

**Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies**  
**Policy on the Use of Text Messaging**  
**CUSP 2025-26G**  
**Resolution was Withdrawn by the Commission**

Resolution Proposal Form Sent to University Council Cabinet	09/24/2025
First Reading by Commission Undergraduate Studies and Policies	02/23/2026
Approval by Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies	
First Reading by Faculty Senate	03/06/2026
Approval by Faculty Senate	
Staff Senate Comment	02/26/2026
Administrative and Professional Faculty Senate Comment	03/12/2026
Graduate and Professional Student Senate Comment	
Undergraduate Student Senate Comment	
First Reading, University Council	
Approved, University Council	
Approved, President	
Approved, Board of Visitors	
Resolution Withdrawn by the Commission	03/23/2026

**WHEREAS**, the University uses several means to communicate matters of official business effectively with students; and

**WHEREAS**, text messaging has been an effective way to communicate with students; and

**WHEREAS**, extensive text messaging can oversaturate student receipts and lead to opting out;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** hat the attached policy on official University text messaging be adopted upon development of a university-wide opt-in opt-out process.



## Text Messaging SMS Policy

No. ####

Policy Effective Date:  
xx/xx/xxxx

Last Revision Date:  
xx/xx/xxxx

Policy Owner:

Policy Author:  
(Contact Person)

Affected Parties:  
Undergraduate  
Graduate  
Faculty  
Staff  
Other

- 1.0 Purpose
- 2.0 Policy
- 3.0 Procedures
- 4.0 Definitions
- 5.0 References
- 6.0 Approval & Revisions

### 1.0 Purpose

This Text Messaging SMS Policy outlines the guidelines and expectations for the use of text messaging services within the university to ensure effective communication with students. This policy applies to all university employees, students, or Virginia Tech-affiliated organizations/department who use text messaging for official university purpose. This includes messages sent from a university-owned device, account, or office; messages sent through third-party services on behalf of any unit of the university; and messages from any authorized university employee or agent acting in their official capacity.

### 2.0 Policy

University entities or individuals may, as needed, use text messaging tools to communicate with university constituents on matters of official University business. The message content must clearly state that the message is from Virginia Tech so recipients can immediately understand the message origination.

### 2.1 Text Messaging Guiding Principles

Text messaging will be used as an additional channel for critical communications as noted in section 2.3. Text messaging will be used minimally to prevent oversaturation of student receipts and leading to opting out. All text messages must be directly related to student safety or academic achievement, must be mission related and be relevant.

All text messages must comply with [Policy 1025, Policy on Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Assault](#), FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), and [Policy 7000, Acceptable Use and Administration of Computer and Communication Systems](#).

### 2.2 Categories of Messages

Texting is reserved for information considered critical and/or time sensitive. The following are the categories of mass text messages permitted under this policy:

- Crisis and/or emergency, or significant disruptions to university operations, including activities which pose a threat to public safety, as determined by the Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer or designee
- Information critical to student academic success, limited to critical academic calendar dates, course-related texts from instructors, and academic advising and success notifications
- Individual appointment confirmations where individuals are able to opt-in/out
- Other critical messages as determined by the President, Executive Vice President and Provost, Vice President of Student Affairs or designee



Text messages should not be used for:

- General information to large populations
- Repeat reminders of text messages already circulated
- Personal matters (e.g. items for sale, farewell messages, etc.)
- Solicitation/Advertising purposes not related to the university's mission

Text messaging must not be used as the sole means of communicating an essential message or announcement. The text message must be supplemented by some other means of communication (e.g. electronic, paper notice) to ensure all students receive the information.

## 2.3 Official emergency or urgent need for messaging

Emergency or urgent need is defined by the Clery Act as “an event of occurrence that constitutes an ongoing or continuing serious threat to the university community.” This would involve any circumstances under which the Responsible University Authority reasonably believes that notification of the university community, or a substantial subset, communicated over the space of several hours, will reduce the risk of personal harm, property damage, or severe negative impact on university operations.

