Policy on University Mass Electronic Communications

I. Purpose

The University recognizes the need for the campus community to send electronic communications of both a critical and a general nature electronically to various groups on campus. The University is aware, at the same time, of the need to protect the privacy of the campus community and to ensure that mass electronic communications to campus groups are essential and relevant to its academic mission.

The University also recognizes the need, in special instances, for sending mass email to off-campus groups. When this channel of communication is used, the sender must be sensitive to the dual role the University plays in the Internet community as an educational institution. Unless special precautions are taken, off-campus, mass-emails may be viewed solely as being transmitted from an business, and not from an educational institution, with negative ramifications resulting from violation of law to violations of best-practices in the Internet community.

II. Scope

This policy on the use of mass electronic communication and mass e-mail applies to all members of the Doane University community.

III. Policy

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 its University mission. This prohibition extends to all mail servers within the University network domain (e.g., doane.edu, student organizations, and other domains hosted or maintained by or domain names registered by the University).

To facilitate appropriate mass electronic communication, the University has defined three channels along with directives for their appropriate use and management. Special considerations have been prescribed for surveys, research, and for off-campus mass-email communication.

With few exceptions, mass-electronic communications require permission from the recipients and the communication must offer an option to be removed from the list at any time. The exceptions include University administrators and faculty as follows:

• Persons in an official administrative position have the right to contact faculty, staff, or students under their scope of administrative responsibility without prior permission.

• The President and Vice Presidents maintain authority over special mass-communication channels designed to contact large sectors of the University community without prior permission.

• Faculty retain the right to use mass-electronic communication for academic purposes and to contact students registered for their classes without prior permission.

1. Introduction

To ensure that a message is seen by all intended parties, more than one channel of communication may be used. When using the various channels of communication, there is no guarantee that everyone in a University or Campus group will receive the electronic message. All electronic communication from the University community must adhere to the Appropriate Use Policy for University electronic services. See https://www.doane.edu/faq/acceptable-use-policy

2. Definitions

2.1. Mass Electronic Communication or Mass Email. For the University, any electronic communication of the same message, in multiple or single mailings, to 100 or more recipients, is defined as mass electronic communication. This includes communication of differing wording that conveys the same message as well as communication sent on behalf of the University through Internet Service Providers other than Doane University.

2.2. Spam. The University's definition of Spam is broadly defined as unsolicited electronic communication, outside of the scope of the University mission, sent to a group of recipients, on- or off-campus, without their permission.

2.3. Campus Alert System. A software program that automatically distributes email or text messages to members subscribed to the application for the purpose of receiving safety alert messages.

2.4. Opt-in and Opt-out. Subscribers to general and academic email groups may elect to opt-in to a list (subscribe) or opt-out of a list (unsubscribe). A no-opt-out list provides no option for people to remove themselves from the list membership.

2.5. Subscribed membership. The following types of subscribed membership for mass electronic communications are defined:

Subscribed-with-permission. A list made up of people who have explicitly given prior permission to be added to the membership of a list.

Subscribed-implied-permission. A list made up of people who have indirectly given permission to be contacted electronically (e.g., through membership in a professional organization, through a general request to be contacted at a University event, through a University mailing, through membership in a University organization where they willingly provided their email address, or membership in a University organization that has an opt out provision on communications.)

Subscribed-without-permission. A list made up of people who have not given their permission to be added to the membership of the list.

2.6. On-Campus and Off-Campus Communication. On-Campus refers to mass-electronic communication that is sent by any member of the University community (faculty, staff, students, etc) to another member of the University community. In most instances, while not exclusively, this will be via mobile devices, desktops or servers within the doane.edu domain, or any of its sub-domains. Off-campus refers to mass-electronic communication that is sent by a member of the University community to anyone else in the Internet at-large. Individuals using mail services other than doane.edu or domain, to send mass email while pursing the mission of the University (e.g., Advancement, Alumni Relations, Marketing, IRB approved research, etc.) must adhere to the University's mass-electronic communication policy.

2.7. Administrator. The term administrator refers to a person officially recognized by the University as having responsibility over a University unit and its faculty and staff. In the case of an academic unit, the administrator's responsibility would extend to students who are officially participating in academic programs under the responsibility of that administrator. An administrator may appoint a designee for a mass-electronic communication but retains responsibility for the event.

3. University Channels for Mass-Electronic Communication

The University provides three channels of electronic communication for members of the University community to send information to, and engage in discussions with, selected University groups. Those five mass communication channels are as follows:

    President and Vice Presidents' mass e-mail groups (opt-out not permitted)

    Person's in official Administrative Capacity mass e-mail groups (opt-out not permitted)

    Division, Department, Academic and special interest e-mail groups (opt-out permission optional)

    Individual emails in compliance with the "Appropriate Use" policy to fewer than 100 recipients (opt-out by request)

3.1. All-University Mass Email Groups.

This communications channel is reserved for messages where urgency is necessary or where the message is of sufficient importance that all members of the University community need to be informed. Examples include:

    Crisis or urgent announcements: bomb or terrorist threat, natural disasters, mechanical failures, weather closures or delays, crime alerts, major computer or network alerts.

