To: Faculty Senate, Faculty Senate Office, Quinetta Hubbard, Jerry Van Hoy, Tomer Avidor

Reiss, Linda Rouillard, Angela Paprocki, Matt Schroeder, Scott Molitor, Sammy Spann,

Lucas Will, Ashley Westgate,

From: Deborah Coulter-Harris, Lucy Duhon, Sally Harmych, Suzanne Smith, Berhane

Teclehaimanot

Date: 11 February, 2025

Subject: Report on Faculty/Student Communications

Officially, the Faculty Senate Committee on Student Affairs is charged with the following: "*The Senate Committee on Student Affairs shall act as a liaison between the Faculty, the Student Government, and the Administration on matters of common interest that fall within the jurisdiction of the Faculty Senate, and shall study and make recommendations on such matters.*"

I.   **History of SG Topic #3 (Not a new issue: read pdf's below.)**

(Faculty – Student Communication) "Student Government would love to work with Faculty Senate to improve communication between students and faculty this year. Students have had issues with professors not replying in a timely manner or communicating in ways that are not easily accessible." **(From First Meeting of FSCSA for 2024-2025: Thursday, 19 September, 2024)**

Please read Faculty Senate Minutes from 15 November, 2022, here:

https://www.utoledo.edu/facsenate/docs/minutes/approved-faculty-senate-minutes-november-15-2022.pdf

Please read FSCSA Memorandum Report from 15 November 2022 here:

https://www.utoledo.edu/facsenate/docs/final-%20fscsa-subcommittee-on-faculty-student-email-communcations-report-for-fs-11-15-22.pdf

Items Discussed at FSCSA's 19 September, 2024, first meeting:

A. The subcommittee remarked on the fact that this very issue has been addressed before (Fall 2022 and reported on at the 11/15/2022 Faculty Senate meeting) with solutions proposed on both the student side and the faculty side.

- As a recap, in November 2022, our then subcommittee suggested three approaches to improve faculty-student email communications. We suggested:
    - on the student side, that Academic Support Services include a [resource](#) to its Writing Center website to promote guidance and training on email etiquette;
    - on the faculty side, Dr. Jeanne Kusina recommended faculty develop their own email policy in class and/or address the issue on their syllabi.
    - make email etiquette training an incentivized part of FYE or orientation

B. The subcommittee confirmed there was not enough time to conduct a formal survey of students and/or faculty during Spring semester 2025.

C. The subcommittee conducted a thorough, independent search for any existing institutional policies or documents that might refer to expectations for faculty and/or students regarding their email communications. We confirmed Suzanne Smith's and Deborah Coulter-Harris' findings that there were none extant, except for this document: [Student Guidelines for the Use of Official Student Email Addresses](#). Supporting DCH's findings also, the subcommittee found that although this document still links to a 2003 "policy" on email usage, that policy apparently no longer exists.

D. The subcommittee briefly discussed the functionality of Course Messages sent through Blackboard. A question was raised: in addition to notifications sent to users' Outlook email, could Blackboard Ultra be configured to send notifications to students' phones (i.e., text message alerts to check their emails or BB messages)? Is there a one-way mechanism like this that students could opt into? This may be something to look into to increase their engagement.

II.   Action Items Planned after First FSCSA Meeting:

A. Sally will follow up with Dr. Jeanne Kusina, Director of CETL, on whether there's an email policy template faculty can use for their syllabi, including any suggested links.[1]

B. Sally will poll her students on their general satisfaction re: email communications with their professors. **Results:** A survey of 119 students was done to assess their satisfaction with professor response times to email. The results show that:

- Most students are either very satisfied or satisfied with professor response times: 48.7%; satisfied and 30.3% very satisfied

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[1] CETL already includes suggestions on welcome emails under [Faculty Resources for Student Success](#). Information and links on email communication (guidelines & templates) are also provided via the [syllabus resources page](#):
- https://www.utoledo.edu/offices/provost/utc/docs/f2f-syllabus-guidelines.pdf
- https://www.utoledo.edu/offices/provost/utc/syllabus/

- When asked how long does it take for their professors to respond to their emails: 29.4% of students indicated it takes less than 12 hours, 48.7% indicated it takes 12-24 hours, 20.2% 1-2 days and
- The remaining students indicated it takes 3 days or more, or that they do not receive a response.
- The majority of students indicated that they prefer responses from professors within 24 hours **(See Appendix 1).**

C. Lucy will follow up with Tia Tucker, Director Of Academic Support Services, for possible data on students taking advantage of training since the Writing Center's [web page](https://www.utoledo.edu/success/writingcenter/) (https://www.utoledo.edu/success/writingcenter/)was created in March 2023. **Results:** No data for training on emails was available.

