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UW SPH Listserv Policy and Protocol

Contents:

Purpose and General Policy

This document uses UW IT policy to direct all School of Public Health (SPH) listserv use to be in accordance with laws and UW policies. The listserv mailman system is an automated mailing-list management system that allows UW staff, faculty, and students to send email to target audiences.

You may create and use listservs only for activities related to UW research, education, or administration. SPH listserv users agree to UW Mailman Polices, Faculty Code, Student Conduct Code, policies prohibiting discrimination, appropriate use of University technology resources, and SPH policies and protocols.

Mandatory State Resource Use Law and Policy

Listservs are operated with Washington State funds; therefore, listserv use must follow federal and state laws and University of Washington policies.

Law and policy prohibit listserv use for:

- Partisan political purposes, such as circulating advertising for political candidates or help to defeat a ballot measure.
- Personal gain or the benefit of any individual or outside organization, such as promoting an outside business, donations to group or non-profit organization not affiliated with the UW, displaying commercial advertising, or performing work for profit in a manner not authorized by the University.

State law holds listserv users and moderators personally responsible for appropriate use of state resources and can be fined up to $5,000.

If you have questions about whether something is permissible when using state resources, please refer to the appropriate use of University technology resources or reach out to the UW Office of Internal Audit, UW Division of the Attorney General's Office or SPH Communications Director.

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Types of Listservs

Per the new UW institutional Mailman policy, there are two types of Listservs, required and opt-in, and both have different purposes and protocols within the context of SPH.

	Required Listservs	Opt-in Listservs
Purpose	Required Listservs disseminate official SPH or department messages that all related staff, faculty, students receive and cannot opt out of receiving.	Opt-in Listservs can be created for the discussion of certain academic topics. Members/recipients can opt in or out of these listservs at any time.
Creation	Required listservs may not be created.	Opt-in listservs can be created by any UW staff, faculty, or student by reaching out to your departmental IT team.
Moderation	Required SPH listservs are managed and moderated by the SPH Director for Marketing and Communications or their designee. Required departmental listservs should be managed and moderated by the department chair, department administrator or their designee.	Opt-in listservs must be moderated by the creator of the listserv and/or their designee to ensure content follows laws, policies, and is relevant to the intended audience.
Who can submit messages	For SPH required listservs, Office of the Dean staff and leadership. Departments may choose and communicate who can submit messages to required department listservs. *Anonymous postings are prohibited for required listservs*	Who can post on opt-in listservs can be determined by the listserv manager, but this policy must be made transparent to all members and implemented consistently. *Anonymous postings are prohibited for opt-in listservs*

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Required Listserv – Policy and Protocol

SPH Required Listservs: Acceptable Messages
- Business, resource, and/or emergency updates that inform or impact required listserv audiences.
- Executive communications from the Dean or SPH senior leadership team (in the case of Schoolwide required listservs) or department chair or departmental leadership team (in the case of departmental required listservs).
- Announcements of events held at, or sponsored by SPH or departments, relevant to required listserv audiences (see event guidance).

SPH Required Listservs: Unacceptable Messages
- Messages that do not follow state resource laws or institutional and/or school policies.
- Messages that are not official business or not relevant to required listserv audiences.
- Messages regarding the exchange of ideas.
- Messages that solicit a direct, written response: "respond to this email with…"
- Messages that are marked "high importance" and do not contain emergency or personal safety information.
- Messages replying to a listserv email.
- Messages should aim for a 150-250-word limit. Case-by-case exceptions can be made that best support School needs. Otherwise, if you must communicate more information you can link to that information via the web or intranet rather than putting it in the message.
- Unofficial messages that may be more appropriate for a different internal communications channel such as Microsoft Teams or opt-in listservs (e.g. the availability of food, lost or found items, exchange of ideas, community activities, personal news or events).

SPH Required Listservs: Moderation and Management
- Messages are held for moderator approval before being released.
- Messages are usually approved or rejected within 1-2 business days.
  - Listservs are not moderated over the weekend or holidays.
  - Due to the amount of listserv messages received, moderators will not follow up to confirm if messages are approved.
  - Please consider all messages approved within 1-2 business days unless a rejection message is sent.
- A rationale for rejected messages should be provided to the sender by the moderator. Rejection is usually due to the message not adhering to policy or best practices, or other circumstances.
- Unless requested and approved, moderators may determine the timing of distribution during optimal times to avoid email overload.

SPH Departmental Required Listservs
- Departments are expected to maintain an up-to-date list of the required listservs and what general audiences they reach within their unit. They are expected to make this information available to their department stakeholders and the Office of the Dean.
- Departments may place additional requirements for the moderation and management of required listservs in their department, as long as they:

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o   Are consistent with state laws, University and SPH policies;
o   Are clearly communicated to departmental stakeholders; and
o   Are applied consistently.

In the absence of such direction, SPH listserv policies and protocols apply to department required listservs.

