

# Oakwood University Email Usage Policy

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

This Policy clarifies the applicability of law and of other Oakwood University policies to electronic mail. It also defines new policy and procedures where existing policies do not specifically address issues particular to the use of electronic mail.

Oakwood University recognizes that principles of academic freedom and shared governance, freedom of speech, and privacy of information hold important implications for electronic mail and electronic mail services. Oakwood University affords electronic mail privacy protections comparable to that which it traditionally affords paper mail and telephone communications. This Policy reflects these firmly held principles within the context of the Oakwood University's legal and other obligations.

### **Cautions:**

#### **Users should be aware of the following:**

1. Both the nature of electronic mail and the public character of Oakwood University's business (see Caution 2 below) make electronic mail less private than users may anticipate. For example, electronic mail intended for one person sometimes may be widely distributed because of the ease with which recipients can forward it to others. A reply to an electronic mail message posted on an electronic bulletin board or "listserver" intended only for the originator of the message may be distributed to all subscribers to the listserver. Furthermore, even after a user deletes an electronic mail record from a computer or electronic mail account it may persist on backup facilities. Oakwood University cannot routinely protect users against such eventualities.

2. Electronic mail, whether or not created or stored on Oakwood University equipment, may constitute an Oakwood University record subject to disclosure under the Alabama Public Records Act or other laws, or as a result of litigation. However, the Oakwood University does not automatically comply with all requests for disclosure, but evaluates all such requests against the precise provisions of the Act, other laws concerning disclosure and privacy, or other applicable law.

Users of Oakwood University electronic mail services also should be aware that the Alabama Public Records Act and other similar laws jeopardize the ability of Oakwood University to guarantee complete protection of *personal* electronic mail resident on Oakwood University facilities.

The Alabama Public Records Act does not, in general, apply to students except in their capacity, if any, as employees or agents of Oakwood University. This exemption does not, however, exclude student email from other aspects of this Policy.

3. Oakwood University, in general, cannot and does not wish to be the arbiter of the contents of electronic mail. Neither can Oakwood University, in general, protect users from receiving electronic mail they may find offensive. Members of the Oakwood University community, however, are strongly encouraged to use the same personal and professional courtesies and considerations in electronic mail as they would in other forms of communication.

4. There is no guarantee, unless "authenticated" mail systems are in use, that electronic mail received was in fact sent by the purported sender, since it is relatively straightforward, although a violation of this Policy, for senders to disguise their identity. Furthermore, electronic mail that is forwarded may also be modified. Authentication technology is not widely and systematically in use at Oakwood University as of the date of this Policy. As with print documents, in case of doubt receivers of electronic mail messages should check with the purported sender to validate authorship or authenticity.

5. Encryption of electronic mail is another emerging technology that is not in widespread use as of the date of this Policy. This technology enables the encoding of electronic mail so that for all practical purposes it cannot be read by anyone who does not possess the right key. The answers to questions raised by the growing use of these technologies are not now sufficiently understood to warrant the formulation of Oakwood University policy at this time. Users and operators of electronic mail facilities should be aware, however, that these technologies will become generally available and probably will be increasingly used by members of the community.

## **II. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Policy is to assure that:

- A. Oakwood University community is informed about the applicability of policies and laws to electronic mail;
- B. Electronic mail services are used in compliance with those policies and laws;
- C. Users of electronic mail services are informed about how concepts of privacy and security apply to electronic mail; and
- D. Disruptions to Oakwood University electronic mail and other services and activities are minimized.

## **III. DEFINITIONS**

*The terms "electronic mail" and "email" are used interchangeably throughout this Policy.*

## **IV. SCOPE**

This Policy applies to:

- All electronic mail systems and services provided or owned by the Oakwood University; and
- All users, holders, and uses of Oakwood University email services; and
- All Oakwood University email records in the possession of Oakwood University employees or other email users of electronic mail services provided by Oakwood University.

This Policy applies only to electronic mail in its electronic form. The Policy does not apply to printed copies of electronic mail. Other Oakwood University records management, however, do not distinguish among the media in which records are generated or stored. Electronic mail messages, therefore, in either their electronic or printed forms, are subject to those other policies, including provisions of those policies regarding retention and disclosure.

This Policy applies equally to transactional information (such as email headers, summaries, addresses, and addressees) associated with email records as it does to the contents of those records.