## 3.0 Procedures

### 3.1 Opt-in and Opt-out

Students must initially opt-in prior to receiving any text message. Accessible, clear opt-in and opt-out processes must be in place for each tool/entity so that students, staff, and faculty have the opportunity to opt in or out on an ongoing basis. Only those who opted-in should receive non-emergency text messages.

### 3.2 Standards

University entities may send non-emergency messages that are closely related to Virginia Tech's mission, provided the recipient has previously given express consent when they gave their telephone number to Virginia Tech with their explicit understanding and agreement that they would receive non-emergency messages. These messages may include information about upcoming general university activities, within the following parameters.

Non-emergency messages must, at a minimum, comply with the following:

- Be sent only to individuals who have opted-in;
- Messages should be no longer than 160 characters
- Comply with applicable laws and regulations
- Adhere to university branding and other guidelines as set forth by University Relations
- Allow subscribers to opt-out of receiving non-emergency messages at any time and honor those requests promptly; and
- Communicate that standard data and text messaging rates may apply
- All messages must be tagged with the appropriate identifier e.g., school, administrative office so that the recipients of the text can see immediately where it originated
- All text messaging services or software must be approved by the Procurement Office



Text messaging must not be used to communicate:

- Repeat reminders of messages already communicated
- Personal topics e.g., items for sale, farewell messages, etc.
- Advertising for organizations or other commercial solicitations or
- Personally identifiable information (pii) or FERPA protected information, including but not limited to social security numbers, VT ID numbers, financial information, or grades

The following groups, departments or units have developed respective standards and guidelines on accumulating opt-in numbers, preparing and configuring messages, storing and securing associated data, and data retention.

[Links to department standards and guidelines]

## 4.0 Definitions

Mass Text Messaging – Texts sent to predetermined group of people with whom the sender is not in direct, personal contact on a regular basis.

## 5.0 References

Policy 1025, Policy on Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Assault  
<https://policies.vt.edu/assets/1025.pdf>

Policy 5615, University Safety and Security Policy  
<https://policies.vt.edu/assets/5615.pdf>

Policy 7000, Acceptable Use and Administration of Computer and Communication Systems  
<https://policies.vt.edu/assets/7000.pdf>

Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act of 2003 (“CAN-SPAM Act”), 15 U.S.C. 7701-7713  
<https://www.ftc.gov/enforcement/rules/rulemaking-regulatory-reform-proceedings/can-spam-rule>

The Clery Act <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2014-10-20/pdf/2014-24284.pdf#page=33>

## 6.0 Approvals and Revisions



## AP Faculty Senate Comments

### CUSP 2025-26G – Policy on the Use of Text Messaging

3/12/2026

The A/P Faculty Senate Policies and Issues Committee has reviewed and endorses CUSP 2025-26G – Policy on the Use of Text Messaging.

Although the resolution received majority approval from A/P Faculty Senators through an internal review and comment process, all submitted comments are provided here for your consideration. A formal response to these remarks is not required:

I have concerns as to how broad this resolution is. Does it cover text messages from Virginia Cooperative Extension Agents to 4-H teen leaders? Texting is often the best way to communicate with them and would likely violate the reminder or mass communication parts of this resolution. Since they are not academic students attending VT, they may be excluded from this resolution, but I was unsure and therefore abstained from the vote.

I don't understand why we need this, but I'm not a student and therefore do not know how many texts they receive a day from the University. It's also unclear how the messages that are not deemed worthy of texting are sent to students (paper?, that's ridiculous).

I don't have an issue with this policy as crafted. However, in practice, there should be multiple modes of communications available through university resources to connect with students and not relying solely on text messaging.

"Text messaging must not be used to communicate:" appears at top of page 2 and 3. It appears there may be a format issue and should not appear at top of page 2.

