

## **E-mail as Official Communication to Students Policy**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish e-mail as an official means of communication with students. The use of e-mail expedites and reduces the cost of communicating valuable and timely information to students. Official e-mail is intended to meet the academic and administrative needs of the campus community.

Implementing St. Cloud State e-mail as an official means of communication between University offices and students requires the guarantee of timely receipt of announcements and notifications, and the ability to verify delivery of these messages.

### **Policy**

St. Cloud State e-mail is recognized as an official communication channel for all students at St. Cloud State University (SCSU). The St. Cloud State address will be designated as their e-mail contact in the Integrated Statewide Records System (ISRS); students will not be permitted to change or replace this address within ISRS. SCSU requires students to activate their St. Cloud State e-mail account once it is assigned to them, and students are expected to receive, read and act expeditiously upon communication distributed through St. Cloud State e-mail. Students will not be held responsible for their inability to access messages due to problems with the St. Cloud State e-mail system, whether the downtime is scheduled or unscheduled.

Students are required to use their St. Cloud State e-mail in accordance with all approved federal, state, Minnesota State, and SCSU statutes and policies.

For questions concerning the Policy for E-mail as Official Communication to Students, contact one of the reviewing offices: Academic Affairs, Administrative Affairs, Business Services, Financial Aid, Learning Resources & Technology Services, President's Office, Public Safety, Records and Registration, Student Government Association President, Student Life and Development, University Communications.

### **Student Procedures:**

- All SCSU students are required to activate their St. Cloud State e-mail accounts once they are available to them.
- When a student activates the account, it remains active until the student is no longer in student status with the University.
- Failure to read e-mail communication in a timely manner (except in instances of system downtime) does not release the student from the obligation of knowing and complying with its content.
- Students are encouraged to clear their mailboxes regularly to ensure that there is sufficient space for new messages.
- Student St. Cloud State e-mail addresses have been declared to be directory items under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and as such, are public and will be available in public directories and on-line address books. Students who request removal of their St. Cloud State e-mail address from the public online address book (using the *Request to Prevent Disclosure of Directory Information Form*, available from Records & Registration) will continue to receive official University communications through e-mail; however, the addresses will remain unpublished. This in no way releases the student from his/her responsibility to read and act expeditiously upon communication distributed through St. Cloud State e-mail.

### **Official Communication Procedures:**

- Official e-mail communication is used for academic and administrative purposes.
- When using e-mail, caution should always be used regarding sensitive or confidential matters, as privacy cannot be guaranteed. See Appendix B for e-mail usage guidelines.
- When there is information that is relevant to University business, or to the safety and security of the students and campus, and it needs to be communicated to all SCSU students, the intended e-mail message must be sent to one of the e-mail reviewing offices listed above, and if appropriate, forwarded to all students. If there are concerns with the message, one of the reviewing offices will contact and work with the sender to address the concerns.

- When information needs to be communicated to a specific subgroup of students (e.g. all students in a specific major), an appropriate e-mail address list can be generated. These requests require the completion of an *Ad Hoc Request Form* (see Appendix A) available from Records & Registration.
- Faculty will determine how official communication will be used in their classes. This “Policy for E-mail as Official Communication to Students” will ensure that all students will be able to comply with e-mail-based course requirements specified by faculty. Faculty can assume that students are accessing their St. Cloud State accounts and faculty can use e-mail for their classes accordingly. See Appendix A for a list of applicable policies; see Appendix B for e-mail usage guidelines.

**Copies of all official communications sent to students are electronically stored and archived. All official electronic communications are subject to the Official Records Act, Minnesota Statutes section 138.17. Offices creating official communications are responsible for consulting with University Archives to coordinate retention of these communications.**

**Abuses of this policy will be handled per appropriate SCSU policies. See Appendix A.**

## **Appendix A - Statutes and Policies related to E-mail as Official Communication to Students**

The following is a list of statutes and policies provided as a reference and may be updated as needed, without changing the policy to which it is attached.

### **Federal Statutes**

- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- USA PATRIOT ACT

### **State of Minnesota Statutes & Policies**

- Statewide Policy: Appropriate Use of Electronic Communication and Technology (Oct. 2002)
- Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13 (Government Data Practices)
- Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 15.17 (Official Records Act)
- Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 138.17 (Government Records)

### **Minnesota State Policies**

- Board Policy 5.22 Acceptable Use of Computers and Information Technology Resources

### **University Policies**

- Ad Hoc Request Form
- Campus E-mail Policy
- Faculty and Staff St. Cloud State Accounts: Deactivation and Removal Policy
- Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy
- ResNet Acceptable Use Policy
- Request to Prevent Disclosure of Directory Information Form
- Student Code of Conduct

## **Appendix B - Guidelines for E-mail as Official Communication to Students**

Official e-mail is intended to meet the academic and administrative needs of the campus community. These guidelines are intended to help define the appropriate usage of official student e-mail, in particular those messages sent from academic and administrative offices to student St. Cloud State accounts. These guidelines will address sensitive and confidential information, formatting, and appropriate uses of e-mail as official communication to students.

### **Dealing with Sensitive and Confidential Information**

Follow all federal, state, Minnesota State, and SCSU statutes and policies when sending sensitive and confidential information (see Appendix A).

### **Formatting**

- Care must be taken to ensure that the e-mail is addressed only to the intended recipients.
- Keep messages simple and direct.
- Develop a template that students can easily recognize.
- The use of file attachments with e-mail communication is discouraged unless the sender has verified that the attachments are accessible to and readable by all intended recipients.
- When sending an official office or department e-mail, the message should be sent from a department account rather than a personal account.
- When a message is to be sent to many recipients, use an e-mail program that will not list all the recipients in the message. Alternatively, include all recipients' addresses as "Bcc:" instead of "To:".

### **Examples of appropriate uses include communicating:**

- Information relevant to campus security and the student population.
- Important weather information affecting scheduled classes.
- Faculty communication to individual students regarding classes or advising
- Overdue notices for library materials.
- New student information about academic support services and academic policies.
- Notification of registration information.
- Student financial aid processing issues and deadlines.
- Payment deadlines and other Business Office activities.
- General Education Program information.
- Commencement and convocation information.
- Official University surveys.
- Student Government election information.
- Other messages as deemed appropriate by the designated SCSU E-mail reviewing offices: Academic Affairs, Administrative Affairs, Business Services, Financial Aid, Learning Resources & Technology Services, President's Office, Public Safety, Records and Registration, Student Government Association President, Student Life and Development, University Communications