
SUMMARY OF UB POLICIES RELATING TO THE USE OF DIRECT EMAIL TO CONTACT STUDENTS FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES

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Responsible Office: Student Affairs

Summary

Requests to direct unsolicited email to the UB student population for research or non-administrative purposes must be approved in advance by the VP for Student Affairs and the attached procedures must be followed.

Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

Any unsolicited email directed to the UB student population, or any sample/component of the UB student population, for research or other non-administrative purposes must be approved in advance by the VP for Student Affairs.

- A. Approval is restricted to UB faculty and professional staff. Any student wishing access must have an appropriate faculty or professional staff sponsor. A written and signed statement from the sponsor must accompany any student request (See Sponsor Form attachment).
- B. Approval is restricted to the specific purpose(s) described in the proposal – no sharing or re-use of the email list is permitted. All requests must include a written and signed statement of agreement to this policy condition (See Researcher Form attached).
- C. Final approval to use direct email to contact UB students for research purposes is contingent upon official IRB approval, for any/all projects subject to the IRB process.
- D. Upon final approval, staff in the Office of Student Affairs will work with the requestor to prepare the appropriate project listserv. For privacy and security reasons, Student Affairs will retain ownership of the listserv.

Note: The use of unit listserv lists and email databases to transmit unit-specific business/information may be exempt from this policy.

RELATED INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

- A. Any access to UB databases for purposes of obtaining student directory information for non-administrative purposes must be approved in advance by the Director of Judicial Affairs.
- B. Any access to UB databases for purposes of obtaining student academic information must be approved in advance by the Senior Associate Vice Provost for Student Academic Records and Financial Services.

- C. Researchers are responsible for complying with policies and requirements to secure and prevent disclosure of protected student information in compliance with FERPA, HIPAA, and other legal statutes. See <http://www.itpolicies.buffalo.edu> .

BACKGROUND

UB students are, and will continue to be, our most valuable product. They join the campus community to learn, explore, experience, and develop both personally and professionally. It is UB's responsibility to support student growth and development by providing an environment, free from unnecessary distraction and rich in opportunity, guidance, and resources.

As UB faculty and staff strive to provide that environment, students are an important resource. Student feedback is essential to assessing and improving the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of both academic and academic support courses, programs, and services. Faculty and professional staff seek student responses for research designed to identify and/or study barriers to student success and/or to develop and test effective prevention or intervention strategies to overcome those barriers.

UB must maintain a careful balance between the protection and preservation of student rights to a learning environment free of solicitation, and the need for student feedback/responses for research purposes. The relatively recent availability of web-based survey software along with email technology has increased the number of requests to survey UB students and threatens this careful balance. Survey research is now less costly, more time-efficient, and more available to trained social scientists, as well as to faculty and staff with no formal training in survey research. In addition to research issues regarding quality control and data contamination, this matter has raised serious issues regarding student privacy. Therefore, UB will operate under the institutional policy and procedure described below. *Note that this policy and procedure is separate and distinct from separate and distinct from the UB IRB approval process.*

APPLICABILITY

All members of the University at Buffalo community must comply with this policy.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE

Vice President for Student Affairs

PROCEDURE

Anyone wishing to initiate contact with a sample, sub-population, or population of UB students via direct email for research or other non-administrative purposes must obtain approval by the Vice President for Student Affairs by submitting a proposal/letter of request. The proposal/ letter should include:

Requestor's UB affiliation: (e.g., faculty, staff, student, not UB affiliated)

Purpose of request: (e.g., research, marketing)

Research Type: if applicable (e.g., mandated, institutional, sponsored, un-sponsored, doctoral dissertation, Master's thesis, other student research, other – specify).

Impact of request on UB/UB students/UB community: How will the proposed student contact (and related activity) impact UB, UB students, and/or the UB community.

Description of Student Population/Sub-population: (e.g., size of sample/population, expected frequency of contact, how list will be secured.

Viability of Other Strategy Options (analysis of options - other than direct email to students – to accomplish project)

Signed Statement of Confirmation: (i.e., agreement to terms of policy approval)

To facilitate the process, a copy of a standard request form is attached.

Approval Guidelines and Priorities:

Approval of requests is based on three primary factors. Listed below are the factors and associated priorities.

a. Purpose of Request

Priority 1: Externally mandated project

Priority 2: Institutional project

Priority 3: Sponsored research project (UB faculty)

Priority 4: Un-sponsored research project (UB faculty)

Priority 5: Doctoral dissertation research project (UB student)

Priority 6: Master's thesis research project (UB student)

Priority 7: Undergraduate research project (UB student)

Priority 8: Third-Party projects

b. Impact of Request

Priority 1: Positive Impact on UB

Priority 2: Positive Impact on UB students

Priority 3: Positive Impact on UB Community

Priority 4: Other

c. Viability of Alternate Strategies

Priority in this factor will be given to project proposals that show convincing evidence that no other viable alternative strategies are available.

Contact Information

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Related Information

University Documents:

Request to Contact Students via Email for Purposes of Research: Sponsor Form

Request to Contact Students via Email for Purposes of Research: Researcher Form

University at Buffalo Survey Research on UB Students Request Form