D. The other subcommittee members were invited to submit feedback from their own students. Suzanne Smith forwarded poll results from her students during mid-week of February 7, 2025. **Results: (See Appendix 2).**

- LD/SH/SS 2/6/2025
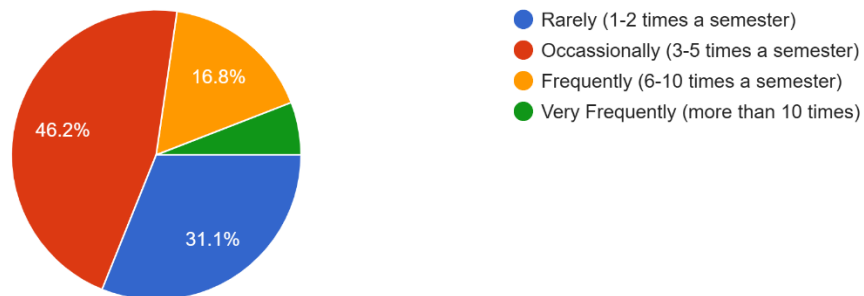
Appendix 1.

Total of 119 students responded.

While this is just a small sample of students, results of the survey indicate that:

- Most students are either very satisfied or satisfied with professor response times (48.7%; satisfied and 30.3% very satisfied).
- When asked how long does it take for your professors to respond to your emails 29.4% of students indicated it takes less than 12 hours, 48.7% indicated it takes 12-24 hours, 20.2% 1-2 days and the remaining students indicated it takes 3 days or more or that they do not receive a response.
- The majority of students indicated that they prefer responses from professors within 24 hours. The final question asked students to make suggestions on how to improve communication. These comments are at the end of the document.

Question 1:

How often do you email your professors during a typical semester?
119 responses

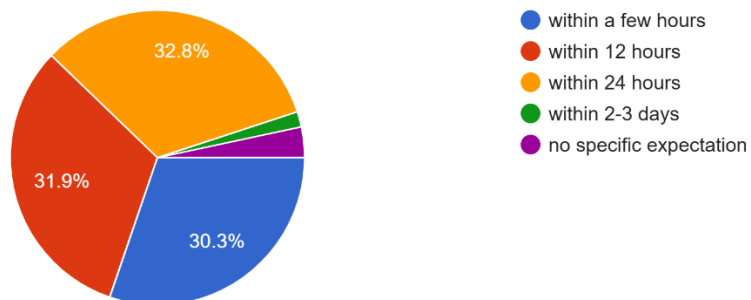- Rarely (1-2 times a semester)
- Occassionally (3-5 times a semester)
- Frequently (6-10 times a semester)
- Very Frequently (more than 10 times)

46.2%
16.8%
31.1%

Question 2:

On average, how long does it take for your professors to respond to your emails?
119 responses

- less than 12 hours
- 12-24 hours
- 1-2 days
- 3 days or more
- I often do not receive a response.

48.7%
20.2%
29.4%
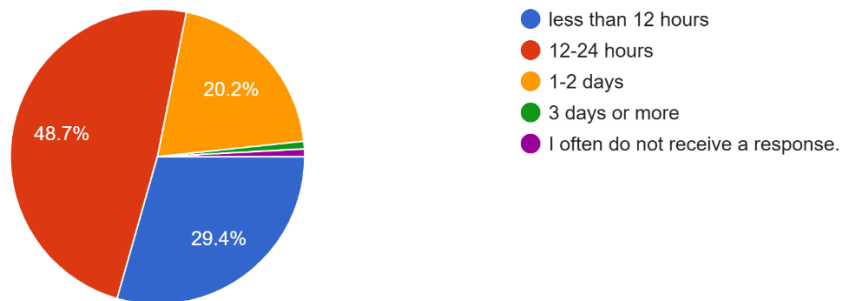
Question 3:

What is your preferred response time when emailing a professor with an academic question?
119 responses

