

INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON

Mass Email Procedures and Restrictions

(By Action of the Bloomington Faculty Council: February 18, 2003)

RATIONALE:

Electronic mail (“email”) has become pervasive in most network-connected organizations, and Indiana University is no different. Email is provided by the University to facilitate the academic and administrative functions that support the University’s mission, and has become an important resource for academic and administrative communications. There are millions of email messages traversing the University network daily. Frequently, email is a cost-effective way for faculty, staff, and students to communicate with targeted groups of individuals concerning common academic or administrative activities. Electronic mailing lists or listservs are appropriate and necessary tools for communication among University interest groups, committees, classes, and service providers and their clients.

At the same time, email can be sent easily to large numbers of non-targeted recipients, and this can be a disadvantage. Most users within the University are receiving dozens of emails per day, and some are receiving hundreds per day. Many users have experienced a substantial increase in unsolicited mass email, i.e. unsolicited email directed at large numbers of recipients. Users increasingly complain that unsolicited mass email requires a significant amount of daily time to address and obscures or “buries” important messages that relate directly to their academic and administrative activities within the University, which in turn interferes with their ability to pursue those activities. Moreover, such unsolicited mass email can, and at times has, overloaded mail servers to the extent that institutional email services are degraded. Much unsolicited mass email comes to users from outside the University, and is addressed in a separate policy; however, mass email also is sent to members of the University community by University administrative offices, and unless certain limits are placed on administrative mass email, it can cause some of the same harms as external mass email. Accordingly, this policy and accompanying procedures set out rules that must be followed whenever a University administrative office desires to send a mass electronic mailing, as defined below.

A variety of means exist within the University for internal mass communication with faculty, staff, and students, including traditional paper mail distributed through the campus mail system, electronic and traditional bulletin boards, electronic newsgroups, and web sites. The creation and use of Web sites devoted to notifications of general interest, announcements of events, descriptions of general policies, or other at large distributions should continue to be the primary method of electronic communication to reach large groups within the University or campus community. The use of Web sites for these purposes takes advantage of electronic communications, while still maintaining the unencumbered benefits of interpersonal communication available via an electronic mail system. By keeping the focus of electronic mail on individuals and relatively small groups, the University can help ensure that internal, general purpose mass communications do not unduly interfere with or distract from the utility of email for performing the academic and administrative tasks associated with the University’s

mission of teaching and learning, research, and service. This sharpened focus will also help ensure that mass internal email is not used in a way that degrades the University's electronic mail operations.

POLICY:

A. Administrative mass electronic mail

1. *Administrative offices or officials* of the University may only send electronic mail to all members of a campus or the University community, when an *emergency or urgent need exists* . The *appropriate campus or University officer*, per the procedures below, will be responsible for determining whether or not an emergency or urgent need exists to warrant a requested mass electronic mailing.
2. *Routine, periodic, targeted electronic mailings* from an administrative office or official to any substantial portion of a campus or the University community, such as all students, all faculty, or all staff, must be approved in the first instance by the *appropriate campus or University officer*. Membership on distribution lists for these mailings can be automatic and mandatory only as long as mailings to the list directly relate to and facilitate the teaching and learning, research, or service missions of the campus or University, and are consistent with the stated purpose of the list (that is, are relevant to the vast majority of the list membership).
3. *Formal distribution lists* ("listservs") that exist to serve an administrative function must be moderated in order to limit mailings to the list to those appropriate to the academic or administrative function of the list. All such lists must be operated such that replies to messages sent to the listserv are directed only to the sender and not to the entire list membership.
4. If a mailing is to be sent to a list of specific addresses instead of a *formal distribution list*, those addresses must not be included on visible address lines (To and Cc).
5. The University President or his/her designee may make exceptions to this policy for requested mailings to the entire University community. Campus chancellors or their designees may make exceptions to this policy for requested mailings to an entire campus community. Such exceptions may only be made if, in the respective officer's judgment, the benefits of an administrative mailing with respect to immediacy of communication, universal distribution, and significance of content for the fulfillment of the University's mission, substantially outweigh the costs and burdens associated with permitting mass electronic mailings. It is anticipated that exceptions will be made only in exceptional circumstances.