This Policy is effective immediately.

## **V. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

As noted in the Introduction, Oakwood University recognizes that principles of academic freedom, freedom of speech, and privacy of information hold important implications for electronic mail and electronic mail services. This Policy reflects these firmly held principles within the context of Oakwood University's legal and other obligations.

### **A. Purpose.**

In support of its threefold mission of instruction, research, and public service, Oakwood University encourages the use of Oakwood University electronic mail services to share information, to improve communication, and to exchange ideas.

### **B. Oakwood University Property.**

Oakwood University electronic mail systems and services are Oakwood University facilities as that term is used in other policies and guidelines. Any electronic mail address or account associated with Oakwood University, or any sub-unit of Oakwood University, assigned by Oakwood University to individuals, sub-units, or functions of Oakwood University, is the property of The Regents of Oakwood University.

### **C. Service Restrictions.**

Those who use Oakwood University electronic mail services are expected to do so responsibly, that is, to comply with state and federal laws, with this and other policies and procedures of Oakwood University, and with normal standards of professional and personal courtesy and conduct. Access to Oakwood University electronic mail services, when provided, is a privilege that may be wholly or partially restricted by Oakwood University without prior notice and without the consent of the email user when required by and consistent with law, when there is substantiated reason to believe that violations of policy or law have taken place, or, in exceptional cases, when required to meet time-dependent, critical operational needs. Such restriction is subject to established campus-wide procedures or, in the absence of such procedures, to the approval of the appropriate *Oakwood University Vice President*.

### **D. Consent and Compliance.**

An email holder's consent shall be sought by Oakwood University prior to any inspection, monitoring, or disclosure of Oakwood University email records in the holder's possession. Oakwood University employees are, however, expected to comply with Oakwood University requests for copies of email records in their possession that pertain to the administrative business of Oakwood University, or whose disclosure is required to comply with applicable laws, regardless of whether such records reside on a computer housed or owned by Oakwood University .

### **E. Restrictions on Access Without Consent.**

Oakwood University shall only permit the inspection, monitoring, or disclosure of electronic mail without the consent of the holder of such email (i) when required by and consistent with law; (ii) when there is substantiated reason to believe that violations of law or of Oakwood University policies have taken place; (iii) when there are compelling circumstances; or (iv) under time-dependent, critical operational circumstances.

When the contents of email must be inspected, monitored, or disclosed without the holder's consent, the following shall apply:

**1. Authorization.**

Except in emergency circumstances, and pursuant to Paragraph V.E.2, the responsible Oakwood University Vice President must authorize such actions in advance and in writing. This authority may not be further re-delegated. Requests for such non-consensual access must be submitted in writing following procedures to be defined by each campus. Oakwood University counsel's advice shall be sought prior to authorization because of changing interpretations by the courts of laws affecting the privacy of electronic mail, and because of potential conflicts among different applicable laws. Where the inspection, monitoring, or disclosure of email held by faculty is involved, the advice of the Campus Academic Senate shall be sought in writing in advance, following procedures to be established by each campus. All such advice shall be given in a timely manner. Authorization shall be limited to the least perusal of contents and the least action necessary to resolve the situation.

**2. Emergency Circumstances.**

In emergency circumstances, the least perusal of contents and the least action necessary to resolve the emergency may be taken immediately without authorization, but appropriate authorization must then be sought without delay following the procedures. If the action taken is not subsequently authorized, the responsible authority shall seek to have the situation restored as closely as possible to that which existed before action was taken.

**3. Notification.**

In either case, the responsible authority or designee shall, at the earliest possible opportunity that is lawful and consistent with other Oakwood University policy, notify the affected individual of the action(s) taken and the reasons for the action(s) taken. Each campus will publish, where consistent with law, an annual report summarizing instances of authorized or emergency non-consensual access pursuant to the provisions of this Section.

**4. Compliance with Law.**

Actions taken under Paragraphs 1. and 2. Shall be in full compliance with the law and other applicable Oakwood University policy. This has particular significance for email residing on computers not owned or housed by Oakwood University. Advice of counsel always must be sought prior to any action taken under such circumstances. It also has particular significance for email whose content is protected under the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, which applies equally to email as it does to print records.

