

University Policies and Procedures

10-03.00 – ELECTRONIC MAIL POLICY

I. Policy Statement: All students, faculty and staff members are issued a Towson University (the “University”) e-mail address and must establish their University e-mail account. This account must be used for any and all communication to and among students, faculty, and staff as well as departments, offices, and units on University matters or business. It is the responsibility of each e-mail account holder to monitor e-mail on a regular basis. The University electronic mail users must abide by the guidelines in this policy and protect e-mail documents according to University and University System of Maryland (USM) policies, and Maryland State laws.

II. Definitions:

- A. E-mail Systems – The University E-mail System and any Third-party E-mail Systems.
- B. Electronic Communication – Any means of transmitting and receiving messages over electronic media such as telephone, fax or computer.
- C. Third-party E-mail System – E-mail services provided on behalf of the University through third party service providers (such as Google Mail for students or Office 365 for faculty/staff).
- D. University E-mail System – E-mail services provided by the University through the Office of Technology Services.
- E. Electronic spamming – the use of electronic messaging systems to send unsolicited messages (spam), especially advertising, as well as sending messages repeatedly on the same site. E-mail spam, also known as junk e-mail or unsolicited bulk e-mail (UBE), is a subset of electronic spam involving nearly identical messages sent to numerous recipients by e-mail.

III. Responsible Executive and Office:

Responsible Executive: Vice President for Administration & Finance
and Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

Responsible Office: Office of Technology Services

IV. Entities Affected by this Policy:

This policy applies to all with University e-mail accounts.

V. Procedures:

A. Acceptable Use

The University provides the University E-mail System, and contracts for any Third-party E-mail System(s), for learning activities and administrative functions supporting its education mission. Although modest personal use of the E-mail Systems is allowed, the E-mail Systems should primarily be used for University-related educational and administrative purposes. E-mail made or received using the University E-mail System is presumed to be made and/or received in the course of University employment and is subject to federal, state and local laws and regulations (including the Maryland Access to Public Information Act), and USM and University policies, including not only laws, regulations and policies that are specific to computers and networks, but also those that may apply generally to personal conduct. Anyone performing official University business is required to utilize their E-Mail System account(s) and not personal e-mail accounts. Use not consistent with this policy will be considered unauthorized use as referenced in the University Acceptable Use policy.

B. Privacy and Confidentiality

The University will make reasonable efforts to maintain the integrity and effective operations of the University E-mail Systems, but users should not regard e-mail as a secure medium for the communication of sensitive or confidential information. Because of the nature of Electronic Communication, the University can assure neither the privacy of an individual user's usage of the E-mail Systems nor the confidentiality of their messages.

Users should exercise particular caution about sending confidential information (e.g., information about the medical or mental condition of employees or students; information about the evaluation, performance or discipline of University employees or students; information relating to the investigation, defense, or prosecution of any pending judicial action or administrative charge in which the University, its faculty, staff or students are parties; information relating to the investigation, resolution or disposition of any complaint or charge involving faculty, staff or students, including, but not limited to, complaints and/or charges involving fair practices, grievances or alleged discrimination; and information relating to the request for or delivery of legal advice or employer/employee relations assistance) via unencrypted e-mail, and should limit any such communications (or further disclosure of any such communications) to those with a legitimate need to know.

C. Prohibited Uses

The E-mail Systems may not be used for unlawful activities or for commercial purposes that are not directly related to the University's mission or otherwise authorized. Other prohibited uses of the E-mail Systems include, but are not limited to:

1. Sending copies of documents or inclusion of the work of others into e-mail in violation of copyright laws.
2. Sending junk mail or spam messages.
3. Using e-mail to harass, intimidate, defame or discriminate against others or to interfere with the ability of others to conduct University business.
4. Soliciting e-mail from any other e-mail address, other than that of the poster's account; creating or forwarding Chain Letters or solicitations for business schemes; using e-mail originating from within University networks for commercial purposes or personal gain.
5. Sending the same or similar non-business-related messages to large numbers of e-mail recipients such as mass-e-mailing.
6. Misrepresenting (including forgery) the identity of the sender or the source of an Electronic Communication.
7. Acquiring or attempting to acquire passwords of others.
8. Using or attempting to use the computer accounts of others.
9. Altering the content of a message originating from another person or computer with intent to deceive.
10. Deleting another person's postings without authorization.
11. Obtaining access to the files or e-mail of others without a substantiated University business purpose.
12. Attempting unauthorized access to e-mail or attempting to breach any security measures on any e-mail system, or attempting to intercept any e-mail transmissions without proper authorization.
13. Using e-mail for any purpose restricted or prohibited by laws, USM or University policies.

