

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL STUDENT SENATE

Resolution to Enhance the Efficiency of Email Communication at Columbia Law School

PROPOSED: March 24, 2009

PROPONENT: Benjamin Brickner

WHEREAS an efficient means of communication between members of the Columbia Law School community is essential to academic dialogue, information exchange, and quality of life;

5 The inexpensive and obtrusive nature of electronic communication has encouraged a substantial increase in the number of email messages from all Law School constituencies, thereby decreasing the efficiency of this medium;

The evolution of communication at Columbia from predominantly verbal and tangible to electronic means has outpaced the Law School's policy on such communications, and

10 No individual acting alone can prevent this emergent tragedy of the electronic commons.

RESOLVED BY THE COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL STUDENT SENATE,

15 Automated System for Announcements and Events Information ("CalBot"). The Senate encourages the administration to implement an automated system, informally known as "CalBot," to communicate announcements and events information by daily email to the Law School community. Members of the Senate Committee on Information Technology shall offer assistance to the Law School Office of Information Technology with developing CalBot to ensure it meets the needs of the entire Law School community.

20 Uniform Policy on Unsolicited Mass Email. The Senate respectfully urges the faculty and administration to adopt a uniform policy, in conjunction with CalBot, limiting unsolicited mass email and encouraging the Law School community to utilize CalBot to disseminate announcements and events information. A proposed Uniform Policy is attached to this resolution.

Student Organization Listserv. In conjunction with CalBot, the Senate shall cause the Student Organization Listserv to become "opt-in" each fall after the second week of upper-year classes and shall offer assistance to student organizations with their transitions to CalBot.

25 Timing. The steps above should be completed at such time and in such order so as to minimize communications disruption. To maximize the efficacy of CalBot and a uniform policy on unsolicited mass email, the steps above should be completed before Orientation Days next August.

30 Transmission of Resolution. The Student Senate President shall transmit a copy of this resolution, with the Senate's endorsement, to the Dean of Faculty, the Associate Dean for Administration and Finance, and the Assistant Dean of Information Technology.

This resolution expires at the end of the 2008–09 academic year.

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL STUDENT SENATE

PROPOSED UNIFORM POLICY ON UNSOLICITED MASS EMAIL[‡]

§ 1. Introduction

- A. Purpose. Electronic mail is an efficient means of communication and essential to academic dialogue, information exchange and quality of life. When misused, however, its efficiency may be substantially reduced by recipients' reflexive deletion, inadvertent filtering as junk mail, or desensitization to large amounts of disparate information. This policy seeks to promote the efficient use of electronic mail communication by all members of the Columbia Law School community.
- B. Definition. "Unsolicited mass email" includes electronic mail messages sent to multiple individuals without their consent and by means of a listserv or other automated distribution list.

§ 2. Permitted Unsolicited Mass Email

- A. General Policy. Unsolicited mass email should be limited to exceptional circumstances where a majority of intended recipients need to receive emergent or time-sensitive information. Examples include,
 - i. Emergent threats to health or safety;
 - ii. Important administrative or registration information, and
 - iii. Other time-sensitive information likely to be of interest to a majority of intended recipients, such as large, all-school events.
- B. Specific Limitations
 - i. Multiple reminders about previously sent messages should be discouraged;
 - ii. During exam periods, reading periods and the final week of upper-year classes, unsolicited mass email to students should be limited to emergencies and important administrative or registration information, and
 - iii. When an unsolicited mass email is permitted under this section, recipients should be limited to the constituency (e.g., faculty, administrative office, or class of students) to which the information is urgent or likely to be of interest.

§ 3. Prohibited Unsolicited Mass Email

- A. General Policy. Unsolicited mass email should not be used to communicate information that is not time-sensitive or is unlikely to be of interest to a majority of intended recipients. Examples include,
 - i. Specialized, non-urgent announcements, and
 - ii. Events information including corrections, addenda and reminders.
- B. Automated System for Announcements and Events Information ("CalBot"). For non-urgent announcements and events information including corrections, addenda and reminders, senders should utilize "CalBot," an automated system that transmits this information by daily email to the Law School community. Announcements and events information may be submitted at, <http://www.law.columbia.edu/calendar/advisor-form>.

§ 4. Violation and Penalty

Violators of this policy will first be warned and, if the violation persists, will be referred to the appropriate authority who shall ascertain the nature of the violation and determine a suitable penalty, if any, which may include loss of email privileges.

[‡] Portions of this proposed Uniform Policy are adapted from Columbia University's "Procedures for Sending a Broadcast Email Message," available at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/policy/mass-email-procedure.html> and New York University's "Policies and Guidelines for Sending Bulk E-mail" available at <http://www.nyu.edu/its/policies/bulkemail.html>.