

**PANOLA COLLEGE
ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

With this policy, Panola College advises its employees that all data/information kept on e-mails; voice mails or the computer is property of the College and subject to access at any time. Employee access to the Internet, telephone system, and the sending and receiving of profane e-mails can be monitored and restricted to avoid violation of the College.

ACCEPTABLE USES:

- All use in direct support of the mission of the College. Use in support of the mission of the College includes, but is not limited to:
 - Communication with colleagues in connection with instruction or research,
 - Use applying for and administering grants,
 - Communication and exchange for scholarly or professional development.
- Vendor communication relevant to official College business.
- Communication incidental to otherwise acceptable use, except for illegal or unacceptable use.

UNACCEPTABLE USES:

- Any use for illegal purposes, or in support of illegal activities.
- Any use for commercial purposes or political lobbying.
- Any use that serves to interfere or disrupt the use of email and messaging services by other users. Uses that interfere or disrupt the use of other users include but are not limited to:
 - Chain letters,
 - “SPAM” (messages broadcast to large numbers of people),
 - Illegal schemes or activities.
- Communication that could be considered harassing, including but not limited to racial slurs and obscene language.
- Anonymous mailings or mailing which impersonate another individual.

DUTY OF CARE:

Users must take the same care in drafting an email as they would for any other communication. Confidential information should not be sent via email. The Texas Public Information Act states that an email is considered an open records document and is subject to being subpoenaed and used in a court of law.

PERSONAL USAGE:

Although the institution’s email system is meant for business use, Panola College allows personal usage if it is reasonable, does not interfere with work, and does not incur any cost to the institution.

GENERAL GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW:

- You represent Panola College; therefore, all written communication should reflect an expectation of professionalism.
- Use principles of good writing and pay attention to spelling, grammar, punctuation, and word usage.
- Format and design your message for clarity.
- Avoid using emoticons, graphic background or wallpaper in business emails.
- Use high-priority flags only when necessary.
- Emails are not essays. If the text is long, consider an attachment.
- Use abbreviations sparingly.
- Common courtesy is always welcomed and appreciated in written communication and helps to promote two-way communication.
- Avoid offensive or slang language of any kind.
- Be mindful that email is not private. (Emails can be forwarded and/or blind copied to others.)
- Be patient while waiting for a response.
- Send messages only to those who need to read them. Be careful how you use blind copy because it can cause unexpected complications.
- Use standard email format.
- Use reply to all only when necessary.
- Include meaningful subject lines.
- Begin message with a salutation.
- Use clear and informative signature files, and include your email address, phone number and address when necessary.
- Use the inverted pyramid form of writing. Your most important statements should appear in the first paragraph. Follow up with supporting details.
- Keep paragraphs short for easy reading.
- Use the spell check or consult grammar and style manuals.
- Re-read your message one last time before you send it.
- When forwarding an email (if you must), remove headers from previous mailings – including the email addresses – if any.
- Consider asking for a response from your reader within your email message.
- It is best not to forward a message or attachment without the author's permission. Asking for permission to forward a message or attachment demonstrates your integrity in personal and business communications.
- Never respond in the heat of the moment.