

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY POLICY MANUAL – POLICY # ITS - 104

1.0 Revision History

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For the majority of the student population, this NAU Student E-mail Policy does not represent a change from current practice. However, the policy does ensure that all students have access to this important form of communication. Furthermore, it ensures that students receive important and timely University information from faculty and staff through a standardized communication channel.

This policy proposal originated with the implementation of the PeopleSoft Student Administration System which began in January 2001 with the final records conversion taking place from March-August 2003. The original proposal, **NAU Official E-mail Usage Policy** was submitted to the SOLAR Steering Committee in June, 2002 and was approved by the President's Cabinet on July 2, 2002. At the time it was intended that the policy would make E-mail "the" official form of communication from the University to students. Included in the original proposal was a statement allowing students to elect to inform the University of their desire to receive official communications through a method other than E-mail. However, a practical application of the policy statement to allow students to opt out of this form of communication was never implemented. In addition, since the original proposal was approved, new and serious issues have been identified related to the proliferation of software viruses, network security, e-mail "storms," and the overuse of campus listservs that have also impacted the actual implementation of this policy related to the question of what constitutes an "official" university communication.

It is the intent of this revised policy proposal to both restate the intent of the policy as well as provide guidelines for the implementation of a method to allow students the option of receiving official communications in alternate ways.

2.0 Purpose (problem statement, philosophy)

As technologies become more sophisticated and accessible, Northern Arizona University believes that it is important to provide services using the most efficient means possible for its students and employees. Toward that end, E-mail is considered an official method for communication at Northern Arizona University (NAU) for its students and employees because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost effective, and environmentally aware manner. E-mail communication represents a method to provide a centralized communication management point for multiple locations around the state. To provide the same communication service without a centralized mail processing area (using regular mail) would present many unique logistical problems including mail printing, inventory control of mail materials, increased mail costs due to small volume mailings, and the processing of returned mail in a consistent manner. Not only is e-mail a more efficient and effective communication medium, it also represents a more student and employee friendly service as it provides more immediate response time.

3.0 Persons Affected

This policy affects all NAU students and persons admitted to NAU but not yet enrolled, and all NAU employees.

4.0 Policy

University Use of E-mail

The use of e-mail is to be considered an official method for the communication of NAU business related information for students and employees. The University may send communications to students and employees via e-mail. Students and employees are responsible for the consequences of not reading in a timely fashion University-related communications sent to their official NAU e-mail account. Students and employees are expected to check their NAU official e-mail on a frequent and consistent basis in order to remain informed of University-related communications.

Faculty Expectations and Educational Uses of E-mail and Class Listservs

Faculty can require students to check their e-mail on a specific and regular schedule. Faculty may also require students to confirm their subscription to University-provided class listservs. Messages sent to University-provided aliases of official NAU student e-mail addresses are also considered official communication. For example, messages sent to University-provided class listservs are considered REQUIRED communications for all students enrolled in the class designated by the class listserv address. Students may not choose to opt-out of faculty prescribed or class related e-mail communications or listservs.

Appropriate Use of Student E-mail

In general, e-mail is not appropriate for transmitting sensitive or confidential information unless an appropriate level of permission is secured or the e-mail message simply points to a secure website where sensitive information can be retrieved securely.

All use of e-mail will be consistent with other University policies, including the NAU Network Acceptable Use Policy for Students (http://www.nau.edu/policy/student_pol.html).

All use of e-mail will be consistent with local, state, and federal law, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

Communications sent to a student's official NAU e-mail address may include notification of University-related actions, including disciplinary action; however, e-mail shall not be the sole method for notification of any legal action.

5.0 Definitions

NAU OFFICIAL E-MAIL ACCOUNT: An NAU official e-mail account is an e-mail account on an e-mail server registered with NAU's Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) server. Examples at the time of this document include jan.ucc.nau.edu, dana.ucc.nau.edu, mailbox.nau.edu, bus.cba.nau.edu, and cet.nau.edu.

OFFICIAL NAU COMMUNICATION: Contains information students (and employees) must have in order to conduct business with NAU and for which they will be held accountable. Examples include information on fees, enrollment processes, deadlines, financial aid and posting of grades. When communicating "official" information, administrative departments, including the Bursar, Registrar, Financial Aid, and Distance Learning, are required to be aware of the students who have identified themselves as unable to depend on e-mail as their sole source of information and serve this population with alternate forms of communication. Please refer to section 6.0, Procedures, for further information on official NAU Communications and how to serve students who have requested official correspondence via mail.

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It is understood that choosing the option to receive hardcopy, mailed notices will result in a delay in receipt of the notices depending on mail delivery time.

It is understood that when the timing of any given message does not allow for USPS mail delivery, then e-mail may be the only official notice sent. It is recommended that departments also consider the practical use of other means to communicate this information, ex: a phone call.

Even when communications might not be considered "official," departments are encouraged to use alternate forms of communication to reach students who have requested official correspondence via hardcopy mail. Choosing this method should not mean that students miss important but non-official pieces of information.

6.0 Procedures

E-mail Accounts Creation

All students taking classes at NAU and all benefit eligible employees are given an official NAU e-mail account. Students must activate their account within one week of the beginning of the term when they enroll. Employees must do so within one week of the first day of employment. This e-mail address is the official e-mail address to which the University will send e-mail communications.

Redirecting E-mail

Students may elect to redirect (auto forward) e-mail messages sent to their NAU official student e-mail address. Students who redirect e-mail from their official address to another address (such as AOL, Yahoo, or Hotmail) do so at their own risk. Having e-mail lost as a result of redirection does not absolve a student from the responsibilities associated with communication sent to his or her official e-mail address. The University is not responsible for the handling of e-mail by outside vendors or unofficial servers.

Requesting Official Correspondence via U.S. Postal Service Mail

A student shall have the ability to also obtain official correspondence via USPS delivered mail. The student shall notify the University of this desire. Employees will not have the option to have official correspondence sent by USPS mail. Students who notify the University of their desire to receive official correspondence via USPS delivered mail will be placed in a defined “student group” system category so that the Bursar, Registrar, Financial Aid, and Distance Learning can identify them and accommodate their desire when sending official correspondence. Students may be added or removed from the “student group” via a self service application within the student administration system or by notifying an appropriate administrative office who will perform this task for the student. Flagstaff students requiring assistance should contact the Office of the Registrar. Distance Learning students should contact the Distance Learning Services Office or one of the Distance Learning Statewide Site Offices. As stated in section 5.0, Definitions, it is the responsibility of administrative departments, including the Bursar, Registrar, Financial Aid, and Distance Learning to be aware of those who have identified themselves as unable to depend on e-mail as their sole source of information and to serve this population with alternate forms of communication, such as hard copy USPS delivered mail, when it is practical to do so. In addition to the up front use of the “student group” as a means of identifying students wishing to receive official communications via USPS delivered mail, other methods are also possible. Any department wishing to explore other options should contact Information Technology Services.

As stated in Section 4.0 Policy- Faculty Expectations and Educational Uses of E-mail and Class Listservs, students may not choose to opt-out of faculty prescribed or class related e-mail communications or listservs.