    Logistic announcements: construction closures, traffic routing, and environmental alert notices.

    Major University events: naming of a new president or other key administrator, change in University policy affecting all constituents, major class registration changes, major

payroll or financial alerts, any other situation that may have an impact on the functioning of the University as a whole.

Policy and procedure updates

Faculty, staff, or student governance issues

Personnel appointments

Strategic messages from the president, provost, or one of the vice presidents

Financial, administrative, or event deadlines that are time critical

Announcement of time-sensitive importance that are critical for a given group

The subject heading for all safety related messages should begin with the prefix "SAFETY-ALERT:" All other Messages from this channel should begin with "This email is being sent to all <insert group> from the Office of the <insert title and name>." This is an announcement only channel. The membership setting for this channel is subscribed-without-permission for the entire University community; opt-out is not permitted.

3.2. Academic Email Groups.

This communications channel is the preferred channel for sharing University Academic information and discussions of mutual interest among Students and Colleagues. Academic-email groups require designating a person to be the owner of the group. The membership setting for this channel is subscribed-without-permission for the Academic community; opt-out is permitted.

3.3. General Groups.

This communications channel is the preferred channel for sharing information and discussions of mutual interest among special interest groups. General purpose email groups require designating a person to be the owner of the group. The membership setting for this channel is subscribed-with-permission for the members of the community; opt-out is permitted.

3.4. Individual Emails to Less Than 100 Recipients.

Any member of the University community can send individual email messages to one or more individuals; current restrictions limit the number of recipients to fewer than 100, either in multiple or single mailings of the same or similar message. People needing to communicate with 100 or more recipients should use the Academic or General University Email Groups channel (3.3 above). Originators of email to fewer than 100 recipients should use discretion when sending to groups of people without their permission. Sensitivity should be shown to the sender-receiver relationship, and the sender should discontinue sending to anyone who indicates that they do not wish to receive further communications. Failure to acknowledge such a request will be in violation of the University Appropriate Use Policy.

4. Restrictions on Composing Messages for Mass Communication

When composing an email message to send through any of the mass-email channels, the following guidelines apply:

4.1. Subject line. Subject header must contain <insert assigned group name>: and be clear and concise. This line must not be left blank.

4.2. Mass email approval notification. All messages that are subscribed-without-permission/no-opt-out, must state that the message is authorized under the University Mass-Electronic Communications policy and provide a web link to that policy. The group owner should be clearly identified.

4.3. Opt-out notification. All messages that have subscribed-with-permission/opt-out membership must state that recipients may opt-out of additional messages and provide a contact and a Web link for instructions for doing so.

4.4. Identification. Sender identification is critical and all email messages must contain a valid reply-to email address.

4.5. Message length. 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 email message.

4.6. Attachments. Do not include attachments with mass emails.

4.7. Messages should be written using proper grammar, language, punctuation, and adhere to University standards.

5. Communications between Faculty and Students

The mass electronic communication policy is not meant to interfere with the ability of an instructor to establish communication with students in a class. For classes with more than 100 students, the General University Email Group policy should be followed (Section 3.2). Faculty may choose subscribed-without-permission, opt-out not permitted, for students in their classes for the current term only. Communication within the Learning Management System, Web message boards and chat groups may also be considered as alternatives.

6. Sending Surveys to On-Campus Recipients

The University recognizes the importance of research as part of its academic mission. This policy supports the need for academic researchers to use mass-electronic communications as a research tool. Policy and procedures are defined for deploying these tools for on-Campus and off-Campus research in appropriate ways to ensure that such communication is viewed by the recipient as an academic activity, and not as unsolicited and unwanted e-mail. To facilitate on-Campus surveys for institutional and instructional research needs, all members of the Campus community will be pre-subscribed to a Campus-wide pool from which survey samples may be drawn. When a person activates their University user account they will automatically be added to the central survey pool. The following restrictions apply to the use of the University-wide survey pool:

7.1. All on-Campus research surveys must be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). All other surveys must be approved by the administrator that oversees the sample population (e.g., a department chair for students within their academic area or the Vice President for Student Affairs for a Campus-wide survey of students).

7.2. Samples drawn from the survey pool will be provided as a subscribed-with-permission/opt-out to be used only for the duration of the survey.

7.3. The sample survey may only be used for communication to the sample population, not for the survey instrument itself.

7.4. To maximize resource efficiency, Survey instruments should not be embedded or attached to the mass emails (e.g., use web-based surveys).

