



## Broadcast Mass Mail

**Policy Type:** Administrative

**Responsible Office:** Division of University Relations

**Initial Policy Approved:** 09/05/2009

**Current Revision Approved:** 05/29/2018

### Policy Statement and Purpose

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Virginia Commonwealth University is committed to keeping the university community informed regarding significant issues and opportunities both efficiently and effectively through VCU email. Each employee and student of the university is provided a VCU email account and is expected to monitor it regularly.

This policy describes the requirements for distributing information to all members of a VCU audience group via VCU email. The purpose of the policy is to identify individuals authorized to send and receive such emails as well as the appropriate content of messages in order to ensure that mass emails are kept to a minimum and are timely, relevant, coordinated and properly vetted for content and quality.

Noncompliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. VCU supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation is prohibited.

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## Who Should Know This Policy

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All employees (includes faculty) and students of Virginia Commonwealth University are responsible for knowing this policy and familiarizing themselves with its contents and provisions.

## Definitions

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### **Audience Groups**

Include all faculty, all staff, all students or substantial segments thereof.

### **Broadcast Mass Mail or Mass Mail**

An email sent to all or substantial segments of faculty, staff, or students through university email systems by a designated or authorized sender.

### **Designated or Authorized Senders**

The only individuals authorized to send broadcast mass mail to audience groups.

### **Member of the University**

An individual employee of VCU or a specific division, unit or subunit of the university.

### **Other Means (Third-party email tools)**

Includes commercial email marketing tools such as iContact, Constant Contact, etc.

### **VCU Email Address**

Email addresses that end with @vcu.edu, @mymail.vcu.edu and @vcuhealth.org

## Contacts

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The Division of University Relations officially interprets this policy. The Division of University Relations is responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions as required by the policy *Creating and Maintaining Policies and Procedures* through the appropriate governance structures. Please direct policy questions to the Division of University Relations.

## Policy Specifics and Procedures

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- I. Designated or Authorized Senders
  - a. Only the president, provost and vice president for academic affairs, vice president for health sciences and CEO of VCU Health, and the VCU Police Chief (or VCU Police Chief designee) (collectively referred to as “authorized senders of mass mails”) are authorized senders of mass mails to audience groups. All others must be approved by the vice president for University Relations (or vice president for University Relation’s designee). Requests for mass mail approval should be sent to [massmail@vcu.edu](mailto:massmail@vcu.edu). A response will be

provided as soon as practicable (generally within two business days).

II. Audience Groups

- a. Authorized senders of mass mails are permitted to define at their discretion the segments of university audience groups to whom mass mail is to be sent.
  - i. University audience groups may be further narrowed (e.g., students may be segmented by year or campus; faculty may be divided between full time faculty and adjunct faculty; etc.). Messages must be consistent with VCU's nondiscrimination policy.

III. Criteria for Mass Mail Content and Subject Lines

- a. Mass mail use must be limited and restricted to announcing news and other important information that is pertinent to audience groups and that is based on at least one of the following:
  - i. Is urgent. (Urgent messages would be those that require immediate action and/or pertain to safety, health, or crisis situations);
  - ii. Is required by law or regulation;
  - iii. Affects all members of a defined university audience group; and/or
  - iv. Is not reasonably able to be delivered by any other means.
- b. Subject lines for mass mails must be brief and must include a prefix that describes the intended purpose of the email. For example:
  - i. Urgent
  - ii. Action Required by
  - iii. Announcement

IV. Use of Other Means/Third-Party Email Tools to Send Mass Mails

- a. Individuals and divisions, units and subunits within the university are not permitted to use other means or processes for sending emails to defined university audience groups or substantial segments of defined university audience groups via VCU email and are urged to use VCU TelegRAM to disseminate information or other university applications as they become available. This does not include sending emails to anyone outside the university community, nor does it include members of audience groups who choose to join mailing lists of university divisions, units or subunits.
- b. Divisions, units or subunits of the university are permitted to send emails only to the employees and/or students of that division, unit, or subunit.

- V. Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the vice president of university relations. Requests for exceptions must be submitted to [massmail@vcu.edu](mailto:massmail@vcu.edu). A response will be provided as soon as practicable (generally within two business days).

**Forms** \_\_\_\_\_

TelegRam Request Form: <https://telegram.vcu.edu/requests>

## Related Documents

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VCU Policy: [Computer and Network Resources Use](#)

VCU Policy: [Information Security](#)

[Student Email Standard](#)

Development and Alumni Relations local policy: [Policy on external DAR-related communications](#)

VCU Notice: [VCU notice of nondiscrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative action](#)

## Revision History

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This policy supersedes the following archived policies:

Approval/Revision Date	Title
Initial Approval: 09/05/2009	<i>Broadcast or Mass Mail Policy</i>
11/01/2017	<i>Broadcast Mass Mail - Interim</i>

## FAQ

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### **Q: Why do we have/need this policy?**

A: This policy is designed to limit the number of mass mails members of the university receive. Polling and feedback from university faculty, staff and students suggests too many emails are sent on behalf of university entities. The policy is meant to ensure that email “fatigue” is diminished and email effectiveness is increased.

### **Q: Can external third-party products (such as Constant Contact or MailChimp) be used to send mass mails to defined audience groups (i.e., all faculty, all staff, etc) at the university?**

A: No. Although (subject to any applicable university policy) third party tools may be used by university divisions, units and subunits to send emails, those tools cannot be used to avoid this policy. The exception to that rule is if members of the university community voluntarily add themselves (opt in) to an email list.

### **Q. May I use an external third-party product (such as Constant Contact or MailChimp) to send emails to employees and/or students within my division, unit or school only?**

A. Yes, if authorized by the division, unit or school leadership. Importantly, email communications must comply with Virginia law by not disclosing student email addresses to other recipients or by obtaining required student consent for the disclosure. For details visit [go.vcu.edu/hb1](http://go.vcu.edu/hb1).

### **Q: Can emails be sent to the employees/students of a university division, unit, or school without the permission of University Relations?**

A: Yes, individual divisions, units or schools may continue to send emails to their own employees and students at their own discretion with existing mechanisms.

**Q: If employees and students are not receiving mass emails, how will they stay informed?**

A: VCU TelegRam is a daily mass mail from the university that contains announcements and events of interest to the majority of faculty, staff and students. In exceptional or emergency circumstances individual emails with a single topic may be sent, but the intent is that only one email a day will be sent from a VCU entity to all faculty, staff or students. VCU TelegRam at <http://telegram.vcu.edu/>

**Q: Who decides what gets sent out?**

A: University Relations will strive to include as much content as possible for mass mails. Although you should route your request through your unit or division for approval, ultimately University Relations has discretion as to what can and will be sent in a mass mail.

**Q: How can one request an exception to this policy?**

A: Requests for exceptions must be submitted by email to [massmail@vcu.edu](mailto:massmail@vcu.edu). Included in the email should be the purpose of the requested email, the proposed date of the email, the intended audience, and a brief explanation of the need for an exception to this policy. A response will be provided as soon as practicable (generally within two business days). If the exception is not granted, University Relations will advise of alternative methods of dissemination.

**Q: Will the university provide support in identifying alternative methods for disseminating information university wide that was previously sent via email (prior to this policy)?**

A: Yes. The primary method for university wide distribution is the VCU TelegRam (<http://telegram.vcu.edu/>). Additional guidance is available as needed. Contact information is on the University Relations website at <https://univrelations.vcu.edu/>

**Additional guidance on this policy is online at [NEW URL to come]**