



## SAAC SYSTEMS ISSUES SUBCOMMITTEE

### PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS (JULY, 2009)

This subcommittee of the Student Affairs Action Coalition was charged with reviewing systems related data to understand how Student Affairs can improve service to students and communication within the division and externally. The committee met during 2008-2009. Following are their recommendations.

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

**Co-Chair: Kathy Rank** (Registrar's Office)

**Co-Chair: Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski** (University College)

John Curl (Financial Aid & Scholarships)

Christoph Dressler (International Center)

Danny Fuhriman (Housing & Residential Education)

Michelle Jones (Orientation & Leadership)

Mateo Remsburg (Student Recruitment & High School Services)

Barb Remsburg (Housing & Residential Education)

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

##### 1. UMAIL

###### Data Reviewed

- **Profile of Today's College Student, 2008**

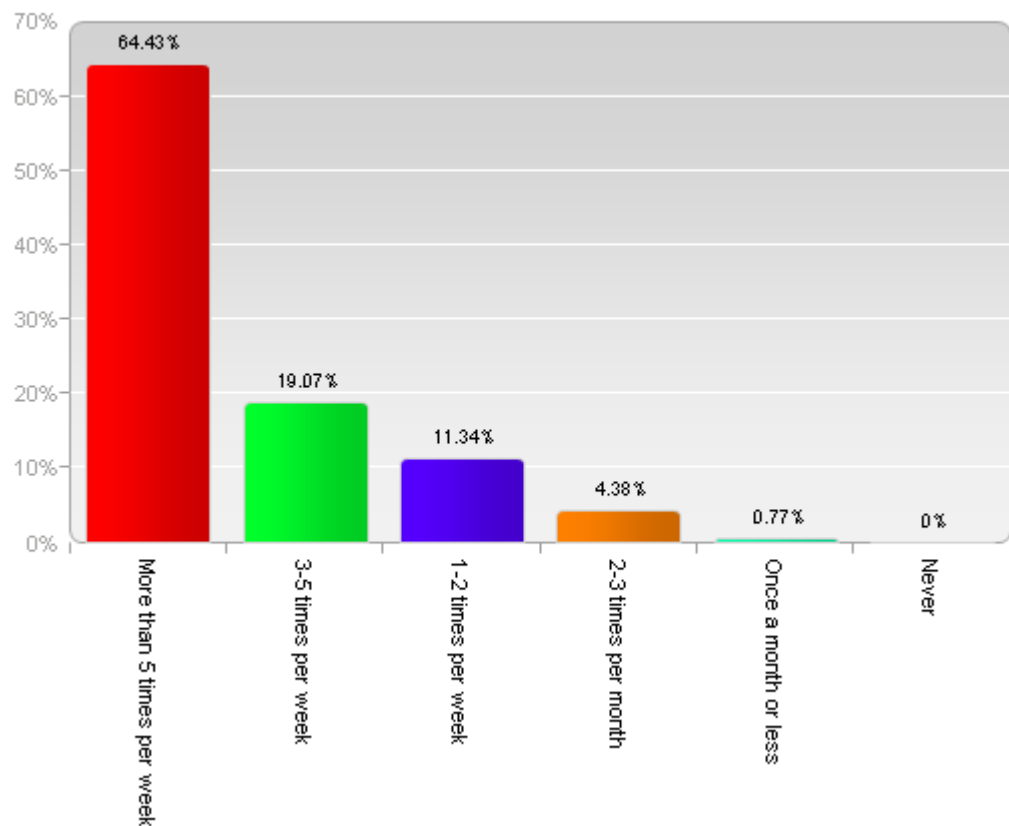
The Profile of Today's College Student (PTCS), developed by NASPA and StudentVoice, was administered at the University of Utah in Spring 2008 to a random sample of undergraduate students. A total of 1197 students responded, which represents a 15% response rate. The survey is comprised of ten different sections. All participants completed the demographics section and were randomly assigned to three of the nine subject sections. Thus, number of responses on items can vary throughout the survey.

