

West Chester University of Pennsylvania

Official University Mass Communication Methods

Scope

This policy covers official West Chester University mass communication methods to ensure effective and efficient communication and provide accurate and timely information to the campus community and the general public for emergency notifications and timely warnings, weather-related events, important time-sensitive announcements, and non-emergency general communications.

Policy Statement

This policy covers all internal electronic mass communications to West Chester University faculty, staff, and students. Mass communications are those electronic messages that are sent without self-subscription or opt-out capabilities. All internal mass communications will refer only to official business or official activities of West Chester University.

West Chester University must exercise control over electronic communications in order to properly maintain network performance, limit the number of unsolicited email messages, and prevent desensitization that could inhibit the communication of critical information. ***As a result, the use of the WCU All Employees email distribution list will be limited to*** emergency notifications and timely warnings, weather-related events, and important time-sensitive announcements (as described below).

Note: This policy does not limit or prohibit the use of other methods of email dissemination. Communications not covered by this policy would include electronic messages from central service providers about a service they provide (e.g. WCU Information Services notifying email users that the system will be shut down for maintenance.) Also exempt from this policy are email distribution lists that are created or typically considered “opt-in,” such as discussions groups, committees and project teams, etc.

The Vice President for Information Services, or his/her designee, will make any final decision regarding the application of this policy in cases where the policy does not clearly apply or in cases when the protocol changes as the emergency situation unfolds.

Any individual who is deemed in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

Responsibilities

- West Chester University faculty, staff, and students must activate and maintain regular access to University-provided electronic mail accounts.

- West Chester University faculty, staff, and students are responsible for accessing electronic mail to obtain official University communications.
- Failure to access the electronic mail account will not exempt individuals from associated responsibilities and liabilities.
- Departments that supervise employees or students with limited or no available computer resources are responsible for providing alternative notification systems for these employees and/or students.

West Chester University offers a text messaging subscription service for all faculty, staff, and students to receive notification of major emergencies and timely warnings and strongly encourages subscribing to this important service. There is no cost to register; however, some cell phone providers may apply a small cost per text message sent or received. Subscribers will receive text messages on any device that accepts text messaging (SMS) through cellular service, such as cell phones, text pagers, BlackBerrys, and some wireless PDAs. In addition, there is an option to have messages sent to a personal email address. The University offers this service to notify the campus of emergencies and/or timely warnings. In addition, there is an option to receive weather-related cancellations as well. Subscribe to receive text messages of campus emergencies and/or weather-related cancellations at <http://www.wcupa.edu/wcualert/>.

Categories – Mass Communication

West Chester University of PA identifies four mass communication categories:

- **EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS AND TIMELY WARNINGS**
- **WEATHER-RELATED ANNOUNCEMENTS**
- **IMPORTANT TIME-SENSITIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS**
- **NON-EMERGENCY – GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS**

Category Definitions and Distribution Methods

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS AND TIMELY WARNINGS

Emergency Notifications “... are required to immediately notify the campus community upon confirmation of a significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the health of safety of students or employees occurring on campus. An 'immediate' threat as used here encompasses an imminent or impending threat such as an approaching fire, as well as a

fire currently raging in a campus building.” (The Handbook for Campus Safety and Security Reporting, U. S. Department of Education, 2011)

Examples of significant emergencies when an Emergency Notification may be issued:

- Outbreak of meningitis, norovirus or other serious illness
- Approaching weather such as a tornado or hurricane
- Earthquake
- Gas leak
- Terrorist incident
- Armed intruder
- Bomb threat
- Civil unrest or rioting
- Explosion
- Nearby chemical or hazardous waste spill

Emergency Notifications may be issued by some or all of the following methods of communication: emergency text messaging, email blasts, posting on the WCU homepage, recorded message on the WCU information line and external emergency notification broadcasts.

INITIAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS WILL BE SENT IMMEDIATELY AND WILL CONVEY ONLY THE MOST CRITICAL INFORMATION. DETAILS WILL BE CARRIED ON THE UNIVERSITY’S HOMEPAGE, WHICH WILL BE UPDATED AS CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE.