Opt-in Listserv – Policy and Protocol

Opt-in Listservs: Creation

Any staff, faculty, or student with a UW Net ID may create a listserv. The SPH community is directed to submit opt-in listserv creation requests to your department's IT team. See additional listserv creation policies, protocols, and resources from UW IT Connect: Mailman Policies – IT Connect (uw.edu)

Opt-in Listservs: Acceptable Messages
•   Communications that advance school projects, research, or academic priorities
•   Messages related to sharing resources and/or facilitating the exchange of ideas

Opt-in Listservs: Unacceptable Messages
•   Messages that do not follow state resource laws or institutional and/or school policies
•   Unofficial communications appearing to provide official, SPH business or emergency related information (e.g., an HR-related update from non-HR staff)
•   Additional rules opt-in listserv owners may choose to enforce relative to the listserv purpose, topic or audience (owners must communicate and educate additional rules to their listserv community)

Opt-in Listserv Protocols
Opt-in Listserv owners may create and conduct their own protocols and moderation processes if they follow state laws and UW policies; and are made known to all members and are implemented consistently. In the absence of such direction, SPH listserv policies and protocols apply to opt-in listservs.

Additional Direction and Guidance

Event Promotion via Listserv

•   **SPH Trumba Calendar and Registration Links:** An SPH Trumba calendar event allows you to host and send a registration link and provide functionality to add an event to your calendar. Sending a registration link via a Trumba calendar event ensures you can track RSVPs and all invites receive one. How to create a Trumba calendar event.

•   **Outlook Invites**: Sending outlook invites via listservs can create technical problems like unreliable tracking of invite responses. Avoid sending outlook invites when RSVPs must be tracked and there is an event capacity limit.

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Exchange of Ideas

Universities are regarded as facilitators of the exchange of ideas. The promotion of such discussions is within the UW's mission along with providing information on where to learn more about an issue.

The exchange of ideas and their promotion must follow state laws and UW policies and codes. SPH promotion of the exchange of ideas is to occur via opt-in and not required listservs.

Guidance for Resource Use Law and Policy

This section provides the exact law and/or policy regarding state resource use, and an unofficial interpretation of each to provide guidance.

Guidance	Law and/or Policy
Listservs are for public purposes only and may not be used to advance private interests. You may reference or include links to private or non-profit organizations as resources, but do not include messaging that could be seen as advocating or persuading for non-UW affiliated private businesses or organizations, such as promoting sales or calling for donations.	**Gifting state resources:** The state constitution (Article VIII, Sections 5 & 7) prohibits gifting of state funds and resources, such as space on UW webpages, social media or official listservs, and use of employee work hours. Use of state funds must be to carry out a fundamental public purpose or without donative intent.
Do not link to an external organization's fundraising page or an external fundraising site such as Gofundme.	**Providing links to outside donation resources:** No University unit, faculty or staff should be linking in their UW e-mail, on a UW website, or in a UW-managed social media site to an outside organization's fundraising page or a fundraising site such as Gofundme, since this would be in violation of WA State Ethics Act section 42.52.160, which states that a state organization or officer may not use state resources for the private gain of the officer or another. "Another" is usually defined as any non-state organization, individual or company. The only exception is groups that are part of the Combined Fund Drive and appeals for those groups should go through their CFD listing.

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Guidance	Law and/or Policy
Listservs cannot be used to advance lobbying or political activity. You may share information about topics that may be political in nature, but do not include messaging that could be seen as advocating for or against ballot measures, candidates, or legislation.	**Lobbying and political activity:** Generally, public resources cannot be used, directly or indirectly, for attempting to influence the passage or defeat of legislation by the legislature (RCW 42.17A). Communications should avoid being interpreted as lobbying. This includes promotion of petitions that call for passage or defeat of legislation. Similarly, public resources cannot be used, directly or indirectly, to promote the election or defeat of a candidate for office. **RCW 42.52.180:** No state officer or state employee may use or authorize the use of facilities of an agency, directly or indirectly, for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of a person to an office or for the promotion of or opposition to a ballot proposition. Knowing acquiescence by a person with authority to direct, control, or influence the actions of the state officer or state employee using public resources in violation of this section constitutes a violation of this section. Facilities of an agency include, but are not limited to, use of stationery, postage, machines, and equipment, use of state employees of the agency during working hours, vehicles, office space, publications of the agency, and clientele lists of persons served by the agency.

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Guidance	Law and/or Policy
While listservs cannot be used to endorse or advance businesses, organizations, candidates, ballot measures or legislation, content within a listserv does not need to be neutral. Moderation of listservs, however, must be viewpoint neutral – if a message meets the guidelines of a listserv it cannot be rejected simply because the moderator or others disagree with the views it expresses.	**Content neutrality:** Authorized communications from UW do not need to be content neutral, however, as a public entity, the UW is not permitted to discriminate on the basis of viewpoints. This includes not blocking messages that meet the guidelines of a listserv, but that express views the moderator or others disagrees with
You may not use a listserv to offer a UW endorsement of a specific organization or appearing to raise money or resources for it.	**Endorsements:** The university and its employees need to be careful to avoid endorsing entities, products or services in their communications. In some cases, this could impact the tax-exempt treatment of the UW, but there are also UW policies disallowing endorsements. For example, Executive Order 15(f), the university's sponsorship policy, permits sponsorships, but does not permit affiliation or endorsement of another entity. If you are appearing to offer a UW endorsement of a specific business, organization or product - or appearing to raise money or resources for an organization, this may be using state resources for the gain of a private entity. Such usage is likely not permissible and further consultation is warranted to confirm that.

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