West Texas A&M University
Student E-Mail Procedure

Adopted: 4/18/05
Revised:

Introduction

The purpose of the West Texas A&M University (WTAMU) student e-mail system is two-fold. First and foremost, the system is intended as a means of communicating official university information to students. However, a secondary, yet very important purpose is to encourage student engagement.

The university recognizes that principles of academic freedom and shared governance, freedom of speech, and privacy of information hold important implications for electronic mail and electronic mail services. The University affords electronic mail privacy protections comparable to that which it traditionally affords paper mail and telephone communications. This procedure reflects these firmly held principles within the context of the university's legal and other obligations.

Electronic mail, as a means of communicating official university information to students, is convenient, rapid, environmentally aware, and cost effective. West Texas A&M University issues a student e-mail address, an e-mail account and disk space (for e-mail storage) to all admitted students. The university also provides e-mail client software on computers in the Open Access Lab (OAL) in the Hastings Electronic Learning Center. This practice ensures that all students have e-mail communication readily available to them. Students who do not have access to computers in their homes or workplaces may use several locations on campus, or computers in public libraries off campus, to access their e-mail. The purpose of this procedure is to set forth the rights and responsibilities of both users and providers of electronic mail for students.

This procedure ensures that all students have access to this important form of communication. It ensures students can be reached through a standardized channel by faculty and staff of the university as needed.

Assignment of student e-mail addresses and accounts

The university will issue a student e-mail account and disk storage to all admitted students. This account will be created electronically upon admission to the university and requires no action on the student’s part. Accounts will be deleted at the point that a student is no longer enrolled at the university, for any reason, after a period of 18 months.

Student user ID’s consist of the first letters of his or her first and middle names along with his or her last name, a sequential digit followed by @go.wtamu.edu. For example, “Billy Bob Smith” would have the e-mail address bbsmith1@go.wtamu.edu. For those who may share the first initial, second initial and last name, the sequential digit will be incremented by one. For example bbsmith2@go.wtamu.edu, bbsmith3@go.wtamu.edu, etc.

Students have access to e-mail accounts through the World Wide Web. A login ID and password are required.

Student responsibility

Forwarding/Redirection: While the manner in which e-mail is accessed is left to the student’s discretion, it is recommended that students access the mail sent to their WTAMU account directly from the WTAMU system. There are considerable risks in forwarding/redirecting e-mail from the student's official university e-mail address to another e-mail address (e.g., @aol.com, @hotmail.com, any other internet service provider, or to an address on another server). Forwarded/redirected messages may be delayed, lost in transit at various points along the Internet outside the WTAMU network, or rejected by the targeted mailbox.

Obligation to Read E-Mails: Failure to receive or read a notification in a timely manner does not release the student from the obligation of knowing and complying with its content. Students are expected to check their e-mail on a frequent and consistent basis in order to stay current with university communications. Students have the responsibility to recognize that certain communications may be time-critical. "I didn't check my e-mail", error in forwarding/redirecting mail, or e-mail returned to the university with "Mailbox Full" or "User Unknown" are not acceptable excuses for missing official university communications via e-mail.

In addition, students are encouraged to clear their mailboxes regularly to ensure that there is enough available space for new messages. Unread e-mails over 120 days old may be purged at university discretion.
Passwords: Students are responsible for keeping their e-mail passwords confidential, and should never share this information or access to university resources with others, including family members. Students who lose or forget their passwords may visit Web site http://www.students.edu/helc/chpass.php any time or bring their Gold Card to the Open Access Lab in the Hastings Electronic Learning Center for a password reset. A third option is to complete a password reset validation form. The form is available at Web site http://www.students.edu/helc/reset.pdf or you may contact the Information Technology Service Center (ITSC) at 651-4357 Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to receive a copy of the form. With this option, passwords are reset within 24 hours excluding weekends and holidays.

