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Faculty and Preferred Email

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To: uaf-faculty-l@lists.alaska.edu

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I'm writing to you to clarify a point of confusion about the use of email addresses at the University of Alaska.

Several years ago, we put into UAOnline the ability for students to enter their "preferred" email address. Most (but not all) official university communications go to whichever address a student has indicated in UAOnline.

Faculty and instructors sometimes enter a preferred email address as well, thinking that this will allow them to use it for official university business. That is not the case. Using an email account not controlled by the university introduces an unknown risk to student information, which could result in a violation of student's rights to privacy under both FERPA and the GDPR. Students can choose to take that risk for themselves if they want to use something other their assigned @alaska.edu email account. It's their right to privacy, so they assume that responsibility when they designate a preferred email. As employees of the university, you are expected to exercise caution with student data. In terms of email, this means that you can only use your university email account for communicating about (or with) students.

In the Registrar's Office, we send out email updates and reminders to faculty several times per semester. Oftentimes these messages are time-sensitive and give you instructions on how to do something related to grading. We will use only your @alaska.edu email for these important messages. Faculty often email our office with questions or information related to registration, advising or grading, and we can only communicate with you via your UA email.

This would also be a good time to remind you that all faculty are required to take a FERPA training annually. If you haven't done yours recently, please look under the Employee tab in UAOnline, and then click "Employee E-Learning" for the FERPA module. You should be able to complete the training within about 30 minutes.

Thank you for your assistance in safeguarding all student data, including email communications.

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