Westfield State University

Policy concerning:

APPROVED: December 2013

Section   Administrative

number   0550

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REVIEWED: June 2018

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ELECTRONIC MAIL (E-MAIL)

PURPOSE

Westfield State University ("University") recognizes that principles of academic freedom and shared governance, freedom of speech and confidentiality hold important implications for electronic mail and electronic mail services ("e-mail"). E-mail is provided as a privilege to all University employees, students, and authorized guests. The same ethical conduct that applies to the use of all University resources and facilities applies to the use of University e-mail.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students, faculty and staff of the University, and to all other users who are authorized by the University to access the University's e-mail system.

DEFINITIONS

Distribution List: A distribution list refers to a facility in the e-mail system to enable a large number of subscriber mail addresses to be reached through a single (list) name. Ex. fac/staff, departmental list.

Westfield State University's e-mail system: The University's e-mail system is a communication resource to enhance and facilitate the academic and administrative operations of the University. This includes any originating e-mails containing @westfield.ma.edu. Use of the system shall be to support these purposes and this policy.

Information Technology Resources: Information technology resources refers to all computer and communication facilities, services, data and equipment that are owned, managed, maintained, leased or otherwise provided by the University.

PUBLIC RECORD

E-mail, whether or not created or stored on University-owned equipment may constitute a public record under Massachusetts' Public Records Law or be subjected to mandatory disclosure under other laws or regulations, including the rules compelling disclosure during the course of litigation. Users of the University's e-mail services should be aware that Massachusetts' Public Records Law and statutory and regulatory provisions prevent the University from guaranteeing complete protection of email, including personal e-mail residing on the University's information technology resources.

The messages, information and data carried by the e-mail system are the sole property of the University and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The University reserves the right to monitor and access those systems and their contents as they deem necessary, in accordance with the law and relevant collective bargaining agreement. No user of the University's e-mail system shall have a reasonable expectation of privacy in any e-mail.

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USER OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY

I.   SECURITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

      A.   Individuals with approved access to the University's e-mail system have the responsibility to maintain a confidential password, as well as the responsibility to regularly change their password, to protect the system from unauthorized access. The University will never ask for your password, and users should not provide this information to anyone.

      B.   Individuals with approved access to the e-mail system have the responsibility to log off and lock their computer or mobile device. This will prevent others from tampering with an account or accessing confidential material.

      C.   All messages should be treated as confidential by other employees and accessed only by the intended recipient unless necessary as a normal function of their job. Employees are not authorized to intentionally retrieve or read any e-mail messages that are not sent to them.

      D.   Never assume that e-mail is confidential. A message can easily be forwarded to another e-mail user, and anyone has potential access to read an e-mail message once it has been printed. Technical problems or human error may result in the unintended distribution of e-mail.

II.   USAGE

      A.   The University's e-mail system is the official method of communication for the University. Only mailboxes with westfield.ma.edu suffixes are supported. Anyone who utilizes another e-mail system, or forwards e-mail from their University account to another account does so at their own risk, and is responsible for ensuring they are in receipt of all intended communications.

      B.   The University's e-mail system is intended to support the academic and administrative mission of the University. Users are expected to demonstrate a sense of responsibility in utilizing
the e-mail system to include maintaining professional etiquette in all e-mail messages.

      C.   Attached to this policy are guidelines regarding the use of the e-mail system.

III.   RETENTION

E-mail is backed up on a daily basis. Tapes are retained in an alternate, locked fire-proof location for 14 days before they are overwritten. Deleted items are retained in the system for 14 days and then moved to tape. Mailbox space is allocated to users

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on a disk availability basis and space allocation is reviewed by the Director for Infrastructure Services on an annual basis. Even when e-mail messages are deleted from the user's mailbox, copies of the files and messages may be automatically retained on back-up systems for an extended period of time.

Users are responsible for archiving and retaining emails on their computer in accordance with Policy 0650: Records Retention and Destruction and the Email Retention Procedures, which are available on myWestfield > Documents > Administration and Finance > Records Retention. The deletion of emails must also be in accordance with the aforementioned policies and procedures.