**Demographics:** Of the respondents, 51% were female, 49% were male. Seventy-eight percent of the students identified as White/Caucasian, 7% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 5% Latino, and 3% multiracial/ethnic. Less than 1% identified as Black/African-American, American Indian/Native American and 5% of the sample preferred not to identify. Of the sample, 78% were full-time and 39% were transfer

students. The sample was fairly evenly distributed across class standing. The top five majors in the sample were Social Sciences (16%), Business (15%), Health Sciences (15%), Engineering (10%) and Humanities/Liberal Arts (10%). Seventeen percent of the sample indicated that they live on campus. Fifty-six percent are single, 41% married/partnered and 15% of the sample have children.

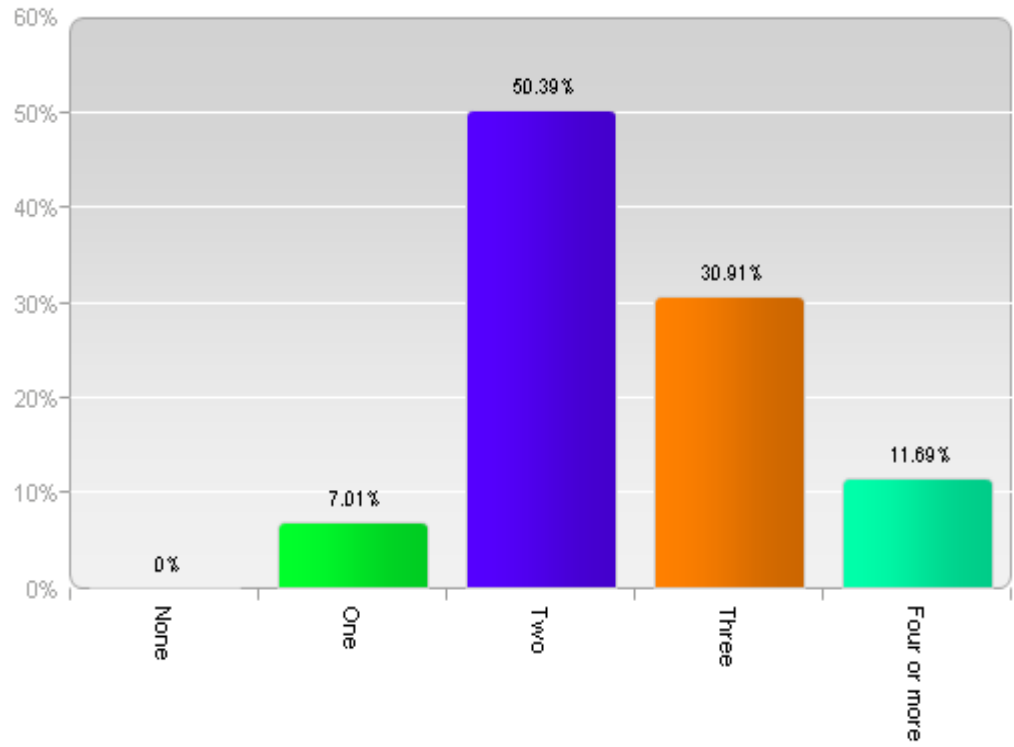
**Generational Differences on PCTS Items:** Due to different generational experiences with technology, the committee decided comparing millennial students (born 1980 or later) with pre-millennial (born prior to 1980) would be useful. Of the total PCTS sample 83.60% (856) of total respondents were identified as millennial students and 16.40% (168) identified as pre-millennial students. [Please note: The number of responses for individual items varies quite a bit due to the structure of the survey. Certain items were presented only to small samples of students rather than the entire survey sample so results must be considered preliminary.]

Q165. How often do you use the Internet for the following purposes? - Emailing/Instant messaging

