Policy Title: Official Student Communication and Acceptable Use of College Email

Purpose:
The College uses electronic communication as an official means of information delivery. This use is motivated by the convenience, speed, cost-effectiveness and environmental advantages of using email rather than printed communication. Because of this reliance on and acceptance of electronic communication, email is considered an official means for communication at the College.

Implementation of this policy ensures that students have access to this critical form of communication. It also ensures that students can access, and be accessed by, email as the need arises.

Definitions:
None

Policy:
College Use of Email
Email is an official means for communication at Minnesota State Community and Technical College. Therefore, the College has the right to send communications to students via the college email system and expects that students will read those communications in a timely fashion. The College retains the right to send official communication via traditional methods.

Assignment of Email Addresses
Information Technology Services (ITS) will assign students an official College email address. The College will send email communications to this official address. Confidentiality regarding student records is protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). Data sent via email is public information unless deemed private or confidential by Minnesota Statute, Chapter 13, Official email addresses are considered as “directory data” under FERPA and the College’s Student Directory Data Policy.

Redirecting Email
While students have the technical ability to electronically redirect their college email to a private email account (e.g., @yahoo.com, @gmail.com, etc.) redirection is at the student’s risk, and the college is not responsible for the privacy and security practices in handling email by outside vendors that are not college contractors. Students who elect to redirect their email remain responsible for the content of any information sent to their official college email address.

Student Expectations
Students are expected to check their email regularly and are responsible for all information sent to them via their College email address. Students must recognize that certain communications may be time-
sensitive, and they may be required to monitor email on a more frequent basis than determined by instructional needs.

**Educational Uses**
Faculty may determine how students will use email in their classes. Faculty may expect students to use their official College email address for instructional purposes.

**Appropriate Use**
In general, email is not appropriate for transmitting sensitive or confidential information unless its use for such purposes is matched by an appropriate level of security. All use of email, including use for sensitive or confidential information, will be consistent with FERPA.

All students using any of the College’s IT resources, including email, must adhere to the Acceptable Use of Computers and Information Technology Resources Policy and all other IT policies and procedures, as applicable. All students are responsible for all matters pertaining to their access privileges to College IT resources.

It is not permissible for any student email user to impersonate a College official, faculty/staff member or student.

**Mass and Unsolicited Email**
The College uses email as the primary means for communicating important information to students. Mass email messages are a useful and convenient way of informing the campus and college communities. However, their potential for unnecessarily consuming resources and cluttering campus inboxes require that senders of such messages adhere to some guidelines. As such, mass emails must be approved or sent by authorized users only. A mass emailing is an unsolicited email message sent to a group of otherwise unrelated campus email addresses. Sending a message to members of a club or a group of friends does not constitute a mass emailing. Sending messages to groups, committees, or divisions also does not constitute a mass emailing.

There are four basic types of college-wide and campus email distribution lists:

- All Faculty and All Staff, college-wide
- All Students
- All Faculty and All Staff at a particular campus
- All Students taking courses at a particular campus

Students and employees may maintain personal group lists, those lists should not be used to send unsolicited email that violates any of the College’s policies.

**Use of College-wide and Campus Email Distribution Lists**
College email is only for official college business. Use of College-wide and Campus-wide email distribution lists should be solely used for information important to all members of the college community.

- Email primarily of interest to a particular campus should use the individual Campus distribution list.
• Announcements of cafeteria menus, fitness center schedules, art shows, music performances, bookstore sales, etc. should not be sent to email distribution lists individually; it would be more appropriate to gather this information into a campus or student weekly newsletter to be sent out at the same time and/or post the information in a table tent, poster, campus monitor, or to a campus or College News and Events website/portal and link to it.

• Faculty, staff, and student Email distribution lists are not made available to outside organizations other than as specified by legal or policy requirements. Emails from such groups may be sent to an M State distribution list by an appropriate M State representative.

• Mass emails to students with information about new courses or programs should only be sent to student email lists with prior approval of the Vice President of Academic Affairs or designee and only once or twice a semester. The list should only provide a list of the new courses and programs with links to the appropriate Web site(s) for more information.

• Individual faculty can send information about new courses and programs to students enrolled in their classes as they deem appropriate without prior approval.

Access to College-Wide Email Distribution Lists
The following individuals have access to the use of College-wide Email distribution lists:

• College President
• Chief Officers (CAO, CSAO, CFO, CHRO, CIO and CDO)
• College Registrar
• Director of Strategic Communications and Marketing
• College-wide Deans
• Campus Student Development Service Directors
• Information Technology Staff
• Administrative Assistants to the President and Vice Presidents
• Campus Directors of Student Engagement (Please work with Student Services to keep messages to students at a minimum.)

Members of Presidents Cabinet may approve permanent or temporary access to a College-wide Email Distribution List for another faculty or staff. Giving temporary access for someone to use a College-wide email distribution list will allow email replies to go directly to that individual. Timeline for gaining this approval is expected to be completed within two weeks.

Access to an Individual Campus-Wide Email Distribution List
The Academic Dean(s) and Campus Student Development Services Directors can determine who may send communications via Campus faculty/staff and student Email distribution lists.

The following individuals will also have access to the Campus Email distribution lists:

• College President
• Chief Officers (CAO, CSAO, CFO, CHRO, CIO and CDO)
• College Registrar
• Director of Strategic Communications and Marketing
• College-wide Deans
Separate access can be granted for the Campus faculty/staff and student lists. The Academic Dean(s) and Campus Student Development Services Directors can request access changes or request temporary access for an individual at any time. Giving temporary access for someone to use a College-wide email distribution list will allow email replies to go directly to that individual. Timeline for gaining this approval is expected to be completed within two weeks.

**Sending Attachments to Students Through Distribution Lists**

For employees granted access to use the Student Distribution Lists, messages must be reviewed by the Director of Strategic Communications and Marketing or designee, for options and approval before being sent.

**Sanctions**

Willful or intentional violations of this policy are considered to be misconduct under applicable provisions of the Student Conduct Code. Students who violate this policy may be denied access to IT resources and may be subject to other penalties and disciplinary action both within and outside the College. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action that could result in student employment termination, suspension or expulsion from the College.

**Associated Policies:**

- M State Acceptable Use of Computers Policy
- M State Information Technology Resources Policy
- M State Student Directory Data Policy
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (MGDPA), Chapter 13 of Minnesota Statutes
- Minnesota State Board Policy 1.C.2-Fraudulent and Other Dishonest Acts

**Policy History:**

*Policy Owner:* Chief Information Officer  
*Policy Author:* Dan Knudson  
*Date of Adoption:* 8/4/2010  
*Date of Implementation:* 5/17/2017  
*Date and Subject of Revision:* 7.31.12 Format revision only; 5.17.17 policy content update; 2.07.17 policy content update

*Policy Group Assignment:* Technology

*Procedure Written:* Not Needed