approval.

9.4. Subscribed-implied-permission, opt-out membership may be used in special circumstances. Those exceptions include:

- Recruitment of prospective students who have been selected from databases designed for the purpose or where the student has indicated an interest in the University through an official procedure tied to the admissions process. Use of mass-email to this group requires the approval of the Vice President for Enrollment Management or designee.
- Alumni, donors, or “friends” of the University where fund-raising, event notification, or maintaining alumni-University relations is concerned. The scope of such communication is limited to those who have implicitly or explicitly provided their email address to the University through a University sanctioned process. Use of mass-email to these groups requires approval of the Vice President for Institutional Advancement or designees.
- Off-campus research surveys where the sampling pool is derived from mass e-mail lists where people have indicated a willingness to be included based on membership in an organization or an affiliation with a common group interest. The procedures and approval process for authenticating off-campus lists shall be determined by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies consistent with Section 9.5. The Office of Research and Graduate Studies shall also establish the review process or protocol for approving subject heading and message content.

9.5. The following criteria should be applied when evaluating the validity and appropriateness of an off-campus list, be it subscribed-with-permission or subscribed-implied-permission:

- The members of the list must have given permission for the use of their email address either explicitly or implicitly;
- The technique for obtaining membership should be clearly defined; and
- Every effort should be made to ensure that the lists are valid and from reputable sources.

9.6. The Subject line of a survey must use the prefix of “TAMUK-SURVEY:” The message should begin with wording to the effect: “Texas A&M University-Kingsville is contacting you in order to…,” “Your name and email address was obtained through…,” “Please let us know if you do not want to be contacted further….”

Other types of external e-mail, such as student recruiting e-mail, may use other appropriate Subject lines and message content as long as the wording meets the spirit of the requirements of this procedure. Variations that meet the requirements are to be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Vice President.

9.7. For surveys, messages should be as short as possible, deferring any significant information to the Web, and end with an option to be removed from the list with instructions. The survey instrument should not be included in the body of the e-mail or as an attachment (e.g., use a web-based survey).
For external e-mail other than surveys, length, content and opt-out availability for messages must be consistent with industry best practices for the particular application and market.

10. Critical Communications to Campus Populations by Non-Email Methods

It is the responsibility of the sender of mass-email communications to ensure that email intended to notify or inform campus faculty and staff with critical or urgent information also be published using a non-email method. This could include using text messages or digital signage or other emergency communication methods.

11. Grievances

Anyone who receives a mass-electronic communication from a member of the Texas A&M University-Kingsville community that appears to be in violation of this policy may take the following steps: First, the recipient should contact the original sender of the message and/or the associated administrator. Second, after allowing proper time and if a resolution is not reached, a complaint should be filed with the Chief Information Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs, who will consult with the appropriate administrator(s). The final decision to treat the incident as a violation will be made by the CIO in consultation with the Vice President responsible for the unit where the alleged violation occurred.

12. Exceptions

The University President or the President’s designees are empowered to make exceptions to the Mass Electronic Communication policy for their constituencies. Such exceptions should only be made if, in the Officer’s judgment, the benefits of mass-electronic communication with respect to the immediacy of the communication, universal distribution, and truly significant content, outweigh the costs associated with infringing upon the general principle of controlled mass electronic distribution. Appeals concerning the use of Vice President-controlled communication channels also may be made to the University President or the President’s designee.

Disciplinary Actions

Violation of this procedure may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination for employees and temporaries; a termination of employment relations in the case of contractors or consultants; dismissal for interns and volunteers; or suspension or expulsion in the case of a student. Additionally, individuals are subject to loss of Texas A&M University-Kingsville Information Resources access privileges, as well as applicable civil, and criminal prosecution.
Approval by President’s Council:

By: original signed
President

Date

This procedure is maintained by the Offices of Marketing and Communications and Computing and Information Services.