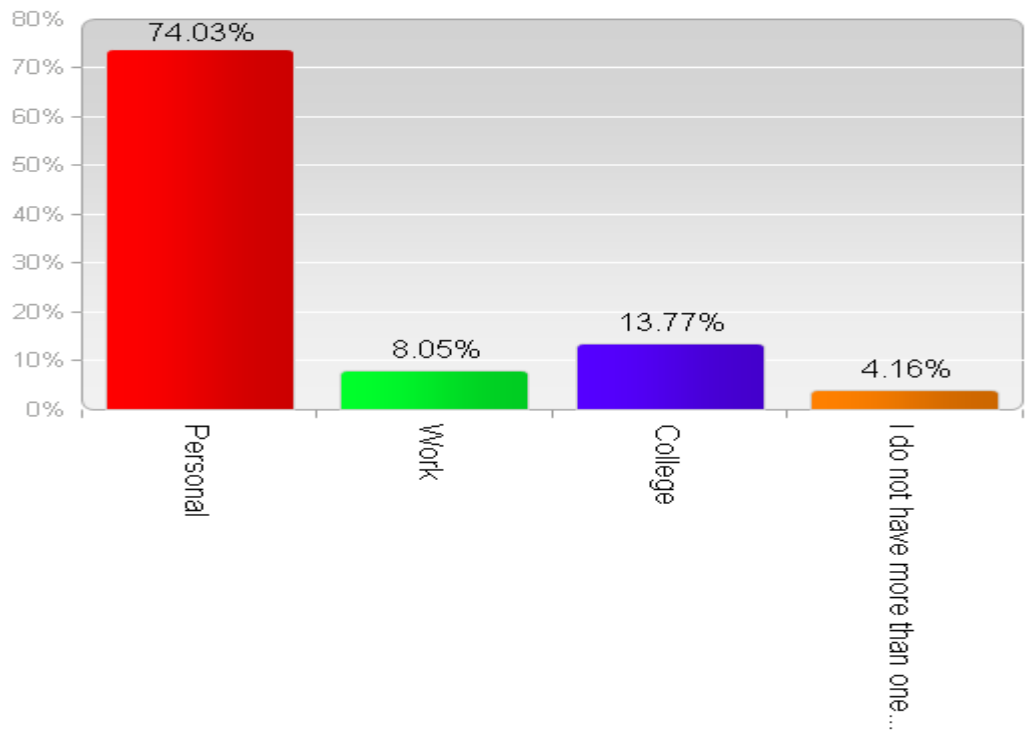


\*On this item, significant differences were found between Millennial and Pre-Millennial students with pre-millennial students (86.67%) endorsing that they use the internet to check email more than 5 days per week with only 60.87% of millennials doing so. Millennial students had a higher endorsement of 3-5 times per week (21.40%) as compared to Pre-millennial students (8.33%), 1-2 times per week (millennial 12.37% and pre-millennial 3.33%).

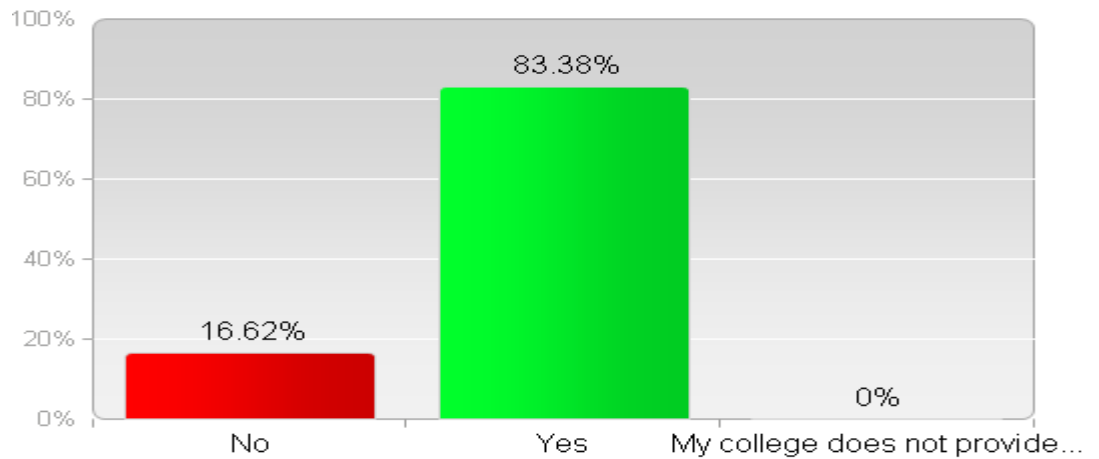
Q185. How many e-mail accounts do you actively use?