**5. Recourse.**

Procedures for the review and appeal of actions taken under Sections V. C, D, and E and under Section VII shall be implemented (or existing procedures adapted) by each campus to provide a mechanism for recourse to individuals who believe that actions taken by employees or agents of Oakwood University were in violation of this Policy.

**6. Misuse.**

In general, both law and Oakwood University policy prohibit the theft or other abuse of computing resources. Such prohibitions apply to electronic mail services and include (but are not limited to) unauthorized entry, use, transfer, and tampering with the accounts and files of others, and interference with the work of others and with other computing facilities. Under certain circumstances, the law contains provisions for felony offenses. Users of electronic mail are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these laws and policies.

## **VI. SPECIFIC PROVISIONS**

### **A. Allowable Use**

In general, use of Oakwood University electronic mail services is governed by policies that apply to the use of all Oakwood University facilities. In particular, use of Oakwood University electronic mail services is encouraged and is allowable subject to the following conditions:

#### **1. Purpose.**

Electronic mail services are to be provided by Oakwood University organizational units in support of the teaching, research, and public service mission of Oakwood University, and the administrative functions that support this mission.

#### **2. Users.**

Users of Oakwood University electronic mail services are to be limited primarily to Oakwood University students, faculty, and staff for purposes that conform to the requirements of this Section. All student email will be added automatically when the student is deemed cleared for the semester. All faculty and staff email will be added when a request is made in writing by the department head or VP through an email or memo to the email administrator.

#### **3. Non-Competition.**

Oakwood University electronic mail services shall not be provided in competition with commercial services to individuals or organizations outside Oakwood University.

#### **4. Restrictions.**

Oakwood University electronic mail services may not be used for: unlawful activities; commercial purposes not under the auspices of Oakwood University; personal financial gain (see applicable academic personnel policies); personal use inconsistent with Section VI. A. 8; or uses that violate other Oakwood University policies or guidelines. The latter include, but are not limited to, policies and guidelines regarding intellectual property, or regarding sexual or other forms of harassment.

#### **5. Representation.**

Electronic mail users shall not give the impression that they are representing, giving opinions, or otherwise making statements on behalf of Oakwood University or any unit of Oakwood University unless appropriately authorized (explicitly or implicitly) to do so. Where appropriate, an explicit disclaimer shall be included unless it is clear from the context that the author is not representing Oakwood University. An appropriate disclaimer is: "These statements are my own, not those of Oakwood University."

#### **6. False Identity.**

Oakwood University email users shall not employ a false identity. Email may, however, be sent anonymously provided this does not violate any law or this or any other Oakwood University policy, and does not unreasonably interfere with the administrative business of Oakwood University.

#### **7. Interference.**

Oakwood University email services shall not be used for purposes that could reasonably be expected to cause, directly or indirectly, excessive strain on any computing facilities, or unwarranted or unsolicited interference with others' use of email or email systems. Such uses include, but are not limited to, the use of email services to: (i) send or forward email chain letters; (ii) "spam," that is, to exploit listservers or similar broadcast systems for purposes beyond their intended scope to amplify the widespread distribution of unsolicited email; and (iii) "letter-bomb," that is, to resend the same email repeatedly to one or more recipients to interfere with the recipient's use of email.

## **8. Personal Use.**

Oakwood University electronic mail services may be used for incidental personal purposes provided that, in addition to the foregoing constraints and conditions, such use does not:

(i) directly or indirectly interfere with Oakwood University operation of computing facilities or electronic mail services

ii) burden Oakwood University with noticeable incremental cost; or

(iii) interfere with the email user's employment or other obligations to Oakwood University. Email records arising from such personal use may, however, be subject to the presumption of an Oakwood University Email Record, regarding personal and other email records. Email users should assess the implications of this presumption in their decision to use Oakwood University electronic mail services for personal purposes.

## **B. Security and Confidentiality**

1. The confidentiality of electronic mail cannot be assured. Such confidentiality may be compromised by applicability of law or policy, including this Policy, by unintended redistribution, or because of inadequacy of current technologies to protect against unauthorized access. Users, therefore, should exercise extreme caution in using email to communicate confidential or sensitive matters.

