



AU Policy: Electronic Mass Communication Policy

Subject: Managing the distribution of electronic communications to large groups of AU users.

Office Responsible for Annual Review of This Policy: University Communications and Marketing (UCM)

Procedures: OIT Mail Group Procedures, Creating a ListServ, Deleting a ListServ, Adding a ListServ name to the aliases file in UNIX, Mass Mailing using e-Ops Mail Agent DB

Related University Policies: Information Technology Security Policies, Computer Use and Copyright

I. SCOPE

This policy governs the distribution of unsolicited electronic communications to large (>25) recipient populations within the American University (AU) user community. This does not apply to management communications intended for an entire department or unit. Neither does this policy apply to emergency situations and initial communications by first responders, when timely notice to avoid danger outweighs the benefits of wider review and approval of messages.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

AU offers Web services, newsgroups, mailing groups, and electronic mailing list services to all academic and administrative departments, schools and colleges, registered student organizations, and other recognized university groups to facilitate electronic communications among large groups of networked computer users.

The purpose of this policy is to establish coordination and approval for the distribution of unsolicited mass electronic communications.

III. DEFINITIONS

Approver: A cabinet official, dean, or designee who has oversight responsibility for the individual or function either distributing a mass electronic communications or requesting that a mass communications be distributed.

E-mail Group: An e-mail address established for a group of users. Mailing groups are created by either a single user or through a periodic update in time extraction from the data warehouse.

List Service: A centrally managed e-mail distribution service that has an owner and subscribers. The subscribers voluntarily subscribe and unsubscribe to messages that come from the service. These services are generally set up for recurring communications to a relatively static group of users established for a consistent topic.

Mass communications: Electronic communications intended for, and addressed to, a large set of recipients within the AU community. These communications could include: e-mail, text message, Web message, or voicemail.

Message types: Electronic communications may be classified as emergency, important but not urgent, news/informational, or specific to a service.

IV. POLICY

The Office of Information Technology (OIT) provides the central e-mail directory with many e-mail groups for the purpose of sending electronic announcements to large sections of the AU community. As these preconfigured e-mail groups are electronic resources, each list must have a steward established with OIT for managing the configuration.

Such e-mail groups target segments and aggregations of the university by status (undergraduate, graduate student, faculty, and staff) or by location (building, campus, and residential students). For example, undergraduate students may be targeted by level (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior).

Use of these email groups for mass electronic communications (e-mail and other) by any group, unit, or individual requires appropriate approval, typically a cabinet official or designee, and will use the appropriate communication tool, as indicated by the type of audience and message. Approval ensures that both format and content are appropriate for mass distribution.

Users should not attempt to send out unapproved mass electronic communications from their own email account. Such mailings are a violation of American University's Computer Use and Copyright Policy (see <http://www.american.edu/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&pageid=2609353>) and the IT Security Policies (see <http://www.american.edu/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&pageid=2452111> Section 5.2.4);

To reduce the frequency and increase the effectiveness of emails sent to the entire AU community, UCM will be responsible for streamlining effective and efficient communications through a series of shared and coordinated communications tools, such as Today@AU. Outside of these shared community tools, mass communications (primarily broadcast email) may be distributed on behalf of departments, units, or individuals by UCM or OIT, upon request and with appropriate approval.

V. STANDARDS

A. Message Format Standards

Mass email communications should include the following

- ❖ *Reply to:* All mass e-mail messages must include a “reply to” account as part of the message so that the recipients will know to whom to direct questions in response to the message.
- ❖ *Recipient List:* All mass e-mail messages mask the recipient list, so that unintended use of the “reply to all” feature within most e-mail programs will not be possible.
- ❖ *Address Line:* All mass e-mail messages should include an address line at the top of the body of the message clearly depicting the target audience.

Mass email communications should not include attachments or embedded images larger than 2 MB.

Other forms of mass electronic communications should include the following

- ❖ *Distributor:* All mass electronic messages must include sender as part of the message so that the recipients will know to whom to direct questions in response to the message.

VI. EFFECTIVE DATE AND APPROVAL

This policy is effective December 14, 2009.

Reviewed August 2016.