Secondary Communication Distribution Methods: In an emergency, secondary communication methods may be activated as circumstances dictate. Examples:

Communication Channels	Responsible Party
Posting to D2L and email	Information Services Division
Activate a recorded message for those using WCU voice mail functionality	Information Services Division
Activate University’s emergency public address system, sirens, and blue light stations	Public Safety Division
Request Reverse 911 telephone message via the Chester County Emergency Services system	Director of Public Safety
Request Reverse 911 telephone message via the Borough of West Chester system	Director of Public Safety
Contact selected news media (radio and TV stations) including WCU’s radio station WCUR AM 91.7	Director of Public Relations
Announcements via electronic bulletin boards in Anderson Hall, Sykes Union Building, and external kiosk at Ruby Jones Hall	Information Services Division for Anderson Hall; Sykes Union Director for the Sykes Building and Ruby Jones external kiosk
Announcements via police cruiser public address systems, bullhorns or digital sign boards	Public Safety Division
Announcements via individual building public address systems	Residence Life Staff – including The Village and University Hall
Announcement on football scoreboard/Farrell Stadium	Athletic Director
Telephone Trees or Phone Chains – many campus	Deans, Building Administrators, Assistant Building

departments have incorporated phone chains into their procedures to notify individual personnel. In addition, person-to person or paper communication in residence halls, academic/administration buildings, including Library and food service centers, etc. In most cases, electronic communication is preferable to paper communication but paper communication may be used as the situation deems it.	Administrators, Student Affairs Division personnel
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Post Emergency Communication: The University will issue an “all clear” message to convey the University’s return to normal operations to all faculty, staff and students via University-assigned email accounts, the WCU website homepage, and text message via e2campus subscribers. Details regarding the incident will be communicated on the University’s homepage.

Timely warnings must be issued for the following crimes if the crimes are reported to campus security authorities (CSA) or local police agencies; are considered by the University to represent a serious or continuing threat to students and employees; and occur in certain geographic locations as defined by the *Clery Act*:

- Murder and non-negligent manslaughter
- Negligent manslaughter
- Forcible and non-forcible sex offenses
- Robbery
- Aggravated assault
- Burglary
- Motor vehicle theft
- Arson

Timely warnings may be issued by some or all of the following methods of communication: email, text message, building postings by Building Administrators and postings on the DPS website at: <http://www.wcupa.edu/dps/>.

WEATHER-RELATED ANNOUNCEMENTS

This message category is used to transmit University class and operating delays or cancellations due to general or typical weather-related events.

Severe weather events that may require those on campus to take shelter will be categorized as a Priority 1— Emergency Notification. Assessment and response to and recovery from emergencies will be conducted within the framework of the WCU Emergency Operations Plan.

Communication Distribution Methods: When storm conditions affect the operation of the University, announcements for cancellations and/or delays are made via:

- Text message to WCU Alert subscribers
- Mass emails to faculty, staff and students (WCU-assigned email accounts)
- Posted on WCU’s homepage at <http://www.wcupa.edu>
- Recorded message on WCU’s Information Line - 610-436-1000
- Broadcast on many radio and TV stations

IMPORTANT TIME-SENSITIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS

This message category involves any potential or actual incident that is local in nature, has limited impact, will not seriously affect the overall functioning of the University, and can usually be handled using University resources. Examples - unscheduled changes to campus procedures or services, service disruptions to buildings, certain construction activity, etc.

Communication Distribution Methods:

- Mass emails to faculty and staff (WCU-assigned email accounts)
- As circumstances warrant, mass emails to the student distribution list (WCU-assigned email accounts)
- As circumstances warrant, other University communication channels may be used.

NON-EMERGENCY - GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

This message category is used for general announcements or communications of interest to the University at large.

Distribution Methods: Distribution of announcements/communications will follow one of three tracks:

1. Email messages via individually-maintained or University-maintained group email distribution lists
2. Public Relations weekly event notification
3. Human Resources Homepage - News Update Section

(1) University-maintained group email distribution Lists

The use of specific distribution lists for targeted groups is advised for non-emergency or general announcements. However, use of these distribution lists is restricted to official business or official activities of West Chester University, and as an example, cannot be used for solicitation purposes external to the University.