Q186. If you have more than one email account, which do you primarily use?

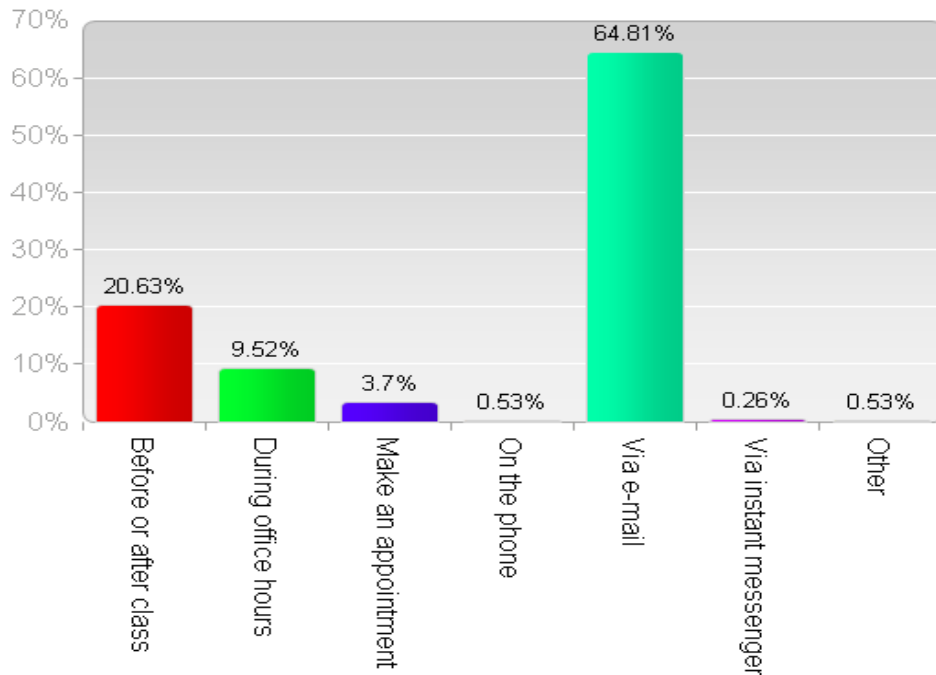


Q187. Do you use the email account provided to you by your college?



\*Statistically significant differences were found between millennial students and pre-millennial students with millennial students (85.33%) using their UMail account more frequently than pre-millennial students (73.33%).

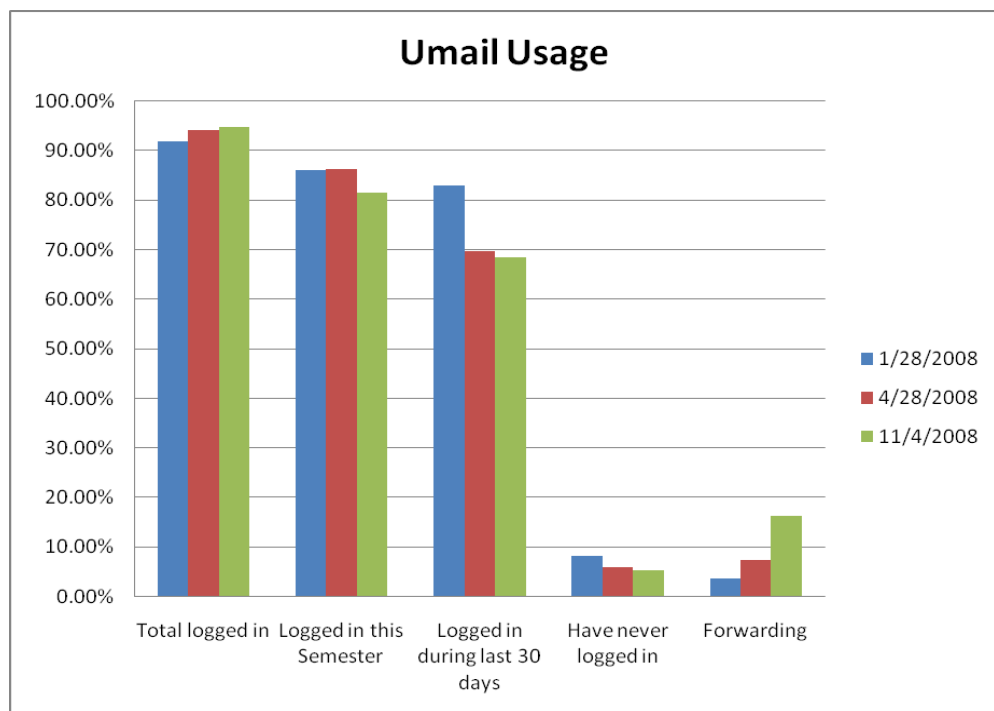
Q42. How do you most prefer to communicate with faculty outside of class?



