



## STEERING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION APPROVAL REQUEST

Process: E-mail as an Official Communication Medium

Description of Recommendation:

- E-mail will be used as a primary communication tool to reach students for both academic and administrative purposes.
- Each student will be given an account on the campus e-mail server, and this e-mail address will be stored as part of the student's record in Campus Management.
- Information on accessing this account will be communicated to the student once he/she is admitted. The IT Helpdesk will be available to students who have trouble accessing their olemiss.edu e-mail accounts.
- E-mail sent to olemiss.edu e-mail accounts may be forwarded to other accounts, if necessary, but no other accounts will be sent e-mail directly for official University purposes after the student has been admitted and while the student is active, i.e., has not become an alumnus.
- UM will provide a means for students to check olemiss.edu e-mail accounts through a web interface, e.g., webMail.
- Students will be responsible for checking their e-mail frequently and on a regular basis (at least twice per week).
- UM will make every effort to limit the amount of "spam" messages to olemiss.edu accounts. Specifically, departments will be discouraged from sending e-mail to all students when other forums are more appropriate, e.g., entries in the campus calendar. Departments will be encouraged to keep messages simple and direct, to avoid fancy formatting and attachments, and to target groups of students for whom the message is relevant.
- UM will provide a suitable infrastructure (hardware, software and technical staff) to allow for a stable and effective e-mail service.

Underlying Opportunities:

- E-mail serves as a quick and cost-effective way to reach students. While there are real costs, e.g., hardware, software, technical support staff, associated with using

an electronic communication tools, these can be offset by savings from the generation of paper notices and postal costs.

- Students are accustomed to reading and sending e-mail – many prefer this communication medium.
- E-mail can be generated out of administrative processes to assist students with conducting University business (for example, billing notices).

Pros Supporting the Recommendation:

- Sending notices by e-mail costs less than sending them as paper memos.
- E-mail messages to large groups of students can be delivered in a matter of hours, whereas paper memos could take several days.
- A University e-mail account is less prone to being stored incorrectly in Campus Management than a local address due to the fact that the University e-mail address changes less frequently.

Cons Against the Recommendation:

- Some students do not currently access their olemiss.edu e-mail accounts.
- E-mail may be more prone to privacy violations than paper memos, for example, if a student forgets to logout after working in a campus lab.
- If UM does not provide a proper technical infrastructure, and system performance becomes an issue, then students will become frustrated and won't check their e-mail.

Issues, Concerns, or Currently Unresolved Aspects of the Recommendation:

- The University must ensure that students who do not have their own computers have adequate access to e-mail. Currently, many academic departments operate student computer labs. Also, computers are available for student use in the IT Labs, the Writing Center and the Library.
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For further information about this recommendation, contact:

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