



Electronic Communication with Students

Last Revised
December 17, 2025

Responsible Executive
Senior Vice Provost
for Academic Affairs

Responsible Office
Office of the Registrar

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. Communications from the university to its students via email, text messaging, instant messaging, and other similar technologies support student success, the safety of the university community, and effective operation of the institution. The university strives to ensure that these types of electronic communication are limited in number and are of interest and importance to students so that their effectiveness is not diminished. This policy establishes the purposes for which the university may send electronic communication to students and describes the ways in which these communications are managed.
- 1.2. Email is the official communication tool used by the university.

2. Reason for Policy

- 2.1. The university recognizes the importance of electronic communication as a means to quickly and efficiently communicate with students while protecting student records, respecting the privacy and stated preferences of the recipients, and adhering to applicable state and federal laws.
 - 2.1.1. When requirements are met, official communications may be delivered to a personal device via text message or other similar technology, and students are asked to provide their mobile phone numbers upon matriculation to the university. However, not all students have a personal device, and not all students have provided a cell phone number to the university. All students do have access to a computer or other device capable of receiving email and all have a university email address. Therefore, email is the official communication tool used by the university.

3. Scope & Audience

- 3.1. This policy applies to electronic communications for any Official University Purpose sent to students and applicants for admission to the university. These forms of communication include but are not limited to:

- 3.1.1. Text messages, instant messages, or emails sent from a university employee or authorized agent of the university.
- 3.1.2. Text messages, instant messages, or emails sent through third-party services on behalf of any unit of the university; and
- 3.1.3. Other forms of electronic communication that use student data sent from a university-owned device, account, or office.
- 3.2. University employees, students, contractors, and volunteers must comply with this policy.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. **Emergency Purpose:** Critical and time-sensitive communications made necessary in any situation affecting the health and safety of the university community.
- 4.2. **Mass Communication:** Identical or substantially similar messages sent via email, text messaging, instant messaging, and other similar technologies to a group of students in one or more batches. Mass Communication is restricted to information that
 - 4.2.1. Pertains to the majority of the recipients,
 - 4.2.2. Is critical or time-sensitive, and
 - 4.2.3. Is for an Official University Purpose.
- 4.3. **Official University Purpose:** The individual sending the communication is doing so for a purpose within the scope of their university employment.
- 4.4. **Opt In:** An action by which someone agrees to receive university communications to a personal device and consents by acknowledging a statement that provides a clear understanding of the nature of the messages that will be received.
- 4.5. **Opt Out:** An action by which someone who receives university communications to a personal device indicates that they no longer want them from the university.

5. Responsibilities & Procedures

5.1. Management of Electronic Communications

- 5.1.1. The Registrar or their designee may designate the university employee positions that may access student records when sending electronic communications pursuant to this policy and University Standard 01-120 *Student Records*.

- 5.1.2. The Registrar or their designee must approve any unit's communication plan that includes Mass Communications to students pursuant to this policy. As part of the approval process, units, departments, and colleges that seek to send Mass Communications must have a written plan indicating the purpose, content, and frequency of Mass Communications that will be sent.
- a. Units that include text messaging in their communication plan must consult with the Registrar or their designee to determine whether the communication plan requires an Opt In or an Opt Out protocol, and whether text messages may contain information classified as confidential or sensitive pursuant to University Policy 08-015 *University Data Management, Classification, and Incident Response*.
 - b. Approval by the Registrar or their designee is not required for
 - i. Returned correspondence via text message that was initiated by the student.
 - ii. Mass Communications sent by academic department leaders or their designee to the student majors and minors in their department.
 - iii. Electronic communication that the student requested, such as list servers, electronic newsletters, or similar.
- 5.1.3. Senders of Mass Communications should carefully define the parameters for selecting student recipients so that only students who meet specified criteria will be contacted.
- 5.1.4. Misuse of a university electronic communication system may be grounds for disciplinary action under the applicable student or employee conduct code in accordance with university policies and procedures. Such violations may also result in revocation or restriction of access to university systems.

5.2. University-Wide Communications

- 5.2.1. Only the University Registrar, President, or Provost, or their designee, may authorize a Mass Communication to all students at the university, and only the University Registrar may send a Mass Communication to all students at the university. Excluded from this requirement are Mass Communications sent by the Department of Public Safety for an Emergency Purpose, which may be sent at any time without prior authorization. For more information about university-wide communications, see Section 6.2 *Communicating with the Campus Community* policy.