\*Statistically significant differences were found between millennial and pre-millennial students with fewer millennials communicating with faculty outside of class (62.32%) as compared to 79.69% of pre-millennials doing so.

- **UMail Usage, OIT, November 2009**

UMail Usage Stats			
	1/28/2008	4/28/2008	11/4/2008
Provisioned students	27994	27994	28494
Total logged in	25713	26398	26980
Percentage logged in	91.85%	94.14%	94.69%
Logged in during last 30 days	23199	19543	19477
Percentage logged in last 30 days	82.87%	69.69%	68.35%
Logged in this Semester	24080	24184	23224
Percentage logged in this semester	86.02%	86.24%	81.50%
Have never logged in	2281	1644	1514
Percentage never logged in	8.15%	5.86%	5.31%
Forwarding	1045	2040	4618
Percentage forwarding	3.73%	7.27%	16.21%



- Policy distributed on UMail for IT Council approximately 3 years ago: “A University assigned student email account shall be the University’s official means of communication with all University of Utah students. The University reserves the right to send official communications to students by email with the full expectation that students will receive email and read these emails in a timely fashion.” See end of document for full policy.

### **Key Findings:**

- Based on the data reviewed, the majority of students report using email multiple times per week. There are some generational differences in email usage with pre-millennial students using email more frequently than millennial students. Most students have two or more email addresses and the majority of students use their personal email account, with a greater number of students using the mail forwarding option on UMail. The majority of students report using their UMail account. Students are using UMail more frequently and checking their accounts more regularly. However, it would be beneficial for students to do so to a greater degree to improve communication flow with students.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Encourage students to check UMail accounts more frequently or set up forwarding:** Develop marketing strategies to encourage students to use their UMail accounts more regularly to help students stay connected to important University of Utah information.
- **Consistent use of UMail** – Student Affairs offices need to use UMail as their means of contacting students as part of a larger systems issue and to support the offices who are required to use UMail (per Federal mandate). If students are receiving the message that they can provide their preferred email account in some offices and must use UMail in others, then it dilutes the utility of UMail. Students have the option to set up forwarding on UMail to their preferred account, so they still can access information at their preferred account if they so choose.
- **Ongoing marketing of UMail to multiple constituents**-- At new employee orientations, within Student Affairs, and with students, promote the use of UMail as the official means of communication with the university. Work with SALT and Directors to promote consistent marketing within the division. Collaborate with OIT, ASUU, and UGS/Academic Affairs on developing marketing strategies that include the positive aspects of UMail for students and the campus community.

### **Connections:**

- OIT
- ASUU
- UGS/Academic Affairs

## 2. Tracking Students

### Data Reviewed

- **Referral Tracker**

Referral Tracker was a system set up by Assessment, Evaluation and Research to support the University Counseling Center's Gatekeeper Training for the suicide prevention grant it received in 2007-2008. Offices who received the Gatekeeper training were asked to keep track of which offices students were referred to and from. Several offices within Student Affairs (Financial Aid, Dean of Students, and Counseling Center) and University College supported this effort by tracking referrals although a greater number of offices did not. Because Referral Tracker was designed to be anonymous to protect students' identity and the voluntary nature of the system, data was entered inconsistently and reliable data were not obtained.

