Email, Web, and Portal for Official Communication

1. Purpose and Policy Statement

There is an ever-increasing reliance on electronic forms of communication among faculty, staff and students at Valdosta State University. In particular, email has become an efficient, fast, and cost-effective method of communication that has many advantages over printed communication. Additionally, announcements directed at general constituencies as well as specific individuals are posted on the public web site and inside the various web-based services for students and faculty.

Because of the importance of this type of communication, email and announcements posted in the portal are considered official forms of communication at the university. This policy ensures that students and employees will have access to a university email and portal account, outlines each student's and employee's responsibilities in having such an account, and establishes expectations for communication between faculty and students for educational purposes and between the university and students for university business purposes. To abide with federal, state and local regulations, this policy must be strictly adhered to.

2. Assignment of email and portal accounts

The Information Technology Division will automatically assign each student and employee an official university email and portal account upon acceptance or employment into the university. All email and portal accounts are protected with a password and multifactor authentication. As indicated in the university's "Information Resources Acceptable Use Policy" and "Information Security Policy," ensuring the security of accounts and email correspondence depends on the appropriate use and protection of usernames and passwords. Users should read and be familiar with these policies. This account may remain active for the duration of attendance or employment, with exceptions for extension and   for constituent groups including but not limited to retirees and adjunct faculty. The provisioning and termination of email accounts will take place in accordance with Information Technology's procedures for provisioning and deactivating email accounts.

3. Use of university email distributions and announcements via the portal

Messages sent via the campus mailing list server will be governed by the policies of the mailing list server and each mailing list, which for on-campus constituencies will normally restrict postings to those sent from VSU email addresses.

4. Compliance

All uses of email and web and portal resources for official communication should be consistent with federal, state and local regulations (i.e. official communication should be consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act as well as the Policy Manual of the Board of Regents and VSU policies and procedures).

4a. Communication with students by faculty

Faculty may expect that students will read messages sent to their official email addresses, and faculty should use the official email addresses accordingly. Faculty may determine how email, web, and portal resources will be used in their classes and should specify requirements and expectations of the use of these resources. Uses of non-university email for communication with students regarding confidential

matters are not acceptable because security and confidentiality for off-campus accounts cannot be provided by the university. Faculty may unintentionally be in violation of federal, state and local regulations by using such non-institutional accounts.

4b. Communication with students by university offices

Offices such as Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Financial Services, Student Financial Services, Financial Aid, or Human Resources will send selected official communications to students and employees via email messages and portal announcements. Such email might include individually-addressed messages as well as mailing list messages such as registration announcements or payroll advice and notices of financial aid. These communications are for the purposes of conducting official university business. The university has the right to expect that those communications will be read in a timely fashion.

4c. Responsibilities associated with use of university email

Students and employees are expected to check their assigned email accounts, web site, and portal on a regular and consistent basis in order to receive university communications in a timely manner and users are expected to abide by the VSU Information Resources Acceptable Use Policy. The university recommends checking email, the web site, and the portal several times per week, preferably at least once per day. It is the responsibility of the student, faculty, and/or staff member to report any problems with email or portal resources to the Information Technology Solutions Center.

5. Use of client software and services

Students and employees are encouraged to check email, calendars, and other services provided by Valdosta State University that are accessible from the institutional home page located at www.valdosta.edu using contemporary, supported web browsers.

6. Redirecting of email

Requests to substitute non-university email addresses for the purposes of official communication will not be honored. In general, redirecting university email to another non-university email address is discouraged. The university will not be responsible for the handling of email by outside service providers or servers. Having university email redirected to another account does not absolve a student or employee from the responsibilities associated with timely reading of communications sent to an official email address.

7. Filtering and storage

The university reserves the right to use automated mechanisms to filter and reject mail using information security policies and/or procedures in order to enforce policies, protect privacy and security, improve performance, and provide forensics for authorized investigation. The Information Technology Division will be expected to maintain email data according to the records retention policies and governing laws.

8.   Affected Stakeholders

Indicate all entities and persons within the university affected by this policy:

☐Alumni   ☒Graduate Students   ☒Undergraduate Students
☒Staff   ☒Faculty   ☒Student Employees
☐Visitors   ☐Vendors/Contractors   ☐Other:_____

9.   References, Associated Policy(ies), and Supporting Documents

- Georgia Computer System Protection Act
- USG Board of Regents Policy Manual
- USG Board of Regents Computer Security Policy Statement
- USG Information Technology Handbook
- USG Peachnet Acceptable Use Policy
- VSU Information Resources Acceptable Use Policy
- VSU Information Security Policy
- VSU Intellectual Property Policy
- VSU Policy on Confidentiality and Privacy Policy under HIPAA
- VSU Policy Pursuant to the Gramm Leach Bliley Act
- VSU Records Retention Policy

10.   Policy Attributes

Responsible Office(s)	Information Technology, 1410 N. Oak St., 229-245-4357, itvsu@valdosta.edu
Approving Officer or Body	President, President's Office, West Hall Suite 1004, 229-333-5952, president@valdosta.edu
Created	04/29/2015
Date Approved	06/01/2016
Last Revised Date	07/01/2020
Last Reviewed Date	08/10/2023
Next Review Date	08/10/2026