



Guidelines on Use of Mass Communications (Email) Services

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Summary:	To instruct and provide recommendations on the proper use of mass email communications.
Scope:	Applies to all Faculty, Staff, Students, and Affiliates

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I. REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Federal Policies

- [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)

UC Policies

- [Acceptable Use Policy](#)
- [UC Merced Policy on the Use of Email for Official Communications with Students](#)
- [Minimum Security Standards for Networked Devices](#)
- [BFB-IS-3 Electronic Information Security](#)

Guidelines/Resources

- [UC Merced Announcements Guidelines](#)
- [Electronic Distribution List Comparison Chart](#)
- [CAN-SPAM Act](#)

II. GUIDELINE SUMMARY & SCOPE

The purpose of this guideline is to instruct users on appropriate use of mass email. It also serves to provide recommendations on how to properly send mass email messages to reduce recipient complaints, confusion, and effectively utilize campus resources.

These guidelines apply to all faculty, staff, students, and affiliates.

III. DEFINITIONS

Mass email: unsolicited email sent quickly in large quantities, and recognized as an efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly use of technology for facilitating communication within the University of California Merced community. The communication can be sent to a list of email addresses or to a pre-defined target group.

IV. GUIDELINE TEXT

A. Campus-Wide Distribution of Mass Email

1. Mass email messages across campus requires approval from selected officers by the Chancellor. Please refer to [UC Merced Announcements Guidelines](#).

B. Guidelines and Criteria

1. Generally speaking, mass email is appropriate for:
 - a. Messages that directly relate to carrying out University business.
 - b. Messages that relate to changes in University policy or time sensitive issues.
 - c. Messages that inform a select group of people (e.g. faculty, staff, students, members of a specific school or department, etc.) of an announcement or event related to their specific role within the University.
2. Inappropriate use of mass email includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Messages that are not in line with the mission of the University.
 - b. Messages that are personal in nature.
3. Messages that are commercial in nature with the exception of those messages that are in support of University business and approved by the stipulations defined in this policy.

C. Electronic Distribution List Services

1. The Office of Information Technology (OIT) at the University of California Merced provides two mass distribution list services for the academic and administrative departments at the University of California Merced campus. These are Mailman and Office 365 (O365) Groups. A comparison of the features provided with each service is located at [Distribution List Comparison Chart](#).

V. PROCEDURES

A. Sending Mass Email

1. To promote institutional operating efficiency, the following guidelines are intended to prevent degrading of email services during working hours:
 - a. A mass message should be brief, self-explanatory, clear, and concise, and should only be used for important messages relevant to all recipients.
 - b. Avoid sending frequent or repeated messages. Monthly or quarterly electronic newsletters, blogs, and social media outlets are preferred.
 - c. Send collaborative messages with others at the University to avoid redundancy.

- d. Avoid sending attachments as they increase processing and delay delivery time. A link to a Web site (URL) or a document sharing solution is preferred. If it is necessary to send attachments, the total message size should be under 5 MB.
 - e. Mass email distribution lists or individual recipients should always be included on the "BCC" line to protect privacy and prevent replies from being directed at all recipients.
 - f. Mass email messages sent to students must comply with the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)
 - g. Mass email messages sent by University email addresses must be consistent with existing University policies
2. Mass email must NOT be used for commercial advertisement purposes. Examples include:
 - a. Commercial advertising for merchants or service providers external to the University, except for notices of services and discounts arranged for members of the University community by the University.
 - b. Solicitations for contributions, charities, or participation in personal activities not related to University purposes or not sponsored by the University.
 - c. Solicitations for non-University businesses operated by University faculty or staff.
 - d. Surveys or solicitations to members of the community selected on demographic characteristics, such as to selected groups or individuals identified as candidates for research subjects. Surveys must be coordinated through the [Institutional Review Board](#) or [Institutional Research and Decision Support](#).
 - e. Targeted audiences that might appear discriminatory or may appear to be infringement on privacy.
 - f. Offensive material.
 3. Under certain limited circumstances, senders of email messages that advertise or promote a product, service, or program being offered by the University or by a third-party through the University, may be required to:
 - a. Identify the message as an advertisement or a promotion.
 - b. Include a valid physical mailing address in the body of the message.
 - c. Provide the recipient with a way to decline to receive any additional messages that advertise or promote the product, service or program at issue.
 4. These requirements typically apply when unsolicited emails are sent, either to groups of faculty, staff, students and/or alumni or to prospective students or members of the public, that include the advertisement or promotion of a product or service being offered by or through the University.

VI. RESPONSIBILITIES

Authorizations and Approvals

1. Authorization to send bulk email is automatically granted in the following three cases:
 - a. Local Authority
 - i. Schools and academic departments are authorized to send messages to their students, faculty, or staff, without any further approvals.

b. Official University Announcements

- i. Administrative departments that need to make periodic announcements to members of the University of California Merced community and/or areas outside of the campus community are granted authority to send mass email via the service best fitted for the project for matters of conducting University business. Please refer to [UC Merced Announcements Guidelines](#).

c. Student Organizations

- i. A student(s) acting on behalf of an approved University group will need to contact the group's Director or Sponsor.

VII. REVISION HISTORY

05-02-2017 Guideline reviewed and up-to-date.

APPENDICES

Not Applicable