



## VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY OF LYNCHBURG ELECTRONIC MAIL POLICY

### **General Provisions**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure proper use of Virginia University of Lynchburg's electronic mail (Email) systems and make users aware of what Virginia University of Lynchburg deems acceptable use of its Email systems. Virginia University of Lynchburg reserves the right to amend this policy without prior notification at its own discretion.

### **Application**

This policy applies to all persons possessing an Email account on the Virginia University of Lynchburg Email systems. The described population includes, but is not limited to, all faculty, staff, students, contractors, visitors, or other representatives of Virginia University of Lynchburg. Email systems at Virginia University of Lynchburg include, but are not limited to, university Email accounts, organizational Email accounts hosted by Virginia University of Lynchburg, Email Servers, Email Message Stores, Email List Servers, and Content Inspection Servers.

### **Privacy Provisions**

All messages, in any format, are the property of Virginia University of Lynchburg. Virginia University of Lynchburg does not guarantee confidentiality with respect to any information stored, sent, or received through its Email systems. All messages may be unintentionally disclosed through message forwarding or other means by the message originator or any intended recipients. For this reason, all users should exercise caution before sending sensitive information via Email.

Virginia University of Lynchburg reserves the right to inspect Email messages and/or disclose Email messages to law enforcement or government officials or to other third parties, at its sole discretion, without notification to or permission from those creating, sending, or receiving the information.

In accordance with the requirements of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Office of the Registrar may elect to publish student Email addresses as directory information. All faculty and staff are required to consider students' privacy when communicating with them via Email.

Consistent with FERPA requirements, each student may submit a request to the Office of the Registrar asking to not disclose his/her personal information. Notwithstanding this request, Virginia University of Lynchburg reserves the right to utilize a student's name and Email address within the University's learning environments to facilitate normal classroom operations. Virginia University of Lynchburg's learning environments include, but are not limited to, traditional classroom settings and the Internet-based Moodle

Learning environment. As such, other students enrolled in the course will have access to these data. By registering for courses, students waive their FERPA protections with respect to name and Email address within Virginia University of Lynchburg learning environments.

### **University Use of Email**

Virginia University of Lynchburg provides each user with a VUL Email account. As such, all users with an Email account are required to maintain Email communication with Virginia University of Lynchburg. If a student user chooses to forward Email sent to his/her VUL Email address to a third-party Email address, it is his/her responsibility to maintain these changes. Virginia University of Lynchburg reserves the right to utilize Email as an official means of communication and each user is responsible for monitoring and maintaining his/her Email account so that he/she may receive important messages from the University.

### **Forwarding Email**

Virginia University of Lynchburg does not permit staff to forward Email messages from their university account to any third party account. Staff are required to utilize their university provided Email (username@VUL.edu) account for all business or educational related communications to and from all other university representatives (faculty, staff, and students), business partners, and educational partners. Further, the university considers faculty and students who might also be a full-time or part-time staff employee, temporary employee, or Graduate Assistant (GA) equivalent to a staff person concerning this Email policy. For that reason, faculty and students who also fill roles within the university that include staff duties, as defined above, are not permitted to forward Email messages from their university account to any third party vendor.

While Virginia University of Lynchburg does not release faculty and students from the responsibility of receiving correspondence via their university Email account, the university does permit faculty and students to forward their Email to third party vendor accounts (ie: AOL, Yahoo!, MSN, Gmail). However, university related Emails may contain sensitive information. Therefore, the university warns that the risk of information disclosure may be greater when Email is forwarded to a third party account. Virginia University of Lynchburg does NOT guarantee the privacy of such information during third party transactions. Further, by configuring one's Virginia University of Lynchburg Email account to forward messages to a third party address, the account owner releases Virginia University of Lynchburg from any liability with respect to disclosure of personal information; whether the information is, or is not, protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Faculty and students accept sole responsibility for maintaining a confidential environment when they configure their university account to forward to a third party vendor. In addition, Emails originating from third party accounts to Virginia University of Lynchburg faculty or staff members may induce replies directly to those third party accounts as opposed to the persons replying sending messages to the originator's university Email account. The university categorizes such requests similarly to forwarded Emails in that any user requesting confidential information from a third party account releases Virginia University of Lynchburg from liability in the event that a reply to the third party account contains confidential information as originally requested (by a student).

To clarify the risk of forwarding Email to third party vendor accounts, users should understand that Email messages transmit data in 'clear text' format. This means that any entity between the originator and recipient (third party account) possesses the opportunity to intercept or read the message. Thus any

information contained in such a message may be exposed to unintended parties. Moreover, Email messages stored on third party vendor servers are readable by said vendor's technology administrators (in the least). For these reasons, Virginia University of Lynchburg strongly encourages all faculty and students to utilize their assigned university account for Virginia University of Lynchburg related communications instead of forwarding messages to and requesting information from a third party vendor account.

### **Exceptions for Forwarding**

In general, staff are not permitted to forward Email to third party accounts. However, if a staff has extenuating circumstances, he/she may request to forward Email to a third party. The onus lies with the requestor for providing a convincing argument to have forwarding approved. Each request must be directed through the university Help Desk. Requests may take up to 5 working days to complete. All requests will be evaluated by the **Director of Information Technology** and decisions will be made at his/her sole discretion. There is no avenue for appeal; all decisions regarding Email forwarding requests are final. Further, the Vice President of Information Technology reserves the right to revoke previously granted forwarding privileges at his/her own discretion without prior consent from or notification to the affected user.

### **Acceptable Use**

Notwithstanding the actions deemed 'misuse' within this policy, all users of Virginia University of Lynchburg's Email systems are permitted to utilize Email for university related business and liberal personal use.

### **Misuse**

The following actions are considered misuse and strictly prohibited. Any violation of these offenses will invoke disciplinary actions on offending users up to and including termination of enrollment and/or employment.

- Utilizing Email to transmit (send or receive) any part/s or whole copyrighted works for which the user has not received permission to use.
- Email messages, in stored, forwarded, received, or sent format, should not be used in a way which may constitute intimidating, hostile or offensive material, including but not limited to such conduct based on gender, race, color, religion, national origin or disability. The University's policy against sexual or other harassment applies fully to its Email systems.
- Using Email for personal business transactions or partisan political purposes.
- Using Email to facilitate a local, state, or federal crime.
- Utilizing encryption devices in order to conceal illegal or prohibited activities. Users who employ encryption mechanisms to protect confidentiality agree to provide "plain text" copies of messages upon request to Virginia University of Lynchburg. Failure to abide by such requests is a violation of this policy and will be treated accordingly.
- Using Email for personal means in a manner that adversely affects one's faculty or staff work duties.
- Using Email to send or forward chain letters, offensive jokes, and messages carrying viruses or worms, and mass mailings.
- Sending messages in another person's name or a fictitious name.
- Sending messages, unrelated to the operation of the University, that adversely affects the normal

operation of the Email systems.

- Forwarding your Email messages from your university account if you are a staff person.

### **Policy Violations**

Abuse of Virginia University of Lynchburg's Email systems, through prohibited personal use, or use in violation of law or university policies, will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment and/or enrollment. All persons to whom these guidelines are applicable, as stated above, are responsible for adhering to these rules. All supervisory personnel are responsible for ensuring that these policies are adhered to within their respective areas of responsibility.

All users of Virginia University of Lynchburg's Email systems may report university policy or law violations to their immediate supervisor, representative faculty or school personnel, or directly to the Information Technology Department Help Desk at 434-528-5276 or [itdept@vul.edu](mailto:itdept@vul.edu)