

Sam Houston State University
A Member of The Texas State University System
Information Technology Services (IT@Sam)

Electronic Communication Policy: IT-20

PURPOSE:

Electronic communication is the transfer of text, html, images, or data through a computer, cell phone, tablet, PDA or any other communication device. This includes E-mail, instant messaging, texting, web pages, blogs and forums.

SHSU electronic communication services support the educational and administrative activities of the University and serve as a means of official communication by and between users and SHSU. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that these critical services remain available and reliable, and are used for purposes appropriate to the University's mission.

This policy is established to establish prudent and acceptable practices regarding the use of electronic communication; and to educate individuals using electronic communication with respect to their responsibilities associated with such use.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all members of the SHSU community who are entitled to electronic communications for the purpose of sending, receiving, or storing of electronic messages.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Under the provisions of the Information Resources Management Act (Texas Government Code, Title 10, Subtitle B, chapter 2054), information technology resources are strategic assets of the State of Texas that must be managed as valuable state resources.

SHSU provides electronic communication services to faculty, staff and students, and to other affiliated classes of individuals, including alumni and official visitors. Use of SHSU electronic communication services must be consistent with SHSU's educational goals and comply with local, state and federal laws and university policies.

Communications via SHSU electronic systems are the property of SHSU, and management maintains the right to access when necessary. All user activity on SHSU information technology resource assets is subject to logging, review and open records.

All electronic communication activities must comply with the SHSU Acceptable Use Policy (IT-03).

The following activities are prohibited as specified by Texas Department of Information Resources in response to TAC §202 requirements:

- Sending electronic communication that is intimidating or harassing.
- Using electronic communication to transmit or receive material that may be offensive, indecent, or obscene.
- Using electronic communication for conducting personal business.
- Using electronic communication for purposes of political lobbying or campaigning.
- Violating copyright laws by inappropriately distributing protected works.
- Posing as anyone other than oneself when sending electronic communication, except when authorized to send messages for another when serving in an administrative support role.
- Sending or forwarding chain letters.
- Sending unsolicited messages to large groups except as required to conduct university business.
- Sending messages with excessively large attachments.
- Sending or forwarding electronic communication that is likely to contain computer viruses.
- All sensitive SHSU material or email containing sensitive data transmitted over external network must be secured during transmission.
- Electronic communication users must not give the impression that they are representing, giving opinions, or otherwise making statements on behalf of SHSU or any unit of SHSU unless appropriately authorized (explicitly or implicitly) to do so. Where appropriate, an explicit disclaimer will be included unless it is clear from the context that the author is not representing SHSU. An example of a simple disclaimer is: "the opinions expressed are my own, and not necessarily those of my employer."

DEFINITIONS:

Copyright Laws: A form of protection provided by the laws of the United States to authors of "original works of authorship". This includes literary, dramatic, musical, architectural, cartographic, choreographic, pantomimic, pictorial, graphic, sculptural, and audiovisual creations.

Disclaimer: A statement that something isn't true or that someone isn't responsible. For example "the opinions expressed are my own, and not necessarily those of my employer."

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Sensitive Data: Information that is protected against unwarranted disclosure. Access to sensitive information should be safeguarded.

Related Policies, References and Attachments:

An index of approved IT@Sam policies can be found on the SHSU Information Technology Services Policies website at http://www.shsu.edu/intranet/policies/information_technology_policies/index.html. Reference materials, legal compliance guidelines, and policy enforcement are available in the IT-00 Policy Compliance Document. The SHSU Information Security Program and SHSU Information Security User Guide are also available on the Information Technology Services Policies website.

Reviewed by: Mark C. Adams, Associate VP for Information Technology, January 30, 2015
Approved by: President's Cabinet, February 6, 2012
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