



Stakeholder Communication

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I. Purpose of Policy

This policy identifies the approved communication resources available to the Valdosta State University community, defines electronic communication channels such as email and portal accounts and discusses proper use of these channels and what the appropriate audience is for delivery. This policy addresses social media naming, ownership, and registration including how units should best communicate with external media/press about VSU business. The goal of this policy is to eliminate duplicative emails and the volume of emails to campus constituents.



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II. Summary of Communication Channels and Audience

Communication Channel	Official University Wide Business	Department Business Targeting Specific Stakeholder Groups	Campus Activity (Student Organization Activities and Events)	Office Activities, Events, and News
Email				
activities@valdosta.edu distribution group ¹			X	
students@valdosta.edu distribution group	X	X		
studentannouncements@valdosta.edu distribution group ²				X
announcements@valdosta.edu distribution group ³				X
staff@valdosta.edu distribution group	X	X		
faculty@valdosta.edu distribution group	X	X		
secretaries@valdosta.edu distribution group				X
retirees@valdosta.edu distribution group	X			
Targeted emails to specific populations via department distribution group		X		X
Social Media				
University Social Media accounts	X			
Department Social Media accounts		X	X	X
Web, Portals, Apps, and Other				
Targeted MyVSU pop-ups	X	X	X	X
Targeted MyVSU ads	X	X	X	X
The VSU Mobile App via the campus wall & push notifications			X	X
Targeted text message	X	X		
Campus digital signage	X		X	X
valdosta.edu website	X			
valdosta.edu departmental webpage		X		X
BlazerLink Calendar			X	X

III. Communication Platforms at Valdosta State University

This list contains the most frequently used communication platforms at VSU.

- Email

¹ Students can opt-out of this group.

² Students can opt-out of this group.

³ Employees can opt-out of this group.



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- Text
- Social media
- Targeted MyVSU pop-ups
- MyVSU ads
- Campus digital signage
- The VSU Mobile App via the campus wall, push notifications, etc.
- Valdosta.edu main and departmental websites
- BlazerLink

IV. Communication Types

a. Official University Wide Business

Definition of University Wide Business

This is communication meant for all stakeholder audiences. Only important, emergency, or broad impact emails will be sent as university wide business emails. For email purposes, the distribution groups ensure everyone on campus is being reached include All Students (students@valdosta.edu), All Faculty (faculty@valdosta.edu), and All Staff (staff@valdosta.edu). Employees and students are NOT allowed to opt out of these three email distribution groups.

Approved Senders⁴ University Wide

- President's Office (including Legal Affairs, Internal Audit, and Athletics)
- Information Technology (IT) [service interruptions]
- Office of Human Resources
- Office of Strategic Communications
- Office of the Registrar
- Physical Plant and Facilities Planning [service and construction announcements]
- University Administration (President's Cabinet)
- University Police

b. Department Business

Definition of Departmental Business

This includes communication targeted to one or two specific stakeholder groups (students@valdosta.edu, faculty@valdosta.edu, staff@valdosta.edu) and appeals to a wide portion of that specific group. Examples include emails meant for only students, faculty, or staff but not meant for all groups. This is not announcements-that is addressed below in section D. Departmental communication includes communication related to:

Example Senders

- Approved IRB research

⁴ Approved Senders units are not the same as the Moderated Bypass List located in section VII(b).



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- Budget and Payroll Services
- Council on Staff Affairs (COSA)
- Employee and Organization Development
- Faculty Senate
- Student Financial Services/Bursary
- Student Government Association (SGA)

Emails from departments, offices, or groups not mentioned above should be sent to VSU Announcements (announcements@valdosta.edu), which is faculty and staff together and/or Student Announcements (studentannouncements@valdosta.edu). You can read more about this below in section D. Employees and students are able to opt out of faculty/staff announcements and student announcements. Student organization activities or events (excluding SGA) should be sent to activities@valdosta.edu.

