

MAILING LIST POLICY

Committee on IT Policy

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AGENDA



why a mailing list policy?



policy revision highlights



questions and feedback



WHY A MAILING LIST POLICY?

KINDS OF MAILING LISTS

- large, standing distribution lists
dl-faculty, dl-potpourri, dl-undergraduate, dl-graduate...
- minors, majors and graduate student lists
dl-imgd-majors, dl-cs-minors, dl-rbe-grads...
- advising mailing lists
adv-gmsmith, adv-rneamtu, adv-ssaberi...
- individually-created groups
gr-imgd-faculty, gr-robotescaperoommqp23-24...

WPI MAILING LISTS BY THE NUMBERS



~640 advising mailing lists (*adv-*)



~380 dynamic distribution lists (*dl-*)



~18,000 individually-created mailing lists (*gr-*)

MAILING LIST CHALLENGES

- **List accuracy under changing Workday data**
AY21-22: focus area for CITP was investigating issues with mailing list accuracy and determining responsibility for list maintenance.
- **Heavy email traffic on large mailing lists with unclear moderation**
AY22-23: CITP heard complaints from students and faculty about heavy list traffic on large mailing lists (e.g. high-enrollment majors). No clear policy guidance for how to approach list moderation.
- **Unused mailing lists introduce resource and security concerns**
Many lists are ephemeral (e.g. IQPs, MQPs), but last forever on WPI servers.
- **IT Service Desk receives requests to join/leave lists**
There is no record of which lists are opt-in, opt-out, and who determines membership policy. IT shouldn't (and doesn't want to) make these decisions.

CURRENT MAILING LIST POLICY

- Created by the Information Security, Risk, and Compliance committee (ISRC), without faculty governance involvement
 - CITP has been conducting ongoing review of ISRC-established policies
 - ISRC-established policy last updated in 2018
- Policy links to “Common Electronic Mail Standard” on the WVPI Hub
 - Recommends appropriate usage, including that email should not be used to “broadcast announcements to the user community at large” and that classroom discussion boards may be more appropriate for course communications
 - Parts are redundant to the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)
 - Describes anti-phishing recommendations alongside mailing list usage
 - Confusing to have a policy that points to a “standard” that sounds like a policy but isn’t a policy yet implicitly sets policy (are we confused yet? me too)

WHAT DOES THIS POLICY DO?

- Updates definitions of mailing lists to be appropriate given current community practices and IT systems
- Establishes a notion of a “list owner” who has authority over mailing list usage, moderation, membership
- Establishes responsibilities for IT in regard to mailing list maintenance and support
- Defines list owners for major standing mailing lists to be offices on campus, rather than individuals

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PROPOSED MAILING LIST POLICY

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ESTABLISHES COMMON TERMINOLOGY

- Types of mailing lists:
 - dynamic distribution list (**dl-**, **adv-**): automatically generated based upon how users are classified in WPI IT systems (e.g. Workday)
 - individually-created mailing list (**gr-**): list that is manually created by an individual member of the WPI community using Office 365's "groups" feature
- Things that feel similar to mailing lists but are not mailing lists:
 - personal alias: an alternate email ID for an individual
 - shared mailbox: an email mailbox that multiple WPI users have access to

LIST CREATION AND DELETION

- Creation
 - Anyone, including students, can make an individually-created mailing list (gr-)
 - Staff and faculty can request dynamic distribution lists with approval of supervisor (staff) or department head/program director (faculty)
 - dl- lists cannot contain members outside WPI community
- Deletion
 - IT flags lists for review for deletion if they are unused for 12 months (automated usage records), owner has left WPI, list violates usage policy
 - IT will make good faith effort to bring flagged lists back into compliance
 - Deleted lists are fully recoverable within 30 days of deletion

DISALLOWED ACTIVITIES

- Do not create lists to substitute as personal aliases
- Do not create or use a list to pretend to be somebody or something else
- Do not reserve a list name if you won't use it
- Do not use lists to forward mail to a non-WPI account
- Do not use lists as an alias for obtaining services internal or external to WPI (this is what shared mailboxes are for)

LIST OWNERSHIP AND PURPOSE

- All mailing lists have named list owners and stated purposes, set by list creator
- List owner responsibilities:
 - Define criteria for list membership
 - for dl- lists, work with IT to accurately capture list population automatically
 - Determine appropriate approach to list management: opt-in/opt-out policies, moderation policies, approved senders
 - Maintaining the health of the list by reporting AUP violations if needed
 - Transferring ownership of the list upon a change in role or departure from WPI
 - Requesting removal of the list when it is no longer needed

STANDING LIST OWNERS

- Policy names offices on campus as owners for major named mailing lists
 - dl-faculty, dl-students, dl-staff, dl-allemployees, dl-potpourri
 - majors, minors, and grads lists – department head/program director
 - advising lists – office of academic advising
 - course mailing lists – instructor of record [these are made on request, not automatic]
 - ...others?
- Working with offices across campus to determine appropriate owners to place in policy

IT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Maintain and ensure reliability of the internal mechanisms that populate dynamic mailing lists
- Ensure that changes made to underlying internal data reflect on list membership within one business day
- Respond to list owners for list maintenance tasks, provide support for mailing list services named in policy
- Upon request, provide list membership information to dl- mailing list owners in a user-friendly and accessible format
- Provide support to individually-created list owners to help them find this information
- Create mailing lists upon valid requests
- Communicate with list owners when changes to the underlying mailing list service may impact list operations



FEEDBACK?

Committee on IT Policy

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*note that gr-citp also reaches recurring CITP guests:
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