Bulk Email Policy

Objective and Introduction

The policy defines appropriate use of bulk e-mail as a means of communication with students and other groups. This policy attempts to ensure that the correct information is sent to the proper target audience in a manner that is acceptable to that audience. The policy applies to personnel working in the following Franklin College offices: Academic Advising, Graduation Certification, University Studies, Budget, External Affairs, Public Information, Information Technology, Franklin Residential College and the Dean's Office. Other Franklin College units may choose to adopt this policy as best practice.

Policy

I. What is Bulk E-mail?

An e-mail message with identical content or purpose sent to 20 or more recipients.

Approval

A unit must receive the approval of the unit manager prior to sending bulk e-mail. The unit manager must also consult the Franklin College Office of Information Technology (OIT) prior to sending out bulk e-mail so that a proper time may be coordinated. OIT will not deliver bulk e-mail during peak productivity hours; doing so could strain our server and network resources and jeopardize the productivity of our clients. Bulk e-mails sent to 100 or more individual e-mail addresses must be sent through OIT. E-mails with less than 100 recipients may also be sent via OIT, but this is not required.

II. Guidelines on Bulk E-mail

Request Timeliness

Bulk e-mails should be submitted to OIT with the following information attached or enclosed at least 48 hours prior to the date of delivery:

- A comma-separated list of the recipients
- The preferred delivery date
- The subject of the bulk e-mail
- The reply-to address (to accept replies and invalid e-mail address 'bounce-backs')
- The body of the e-mail message (Note: e-mails will be sent out in text-only format; special formatting such as colors, font changes, bold, italic and underline will NOT be sent.)

Franklin OIT will strive to send out authorized bulk e-mails within two business days after their submission. A test e-mail will be sent to the requesting person to obtain a final approval of the bulk e-mail. Upon approval, the e-mail will be sent out immediately (pending server status). The reply-to address will be sent a copy of the final e-mail along with a 'receipt' outlining the services performed by OIT.

Frequency

Many entities will communicate with faculty, staff and students via e-mail. In an effort to keep messages at reasonable levels, no unit should send bulk e-mail to the same audience more than once per week. (Critical messages are excluded from this limit e.g. location change for the Regent's Exam.) When possible, messages should be combined to reduce frequency.

Reply-To Address

The University's Policy on Use of Computers states: "You must not falsify your name, address, e-mail address, or affiliation when sending e-mail or other messages from a University computer. Doing so can be illegal (Ga. Code 16-9-93.1 and other laws against misrepresentation) as well as being an unacceptable use of the University's facilities." To comply with the University's policy, each bulk e-mail message must include a valid franklin.uga.edu Reply-To address. To prevent the possibility of spamming, the sender's address will be masked with an e-mail alias that will forward to the actual address. This forwarding will last for a period of one week after the e-mail is sent. The alias will take the form of 'mass_email@franklin.uga.edu'. In the event of multiple e-mails at the same period of time, the alias will be incremented by the respective number (mass_email@franklin.uga.edu).

Logging

All bulk e-mail must be logged. Minimally the log will include the date the message was sent as well as the recipients and the content. The message log must be retained for a minimum of 6 months. If a recipient complains about receiving the message, the log will be used to determine if the message was appropriate or inappropriate. Contact OIT for the logging e-mail address to include in the blind carbon-copy (Bcc:) address field. This is to prevent the publishing of the address to all recipients of the bulk e-mail.

Length

Bulk e-mails should not exceed two printed pages, one printed page or less is preferred. If content is longer than two pages, the sender should use e-mail to summarize the content and send recipients to the web for additional information.

Subject

The subject line of the e-mail message should identify the sender, individual or group, and summarize the content in a few words.

Ex: Franklin OIT: New Accounts
Ex: Franklin College Advisors: Your appointment
Ex: Franklin Grad Office: Notice about graduation
Content
Messages related to university business such as degree programs, graduation requirements, course announcements, changes in University/College/School/Unit policies or procedures, etc. are valid. All messages must also comply with the guidelines set forth in the university’s Policies on Use of Computers. The full policy is published at http://www.uga.edu/compsec/use.html. OIT is not responsible for grammatical, spelling, or other errors within the document. All messages sent by Franklin OIT must be on the behalf of an employee or group within the Franklin College Dean’s Office. E-mails will not be sent on the behalf of groups or departments outside of the Dean’s Office. Acceptable e-mails may come from Budget, OIT, External Affairs, GCO, Advising, Marine Institute at Sapelo Island and other groups if they are determined to be under the Dean’s Office. For e-mails that do not conform to this set of criteria or contain information about social events and meeting reminders, a subscription-based listserv is a more appropriate form of contact. To create a listserv, visit listserv.uga.edu, call the EITS helpdesk at 542-3106, or contact the EITS helpdesk by e-mail at helpdesk@uga.edu.

To ensure a high level of network performance and reach the largest possible target audience, attachments will not be sent with bulk e-mails. If content cannot be summarized within the bulk e-mail itself, the attachment will be posted to a location on the Franklin web site and a link will be included within the message. To support the largest possible audience, the attachment will be converted to a widely-accessible format such as Adobe Acrobat (PDF). This method will allow recipients to download the attachment at a time of their choosing. The specific link to the file will be present in the draft of the bulk e-mail which requires approval prior to the final distribution. The file will remain on the Franklin web server for a period of one month after the bulk e-mail is sent; permanent or semi-permanent content should be integrated into the existing Franklin web site.

Guiding Principle
Benefit should be the guiding principle when utilizing bulk e-mail. If the recipient is not the primary beneficiary of the message, the message is not valid.

What is spam?
Bulk e-mail and spam can be synonymous. The definition below reiterates the guiding principle of preventing the transmission of unwanted e-mail.
From Mail Abuse Prevention System, L.L.C
‘An electronic message is “spam” IF: (1) the recipient’s personal identity and context are irrelevant because the message is equally applicable to many other potential recipients; AND (2) the recipient has not verifiably granted deliberate, explicit, and still-revocable permission for it to be sent; AND (3) the transmission and reception of the message appears to the recipient to give a disproportionate benefit to the sender.’
Again, benefit is the guiding principle of preventing spam and unwanted e-mail. The recipient, not the sender, should benefit from the message.

Miscellaneous Guidelines
Messages for personal or unit benefit (house for rent, puppies for sale, etc.) should not be sent as bulk e-mail. The uga-forsale listserv is probably the best choice for selling, renting or giving away personal property. This kind of message may be sent to a listserv if the listserv was created for this purpose. Avoid the practice of forwarding messages from listserv to listserv e.g. don’t forward a message sent to admin-memos to ugastaff. Faculty and staff who are interested in the announcements that appear in these listservs are able to subscribe. Critical messages are already sent to the archnewsfacstaff or archnewsstudent listservs.

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