BOARD POLICY
San Mateo County Community College District

Subject: BP 2.35 Use of District Communications Systems
Revision Date: 5/13; 4/21

1. **Communications Systems**

   District communications systems include many platforms and technologies. This policy is intended to encourage best practices in communication, including limiting the number of messages being sent to any one person per day; using the appropriate technology for the need; providing for review and oversight of communications for quality and consistency with the goals of the Colleges and the District; and improving overall effectiveness of communications.

   Because technology and communications platforms change frequently, this policy is intended to be applied to all the tools being used to communicate District business. This includes legacy and new technologies such as paper mail; printed flyers and posters; analog and digital telephones; email and SMS systems; websites; emergency messaging systems; enterprise systems such as learning management (LMS) systems, customer relationship management (CRM) systems, enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, or other employee or student engagement systems; work group platforms such as Basecamp and Slack; social media; and any other systems or technologies that come into use as official District communications systems to conduct District business.

2. **Categories of District-approved Communication**

   a. *Category 1: One-to-One or One-to-Few Communication*

   Employees may use common communications systems such as telephone, email, web applications, and text messaging to conduct routine District-related business with other individual employees or limited groups of employees who conduct District business together. These limited groups include supervisors messaging to their staff, messages between groups of employees who serve together on committees, or messages between groups of employees who work on tasks or projects together. Similarly, an employee may communicate with individual students, or with small groups of students, with whom that employee works directly.

   More specialized tools such as customer relationship management software may be used with approval of the employee's supervisor.

    b. ***Category 2: Limited Mass Communication to Specific Member Groups and Cohorts***

    District mass communications systems should be used to facilitate communication within classes, committees, work and task groups, departments, divisions, student support programs,learning communities, and other identifiable groups of employees or students. This category also includes employees communicating with groups of students with whom that employee works indirectly. Examples of these groups include:

      i.   Faculty, staff, administrator, student, District or College committees

      ii.   Student support programs with identified membership or cohorts such as Promise Scholars Program, EOPS, Disability Resource Centers, Veterans Resource Centers; multicultural centers and similar programs

      iii.   Units with a business need for mass communication such as instructional departmentsand divisions; Admissions; Financial Aid; Transfer Services; Career Services and similar offices

    Approved District tools for limited mass communications to specific groups are listed at smccd.edu/communications.

    Mass communication tools used for these groups may include email lists, email listservs, emailnewsletters, text messages and text messaging platforms, social media, customer relationshipmanagement systems such as Salesforce, and other similar systems the District may acquire inthe future.

    c. ***Category 3: Campus, District, and Public Mass Communication***

    Mass communication to faculty, staff, administrators, students, or the public is restricted to theof the College Presidents and/or the District Chancellor, or their designees. Any mass communication to faculty, staff, administrators, students, or the public is subject to approval and oversight of the President/Chancellor/designee. The designee is typically the marketing director/public information officer at each college, the District director of public affairs, or vice presidents, vice chancellors or other approved designees.

    This category also includes the use of email distribution lists, listservs, and other lists of employees or students typically generated by ITS. These lists are only to be used by the Chancellor, Presidents, or their designees.

3. Mass Mailings and U.S. Mail
Mass mailings are mailings going out simultaneously to more than 100 recipients, including postcards, promotional flyers, form letters, and recruitment letters. Mass mailings must be approved by the College President, District Chancellor, or their designee (typically the Collegemarketing director).

Materials from outside organizations that are properly addressed and stamped and delivered tothe District site by the U.S. Postal Service will be delivered to employees. If material from an outside organization is delivered to a District mail location without the proper postage and

cancellation, the organization will be contacted and asked to retrieve the material, or the material will be destroyed.

4. **Required Employee Communications**
   The District communicates essential information to employees via several communications systems. Employees are expected to monitor these communications to the best of their ability and may not opt-out or "unsubscribe" from communications sent to District-provided addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, or other District-provided communications systems.

   District-provided email addresses and personal cell phone numbers for employees are automatically enrolled in the District's emergency notification system for their own safety. Employees may login to the District emergency notification system to change their communications preferences.

5. **Required Student Communications**
   The District communicates essential information to students via several communications systems, typically via U.S. mail, District-provided email, or the student's personal telephone number. These essential communications may include important information related to the student's enrollment, financial aid, attendance, grading, emergency communications, and otherinformation critical to student success. Students are expected to monitor these communications to the best of their ability and may not opt-out or "unsubscribe" from communications sent to District-provided addresses and email addresses.

   Students who do not want their personal email addresses or phone numbers used can opt out by contacting the Records Officer at the College (See Board Policy 7.28).

   District-provided email addresses and personal cell phone numbers of students are automatically enrolled in the District's emergency notification system for their own safety. Students may login to the District emergency notification system to change their communications preferences.

6. **Communicating with Prospective Students and Other External Audiences**
   The District communicates regularly with prospective students, and the general public, using mass communications tools, mailings, media relations, paid advertising, and other platforms. These communications are overseen, and must be approved, by the marketing and outreach offices at each college or the Office of the Chancellor in the District Office.

   All District communications must comply with applicable communications laws such as the Federal CAN-SPAM Act, the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA). District communications to prospective students and the public should include clear instructions for opting-in, opting-out, and privacy guidelines.

7. **Exemption for Student Academic Communications**
   The restrictions in this policy shall not apply to communications related to student enrollment status or academic status such as letters of admission, registration information, counseling appointments, financial aid information, grades, or other communications needed for a studentto make progress toward their educational goal.

8. **Union Use**
   The exclusive representatives of employees may have access to District-provided email and individual campus mailboxes to communicate with employees regarding union business. In compliance with Federal Private Express Statutes, neither District personnel nor District resources may be used to deliver the material to employees; i.e., a representative of the organization must deliver the material directly to the employee mailboxes at each District site.

9. **Use of District Communications Platforms by Shared Governance Senates**
   Shared governance bodies such as District and College academic, classified, and student senates, and other recognized employee and student organizations, may have access to the campus mail and email systems to communicate with their constituents. All communications materials distributed must comply with College time, place and manner regulations.

10. **Commercial Use**
    District communications systems may not be used to promote or sell a commercial good or service. In some cases, the President, Chancellor, or their designee (usually the College marketing director) may approve the distribution of a limited commercial message to employees or students such as a special offer or exclusive opportunity to SMCCCD employees or students. District-provided employee or student contact information (names, mailing addresses, email addresses, phone numbers) shall not be provided to a commercial third party.

11. **Political Use**
    District communications systems may not be used to promote a particular political candidate, legislation, political position, or to campaign or lobby. All employee and student communications via District communications systems must comply with District Rules and Regulations Section 2.30, Policy on Political Activity, and all other Federal, State or local regulations regarding public employees and political campaigns.

12. **Exceptions and Changes**
    The Chancellor, College Presidents, director of public affairs, and College marketing directors/public information officers may grant exceptions for special circumstances.

13. **Further Reference**
    The District provides a list of approved tools for communications (the District whitelist), as wellas guidelines for best practices in internal and external communications at smccd.edu/communications.