7.5. The principal investigator must be clearly identified in all communications.

7.6. The Subject line of the mass-email must use the prefix "RESEARCH:" for IRB approved research projects and "SURVEY:" for all other University survey activities.

7.7. All communications to the survey sample must make clear that there are methods to opt-out of surveys, for the present survey or for future University surveys. To opt out of a survey, the recipient should be given a way to contact the principal investigator.

7.8. Policy regarding sending research surveys to off-University populations is provided in Section 8.

8. Sending Communications and Surveys to Off-Campus

Recipients Given the sensitive issues surrounding mass-emails in the Internet community at large, discretion needs to be used when considering this channel of communication. As with any business, unsolicited mass-email sent off-Campus may be interpreted as Spam mail. The ramifications of this are far-reaching and include negative publicity for the University, potential violation of state law, violation of Internet carrier appropriate use policies, and electronic blacklisting by Spam filtering services. To minimize the likelihood of these events, the following policy and procedure should be followed for off-University mass-email including the use of mass email for survey and research purposes:

8.1. The communication must be related to the mission of the University.

8.2. Subscribed-without-permission, no-opt-out membership for off-University mass-email is not permitted.

8.3. Subscribed-with-permission, opt-out membership is to be used in all circumstances except those noted in 8.4. No approval is needed to establish the channel of off-Campus communication. Research surveys do require IRB approval.

8.4. Subscribed-implied-permission, opt-out membership may be used in special circumstances. Those exceptions include:

8.4.1. Recruitment of students where the student has indicated an interest in the University through an official procedure tied to the admissions process. Use of mass-email to this group requires the approval of the Vice President for Enrollment and Marketing or designee.

8.4.2. Alumni, donors, or "friends" of the University where fund-raising, event notification, or maintaining alumni-University relations is concerned. The scope of such communication is limited to those who have implicitly or explicitly provided their email address to the University through a University sanctioned process. Use of mass-email to these groups requires approval of the Vice President for Advancement or designees.

8.4.3. Off-Campus research surveys where the sampling pool is derived from mass e-mail lists where people have indicated a willingness to be included based on membership in an organization or an affiliation with a common group interest. The procedures and approval process for authenticating off-Campus lists shall be determined by the University Research Committee from the general requirements of Section 8.5. The Committee shall also establish the review process or protocol for approving subject heading and message content.

8.5. The following criteria should be applied when evaluating the validity and appropriateness of an off-Campus list, be it subscribed-with-permission or subscribed-implied-permission:

The members of the list must have given permission for the use of their email address either explicitly or implicitly;

The technique for obtaining membership should be clearly defined; and

Every effort should be made to ensure that the lists are valid and from reputable sources.

8.6. The Subject line in the email must use the prefix of "Doane University:". The message should begin with wording to the effect: "Doane University is contacting you in order to…," "Your name and email address was obtained through…," "Please let us know if you do not want to be contacted further…." Variations that meet the spirit of this wording may be approved by the appropriate VP. Research surveys may use a different protocol as defined by the Committee under Section 8.4.3.

8.7. The message should be as short as possible, deferring any significant information to the Web, and end with an option to be removed from the list with instructions, and a link to this policy document. The survey instrument should not be included in the body of the e-mail or as an attachment (e.g., use a web-based survey).

9. Critical Communications to University Populations Not Accessible Electronically

It is the responsibility of the sender of mass-email communications to ensure that email intended to notify or inform University faculty and staff with critical or urgent information also be published using a non-electronic method. This is to include those that, due to the nature of their job responsibilities, do not have access to electronic communication.

10. Grievances

Anyone who receives a mass-electronic communication from a member of the Doane University community that appears to be in violation of this policy may take the following steps: First, the recipient should contact the original sender of the message and/or the associated administrator. Second, after allowing proper time and a resolution is not reached, a complaint should be filed with the Vice President for Information Technology, who will consult with the appropriate administrator(s). The final decision as to whether to treat the violation as an Appropriate Use Policy violation will be decided by this office in consultation with the Vice President for the unit where the alleged violation occurred. The incident will then be handled following the process defined in the Appropriate Use Policy. To report improper electronic communication received from external Internet Service Providers (ISPs), it is recommended that complaints be filed with our helpdesk: helpdesk@doane.edu

IV. Compliance

Any member of the University community, who uses an electronic communications connection through Doane University, whether from on-Campus or remotely from off-Campus, must comply with this policy.

V. Approval & Review

This policy will be periodically reviewed by the Faculty Liaison Committee and changes or additions to this policy will be recommended by this Committee to the President and Cabinet. Information technology resources and systems are changing rapidly both in terms of technology and application, and the University reserves the right to amend this policy at any time.

Created: June 2009

Update March 2018