UNACCEPTABLE USES

It is unacceptable to use the University e-mail system as follows:

- for personal or private profit;

- In any way that violates University policy;

- In any way that violates local, state or federal law;

- to send or receive, either across the University e-mail system or the Internet, any copyrighted materials, trade secrets, proprietary financial information, peer review committee reports and activities, or similar materials, or any information where exposure of that information to outside parties would have an adverse impact on the University or its employees, without prior approval;

- as a vehicle for unauthorized disclosure of confidential business or private facts concerning employees, students or University-related business (authorized e-mail and e-mail attachments containing sensitive business information may be sent within the Westfield State University system on its secured network);

- for communications regarding commercial solicitations;

- for communications regarding political advertising, chain-letters, jokes, derogatory or inflammatory statements, and/or idle gossip.

ENFORCEMENT

Access to the e-mail system is a privilege and any misuse of the e-mail system may result in withdrawal of access to the system and disciplinary action up to and including termination, suspension or expulsion.

This policy will be reviewed, at a minimum, every three years by the Chief Information Officer.

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GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF ELECTRONIC MAIL

Appropriateness

➤ E-mail is not intended to replace face-to-face interaction. E-mail is one of many communication methods available at the University. Be sure e-mail is the appropriate medium for your message before sending it. Do not use e-mail to write something you would not say face-to-face or include in a memo. Remember that e-mail is a public record and your message may be subject to disclosure.

➤ When using global distribution lists, remember that most groups include a mix of staff and employees. Know who is in the group you intend to send the message to and be sensitive to the intended recipients.

➤ When responding to a message sent to you via a global distribution list, be careful not to use "Reply All" unless appropriate and necessary.

E-mail Etiquette

➤ Treat e-mail messages as business correspondence. Be professional and careful about what you say about others. E-mail is easily (and often inadvertently) forwarded. Avoid using informal language and clearly separate opinion from non-opinion.

➤ Be careful when using humor and sarcasm. Without face-to-face communication, your message may be misinterpreted.

➤ Think before you write. Once sent, a message cannot be retracted. Identify yourself and your affiliations clearly and avoid responding when you are emotional.

➤ Use mixed case. Do not write in all caps or all small letters. Writing in all upper case letters is generally considered to be shouting in electronic correspondence.

➤ Consider including your phone extension in the message. This allows the recipient to call you directly with a response, if they prefer.

➤ Limit each e-mail message to one topic and always use a clear identifier in the subject line of each message which reflects the content of the message. Use common abbreviations when possible, but refrain from using acronyms that would be confusing or annoying to the reader.

➤ E-mail messages should be brief and to the point, meant to be read off the screen in thirty seconds or less. Use attachments for long documents. However, do not create an attachment for brief correspondence; instead, create a brief e-mail (for example, do not create a Word document to communicate a meeting cancellation).

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- ➢ When sending an attachment, always include a one line description of what the attachment contains, giving the addressee the option of opening it or not. If sending multiple attachments, identify the content of each attachment.

- ➢ Be judicious with use of CC's.

- ➢ You may also want to reference the University's Identity Guidelines Manual produced by the Marketing Department or the Writer's Style Guide.

- ➢ When forwarding a message, remember that it is acceptable, and sometimes preferable, to delete any information that is irrelevant to the message you want to send or to cut and paste the pertinent information into a new e-mail.

Responsible E-mail Use

- ➢ Check your mailbox frequently. Respond to e-mail messages as soon as possible after receiving them. If you think the importance of the message justifies it, immediately acknowledge to the sender that you have received the message, even though you will send a longer reply later.

- ➢ ***Be cautious about sending time sensitive material to which you need an immediate answer. Do not expect an instant response to your messages.*** Not all users are "on-line" every day. Use the "return receipt" option to ensure critical messages have been received.

- ➢ E-mail is a transitory communication tool which should be kept current and up-to-date. Mail and working documents that have exceeded their practical life span should be deleted. Delete unwanted messages immediately and keep messages remaining in your mailbox to a minimum and archive messages regularly.

- ➢ When using e-mail as a decision-making tool, do not assume acceptance when a person does not respond.