



Policy 5.5: Electronic Communication Systems, including Email Procedure

Volume: Procedure 5.5

Managing Office: Information Technology Services (ITS)

Effective Date: 11/01/2010

Review History: 10/11/2023

Authority: Information Technology Services/CIO

I. PROCEDURE STATEMENT

University electronic communication accounts are provided and supported by Alabama A&M University to support the mission of the University. **Use of the University's electronic communication systems evidences the user's agreement to be bound by this procedure.**

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Procedure is to ensure the appropriate use of the University's Electronic Communication Systems (ECS) by its students, faculty, and staff and board of trustee members. ECS are tools provided by the University, such as email, to complement traditional methods of communication and to improve educational and administrative efficiency. Users have the responsibility to use these resources in an efficient, effective, ethical, and lawful manner.

III. PROCEDURE

Alabama A&M University has established email as a primary vehicle for official communication with students, faculty and staff. Each registered student and active faculty and staff and board of trustee members is assigned an official Alabama A&M University email address by Information Technology Services (ITS) according to a naming convention regulated by ITS. All official University email communications will be sent to the assigned aamu.edu address, including but not limited to communications from faculty to students registered in their classes and from administrative units to students.

User Responsibilities:

ITS maintains the University's official Electronic Communication Systems, including email; students, faculty and staff and board of trustee members and are expected to read their email messages on a regular basis. Failure to receive and read University communications delivered to official email address in a timely manner does not absolve recipients from knowing and complying with the content of such communications. Students, faculty and staff and board of trustee members who choose to use another email system are responsible for receiving University-wide broadcast messages, notices, and personal mail by checking the University's official electronic mail system, newsgroups, and the University's World Wide Web homepage. An email message regarding University matters sent from an administrative office, faculty, or staff member is considered to be an official notice.

Students, faculty and staff and board of trustee members may redirect their official @bulldogs.amm.edu or @aamu.edu email address to another address, such as @hotmail.com, @yahoo.com, or @aol.com at their own risk. The University is not responsible for the handling of email by other service providers. Having email redirected does not absolve recipients from knowing and complying with the content of the communication sent to their official University email address.

Personal Use of ECS:

While personal use of University ECS accounts is not prohibited by law, and while the University does not routinely monitor any user's ECS content, privacy of personal ECS content residing on or transmitted through University equipment is not assured. Because the University is a State entity, all data transmitted or stored using ECS capabilities are subject to the requirements of Alabama's Public Records law, which generally requires that any person may have access to State records. Courts may order the production of University records, including ECS records, in connection with litigation. Appropriate law enforcement and other officials may, consistent with law, have access to documents for purposes of investigating allegations of violations of law or of University policy. Given such considerations, no University faculty member, staff member, board of trustee member, or student should use a University ECS account with the expectation that any particular ECS content, whether personal or business-related, will be private.

Limitations on the Use of ECS:

The legal and regulatory environment surrounding University ECS creates a number of other limitations on the use of University ECS accounts. Most apply uniformly to the use of all State-provided resources. They may be briefly summarized:

1. ECS accounts are for the exclusive use of the individual to whom they are assigned.
2. No use is permitted that conflicts with the requirements of civil or criminal law, including but not limited to laws relating to pornography, defamation, intellectual property infringement, and illegal discrimination, or conflicts with any applicable procedure of Alabama A&M University, such as use in support of partisan political activities.
3. No use is permitted that constitutes the unauthorized exchange of proprietary information or any other privileged, confidential, or sensitive information.

4. The knowing transmission of a message containing a computer virus or that misrepresents the identity of the sender is prohibited.
5. The use of or attempt to use the accounts of others without their permission is prohibited.
6. Personal use cannot interfere with a University employee's obligation to carry out University duties in a timely and effective manner.
7. The personal use cannot involve sending or soliciting chain letters or sending unsolicited bulk mail messages (e.g., "junk mail," "spam," or "MLM"), or otherwise overloading the University's electronic mail system or negatively interfering with system performance.
8. Uses that result in commercial gain or personal profit are not permitted, except as allowed under University intellectual property policies and the external activities for pay policy; however, in no case may University ECS be used for solicitation of an external activity for pay.
9. No personal use may state or imply University sponsorship or endorsement of its message.

Official University Electronic Communications:

When using ECS as an official means of communication, students, faculty, and staff and board of trustee members should apply the same professionalism, discretion, and standards that they would use in written business communication. Furthermore, students, faculty, and staff and board of trustee members should not communicate anything via ECS that they would not be prepared to say publicly.

Students, faculty, and staff and board of trustee members may not disclose University information in ECS messages that they are privileged to access because of their position at the University.

Those wishing to transmit broadcast electronic messages containing essential University announcements to students, faculty, and/or staff must obtain approval from the appropriate administrative authority. Within the scope of their authority, only the Offices of a Department Chairperson, Director, Dean, Executive Director, Vice President, or President may authorize the transmission of broadcast messages to a wide audience of students, faculty, and staff and board of trustee members.

IV. PROCEDURE: DISCIPLINE / PERSONNEL ACTIONS

Improper use of Electronic Communication Systems, including email, as described in the Acceptable Use Statement, is prohibited and may result in restriction of access to the University Electronic Communication Systems and/or other appropriate disciplinary action.

V. RELATED PROCEDURES

Acceptable Use Statement