B. Prohibition on use of mass email for commercial mailings

In no case shall mass email be approved or used for *commercial mailings*. The University's electronic mailing lists will not be distributed to third parties for commercial purposes.

C. Content of Mass Electronic Mailings

1. All mass electronic mailings will clearly identify the following:

To: Recipient (e.g., "Bloomington Campus Staff," or "Kokomo Campus")

From: Sender

Subject: Concise description

Sender Office

Valid Reply-To Address

Text

Where possible, the Reply-To Address should be an organizational, rather than a personal, address.

2. Mass electronic mailings shall be concise and to the point, and shall consist of a plain-text message without graphics or bolding, italics, or other formatting. Mass emails may include symbols such as "***" to highlight key information, and "hotlinks" to URLs in order to direct recipients to further information. Mass emails may not include file attachments.

3. Violations of this policy will be reported to the administrator to whom the person engaging in the violation reports, for appropriate response.

PROCEDURE REFERENCE:

Requests for approval of administrative mass email should be directed as follows:

- For mailings to the entire University community, to the President.
- For mailings to an entire campus community, to the campus chancellor.
- For mailings to the entire faculty within the University, to the Vice President for Academic Affairs
- For mailings to the entire faculty within a campus, to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for that campus
- For mailings to the entire student body within the University, to the Vice President for Academic Affairs
- For mailings to the entire student body of a campus, to the Dean of Students for that campus
- For mailings to the entire staff of the University, to the Assistant Vice President for University Human Resources
- For mailings to the entire staff, or a substantial subset thereof, within a campus, to the Director of Human Resources for that campus

Requests for exceptions to this Policy under the section above shall be submitted to the University IT Policy Office, within the Office of the Vice-President of Information Technology. The IT Policy Office will forward the request, along with its advice or recommendation regarding any technological concerns regarding the proposed mass email, to the appropriate University officers as specified above.

In approving a mass email, the appropriate campus or University officers shall consider whether coordination or consultation with campus or University public affairs and communications offices is prudent or desired, to ensure that the mailing is in concert with other communications on the topic that may be planned by those offices or other University entities.

Campus administrators should coordinate with their campus computing centers (University Information Technology Services for the Bloomington and Indianapolis campuses) for mailings to the entire campus community. Alternatively, campus administrators may contact University Information Technology Services for assistance in sending campus-wide or University-wide emails and creating electronic mailing lists for that purpose.

Officers and offices designated by this Policy as having authority to review and approve mass mailings are expected to maintain updated addresses for the recipients of such mailings, and to provide such lists to campus computing centers or UITS when seeking their assistance in sending mass mailings.

All recipients of an administrative mass email must have valid University email addresses.

Any requests for assistance in accomplishing mass mailings (along with appropriate approvals) from UITS should be sent to email-admin@iu.edu.

Persons responsible for creating, maintaining and moderating distribution lists should consult the Knowledge Base for information and guidance.

DEFINITIONS:

Administrative offices or officials – Any offices or employees of the University who communicate with faculty, students, or staff in an official capacity representing an administrative or academic unit, such as a department, office, division, school, campus, or program.

Appropriate campus or University officers – the officers listed in the Procedure Reference section who have the authority to review and approve mass electronic mailings for their respective constituencies.

Emergency or urgent need – circumstances under which the appropriate campus or University officer reasonably believes that notification of the campus, the University community, or a substantial subset of either, over the space of several hours, will reduce the risk of personal harm, property damage, or severe negative impact on University operations.

Routine, periodic, targeted electronic mailings – mailings that periodically announce or address for relevant constituents the ongoing academic or administrative activities of a unit, campus, or the University as a whole. Examples of such mailings would be those containing news and announcements collected and sent on a regular basis, in lieu of distinct separate mailings, such as the Monitor; notification from the Office of the Registrar of the availability of final grade information sent to all students; information concerning residence halls operations during vacation periods sent by RPS to international students; and reminders concerning financial aid deadlines sent to relevant student populations by the Office of Student Financial Assistance

Formal distribution lists – those defined and maintained in software designed for that purpose, such as Majordomo and Listserv.

Commercial mailings –mailings promoting the products or services of a person or entity other than the University or its approved contractors and affiliates.

Mass electronic mailing or mass email —electronic mail that is, or is requested to be, sent to all members of a campus or the University as a whole.