University uses of e-mail

The two primary uses of the student e-mail system are official university communications and promotion of student engagement. Messages of official university business may be sent as necessary. Messages intended to promote student engagement may be sent only when directly related to the university and of significant importance to students. All e-mails must be in good taste and appropriate to the culture and reputation of the university. See the university’s “Rules for Responsible Information Technology Usage” for guidance on what is not appropriate.

West Texas A&M University will use electronic mail to communicate official university information of many kinds to students. Examples include, but are not limited to, financial aid announcements, registration or enrollment information, course cancellations, etc.

Groups of students may be selected based on directory (public) or personally identifiable information as long as specific protected data is not disclosed. E-mail addresses are not public information. Therefore, bulk e-mails must always be sent as blind copies to all recipients. Bulk e-mails are defined as any e-mail message that is sent to more than one student.

Official university e-mail is defined as any e-mail message sent to students from a WTAMU faculty or staff member. All official university e-mail must have an appropriate identifier as the first information on the subject line followed by a specific tag line. Senders must choose from one of the following three categories:

- WTAMU Business
  - Information regarding students’ academic record, i.e., payment, last day to drop, 3-peat, 45-hour rule, registration, green lighting, financial aid, etc.
  - Information requiring an action on the student’s part, i.e. make payment, attend convocation as is required by policy, housing notification, university need to gather additional information, etc.
  - Surveys must have approval through Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects and appropriate Dean and/or Vice President

- WTAMU Events / Services
  - Weekly E-Mail sent from Student Services
    - University sanctioned events/activities
    - General interest information appropriate for all students, compiled from various sources on campus
    - Student organization information of broad interest
    - E-Mails may be sent no more than once per week for routinely scheduled activities/events
    - Special events / announcements / unanticipated university sponsored events, i.e. national championship announcements, are not held to the once per week schedule
  - WTAMU Programmatic Listserv(s) (Not supported by the Division of Information Technology)
    - Approval to use official student e-mail addresses through Student E-Mail Oversight Committee chaired by Vice President of Student Services or designee
      - Must prove events/activities are not effectively addressed through Weekly E-Mail from Student Services
      - Must serve department level or above
      - No student organization listservs supported
        - Must have opt out information included on each E-Mail
        - E-Mails may be sent no more than once per week for routinely scheduled activities/events

- WTAMU Course [prefix & course number]
  - Faculty will determine how electronic forms of communication (i.e., E-Mail) will be used in their classes, and will clearly communicate their requirements in the course syllabus.
  - This “Official Student E-Mail Procedure” will ensure that all students will be able to comply with the E-Mail-based course requirements specified by faculty.
  - Faculty can therefore make the assumption that students’ official @go.wtamu.edu accounts are being accessed, and faculty can use E-Mail for their classes accordingly.
University personnel must be sensitive to the volume of messages sent to students to avoid such messages as being perceived as “Spam”.

**Guidelines for use of the student e-mail system for administrative purposes**

This section of the document is intended to help guide the appropriate usage of student e-mail, in particular those messages sent from university administrators, faculty and staff to students. Students may choose to use their e-mail accounts more broadly than prescribed by these guidelines.

Similarly, attachments to messages should be avoided if at all possible. Attachments degrade the e-mail system and require significant disk storage. When attachments must be used, every attempt should be made to limit the size of such attachments.

**General guidelines**

- Keep messages simple and direct. Messages should be short. Long messages are less likely to be fully read by the students plus they have the potential of using up shared disk space and forcing expensive expansions of the mail system.
- An alternative to a long message is to publish the information on a Web site and then send the URL of the posting as a mail message to students.
- Use plain text in messages—do not include HTML or formatted content.
- Format messages so that lines wrap at 80 characters or less.
- Send e-mail messages only to the specific group of students for whom the message is pertinent.

