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Policies: Computer and Network Usage Guidelines

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Access to computing and networking resources is a privilege to which all University faculty, staff, and students are entitled. Accompanying that privilege is an obligation, on the part of users, to understand and abide by the responsibilities and regulations that govern the computing environment at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

This document outlines the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire's guidelines concerning the use of University owned networks and computer facilities. These guidelines reflect the general ethical principles of the University community and indicate the responsibilities inherent in the University computing environment.

*Any UW-System and Board of Regents policies will supersede this policy.

View UW-System Policy

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Institutional Purposes

The use of computing and networking resources is for purposes related to the University's mission of education, research, and public service. Members of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire community may use computing resources only for purposes related to their studies, their instruction, the discharge of their duties as employees, their official business with the University, and their other University sanctioned activities. In the interest of making the use of computing and information technology resources a natural part of the day-to-day learning and work of all members of the University community, incidental personal use is tolerated. However, one should use non-University sources of e-mail, Internet access, and other information technology services for activities of an extensive nature that are not related to University purposes. The use of university computing and networking resources for University-related commercial purposes is permitted only by special arrangement with the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and the appropriate computer system administrator.

Security

The user is responsible for correct and sufficient use of the tools each computer system provides for maintaining the security of stored information. A summary of the security procedures relevant to the users of University computing and networking resources is given below:

- Computer and/or network access accounts are assigned to individual users for their exclusive use and should not be shared with others. The use of an account by anyone other than the assigned user is expressly prohibited. Users are expected to exercise diligence in preventing their accounts from being used by others and are required to report to university authorities any suspected breach of account security. Violation of these regulations governing the use of accounts by others will result in the immediate revocation of the account.

- Users should secure their accounts by using an obscure account password. Passwords should be changed frequently.

- The user should understand the level of protection each computer system automatically applies to files and supplement that protection, if necessary, for sensitive information.

- The computer user should be aware of computer viruses and other destructive computer programs, and take steps to avoid being either their victim or propagator.

Confidentiality

In general, information stored on University computers is considered confidential, whether protected by the computer system or not, unless the owner intentionally makes that information available to other groups or individuals. The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire will assume that computer users wish the information they store on central and campus shared computing resources to remain confidential. University employees will maintain the confidentiality of all information stored in University computing resources in accordance with the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents Policy on the Use of University Information Technology Resources (Regents Policy 97-2). The University will not seek access to email or electronic documents stored or transmitted on University-owned equipment except where necessary to:

- Meet the requirements of the Wisconsin Public Records Law, or other statutes, laws or regulations;

- Protect the integrity of the University's information technology resources, and the rights and other property of the university;

- Allow system administrators to perform routine maintenance and operations, and respond to emergency situations; or

- Protect the rights of individuals working in collaborative situations where information and files are shared.

All computer files and data transmissions shall be free from access by any but the authorized users of the data. It is inappropriate and unacceptable for any person to search, browse, alter or view the

content of any file, directory or transmission for which they are not directly responsible. To do so is a serious misuse of authority. Violations may lead to discipline up to and including dismissal from the University.

Employees may search, browse, alter or view the content of files, directories or transmissions only with the express consent of the person responsible for those files, directories or transmissions, or with explicit authorization from the Chief Information Officer.

The technical aspects of electronic communications and storage require that files and transmissions be backed up, logged and occasionally analyzed. When such things are done as part of the normal business of maintaining an efficient computing and networking environment, Employees will maintain strict confidentiality of the information.

Requests for the disclosure of confidential information will be governed by the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and the Wisconsin Open Records Law (SS. 19.31 - 19.39,stats., Chapter 335, Laws of 1981). All such requests will be honored only when approved by University officials who are the legal custodians of the information requested, or when required by state or federal law, or court order.

Academic Freedom

Free expression of ideas is central to the academic process. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire computer system administrators will not remove any information from individual accounts or from electronic bulletin boards maintained in individual accounts unless it is determined that:

- The presence of the information in the account or on the bulletin board involves illegality (e.g., copyrighted material, software used in violation of a license agreement).
- The information in some way endangers computing or networking resources, or the information of other users (e.g., a computer worm, virus, or other destructive program).

- The information is not in compliance with Federal law, State law, or University of Wisconsin policy.

Users whose information is removed, for any of the reasons indicated above, will be notified of the removal and may appeal any such action by contacting the Associate Vice Chancellor and CIO.

Inappropriate Usage

Computing and networking resources should be used only in accordance with the guidelines indicated herein. Examples of inappropriate and unacceptable use of computing and networking resources include:

- Harassment of other users (e.g., continuing to send electronic communications when the recipient has requested that you cease, sending threatening messages).
- Destruction of or damage to equipment, software, or data belonging to the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire or other users.
- Accessing or attempting to access computer networks or computer systems that you do not have permission to use.
- Violations of computer system security.
- Unauthorized use of computer accounts, access codes, or network identification numbers assigned to others.
- Use of computer and/or network facilities in ways that impede the computing activities of others (e.g., randomly initiating interactive electronic communications or e-mail exchanges, overuse of interactive network utilities, overuse of network accessible bulletin boards or conferences, and the "off topic" posting of material bulletin boards and conferences).
- Use of computing facilities for personal or business purposes unrelated to the mission of the University.
- Violation of copyrights and software license agreements.

- Violation of the usage policies and regulations of the networks that the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire is a member of or has authority to use.

- Violation of another users privacy.

- Academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism or cheating).

- The downloading, storage, and/or display of sexually explicit material (pornography) on University owned equipment.

- Operating server systems or other network services without prior authorization from the CIO.

- E-mailing to large numbers of recipients without following the campus E-mail Distribution Policy (February 2000).

- Use of institutional technology in violation of UW System Board of Regents policy 14-6 or UW-Eau Claire policy prohibiting discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

These guidelines were adapted from a similar statement published by Indiana University. Used with permission.

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