2. Business and Finance, *Legal Requirements on Privacy of and Access to Information*, prohibits Oakwood University employees and others from "seeking out, using, or disclosing" without authorization "personal or confidential" information, and requires employees to take necessary precautions to protect the confidentiality of personal or confidential information encountered in the performance of their duties or otherwise. This prohibition applies to email records. In this Policy the terms "inspect, monitor, or disclose" are used within the meaning of "seek, use, or disclose".

3. Notwithstanding the previous paragraph, users should be aware that, during the performance of their duties, network and computer operations personnel and system administrators need from time to time to observe certain transactional addressing information to ensure proper functioning of Oakwood University email services, and on these and other occasions may inadvertently see the contents of email messages. Except as provided elsewhere in this Policy, they are not permitted to see or read the contents intentionally; to read transactional information where not germane to the foregoing purpose; or disclose or otherwise use what they have seen. One exception, however, is that of systems personnel (such as "postmasters") who may need to inspect email when re-routing or disposing of otherwise undeliverable email. This exception is limited to the least invasive level of inspection required to perform such duties. Furthermore, this exception does not exempt postmasters from the prohibition against disclosure of personal and confidential information of the previous paragraph, except insofar as such disclosure equates with good faith attempts to route the otherwise undeliverable email to the intended recipient. Re-routed mail normally should be accompanied by notification to the recipient that the email has been inspected for such purposes.

4. Oakwood University attempts to provide secure and reliable email services. Operators of Oakwood University electronic mail services are expected to follow sound professional practices in providing for the security of electronic mail records, data, application programs, and system programs under their jurisdiction. Since such professional practices and protections are not foolproof, however, the security and confidentiality of electronic mail cannot be guaranteed. Furthermore, operators of email services have no control over the security of email that has been downloaded to a user's computer. As a deterrent to potential intruders and to misuse of email, email users should employ whatever protections (such as passwords) are available to them.

5. Users of electronic mail services should be aware that even though the sender and recipient have discarded their copies of an electronic mail record, there might be back-up copies that can be retrieved. Systems may be "backed-up" on a routine or occasional basis to protect system reliability and integrity, and to prevent potential loss of data. The back-up process results in the copying of data onto storage media that may be retained for periods of time and in locations unknown to the originator or recipient of electronic mail. The practice and frequency of back-ups and the retention of back-up copies of email vary from system to system. Electronic mail users are encouraged to request

information on the back-up practices followed by the operators of Oakwood University electronic mail services, and such operators are required to provide such information upon request.

### **C. Archiving and Retention**

Oakwood University records management policies do not distinguish among media with regard to the definition of Oakwood University records. As such, electronic mail records are subject to these policies. In particular, such records are subject to disposition schedules in the Oakwood Records Disposition Schedules Manual, which distinguishes among different categories of records, from the ephemeral to the archival.

Oakwood University does not maintain central or distributed electronic mail archives of all electronic mail sent or received. Electronic mail is normally backed up (see Section VI. B. 5), if at all, only to assure system integrity and reliability, not to provide for future retrieval, although back-ups may at times serve the latter purpose incidentally. Operators of Oakwood University electronic mail services are not required by this Policy to retrieve email from such back-up facilities upon the holder's request, although on occasion they may do so as a courtesy.

Email users should be aware that generally it is not possible to assure the longevity of electronic mail records for record-keeping purposes, in part because of the difficulty of guaranteeing that electronic mail can continue to be read in the face of changing formats and technologies and in part because of the changing nature of electronic mail systems. This becomes increasingly difficult as electronic mail encompasses more digital forms; such as embracing compound documents composed of digital voice, music, image, and video in addition to text. Furthermore, in the absence of the use of authentication systems (see Section I, Caution 4), it is difficult to guarantee that email documents have not been altered, intentionally or inadvertently.

Email users and those in possession of Oakwood University records in the form of electronic mail are cautioned, therefore, to be prudent in their reliance on electronic mail for purposes of maintaining a lasting record. Sound business practice suggests that consideration be given to transferring (if possible) electronic mail to a more lasting medium/format, such as acid-free paper or microfilm, where long-term accessibility is an issue.

### **D. Quota**

In order to effectively manage the storage resources, maintain system stability and performance, and ensure sufficient storage capacity is available to all faculty, staff, and student at Oakwood University each is given an initial disk quota allocated as follows:

**Faculty and staff – 500MB**  
**Students – 100MB**

All Oakwood University users will receive a quota warning when they reach 90% capacity and they will continue to receive a daily warning as long as their email account remains at 90% capacity or greater.