**When a message is to be sent to more than one student recipient, do not list all the recipients in the message (as e-mail addresses are not public information); alternatively, include all recipients' addresses as "Bcc:" instead of "To:"**

- A "From:" or "Reply-to:" name and e-mail address of the sender is required.
- Encourage students to check their go.wtamu.edu accounts regularly.
- Ensure that any non-directory (i.e., non-public) information, as outlined in WTAMU FERPA policy, is sent only to the student.
- Caution should always be exercised in communicating sensitive matters by e-mail.
- Privacy should not be assumed when employing this method of communication.
- Great care must be taken to ensure that the e-mail is addressed only to the intended recipient(s).
- The use of file attachments with e-mail communications is discouraged unless the sender has verified that the attachments will be accessible to and readable by all intended recipients.
- All official electronic communications are subject to the University Archives/Records Management policies. Offices creating official communications are responsible for coordinating retention of these communications.
- Subject line of e-mails sent by faculty or staff must begin with one of the following:
  - WTAMU Business
  - WTAMU Events / Services
  - WTAMU Course [prefix & course number]

**Examples of appropriate uses**

**WTAMU Business Examples**

- Communicating commencement and convocation information
- Degree check information
- Notification concerning students’ change of course schedules (drop/adds), general petitions, withdrawals, and residency
- Notification of cancellation of registration
- Student financial aid processing issues and deadlines
- Payment deadlines and other Business Office information
- Academic departmental information such as class changes, registration issues and new courses
- Advising appointments
- University delays and closings
- Surveys
- New student information about academic policies

**WTAMU Events / Services**

- Weekly e-mail sent from Student Services
  - Announcements of job-openings
Announcements of impending fine arts events
Announcement of impending intercollegiate athletic events
New student information about academic support services
Notices about student internships and workshops

WTAMU Course [prefix & course number]

- Course related information at faculty discretion

Examples of inappropriate uses

- Information unrelated to university business
- Solicitation
- Promoting political viewpoints
- Personal information
- Surveys that do not serve sanctioned university purposes.
- E-mails that violate the Official Student E-mail Procedure

Security and Privacy

West Texas A&M University uses various methods to protect the security of its computer and network resources and of its users' accounts. Users should be aware that any electronic communications and data utilizing university-owned computer and network resources potentially may be disclosed under the provisions of the Texas Open Records Act and other university, state and federal laws and regulations or for appropriate university business needs.

The university makes every effort to secure its computer systems, networked resources, and e-mail accounts, but cannot guarantee the infallibility of these systems to unauthorized intrusion, nor the authenticity of the sender of an electronic communication. For this reason forwarding e-mail may not be appropriate for confidential or sensitive information.

The university does not routinely monitor or inspect individual accounts, files, or communications. There are situations, however, in which the university has a legitimate need to do so: to protect the integrity of university systems and resources; with appropriate authorization, when there is a reasonable suspicion that the user has violated either laws or university policies; or when required by law to do so. All monitoring and inspection shall be subject to proper authorization, notification and other legal requirements. The principles and policies set forth in the university’s “Rules for Responsible Information Technology Usage” apply to the use of electronic mail. Students, faculty and staff are responsible for familiarizing themselves with this and any other university policies (such as the Code of Student Life) that may apply and be enforced.

With rare exception, access to e-mail should be made only with the consent of the holder of that e-mail. The "holder" of e-mail is defined as "an e-mail user who is in possession of a particular e-mail record, regardless of whether that user is the original creator or a recipient of the content of the record." Thus, for example, it is appropriate for support staff to inspect an e-mail message when asked by the recipient to look at it in order to provide assistance with a problem.

During the performance of their duties, network and computer operations personnel and system administrators may need to observe certain transactional addressing information to ensure proper functioning of university e-mail services, and on these occasions may inadvertently see the contents of e-mail messages. They are not permitted to see or read the contents intentionally; to read transactional information where not germane to the foregoing purpose; or disclose or otherwise use what they have seen.