- Lack of tracking data in Student Affairs

- Use of UCard data by HRE

- **Systems Issues Committee Survey**

A brief qualitative survey was sent to members of the Systems Issues Committee on communication issues within the institution. Eight of nine committee members completed the survey. The following themes emerged that were related to the concept of tracking:

- Students going to the wrong office/not knowing who they need to speak with (6)
  - "Students often don't understand the bigger picture -and get frustrated when they try to do something and don't know all the steps or the various offices they will need to interact with."
- Lack of contact with other departments (2)
  - Central communication tool, perhaps in PeopleSoft – "It would be incredibly valuable to be able to access and see brief notes on what a student has been advised from the different Student Affairs offices."

### Key Findings:

There was an interest to understand referral patterns for services as well as utilization patterns based on referrals. Currently this tracking does not exist even though Student Affairs attempted to collect these data through Student Voice during the previous academic year. At various times, this type of data can assist with the development of a proposal for resources, suggest strategies for communication, or offer connections for collaboration. Thus, it can have a positive impact on the student experience.

It was also discussed that tracking of students can have some negative implications that should be explored and understood to make sure this does not jeopardize a student within the U of U community.

### **Recommendations**

- Explore how the UCard could be used to understand student patterns of utilization for services in Student and Academic Affairs. It is important to explore the download of PEOPLESOFT demographic data to increase power of information as well as the interface with Blackboard for capabilities.
- Explore how the information would be utilized once it is available.
- Explore the viability of CRM prior to students entering the system to offer a holistic view of the student experience from prospect to graduation.

### **Connections**

- UCARD Office
- Academic Computer Services (ACS)/OIT
- Academic Affairs and Student Affairs Offices

## **3. Understanding Student Affairs Functions**

### **Data Reviewed**

- Systems Issue Committee Survey

**Summary:** Overall, the theme that emerged throughout this survey is that communication between Student Affairs offices is hindered by SA Staff's lack of knowledge about the offices other than their own. This may result in students being sent from office to office in search of the services they need and receiving incomplete or incorrect information from staff. Suggestions for improvement throughout the survey include some type of centralized communication method throughout Student Affairs offices and/or a directory of SA offices and staff members.

#### **1. What are the barriers in communication between multiple Student Affairs Offices?**

- Encountering a voicemail menu/not having someone answer the phone (3)
  - "The larger offices that run a voicemail menu can seem like you are getting the run around even though that is not the intent. I feel lucky that I have some direct lines and can call people directly... students do not have that benefit."
- Lack of knowledge across Student Affairs Offices by SA staff (3)



- “Lack of knowledge of what departments/offices really do, what their workload is, their internal communication, their exact purpose even!”
- Lack of contact with other departments (2)
  - Central communication tool, perhaps in PeopleSoft – “It would be incredibly valuable to be able to access and see brief notes on what a student has been advised from the different Student Affairs offices.”
  - “Lack of personal contact to the individual entities”
- Lack of time (2)

**Key Findings:**

- The flow of communication in Student Affairs impacts overall understanding of services and offerings for students. Due to the complexity and size of this division, the flow of information is a continuous challenge that impacts utilization of services by students. At this time, there is not a venue for providing updates to new and existing staff as the organization grows in breadth and depth to support the U of U mission and strategic plan through student engagement.

**Recommendations**

- Explore options to increase communication within the division for all members. The goal is to consistently educate and update all members on services and activities. Ideas included
  - In-person activities such as a convocation and ongoing SA Orientation for continuing staff.
  - Electronic activities such as podcasts for each department (virtual tour), on-line orientation, and a wiki.

**Connections**

- Student Affairs Departments
- Specialist on electronic tools such as Student Affairs webmaster, TACC Center
- University College Coordinator for Advisor Training and Development
- PDC

#### 4. Information and Referral

##### Data Reviewed

- Systems Issue Committee Survey

##### **1. In your observation what are the consistent communication challenges faced by students when they interact with your area or Student Affairs generally?**

- Students going to the wrong office/not knowing who they need to speak with (6)
  - “Students often don't understand the bigger picture -and get frustrated when they try to do something and don't know all the steps or the various offices they will need to interact with.”
- No one answering the phone when students call (3)
- Receiving incorrect or incomplete information from frontline staff (3)
  - “In hiring new staff, it is a challenge to assist them in understanding who does what and how to assist a student in getting the information that you need.”
  - “Often due to turnover staff aren't providing all the information necessary for a student to efficiently deal with their situation which results in multiple trips to various offices.”
  - “Our lack of knowledge (even within SA) can get in the way and add frustration on behalf of the student. We can't be expected to know everything, but personal contact to as many as possible SA players involved can help us reach answers quickly or refer students to not another office, but to an individual, which is perceived as professional and helpful by students.”
- All of these themes directly connected to students having to go from one office to another rather than going to just one place.