Frequency of Departmental Business Emails

Emails meeting the criteria of a departmental business email may be sent and approved by moderators twice which includes reminder communication. It is recommended that if there is a deadline or call to action, the email should be sent at least two weeks prior to the stated deadline. Senders should plan ahead to avoid inundating recipients with too many emails. Reasons to deny approval are listed below in section VII(c).

c. Campus Activity

Definition of Campus Activity

This is an event or activity happening on campus or virtually that involves a student organization, Student Affairs entities, or Academic Affairs entities. Campus activity communication to students must be sent from the faculty/staff representative and/or the President (or the designated representative) of the group or entity. The email distribution group for VSU student activity communication is activities@valdosta.edu. Student organizations who want to send event announcements to employees must have that communication sent by the faculty/staff sponsor to VSU Announcements at announcements@valdosta.edu.

Example Senders

- Student organizations (must be an [approved student organization](#) and registered with the Office of Student Life)
- Academic organizations (such as AAUW, AAUP)
- Campus Activities Board (CAB)
- Firepit

The Student Government Association (SGA) is considered a departmental business entity and is allowed to send to the Student Announcements or All Students email distribution groups as deemed appropriate.



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Student Activities Newsletter

The Office of Student Life will distribute a newsletter twice a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays during the semester). Organizations that want an event put in the newsletter will need to send that event to activities@valdosta.edu before the deadlines stated below:

Tuesday newsletter deadline: Monday at 9:00am

Thursday newsletter deadline: Wednesday at 9:00am

The deadlines give the Office of Student Life enough time to prepare the newsletter. The Office of Student Life will NOT send out day-of items, so plan ahead to ensure your event is marketed as you wish in the newsletter.

Format for Email

The event email to activities@valdosta.edu should contain the following:

- Graphic
- Day of event
- Time of event
- Location of event
- Any RSVP or registration deadlines

If any edits need to be made, the Office of Student Life will reject the email and send it back for those edits. Once approved, the activity will be added to the next newsletter.

d. Department Activities, Events, and News

Definition of a University Announcement

This is an email that the content of which does not meet the standards of university wide business but still needs to reach a wide audience in the campus community.

As mentioned above, the announcements distribution groups for faculty and staff is announcements@valdosta.edu and the announcement list for students is studentannouncements@valdosta.edu. Employees and students do have the option to opt out of these two email distribution groups.

Example Senders

- Campus Wellness
- Academic Department course offerings
- The Spectator
- Career Opportunities
- Student Support Services, such as the Academic Support Center, the Counseling Center, Odum Library, etc.
- Alumni Relations/University Advancement



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V. Social Media

The Office of Strategic Communications manages the oversight of social media accounts at Valdosta State University. Social media properties involving VSU include but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, TikTok, Flickr, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube. Only the accounts named @ValdostaState and @VStateNews are permitted to post on a social media site as the official representative of Valdosta State University.

i. Naming a Social Media Account

All other social media accounts using VSU branding represent their respective areas, but do not represent the university as a whole. Therefore, the naming of those social media accounts should reflect that. Use the format below:

Incorrect Example: Valdosta State University Chess Club

Correct Example: The Chess Club at Valdosta State University

ii. Creating and Accessing a Social Media Account Linked to VSU

Any Valdosta State University entity interested in starting a new social media account on any site must first contact the Office of Strategic Communications at socialmedia@valdosta.edu. In addition to maintaining at least two (2) account administrators, all official VSU social networking site accounts must be registered with the Office of Strategic Communications. This registration will include the account credentials, in the following forms:

- the email address used to log in to the account, which in all cases should be a university email alias (example: socialmedia@valdosta.edu), not a personal account (example: @gmail.com) or an individual account (example: johnsmith@valdosta.edu); and
- the password for the account must be updated in the Office of Strategic Communications' account registry each time it is changed. It is the responsibility of the account administrator or unit supervisor to notify the Office of Strategic Communications of password updates, credential updates, and administrator changes to department accounts.

