TO: Faculty Senate, Gary Insch, Terry Bigioni, Linda Rouillard

FROM: Lucy Duhon, Sally Harmych, Paulette Kilmer

DATE: 15 November, 2022

SUBJECT: **Report** from Faculty Senate Committee on Student Affairs – **subcommittee on Faculty-Student Email Communications – Issue 1: Faculty Emails**

I.   **Introduction**
       This memorandum is written in response to concerns that UT Student Government leaders expressed regarding email communications between students and faculty.

   A. On 13 September, 2022, President Colleen Palmer and UT Student Government leaders responded to FSCSA's request on 1 September, 2022, to identify student issues of concern. The first issue identified was as follows:

   "One of the biggest issues we are still facing in the classroom today is the lack of timely responses from professors via email. Recently, I had a friend who contracted COVID, and they had to reach out to their professors for any missed work and to stay caught up in class. They had stated that not only did it take a couple days to get a response, but it was not a very thorough response, and she was confused on what work she had to complete. Back in December 2021, a week before final exams, I had contracted COVID myself. It was incredibly difficult to get ahold of two of my professors a week before exams, as I was trying to figure out how to take them. They are also notorious for not responding to emails; the students preface that with our peers. Overall, we wish that Professors would be more active on their email and be able to effectively communicate with their students, whether it's about a disability accommodation, mental health days, COVID, or anything at all."

II.   **Faculty Senate Committee on Student Affairs' Subcommittee Takes Action**

       On Wednesday 9 November, 2022, the Faculty Senate Committee on Student Affairs' **subcommittee on Faculty-Student Email Communications** held a Webex meeting at 4 p.m. with Dr. Jeanne Kusina, interim director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. The group met to share their findings to help address the email communication problems being experienced between some faculty and students. The subcommittee felt that approaching the problem from both sides would be most effective. From the faculty side, a "best practices" approach might be best, and from the student side, email etiquette training might be useful.

- Lucy Duhon, Sally Harmych, and Paulette Kilmer each gave updates on their individual assignments as members of this subcommittee, and Jeanne Kusina offered additional suggestions.

- UT Online/Blackboard – Paulette Kilmer

  Make email etiquette a component of FYE. Students could opt in. However, the sheer number of students could make this a difficult approach.

  - o Paulette's meeting with Blackboard administrator Melissa Gleckler included the possibility of asking the provost to agree to add a module to FYE classes. There is a place within Blackboard to post resources and reminders. The module would have to be structured like a class.
  - o Paulette also suggested using a game such as "Kahoot!" to engage students in an educational and interactive manner in the assignment. Another idea was to offer a prize or drawing at the end of the exercise.
  - o There was discussion also of getting the commuter student organization involved.

- Sally Harmych suggested that students could perhaps earn points for the assignment. Sally also suggested that faculty could include in their syllabi a caveat something to the effect of "*My inbox gets full. If you don't hear back from me in 48 hours, please re-send your email.*"
  - o Dr. Kusina added that every faculty member should have an email policy of their own and make it known at the start of the semester and perhaps remind students at the start of every class session. Also discussed was the use of placing such a statement in faculty signature files. E.g., "*I may answer on the weekends, but expect a longer response time."*
  - o The point being both to effectively manage student expectations, and encourage faculty to be more in control of and intentional in managing their email workload – by developing best practices.
  - o Dr. Kusina also raised the possibility of seeking a campus Outlook expert to offer refresher training for faculty, since there is so much functionality that can be applied which some users may not be aware of, such as out-of-office notices, templates, distribution lists, signature files, etc.

- Lucy Duhon reported that she had met with Tia Tucker, Director of Academic Support Services to discuss the possibility of adding email etiquette training support through the Writing Center. Tia had met with several of her WC consultants to gauge the kinds of reasons most students would need to email their professors and the kinds of email training students could use. They included:
  - o Missed class
  - o Missed assignment, late assignment
  - o Need to reschedule exam date
  - o Don't understand something in class

- o May need to drop class
- o Want to invite professor to student event
- o Creating signature files

- Writing Center could schedule appointments for particular questions students may have. Email templates for various purposes would be made available for adaptation. Other thoughts included posting a *real* "bad" example of a student email and perhaps creating a very short video or presentation in the WC website. This new service would be promoted via social media and flyers. WC will work with Marketing to get their page up and redesigned.

    - o Paulette suggested adding a link to the Writing Center to syllabi for help with emails.
    - o Jeanne added that faculty welcome emails (already recommended by the UTC) would also be a good place to mention the Writing Center.

CC: Colleen Palmer, Aliyah Kayed, Yash Shingan, Samir Hefzy, Berhane Teclehaimanot, Sarah Aldrich, Karen Green, Karen Hoblet, Shery Milz, Paul Schaefer, Eric Chaffee, Lucy Duhon, Sally Harmych, Paulette Kilmer