##### **2. Has your office implemented anything that has helped decrease student frustration and/or increased efficiency when dealing with multiple Student Affairs Offices?**

No themes emerged in response to this question, but answers included the following:

- Quick Answer Desk
- University Academic Advising Committee and other committee opportunities
- Sending email updates on department to other stakeholder departments
- Encouraging students to spread information to other students
- Revamping website to make it more helpful
- Before transferring students to another office, give them the phone number in case they get cut off
- Call other offices for the student to make sure that office can help them
- Better cross-training on other offices for staff
- Track down the information the student needs and give it to them directly

### **Key Findings:**

- As students encounter new situations in their educational experience, they start to require the use of processes and policies that are handled by various Student and Academic Affairs agencies. Students will engage various departments in search of the appropriate resource to meet their needs. Sometimes this can result in being referred to multiple agencies and locations before reaching the appropriate location or abandoning the search. Identifying opportunities to interact with students to assist them in locating the agency of interest would be advantageous for student satisfaction as well as institutional retention.

### **Recommendations**

- Explore the implementation and utilization of various technology tools in student affairs departments to effectively communicate with students for identifying and using resources. The goal encompasses training and understanding student affairs resources as well as reaching out to students with communication tools that are popular. Ideas included:
  - A virtual help desk (Milan).
  - Utilization of Instant Messaging (IM) to ask quick questions across long distances to complement current tools such as phones and e-mail.

### **Connections**

- SSB Offices
- Current U of U providers of this model (Library, Union, UC, SA Network Support, OIT,)

# University of Utah Student Email (UMail) Policy

## Introduction

Each student is issued a University Network ID (UNID) and email (UMail) account for use throughout the time the student is registered for classes at the University of Utah. Accordingly, email is an available mechanism for official communication between the University and students. Email services are provided to students of the University of Utah in support of the teaching, learning, and research mission of the University and the administrative functions to carry out that mission. Email may not be used for unlawful activities.

## Policy

A University assigned student email account shall be the University's official means of communication with all University of Utah students. The University reserves the right to send official communications to students by email with the full expectation that students will receive email and read these emails in a timely fashion.

## Assignment of Student Email

Official University email accounts, which are called UMail accounts, are available for all registered and admitted students. Official University communications will be sent to students' official University UMail address.

Students are expected to check their UMail account on a frequent and consistent basis in order to stay current with University-related communications. Students must insure that there is sufficient space in their accounts to allow for email to be delivered. Students have the responsibility to recognize that certain communications may be time-critical. Students will not be held responsible for an interruption in their ability to access a message if system malfunctions or other system-related problems prevent timely delivery of, or access to, that message (e.g., power outages or email system viruses).

## Course Related Use of Email

Faculty may assume that a student's official University email is a valid mechanism for communicating with a student, although faculty should exercise caution about including sensitive data, such as grades, in email messages. This policy will ensure that all students will be able to comply with course requirements communicated to them by email from their course instructors.

## Forwarding of Email

Students who choose to forward their UMail account to a private (unofficial) email address outside the official University network address, do so at their own risk. The University is not responsible for any difficulties that may occur in the proper or timely transmission or access of email forwarded to any unofficial email address, and any such problems will not absolve students of their responsibility to know and comply with the content of official communications sent to students' official UMail email addresses.

---

**Disclaimer:** Be sure to keep your account active and available to receive messages. Some commercially available accounts, such as Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo!mail, etc., may be automatically blocked if you reach or exceed a specified storage limit, or may be automatically closed if you do not login regularly. If you choose to forward your email to a different account, remember you are responsible to ensure that you can receive official University communications forwarded to your personal account. The University of Utah is not responsible for lost or deleted email due to account closures or storage restrictions.