**The sharing of professional passwords only has been approved by VSU IT.

iii. Standards of Conduct

Members of the university community are expected to adhere to the same standards of conduct online that they would exhibit on campus. Members are expected to adhere to all state laws, federal laws, and applicable university policies, procedures, and regulations, and also the conditions of use established by the social networking site platform.

iv. Moderation

Valdosta State University is committed to the protection of academic freedom. The Office of Strategic Communications will regularly review content posted to official VSU



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accounts, and with respect to any site maintained in the name of the University, may remove or cause the removal of any content for any lawful reason, including but not limited to, content that is threatening, obscene, a violation of intellectual property rights or privacy laws, or otherwise injurious or illegal, or which violates the terms and conditions of the social networking site.

v. During Campus Emergency

In the case of a campus emergency, all VSU social media channels must stop posting until the event is over. The *@ValdostaState* and *@VStateNews* accounts shall be the only accounts to post updates and information during a crisis. These updates will be approved by the VSU President and the Office of Strategic Communications.

vi. Comment Policy

Valdosta State University welcomes the community's contributions to its social networks (e.g., comments, photo tagging, wall posts, and the like). Community contributed content is the opinion of the specific author and does not represent Valdosta State. However, VSU reserves the right, but is not obligated, to remove or hide comments that:

- contain commercial solicitations;
- are factually erroneous/libelous;
- are wildly off-topic;
- that expose the private data of others;
- that consist of cut-and-paste talking points;
- that cannot be translated into English by online translation software;
- violates the site's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities;
- threaten or harass any user;
- post content that is obscene, that contains nudity, sexual content, profanity, or violence;
- anything unlawful, misleading, malicious, or discriminatory

vii. Interactions and Content

All content posted and interactions with social network site users should adhere to the spirit of the Blazer Creed and the VSU brand. Failure to do so may result in loss of account access for the account administrator and/or loss of official recognition for the social network account.

viii. Restricted Content

Content posted by hosts containing the following (or depictions thereof) will be removed from the account, and the host's access to the account may be revoked by the Social Media Manager: alcohol; illegal activity or drug content; profanity; nudity, sexual content, violent or graphic content; threatening speech or harassment (including negative remarks about other organizations or institutions); advertising for non-VSU organizations or entities; other restricted content outlined in the VSU Social Media Policy.



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VI. Communication Standards

These are the standards for communication sent to any of the Valdosta State University email distribution groups and all other campus communication:

- Clear, concise, and easy to understand
- Checked for spelling errors
- Absolutely NO profanity
- Graphics are allowed, but there MUST be alt-text written out in the email body that details all information on the graphic. Valdosta State University is an accessible campus and emails that do not contain alt-text will be rejected.
- The sender of the email must identify what class, group, student organization, office, or department from which the communication being sent
- The sender must use their valdosta.edu email address
- No emails involving marketing or sales opportunities from outside vendors will be accepted (unless a formal [arrangement](#) has been made through the Office of Human Resources)

VII. Oversight of Email Distribution Groups, Digital Signage, and VSU Mobile App

The Office of Strategic Communications, the Division of Information Technology, and the Office of Student Life will share responsibility for oversight of the email distribution groups, campus digital signage, and the VSU Mobile App at Valdosta State University. This will include:

- Monitoring of content sent to the email distribution groups will be performed by the Director of Strategic Communications and the Communications and Media Relations Coordinator. These two positions are responsible for approving emails or denying approval to emails.
- A representative from Information Technology will also be responsible for oversight of the distribution groups. This person is the Deputy Chief Information Officer.
- A representative from Student Life will monitor the Student Activities distribution group to gather content for the twice-weekly Student Activities Newsletter.
- The Office of Strategic Communications and the Office of Information Technology will jointly monitor the VSU Mobile App.

