Ohio University Guidelines for the Use of Broadcast Electronic Communications

Purpose. The purpose of these guidelines is to establish guidance and parameters for the use of broadcast electronic communications (broadcast emails, broadcast texts, and the Ohio University portal) used to communicate with the entire University or significant subsets thereof.

Scope. These guidelines cover University-wide electronic communications to internal audiences. Policies or guidelines on communications sent internally within a school, college, or department are the responsibility of the appropriate dean or department head.

In general, these guidelines do not apply to communications intended for external audiences, such as informational or recruiting messages to prospective students, alumni, or donors.

Nothing in these guidelines should be construed so as to prohibit communications between faculty and students or other official communications necessary to efficiently and effectively conduct the normal daily business of the University.

Definition

"Electronic communications" are defined as:

- Broadcast e-mails, commonly known as "all-campus," "all-student," or "all faculty and staff" e-mails.
- Broadcast text messaging
- Broadcast Portal messaging
- Targeted to the entire University community or a significant subset thereof.

Guidelines

- 1. Electronic broadcast communications are for University business only. Ohio University electronic broadcast communications for students, faculty, and staff are official communications channels of the University and designed for and have as their primary purpose communications in support of the University's mission.
- Proposed broadcast electronic communications must into one of the following categorized categories to be approved for distribution. These categories also determine the priority for distribution:

Emergency - Highly important, time-sensitive messages including emergency notices such as security alerts or campus closings due to weather, such as OHIO!Alert and related messages

Official - Highly important, non-emergency messages such as government reporting requirements, student grade report distribution, financial aid award notices, notification of records holds or policy changes, and student class schedules.

Informational - Other non-emergency messages that are directly related to University business or academic operations.

3. Depending upon the target audience, broadcast electronic communications and the use of distribution list or lists of e-mail addresses will be subject to review and approval as follows. The unit head in the following areas may designate one or more persons authorized to review and approve these lists and message distribution.

All faculty – Office of the Provost

All administrators – Human Resources

All classified staff - Human Resources

All bargaining-unit staff – Human Resources

All employees - Human Resources

All students - Student Affairs

All undergraduate students – Student Affairs

All undergraduate applicants or admitted (not yet enrolled) students—Undergraduate Admissions.

All graduate students – The Graduate College

All regional campus students, faculty and/or staff – Outreach and Regional Campuses

Entire University community - Office of the President

Broadcast electronic communications will be distributed after the appropriate University authority has approved the message.

- 4. Planning unit heads may approve distribution of broadcast electronic communications to students, faculty, and/or staff who are exclusively within their units. For example, the dean of a college may approve distribution of communications to students or faculty within his or her college, the director of athletics may approve distribution of communications to all student athletes, or the dean of a regional campus may approve communications to all students or faculty at the regional campus.
- Faculty and staff individuals in an official administrative position have the right to contact staff or students under their scope of administrative responsibility without prior permission.
- 6. The Offices of the Bursar, Student Financial Aid, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, OUPD, CIRT, Residential Housing, and Registrar may

direct broadcast communications to students, faculty, and staff in order to conduct official University business or for emergency purposes without other approval.

- 7. Each University senate may direct broadcast communications to its constituents about matters of the senate's concern, without other approval.
- 8. Faculty, staff, and students are expected to observe the same level of professionalism and protocol as users of the electronic communications systems of any other agency of the government of the State of Ohio.
- 9. The expectation is that users will read their e-mail and other electronic communications. The University and its departments, colleges, and other agencies and faculty, students, and staff may use electronic communications for notification of actions necessary on the part of recipients.
- 10. Ohio University faculty, staff, and students, by virtue of the their employment with or attendance at Ohio University, are considered to have given their implied permission to receive certain broadcast electronic communications, such as emergency communications, through Ohio University electronic communications channels and to do so without the ability to "opt out" of these communications.
- 11. Because text messaging may impose a cost on the end user, the use of University-wide broadcast text messaging is reserved for emergency or emergency related use only.
- 12. 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 the University mission
- 13. Sensitive or private data must never be sent in broadcast electronic communications. Sensitive or private data includes but is not limited to SSN's, grades, account numbers and balances, and other information. When in doubt, do not send and consult with OIT, UCM, or University Legal Affairs.
- 14. Use Ohio University electronic communications for Ohio University business. Ohio University e-mail, text, and portal are the preferred communications solutions over external email and other service providers. Exceptions, such as when a vendor solution offers critical functionality not found in an Ohio University application or when specific research or grant requirements mandate specific functionality will be coordinated with OIT.
- 15. Using electronic communications does not guarantee immediate communication to the intended audience. All electronic communications channels have the following inherent limitations:



- The message delivery process takes a certain amount of time to complete and the amount of time will vary depending upon circumstances, sometimes beyond the control of the University. This time may vary from a few minutes to up to 24 hours.
- Recipients may not check their e-mail, text message, or portal frequently.
- Not all members of intended audiences have activated Universityprovided electronic communications accounts.
- Some University e-mail account clients used by individuals may be incompatible with software used to generate broadcast e-mails, making them essentially unreadable.
- Not all members of intended audiences use any e-mail account or other University electronic communications system.
- Recipients who have exceeded the quota on their Universityprovided e-mail account, or who have set defective forwarding messages, will not receive the intended message.
- Recipients may configure their software to automatically discard messages, unread.
- 16. Individuals, departments, and organizations that need to send messages to large portions of the University community should not rely on broadcast electronic communications as the sole methods for communications to their audiences. Individuals and organizations should consult University Communications and Marketing for assistance in developing a communications plan to ensure their message is received and understood.
- 17. Only University-affiliated entities (e.g. planning units/divisions, departments, schools, recognized organizations, registered student organizations) are eligible to propose broadcast electronic communications.
- 18. The Office of University Communications and Marketing (UCM) is available to assist unit heads with review of the content, appropriateness of channel, and formatting of any broadcast electronic communications to ensure message consistency and accuracy. In any event, broadcast electronic communications subject to presidential approval will include review by UCM.
- 19. At the University level, the individual approving the broadcast electronic communication will determine whether or not individual recipients will be able to "opt out" of (remove themselves from) the list on which the broad electronic communication was based. As a general rule, an opt-out option will not be offered for Emergency, Official, and most Informational e-mails at the University level (see definitions below).
- 20. Broadcast electronic communications generally **will not** be used for communication of:
 - Routine announcements
 - Partisan political campaigning or messaging



- Messages of narrow interest
- Messages which are largely promotional or advertising in nature
- Messages advertising or promoting products, services, or events
- Organizations recruiting members
- Calls for papers
- Most guest lecture announcements
- Most awards of an individual or organizational nature.
- Announcements of retirements or hirings other than senior staff or other key positions. Exceptions are at the discretion of the president, EVPP, or executive staff or their designated representatives.
- 21. There are three primary sources for publication and distribution of campus-wide routine announcements, messages, updates, hirings, events, and so on:
 - The Ohio University Portal—contact OIT for access.
 - Ohio University Compass, the official news source for Ohio University,
 - Ohio University Compass Points, a faculty and staff targeted bi-weekly e-mail newsletter, is a high-readership tool that may also be used for faculty and staff need-to-know information. Contact University Communications and Marketing for more information.
- 22. Broadcast e-mail messages should follow the below proven practices for more effective and efficient communications.
 - Subject headers must be clear and concise. This line must not be left blank.
 - The office, organization, or owner of the message must be clearly identified.
 - All e-mail messages must contain a valid reply-to e-mail address.
 - 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 e-mail message.
 - Broadcast electronic messages should be written using proper grammar, language, and punctuation. Messages will not be racist, sexist, or otherwise discriminatory or have or imply messaging which would be inconsistent with an agency of the government of the State of Ohio or with the character, nature, mission, or policies of that government or of Ohio University. If in doubt contact University Communications and Marketing.
 - A clear, concise, straightforward listing of information using such techniques as bullet points, numbered lists, conversational style, and easily accessible language are most preferred and most effective.



- The content of the website 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.
- Do not include attachments with mass e-mails.
- 23. The Office of Information Technology (OIT) will administer the technology process for accepting, reviewing, and distributing approved broadcast electronic communications and preventing distribution of unapproved broadcast electronic communications. This process will detail technical requirements necessary to assure efficient processing of requests. Proposed broadcast electronic communications must be submitted according to the process administered by OIT.