D. Retention and Disposal

1. Employee e-mail may be a public record subject to disclosure under the Maryland Public Information Act and, to the extent allowed by existing e-mail retention capability, e-mail in the University E-mail System may be subject to the record retention schedules established by Maryland law, USM Records Retention Standards, and USM and University policies. The University reserves the right to retain e-mails in the University E-mail System as necessary. Federal laws may require retaining e-mail in the University E-mail System for a specific time as defined by individual laws (e.g. FERPA, HIPAA, and FRCA).
2. Upon an employee's separation of employment, the employee's e-mail account shall be terminated and the University shall have the right to access e-mail made or received by the employee using the University E-mail Systems or which is otherwise made or received in the course of employment. An employee who separates from employment shall not remove, destroy, or copy any of the business-related e-mail entrusted to his/her care or created by him/her during employment, unless otherwise permitted in writing by the University.
3. At this time, OTS retains mailbox data for a limited period of time after an employee or student separates from the University. If individuals wish to retain e-mail in these mailboxes prior to the mailboxes being purged, they must transfer the information to alternate storage. Such storage, and the information it contains, constitutes University property and may need to be retained based on applicable laws and policies. Special consideration should be given to any confidential information in the mailbox.
4. In certain circumstances, the University may issue a litigation hold requiring employees to retain Electronic Communication(s), including e-mail, that is created, received, maintained or stored on the University E-mail System.

E. Intellectual Property

A faculty or staff member does not lose any ownership interest he/she has in intellectual property pursuant to USM and University policies on intellectual property, simply because the work is communicated through e-mail. However, if there is a dispute regarding ownership of the work, the University has the right, upon written notification to the faculty or staff member, to obtain access to the work (and to any e-mails in which the work is communicated) for the purpose of determining whether the University has an interest in it.

F. Access and Disclosure

1. Access to the University's information technology resources, including the E-mail Systems, is a privilege. The University reserves the right to limit, restrict or remove access to its resources when policies or laws are violated and to use appropriate means to safeguard its resources, preserve network/system integrity, and ensure continued service delivery at all times.
2. E-mail may constitute University "correspondence" or "computerized records" and therefore may be considered public records subject to disclosure under Maryland's Public Information Act or other laws, or as evidence in a legal action.
3. The University does not routinely inspect, monitor, or disclose e-mail without the holder's consent. The University, however, shall have the right, in its discretion, to access, retrieve, inspect and disclose the contents of e-mail for University-related purposes, which may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. maintaining system integrity;
 - b. protecting health and safety;
 - c. preventing interference with the academic mission;
 - d. performing required internal investigations;
 - e. complying with legal requests and demands.

G. Policy Violations

Violations of University rules and policies governing the use of the E-mail Systems may result in administrative or disciplinary actions or in any other action allowed by law or regulation. Such actions may include revocation or restriction of use of the E-mail Systems; disciplinary action including suspension or termination; and/or legal action, including referral to appropriate law enforcement authorities. Faculty/staff actions should be referred to Human Resources and students to the Office of Student Conduct and Civility Education.

H. Policy Changes and Third Party Policies

This policy may be amended from time to time. The University students utilizing Third Party E-mail Systems may be subject to third party vendor policies.

Related Policies:

10-01.01 – Information Technology Security Policy

10.01.02 - Acceptable Use Policy

Approval Date: 06/02/2010



Effective Date: 06/02/2010

Amended Date: 01/08/2016

Approved by: President's Council 04/26/2010