To avoid any confusion, email users transmitting general announcements should not use the words **Urgent, Urgent Notice, Important, or Important Notice** in the subject line of their email messages. In addition, email users should also avoid highlighting their messages with an **exclamation mark** unless the messages are very high priority.

West Chester University maintains the following group email distribution lists, which are located in the Global Address book. **These distribution lists are accessible to all employees and are the preferred method for distributing general, non-emergency announcements.**

Distribution List Name	Maintained by:
WCU Academic Department Contacts	Provost's Office
WCU Administrative Department Contacts	Information Services
WCU All Faculty	Provost's Office
WCU All Managers	Human Resources
WCU Chairs Distribution List	Provost's Office

WCU Deans Council	Provost's Office
WCU Departments Distribution List	Information Services
WCU President's Cabinet	President's Office
WCU President's Council	President's Office
WCU President's Council Support Staff	President's Office

(2) Public Relations - Weekly News Bulletin

Every Friday, WCU's Public Relations Office issues a mass email to all faculty and staff publicizing the upcoming week's University events, both those events ***open only to the campus community*** and those events ***open to the general public***. This weekly notice replaces the numerous individual e-mails that have been sent in the past to all campus employees regarding university events and other announcements.

The *Public Events* section is used primarily to announce events that are open to WCU employees and students, as well as to the general public. Such events include, but are not limited to, theatre and music performances, athletic events and camps, gallery exhibits, seminars and colloquiums, and graduation ceremonies.

The *Campus Community Events* section will announce newsworthy items related to upcoming University programs, activities, and events for WCU faculty and staff. This section will also carry announcements and pertinent links regarding software training and "Investing in Employee Excellence" training. In addition, "Mark Your Calendar" dates and information will carry details regarding future events for planning purposes.

Student-related announcements and events are publicized on the *myWCU* homepage Announcements section.

Sports schedules or information, including information on post-season play-offs, will be available on the University's athletic website - www.wcupagoldenrams.com/

Those wishing to submit information for the weekly Public Relations bulletin should submit the date, time, location, and cost of the event, as well as a brief description of the event, a campus extension number or University website for more information and whether the event is public or a campus community only event to publicrel@wcupa.edu. Examples of event listings can be viewed on the University's homepage titled This Week at WCU. The deadline for submitting event information is Thursday at noon preceding each Friday's bulletin. Submissions must be timed to include only information on events taking place Monday through and including Sunday of the following week. Submissions must be accurate as no additional information on University events, such as corrections, will be emailed to all faculty/staff until the following week.

Note: Individual divisions or departments may still e-mail their announcements or information to selected distribution lists, but not to the entire campus.

(3) Human Resources webpage - News Update

This News Update section in the Human Resources webpage will be used as a repository for personnel-related announcements that in the past would have been sent using the All Employees

email distribution list. Exceptions will be made for time-sensitive announcements such as employee bereavement notices or pertinent labor-relations information that will require the use of the All Employees email list.

While use of this Human Resources News Update is preferred, individual divisions or departments may still e-mail their personnel-related announcements or information to selected distribution lists, but not to the entire campus via the All Employees distribution list. To avoid any confusion, email users transmitting personnel-related announcements should not use the words **Urgent, Urgent Notice, Important, or Important Notice** in the subject line of their email messages. In addition, email users should also avoid highlighting their messages with an **exclamation mark** unless the messages are very high priority. Examples: Search Committee announcements/schedules, hires/appointments, retirements/resignations, employee transfers, etc.

Those wishing to submit information for the posting on the Human Resources News Bulletin should contact HumanResourceServices@wcupa.edu.

The use of the WCU All Employees email distribution list will be restricted to announcements categorized as emergency notifications, timely warnings, weather-related, or other important time-sensitive announcements. The All Employees email distribution should not be used for general communication.

Exceptions: The President's Office will continue to use the All Employees email distribution list to convey messages of importance, FYI Bulletins, or other information that the President determines should reach all employees.

Effective Date

This policy is effective January 15, 2008 and supersedes all previous All Users policies.

Revised August 18, 2011