a. Timeline for Sending Email Communication

Students may not check their email daily, so you will want to consider that when preparing to inform and market your event. The email distribution groups are monitored during regular business hours for Valdosta State University (M-TH 8:00am-5:30pm and FRI 8:00am-3:00pm) and emails sent outside these hours may not be approved until the following business day. Keep in mind that emails sent on the day of the event or activity may not be approved before the event starts.

b. Moderated Bypass List

The Moderated Bypass List contains senders from the Valdosta State University campus community who are approved to send emails to email distribution groups without content



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approval from the Office of Strategic Communications. For those not on this list, the Director of Strategic Communications and the Communications and Media Relations Coordinator will read every email and look at every graphic and attachment before approving. This provides a second set of eyes to ensure any attachment is correct, the email is grammatically correct, and that it is accessible for all to read.

The below entities** are approved for the Moderated Bypass List for all email distribution groups:

- President's Office
- Information Technology (IT) [service interruptions]
- Office of Strategic Communications
- Physical Plant and Facilities Planning [service and construction announcements]
- University Police

**Entities who believe they should be included in the Moderated Bypass List can email communications@valdosta.edu.

c. **Reasons to Revise or Deny Email Communication Requests**

A member of the Office of Strategic Communications will review emails sent to all campus-wide distribution groups to ensure they meet the institution's preferred communication standards. Emails may be returned to sender for revision if they do not meet those standards with feedback about necessary corrections. Common reasons for emails to be returned include:

- The sender of the email is not a Valdosta State University student, faculty, or staff member or did not use their Valdosta.edu email address.
- The person did not clearly state what organization, department, or class they are representing.
- The email was sent to the incorrect distribution group.
- There were elements which needed to be clarified (facts, dates, contact information).
- The email contains profanity.
- Graphics in the email or attached to the email are incorrect (misspelling, wrong date or time, etc.) or obscene.
- Alt-text is not included with a graphic sent in the email.
- All surveys, research, petitions, or other means to collect information or elicit participation from students, faculty, and staff must come through a student organization, the Council on Staff Affairs, the Faculty Senate, or be research for a class which has IRB approval or exemption. There are no exceptions to this. The group or class involved must be clearly stated in the email along with the goal of the project.



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VIII. Media Relations

All media requests for employees at Valdosta State University should come through the Office of Strategic Communications. Any VSU faculty and staff approached by the media, including internal media, for an interview, statement, or other information should first reach out to the Office of Strategic Communications at (229) 333-2163 or email communications@valdosta.edu.

a. Reaching Out to the Media

Any employees wanting to attract media coverage for an activity should reach out to the Office of Strategic Communications (see email and phone number above). The communications team will work with the employee to find the best coverage outlet for the requested research or event. Also, the Communications and Media Relations Coordinator often fields requests from the media for subject matter experts. Any faculty members interested in occasionally appearing on a media platform talking about their subject should contact the Strategic Communications Office.

Student organizations wanting media coverage can request a list of contacts from the Office of Strategic Communications at communications@valdosta.edu.

b. Monitoring the VSU Brand in the Media

If the Office of Strategic Communications knows who is talking about VSU in the news, the team can better track those stories to ensure they are correct and share them with the university community. If they are not correct, the team can get them corrected. Knowing the media who wants to talk to the VSU community allows the media relations team at VSU to build relationships with reporters to share other exciting things happening on campus. Often the Strategic Communications team knows about a student or graduate or university employee who is doing something that will add to the topic requested. That allows VSU to get more from what started as a single interview request. If the Strategic Communications team suspects the reporter might surprise an employee with a controversial question, we can adequately prepare the employee.

IX. 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: _____

X. Policy Attributes

<i>Responsible Office(s)</i>	Director, Strategic Communications
<i>Approving Officer or Body</i>	University Council



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<i>Date Approved</i>	02/22/2022
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