It's unclear if this is for mass text messaging or individual. Will similar procedures/policy impact student employees for work related instances?

The policy has affected parties listed as the whole of the VT community, but it specifically calls out students as the critical audience; the student audience may have more protections than the other audiences, so I'm unclear why this is a blanket policy for everyone, rather than having a general policy with a separate student policy. Additionally, the "mission related" category of allowed text messages is not defined. In Advancement, text messaging is deployed for fundraising campaigns. These messages go to students as well as the primary alumni audiences. Advancement adheres to opt-out best practices and standards as set by SMS carriers and licensed vendors. How would this policy affect Advancement's efforts? Would those fundraising campaigns be considered "mission related"? If so, there needs to be definition around whether efforts



## VIRGINIA TECH

like those fit in. Additionally, on page 2, fourth bullet — the reference to University Relations is quite out of date. The office rebranded to Marketing and Communications, so the name will need to be updated. On page 3, there is a repeat of the concern about whether fundraising solicitation text messaging should be included explicitly because it's currently vague about whether it's allowed or not. The 5.0 references section could also link to Policy 5215 on Sales and Solicitation on campus as a related policy.

A good start, but it's not quite ready. This is a vote on the current form of the resolution as it comes to the A/P Faculty Senate in March 2026. I am supportive of establishing a university text-messaging policy. However, the text proposed does not establish clear enough lines of responsibility between the institution and students. If a policy establishes an informal or formal norm, such as communicating non-emergency yet important matters to students, yet students are also instructed by the policy that it is opt-in, it is easy to foresee a mismatch of expectations, where faculty and staff believe messages reach target students, yet those students have not opted-in. Having multiple channels is laudable, but there must also be a recognized communication channel of official record. I would like to see this issue addressed further.

Centralizing texting policies and procedures would be a big shift for the university, and there would be significant concerns about the university's ability to enforce this policy, particularly since there isn't an owner yet identified and there don't appear to be enforcement mechanisms. There need to be consequences for individuals as well as departments who violate the policy, particularly if a student has opted out.

Public Safety may want a broader definition than that the Clery Act uses.

There is existing technology that would likely need to be addressed here—Zoom phones allows for texting, for example. Sometimes Zoom includes a default help/opt out language to the end of the text, but not all the time. This and other existing technologies would need to be reviewed to see if they need to be adapted, not just to be compliant, but to facilitate user compliance with a texting policy. This is also the kind of thing that the Policy Author would be responsible for interpreting post implementation.

Would not recommend listing departments that have separate standards/guidelines in the policy – creates need to constantly revisit and refresh.

This would need to be cross-referenced with the youth protection policy with potential limitations for enrolled minors, athletic recruits, minor participants in campus, etc. Even if this does not result in carve outs or something similar, this is an opportunity to improve controls over how the university interacts with minors virtually/remotely, which is an area that many universities are stepping up to improve.

Has Research reviewed this? Implementing something like this could put high research units in a position where they have to reestablish a participant database to allow for opt in if they've been opt out in the past, let alone if soliciting for a research study would be by policy no longer allowed.



## **VIRGINIA TECH.**

Virginia Tech cannot govern the actions of a third party, and "Virginia Tech-affiliated organizations/departments" is not used the same way by different units across campus. Is the intent to provide oversight over the Alumni Association, for example? If so, that could be problematic.

Recommend that language at bottom of p. 2 be reworded to "All text messaging services or software must be approved by the IT Asset Review team"

Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer should be changed to Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

"University Relations" on p. 2 now goes by "Marketing and Communications"



## Staff Senate Comments

CUSP 2025-26G

February 26, 2026

Staff Senate has reviewed CUSP 2025-26AG and only suggests considering the formatting at the end of page 2 and into the bullet list atop page 3. Perhaps this is just a version integrity issue but it looks odd.

Staff Senate has no further questions or comments.

Thank you,

Gabe Petry, Chair, Staff Senate Policies and Issues Committee