If an Oakwood University user reaches 100% email storage capacity, incoming email will be queued for up to five (5) days. If space becomes available, email stored in that queue will be delivered. If, after five (5) days, space has not become available, the email in the queue will be returned to the sender with a notice that the user was over quota and delivery was not possible.

Email user should be aware that generally quotes are set by COS (class of service). All student quotes are automatically set by COS and will not be changed. Disk quota increase requests are handled by the email administrator on an individual basis for Staff and Faculty. Staff and Faculty may have a temporary quota increase with the written consent from their Department V.P.

## Exceptions:

### Students / Alumni:

At this time OU email is not able to grant any exceptions to the quota to students or alumni.

### Faculty / Staff:

#### *Temporary Quota Increases:*

Faculty and staff who require a temporary quota increase (going on sabbatical, vacation, etc.) may submit a request to the email administrator via Track-it. Your email must include the following information: your email username, date range for the temporary increase (start to end), how much of an increase you will need (by default, we will double the size of your quota for temporary increases; please request more only if more is needed). Allow for three – five working days for the processing of your request.

#### *Permanent Quota Increases:*

While rare, permanent quota increases will be granted on a case-by-case basis. Examples of such exceptions: regular and sustained travel without access to your primary computer (i.e. a laptop), which prevents archiving of email to local folders; position requires space to allow for regular receipt of large files. Request for permanent quota increases must be sent via Track-it to the email administrator from the Department V.P. and must include the following information: your email username, an explanation of why a permanent increase is needed, and how much additional space you would like.

## FAQs

### Why do we have a quota?

There are several reasons why we have an email quota, among them are:

- To maintain system performance: large inboxes can affect performance as there is a constant read/write action taking place on the server anytime an account is accessed. As quotas get larger, inboxes tend to get larger, increasing impact on the servers. By maintaining a quota we are helping maintain performance stability for all Oakwood University email users.
- Effectively managing storage resources: unlike other web based email systems, such as Yahoo and Hotmail, Oakwood University does not possess the resources to increase email storage to allow for comparable quotas. By setting quotas we can ensure that all Oakwood users will have access to a certain amount of storage space while still allowing for some special exceptions.

### Why does my mailbox fill up so fast?

The three main reasons mailboxes fill up so fast 1) not emptying the deleted folder, 2) saving email on the server instead of locally, and 3) too many attachments. There is a work-around for this. You can easily empty your deleted folder by logging into the web interface, right clicking on the deleted folder button, and then clicking on the (Empty folder) in the drop down menu. To save email locally instead of on the server you can use an email client such as Outlook to check your email. By using an email client you can “archive” email by moving messages into local folders, which are stored on your computer, as opposed to the email server. You can also use an email client to archive any attachments you may receive.

### **What about all the Spam that takes up space in my Junk folder?**

All email messages marked as Spam are automatically transferred to your Junk folder. By default Spam messages are kept for 30 days before being automatically deleted, although you can delete Spam at anytime. This is done to provide you with an opportunity to check your Junk folder in case our Spam software,( Mirapoint Anti-Spam), marked a legitimate email as Spam. Proper management of Spam will help reduce the space used up by Spam.

### **Will Oakwood email server get more space so we can have bigger quotas?**

As resources become available to increase storage capacity on our email servers, this will be considered.

### **Why do faculty and staff get exceptions to the quota, but not students?**

All changes to quotas are done manually. Oakwood email does not possess the resources to manually manage individual quotas for 1,800+ students who may request such exceptions. In addition, at this time the email server does not have enough space to actually increase quotas, even on a case-by-case basis.

### **How can I check how much space I am using?**

The easiest way to check your quota is to do so in the web interface. Connect to the Oakwood web site and click on the icon for email and log into your email. At the top of your webmail you will see a bar which signifies what percent of email used. The bar will turn red when your quota reaches 90 % or more.

## **VII. POLICY VIOLATIONS**

Violations of Oakwood University policies governing the use of Oakwood University electronic mail services may result in restriction of access to Oakwood University information technology resources. In addition, disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, may be applicable under other Oakwood University policies, guidelines, implementing procedures, or collective bargaining agreements.