5.3. Text Messaging

5.3.1. Text messaging, generally.

- a. A matriculated student who has provided mobile phone information consents to receive informational messages for all Official University Purposes. University protocols requiring Opt In are determined by contractual language, platform functionality, and details within a unit's electronic communication plan.
- a. Text messaging may be used for an Official University Purpose and is limited to:
 - i. Alerts sent for an Emergency Purpose.
 - ii. Time-sensitive alerts such as communications related to important deadlines, academic matters requiring urgent attention, or alerts from university offices on action needed by an individual student (*e.g.*, missing paperwork).
 - iii. Periodic inquiries about student well-being and support needed.
- b. Communications regarding events or other activities must be shared via non-texting methods (*e.g.*, Beaver Hub notifications, event calendars, and *OSU Today*).
- c. Text messaging must not be used as the sole means of communicating an essential message or announcement (*e.g.*, notification of a registration hold). For essential messages or announcements, the text message must be supplemented by some other means of communication (*e.g.*, an email or web-based notice) to ensure that all students receive the message.
- d. Text messages must meet the following criteria:
 - i. Comply with applicable laws, regulations, university procedures, and any consent agreement that applies to an Opt In statement agreed to by the student or applicant;
 - ii. Be included in the unit's communication plan that is approved by the University Registrar pursuant to Section 5.1.2;
 - iii. Not be sent to students who are marked "confidential" in the student information system;
 - iv. Be clear from the content of the text message that the sender is the university so that the recipients can immediately see its origin (*e.g.*, "OSU Alert" or "OSU Admissions");

- v. Contain no information classified as confidential pursuant to University Policy 08-015 *University Data Management, Classification, and Incident Response*;
- vi. Allow subscribers to Opt Out of receiving non-emergency messages at any time;
- vii. Communicate that standard data and text messaging rates may apply; and
- viii. Be sent via Beaver Hub unless the University Registrar has granted an exemption in the unit's or college's communication plan, in writing, pursuant to Section 5.1.2. Exemptions may be granted for one or both of the following reasons:
 - 1. The unit or college uses a system where the texting functionality is inextricably linked to data housed solely in that system (e.g., medical appointment reminders in the Student Health Services database).
 - 2. Compliance with the texting plan requires that text message content cannot be shared with other school officials.

5.3.2. Mobile telephone numbers:

- a. May be requested, but not required, on university forms and applications.
- b. Must be stored in official university systems or contractually approved tools.
- c. Are protected student data and only available to those who have a legitimate need to access the data pursuant to University Standard 01-120 *Student Records*.

5.3.3. Opting In and Opting Out.

- b. The university may send communications for an Emergency Purpose via automated text messages without Opt In or consent by the student.
- c. The Department of Public Safety may enroll students in the OSU Emergency Alerts or other emergency notification services, which may include text messaging, without Opt In or consent.
- d. All texting tools must include the ability for the student to Opt Out at any time. Instructions must be provided in the text message on how to do so.

5.4. Email Messaging

- 5.4.1. The university may send communications to students by email to their university-provided email address with the expectation that such emails will be read by the student in a timely manner. Students are expected to check their university email regularly to support effective communication between the university and the student.
- 5.4.2. Other university unit rules and guidelines apply to email sent to students, including the University Registrar's guidelines for release of email addresses, the Provost's policy on communicating with the campus community, the university's policy on the acceptable use of computing resources, and the University Information Technology unit rule on email security. See Section 6.2 for additional information and links to these documents.

5.5. Exceptions and Appeal

- 5.5.1. Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the University Registrar.
- 5.5.2. If a Mass Communication or text messaging plan is not approved, the requestor will be given other options for communicating with students. The decision of the University Registrar is final.

6. Related Policies, Procedures, or Information

- 6.1. Office of the Registrar, guidelines for release of email addresses: <https://registrar.oregonstate.edu/guidelines-release-email-addresses-0>.
- 6.2. Office of the Provost, *Communicating with the Campus Community* policy: https://leadership.oregonstate.edu/sites/leadership.oregonstate.edu/files/communicating_with_osu_10_19_2015.pdf
- 6.3. University policy on generation, maintenance, and release of student records: [01-120 Student Records](#).
- 6.4. University Policy [08-005 Acceptable Use of Computing Resources](#).
- 6.5. University Policy 08-015 [University Data Management, Classification, and Incident Response](#).
- 6.6. *UIT Email Security Rule* (available only with university credentials): <https://uit.oregonstate.edu/infosec/policies-rules>.

- 6.7. Federal Communications Commission, information about the Telephone Consumer Protection Act and actions on robocalls and telemarketing:
<https://www.fcc.gov/general/telemarketing-and-robocalls>.

History

Adopted: Oregon State University adopted University Policy 08-105 *Electronic Communication with Students* on June 30, 2023. Housekeeping amendments were made on August 23, 2023.

Revised: University Policy 08-105 *Electronic Communication with Students* was reviewed and revised on March 18, 2025. Housekeeping amendments were made on December 17, 2025.

Next scheduled review date: March 2030.

Contacts

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Available online at: <https://policy.oregonstate.edu/policy/electronic-communication-students>.