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NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY



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Electronic Mail (E-Mail) Policy

Supersedes Policy Dated: New Policy

Approved: by the NCCU Board of Trustees on February 15, 2006

Purpose of Policy:

This policy provides guidelines for the responsible and appropriate use of the North Carolina Central University's electronic mail (e-mail) and communication resources and services. This document will also insure and inform the University community about the applicability of policies and laws to electronic mail and that e-mail services are used in compliance with those policies and laws. The policy applies to all electronic mail system and services provided or owned by NCCU and all users and use of the University electronic mail system.

Policy:

- A. E-mail is an approved medium for communicating with students, faculty, staff and the outside campus community designed to support the teaching, learning, instructional, research, administrative services, and other activities of North Carolina Central University (NCCU) and is intended to be used in useful and productive ways. Individuals using these resources are expected to do so wisely and carefully, with respect and consideration of the rights, needs and privacy of others. The official e-mail address for students at NCCU is username@mail.nccu.edu and username@nccu.edu for faculty and staff. The University when communicating with Faculty, Staff and Students via electronic mail will only do so using the official NCCU e-mail address.
- B. Users are prohibited from engaging in activities involving e-mail that violate or cause harm to resources and to other users. Among the activities prohibited under this policy are:
 - ** Sending frivolous or excessive messages, including junk mail, "spamming", "chain letters", and other types of unsolicited messages.
 - ** Sending unauthorized broadcast or mass email messages ; Interfering with the normal operation and availability of electronic communication systems and services such as e-mail.

Users should contact the Eagle Technical Assistance Center (Help Desk) for information concerning methods of protecting themselves from e-mail abuse. In many cases, users should contact the originator of actions and messages which they believe inappropriate to express their concerns and to request that the unsolicited and unwelcome actions are stopped. This is especially useful for e-mail messages and similar activities for which there may ultimately be no intended harm. If the user is unsuccessful in having such activities discontinued, and in more serious cases where activities are observed that are believed to be illegal, in violation of University policies, or that will result in harm or damage to users, data, or computing and communication systems, those activities should be reported following the procedure outlined in Addressing Concerns below.

- D. Electronic mail is simply a method of communicating information and does not constitute a public record in and of itself. However, the information transmitted through the use of e-mail may become a public record if it meets the definition of N.C. Gen. Statute. § 132-1; i.e., if it is information made or received in the transaction of public business by a state agency. If information transmitted by e-mail meets the definition of "public record," then it may not be deleted or otherwise disposed of except in accordance with a record retention schedule approved by the State Division of Archives and History. The content of the E-Mail message determines the retention requirement. The individual to whom the message is addressed becomes the legal "custodian" once the message is received and is the person responsible for ensuring compliance with the Public Records Act. Although most agencies also periodically back up information residing on system hard drives, this is not done for archival purposes or in order to meet the requirements of the Public Records Act, but as a safety measure in case of system failure or unlawful tampering ("hacking"). Information Technology Services is not the legal custodian of messages which may be included in such back up files.
- E. Email messages generally fall into two categories. First, some e-mail is of limited or transitory value. For example, a message seeking dates for a proposed meeting has little or no value after the meeting date has been set. Retention of such messages in the computer system serves no purpose and takes up space. Such messages may be deleted as soon as they no longer serve an administrative purpose. Second, e-mail is sometimes used to transmit records having lasting value. For example e-mail about interpretations of an agency's policies or regulations may be the only record of that subject matter. Such records should not be maintained in e-mail format, but should be transferred to another medium and appropriately filed, thus permitting e-mail records to be purged at regular intervals. While the methods for reviewing, storing or deleting e-mail vary, compliance with the retention requirements of the Public Records Act may be accomplished by doing one of the following: Print the E-Mail and store the hard copy in the relevant subject matter file as would be done with any other hard-copy communication. Printing the E-Mail permits maintenance of all the information on a particular subject matter in one central location, enhancing its historical and archival value. Electronically store the e-mail in a file, a disk, or a server, so that it may be maintained and stored according to its content definition under the unit's records retention policy.

Guidelines:***Addressing Concerns***

The University reserves the right to place restrictions on the use of its electronic resources in response to complaints that present evidence of violations of university policies, rules, regulations or codes, or local, state or federal laws and regulations. Actions that violate these policies can result in immediate disabling, suspension, and/or revocation of the account owner's privileges pending review for further action. Such unauthorized or illegitimate use of electronic resources including computer accounts, resources or facilities may subject the violators to appropriate disciplinary, criminal and/or legal action by the University and/or the State. If evidence is established, the university authorities responsible for overseeing these policies and codes will be consulted on the appropriateness of specific actions.

Individuals who have concerns about the conduct of a member of the university community or the propriety of a given situation or activity should notify their department chair, dean, director, or an administrator in their supervisory chain at a level sufficient to allow objectivity in evaluating the subject of concern. If action is deemed warranted by this official, the matter shall be referred to the appropriate Vice Chancellor or Senior Officer. Prior to taking action, the Vice Chancellor or Senior Officer responsible for the situation or activity at issue shall consult with the Chief Information Officer for NCCU, who shall, as appropriate, consult with University Counsel. The responsible official shall then respond to University community members who express concerns about such activities or incidents, and shall inform the Chancellor regarding their response.

When concern about a given situation or activity involves an imminent threat to individuals, systems, or facilities, users should immediately communicate the concern directly to the Chief Information Officer for Information Technology Systems and to Campus Police.

Violations:

Disciplinary action will be taken against individuals violating this policy in the course of university-related activities, under the applicable disciplinary procedures appropriate to students, staff, or faculty as the case may be. The possible disciplinary actions for violation of the policy, such as termination of employment or student status, will depend on the facts and circumstances of each case and is likely to include restitution to the ITS or NCCU. In addition, individuals may be denied access to e-mail or related services.