Notwithstanding the above mandate to protect personal or confidential information, support staff is advised to report to appropriate authorities any improper or illegal activities they may encounter in the performance of their duties.

All actions shall be in full compliance with the applicable university policy and law including the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). Electronic mail, whether or not created or stored on university equipment, may constitute a university record subject to disclosure under the Texas Open Records Act or other laws, or as a result of litigation. However, the university does not automatically comply with all requests for disclosure, but evaluates all such requests against the precise provisions of the Act, other laws concerning disclosure and privacy, or other applicable law.
It is a violation for any user of official WTAMU e-mail addresses to impersonate a university officer, a member of the faculty, staff or student body, in line with West Texas A&M University policy and relevant federal and state legislation.

Users should exercise extreme caution in using e-mail to communicate confidential or sensitive matters, and should not assume that e-mail 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 e-mail correspondence.

University e-mail services shall not be used for purposes that could reasonably be expected to cause, directly or indirectly, excessive strain on any computing facilities, or unwarranted or unsolicited interference with others’ use of e-mail or e-mail systems. Both law and university policy prohibit the theft or other abuse of computing resources. Such prohibitions apply to electronic mail services and include (but are not limited to) unauthorized entry, use, transfer, and tampering with the accounts and files of others, and interference with the work of others and with other computing facilities. Under certain circumstances, the law contains provisions for felony offenses. Users of electronic mail are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these laws and policies.

Support

Registrar’s Office Responsibilities

- Individual student e-mail address adds, deletes and changes in Colleague
- Student e-mail procedure questions/inquiries. As steward of the official student e-mail address, the Office of the Registrar is responsible for directing its use. Please e-mail registrar@mail.wtamu.edu for further information or assistance.
- Requests for information/data from the student e-mail system

Division of Information Technology Responsibilities

- All student e-mail system hardware and software
- Maintenance and upgrades to the automated Colleague/Student E-mail System interface(s)
- Backup and recovery hardware, software and procedures
- Restoration of deleted or corrupted student e-mail accounts
- Maintain Website for lost/forgotten passwords
- Gold Card password resets in the Open Access Lab
- 8:00 am to 5:00 pm helpdesk support

Enforcement

The President, the three vice presidents and the chief information officer are responsible for the appropriate use of the student e-mail system by faculty and staff in their respective divisions. Each should monitor e-mails sent from their respective division and provide guidance and/or discipline as appropriate.

Inappropriate use of the student e-mail system by students should be reported to the Vice President for Student Services’ Office.

Other

The university, in general, cannot and does not wish to be the arbiter of the contents of electronic mail. Neither can the university, in general, protect users from receiving electronic mail they may find offensive. Members of the university community, however, are strongly encouraged to use the same personal and professional courtesies and considerations in electronic mail as they would in other forms of communication.

Those who use university electronic mail services are expected to do so responsibly, that is, to comply with state and federal laws, with this and other policies and procedures of the university, and with normal standards of professional and personal courtesy and conduct. Access to university electronic mail services, when provided, is a privilege that may be wholly or partially restricted by the university without prior notice and without the consent of the e-mail user when required by and consistent with law, when there is substantiated reason to believe that violations of policy or law have taken place, or, in exceptional cases, when required to meet time-dependent, critical operational needs. Such restriction is subject to established campus-wide procedures or, in the absence of such procedures, to the approval of the appropriate campus vice president or the university president.
West Texas A&M University will notify all new users regarding the WTAMU Student E-mail Procedure. New users shall positively acknowledge receipt and understanding of the procedure. Such notification and acknowledgment may be electronic to the extent that the e-mail user's identity can be assured.

This procedure will be reviewed as needed by the Student E-Mail Oversight Committee and the President’s Executive Staff will approve changes. Anyone with questions or comments concerning this procedure should contact Student Services at 651-2050.

University electronic mail services shall not be provided in competition with commercial services to individuals or organizations outside the university.

This Procedure is in effect from the date of approval until further notice.