

TEXT MESSAGING

POLICY**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines and expectations regarding the appropriate use of text messaging as an additional form of communication among students, faculty, and staff. This policy aims to enhance efficiency, professionalism, and security in our communication practices, while also safeguarding sensitive information and promoting a conducive learning and working environment within the college community.

Email remains the official communication method of Ridgewater College.

Scope

This policy applies to individual, mass, and system-generated text messages by Ridgewater College faculty and staff to prospective and currently enrolled students and other currently employed faculty and staff. It does not apply to individual personal text messages with whom the sender is in regular, direct personal contact.

Definitions

Text messaging is defined as sending SMS messages to users' cell phones.

Emergency Messages are brief and urgent communications sent out to inform the college community about situations that require immediate attention or action, such as natural disasters, severe weather conditions, campus lockdowns, or other emergencies that pose a threat to safety or disrupt normal operations. The purpose of such messages is to quickly disseminate important information and instructions to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone on campus.

Non-Emergency Messages convey important but non-urgent information to students, faculty, and staff. These messages could include reminders about upcoming events, administrative announcements, campus updates, or general information relevant to the college community. The purpose of such messages is to keep members of the college community informed about relevant matters that may impact their academic or campus life, without causing unnecessary alarm or urgency. They serve to promote communication, transparency, and community awareness within the college environment.

Policy

College-issued individual, mass, or system-generated text messages must support health, safety, student success, recruitment and/or enrollment initiatives at Ridgewater College.

Faculty are encouraged to communicate effectively with their class groups, and texting to class groups can be an effective means to do so. However, text messaging must be limited to students currently enrolled in the faculty members' classes. Texts to students must be class-related content.

College-issued text messages must be identified as coming from Ridgewater College in the title (ex. Ridgewater College Star Alert).

Text messaging must not be used as the sole means of communicating an emergency or other essential message or announcement. These text messages must be supplemented by some other means of

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47 communication (such as email, the official method of communication at Ridgewater College) to ensure that
48 all individuals, including those without a mobile/cell phone, receive the message.

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50 Students, faculty, and staff are automatically subscribed to both emergency and non-emergency text
51 message systems used by the college. Any systematic process or tool used to communicate with students
52 through text messaging must be approved by the President's Executive Team prior to adoption.

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54 College business-related text messages are considered public records whether a Ridgewater College
55 system/tool or personal telephone/system/tool is used for texting.

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57 Ridgewater College non-emergency text messages must, at a minimum, comply with the following:

- 58 • Comply with applicable laws and regulations to reduce institutional risk.
- 59 • Follow best practices outlined by professional organizations.

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61 Text Messages must not be used to communicate:

- 62 • Personal matters, e.g., items for sale, farewell messages, etc.
- 63 • Advertising or other commercial purposes not related to the College's mission.
- 64 • Personal or confidential information, including, but not limited to Tech ID, StarID, social security
65 numbers, passwords, or financial information.
- 66 • Any content related to Sex, Hate, Alcohol, Tobacco, or Firearms.

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Privacy

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69 Employee cellular telephone numbers not issued by the College are considered private and may only be
70 used with the employee's consent. Employee cellular telephone numbers issued by the College are
71 considered public under [Minnesota Statute Chapter 13 - Minnesota Government Data Practices Act](#).

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73 Student cellular telephone numbers are considered limited directory data and may only be used for
74 purposes outlined in this policy and the Student Data Practices Policy.

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76 All College related text messages are considered government data regulated under Minnesota Statute
77 Chapter 13 – Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, regardless of the privacy of the phone number
78 above.

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80 Any device used to send College related text messages is subject to provisions of Minnesota State Board
81 Policy 5.22 [Acceptable Use of Computers and Information Technology Resources](#) and related procedure
82 5.22.2 [Cellular and Other Mobile Computing Devices](#).

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Disclaimer of Liability

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85 Alerts and messages sent via SMS may not be delivered for several reasons, including if the mobile phone
86 is not in range of a transmission site, or if sufficient network capacity is not available at a particular time.
87 Even within a coverage area, factors beyond control may interfere with message delivery, including the
88 customer's equipment, terrain, and proximity to buildings, foliage, and weather. No guarantee is made that
89 alerts or messages will be delivered, and neither we nor the carriers will be liable for delayed or undelivered
90 messages.

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92 **Enforcement**

93 Any student or employee found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and
94 including loss of access rights and/or termination of employment under adherence to their respective
95 collective bargaining agreement of the Employee Code of Conduct. Students found to have violated this
96 policy may have their access removed and may have additional actions taken as directed by the Student
97 Code of Conduct.

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100 History:

101 01.22.2024 Proposed

102 05.30.24 Adopted