

Introduction

This Policy clarifies the applicability of law and certain other ACOM policies to electronic mail. Users are reminded that all usage of ACOM's information technology resources including electronic mail is subject to all ACOM policies including the Information Technology Usage Policy.

Policy

The College encourages the use of electronic mail and respects the privacy of users. Nonetheless, electronic mail and data stored on the college's network of computers may be accessed by the College for the following purposes:

For items a-g, the extent of the access will be limited to what is reasonably necessary to acquire the information and/or resolve the issue.

1. Troubleshooting hardware and software problems,
2. Preventing unauthorized access and system misuse,
3. Retrieving University business related information, *
4. Investigating reports of alleged violation of ACOM policy or local, state or federal law, *
5. Complying with legal requests (e.g.; court orders) for information, *
6. Rerouting or disposing of undeliverable mail,
7. Addressing safety or security issues.

* The system administrator will need written approval, including e-mail, indicating the extent of access that has been authorized from the Dean of Student Services or designee, to access specific mail and data for these purposes.

The College owns both the ACOM Email Accounts and all emails. Subject to underlying copyright and other intellectual property rights under applicable laws and ACOM policies, the College also owns data transmitted or stored using the ACOM Email Accounts.

To the greatest extent possible in a public setting individuals' privacy should be preserved. However, there is no expectation of privacy or confidentiality for documents and messages stored on college-owned equipment.

Users of electronic mail systems should be aware that, in addition to being subject to authorized access, electronic mail in its present form cannot be secured and is, therefore, vulnerable to unauthorized access and modification by third parties. Receivers of electronic mail documents should check with the purported sender if there is any doubt about the identity of the sender or the authenticity of the contents, as they would with print documents. 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 may be back-up copies of such electronic mail that can be retrieved.

ACOM electronic mail services may, subject to the foregoing, be used for incidental personal purposes provided such use does not interfere with college operation of information technologies including electronic mail services, burden the College with incremental costs, or interfere with the user's employment or other obligations to the College.

Faculty members may use electronic systems for course-related discussions of political topics. Individuals may use e-mail to exchange ideas and opinions, including those dealing with political issues.

Electronic mail may constitute a public record like other documents subject to disclosure under the Alabama Open Records Act or other laws, or as a result of litigation. However, prior to such disclosure, the College evaluates all requests for information submitted by the public for compliance with the provisions of the Act or other applicable law. In addition, electronic mail may constitute ACOM records subject to the ACOM's Retention of Records Policy. As such, they may need to be retained for longer than an e-mail system is capable of retaining them. It is the responsibility of the sender/recipient to determine if a particular e-mail message constitutes a college record.

If an e-mail message is a college record, it is subject to the same retention period as the paper equivalent. E-mail messages which require long-term retention should be either retained electronically on retrievable media or printed, including all header and transmission information, and filed with their electronic or paper equivalents by the sender/recipient. ACOM faculty and staff should not consider back-up media on the central system as permanent archival storage (e-mail back up media are only available for 30 days).

Incidental personal electronic mail which is not subject to the Retention of Records Policy may be destroyed at the user's discretion.

Faculty, unclassified professionals, and classified employees may not suppress publication of (e.g., unlist) their ACOM Computing ID in the on-line white pages, ACOM Phone Book or other official publication of Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine. Exceptions for special circumstances must be approved by the Dean of Student Services or official designee.

E-mail is considered a formal communication by the College with faculty, staff and students. Faculty, staff and students are expected to check their e-mail on a frequent and consistent basis in order to stay current with College and/or faculty-student related communications. For more information regarding official correspondence see the policy on Official Electronic Correspondence with Faculty, Staff and Students.

Violations of ACOM policies governing the use of ACOM electronic mail services may result in restriction of access to ACOM information technology resources in addition to any disciplinary action that may be applicable under other ACOM policies, guidelines or implementing procedures, up to and including dismissal.

Related Policy

In the interest of the fullest participation in public affairs, personnel are free to express opinions speaking or writing as an individual in signed advertisements, pamphlets and related material in support of or opposition to parties and causes. There will be the commensurate responsibility of making plain

that each person so doing is acting for himself and not in behalf of an institution supported by tax funds drawn from citizens of varying political and economic views.

Questions

Questions regarding this policy should be sent to the Manager of Information Systems – ACOM at support@acomedu.org.