

## **WGTC 1.11**

### **Employee Email**

West Georgia Technical College provides email services in support of the academic, research, and public service missions of the College and administrative functions that support this mission.

#### **Guidelines:**

The purpose is to assure that the West Georgia Technical College (WGTC) electronic mail user community is aware of the College policies and state or federal laws concerning email services and that these services are used in compliance with these policies and laws. These guidelines have been developed to ensure a quality email service environment at WGTC that furthers the academic distribution of information and service of the institution. Achieving these goals requires that every individual in the WGTC user community cooperates and adheres to these guidelines.

#### **Email Accounts:**

All network and email accounts are the sole property of WGTC, and certain restrictions apply to their privacy. There are a number of laws and policies that may require or permit examination of computer related records such as email.

WGTC recognizes the importance of academic freedom, freedom of speech, and privacy of information. WGTC respects the privacy of users and does not routinely inspect or monitor email without the user's permission unless one of the following conditions requires such action:

1. When required by and consistent with law;
2. When there is reasonable assumption that a violation of law or College guideline has occurred;
3. When there are time-critical operational circumstances; or
4. In the normal course of system administration by the Information Security Administrators.

Since Georgia is an open records state, the law requires that public records be open and available for inspection by any member of the public. These public records include most electronic records of all state agencies. Documents, data, emails, etc. are considered public records regardless of where they reside. Other laws and acts may also require access to these records. Both Georgia law and WGTC guidelines prohibit, in general, the theft or other abuse of

computer systems. Some 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
- 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.

It is also understood that system administrators must perform routine maintenance on these systems. The nature of this system administration will sometimes require Information Technology to work with these files. The local Information Security Officer must notify the Chief Information Officer of any violation, which will, in turn, be dealt with professionally with senior college administrators. These records can then be monitored without notice to the user through vice presidential or presidential approval. This is conducted only when there is substantial evidence of an illegal activity or serious guideline violation.

#### **Legal Risk:**

Unencrypted email should not be used for the transmission of extremely personal and/or confidential educational records, copyright infringement, fraud, slander, libel, harassment, and obscenity.

Users have a responsibility to use this resource in an efficient, effective, ethical, and lawful manner. Email communication should follow the same standards expected in written business communication and public meetings. Although, by its nature, email seems to be less formal than other written communication, the same laws apply. Therefore, it is important that users are aware of the legal risks of email. Violation of this guideline may result in disciplinary action, including possible termination/expulsion and/or legal action.

By following the guidelines, the email user can minimize the legal risks involved in the use of email. If any user disregards the rules set out in this email guideline, the user will be fully liable.

#### **Legal Requirements:**

No user shall give their password for any email system to an unauthorized person, nor shall they obtain any other individual's password by any unauthorized means whatsoever. In addition to the above, no user shall utilize email for their personal use if it (1) directly or indirectly interferes with the College operation of computing facilities or electronic mail services; (2) burdens the College with noticeable incremental cost; or (3) interferes with the individual's employment or other obligations to the College.

Furthermore, no user shall use the College's email systems or services for the purpose of transmitting fraudulent, defamatory, harassing, obscene, or threatening messages, or any other communications that are prohibited by law. Use of the college email system for the purposes of sending spam or non-business-related bulk mail sent to distribution lists is strictly prohibited, whether the distribution list is internal or external.

The following rules are required by law and are to be strictly adhered to. It is prohibited to:

- Send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist, or obscene remarks
- Unlawfully forward confidential information
- Send unsolicited email messages
- Forge or attempt to forge email messages
- Disguise or attempt to disguise your identity when sending email
- Send email messages using another person's email account
- Copy a message or attachment belonging to another user without permission of the originator, which could be construed as copyright infringement or plagiarism
- Send an attachment that contains a virus

### **WGTC Standards:**

WGTC considers email an important means of communication and recognizes the importance of proper email content and speedy replies in conveying a professional image and delivering good customer service. Users should take the same care in drafting an email as they would for any other communications. Therefore, WGTC wishes users to adhere to the following guidelines:

#### **Passwords**

All passwords must be kept as secure as possible. Users must not compromise the privacy of their password by giving it to others or exposing it to public view.

Passwords could be used to access other resources on campus such as Banner and Windows accounts. The use of passwords to gain access to the computer system or to secure specific files does not provide users with an expectation of privacy in the respective system or document.

#### **Confidential Information**

Never send any confidential information via email that could violate federal or state regulations. If you are in doubt as to whether to send certain information via email, check with your supervisor first.

#### **System Monitoring**

Users expressly waive any right of privacy in anything they create, store, send, or receive on the College's computer system. WGTC can, but is not obliged to, monitor emails without prior notification. If there is evidence that you are not adhering to the guidelines, WGTC reserves the right to take disciplinary action, including termination and/or legal action.

#### **Email Signatures**

Employee email signatures will conform to the standards as set forth in the WGTC Style and Standards Guide.

#### **Penalties**

Violations of these policies incur the same types of disciplinary measures as violations

of other WGTC policies or state or federal laws, including criminal prosecution.

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