- within a few hours
- within 12 hours
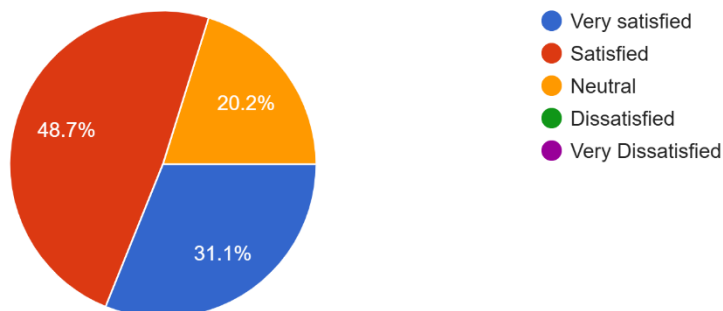- within 24 hours
- within 2-3 days
- no specific expectation

32.8%
31.9%
30.3%

Question 4:

How satisfied are you with the responsiveness of your professors to your emails?
119 responses

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

48.7%
20.2%
31.1%

Question #5: What suggestions do you have for improving communication between students and professors via email? **Valuable Student Answers below:**

1. Make a group appointment.
2. I think it is a case-by-case basis; some professors will get back within a day; others will not respond to some emails and take a few days for others. I have been fortunate that probably 70% of my professors during my time here have gotten back to me within 24 hours. I usually do not email a professor if I have an urgent question, or I try to plan ahead to ask 24 house before a due date because usually emails are not answered in a timely enough manner. This is usually because I wait too long, but if there was a way to communicate with a professor before a large exam or large assignment that was more reliable than email, it would probably beneficial if the professor is willing to help out during that time.
3. There needs to be an email back between 12-24 hours. There cannot be an expectation for us to be prompt and professors not.
4. Try and answer within the timeframe of a class schedule.
5. Students should not reach out so late, so professors can respond right away.
6. I personally don't have problems with communication between professors via email, but professors could be clearer on times they answer emails or response time.
7. It's hard to say. Sometimes if it is urgent, I need an answer right away, but sometimes it's not as urgent. Maybe if there's a different way to send urgent emails.
8. Possibly having more hours than just office hours when they are available. Sometimes it feels like if I don't email during office hours' time, I don't get a response quickly.
9. Professors should send reminder emails more often.

10. It's not about how long professor respond to student but I think sometimes professors don't truly answer what students ask.
11. I feel like some professors don't respond; sometimes you have to email them twice. I feel like some professor should look at their email more frequently because I once had to email a professor 3 times and she didn't answer; it took 3 weeks for her to respond.
12. I suggest that students should email professors during reasonable times (not at 3am on a Tuesday), and professors should make it a goal to check their emails daily and respond to important emails from students asap, especially if a large assignment/exam is coming up and students have questions about it.
13. I think the Blackboard messages would be more useful than having to switch over to UTAD email.
14. I have notifications that come through my phone when I receive an email. So I don't know if that would help.
15. In most cases, I don't mind late replies. However, the issue arises when professors only briefly skim the email I've already waited hours for, overlooking important details and failing to properly address my questions.
16. Priority notifications for emails between professors, so emails don't get lost in spam.
17. Overall shorter response time between the two people emailing.
18. Use clear and concise subject and keep it short.
19. Some professors take longer than 2 days to respond while some professors respond within 3 hours. I had a professor who took 3 weeks and responded after the third email.
20. I suggest using a clear subject line and keeping your email concise. Always be professional, provide context, and use a polite tone.
21. Most professors are very efficient at checking their email, some do not. I think it is a matter of how much they care about the students. Every professor who is enthusiastic about their class tends to respond in a timely manner.
22. Give timeslots of when you are most likely to respond to emails.
23. All my professors have been great about emailing me back.
24. I feel that professors should check their emails often or try to respond as soon possible.
25. Everything is good. I don't have any suggestions.
26. I only use emails occasionally; I prefer meeting in person.
27. Inform students of the time you'll be available. Be kind, it's tough out here.
28. Check the syllabus to see when it's the best to time to email a professor, and try to get closer with them so they can be familiar with your name in order to reply with urgency.
29. Clear and Concise Subject Line
30. No suggestions!
31. If professor responds to our email quickly, that will be really helpful.
32. I think you're doing a good job with that already. But maybe if you don't already have your email notifications on, turn them on.
33. Maybe give professors and students another way of communicating besides email. **Maybe like the app Remind.**

34. I think it would help if professors set clear guidelines for email expectations, such as response times and preferred formats, so students know what to expect and how to communicate effectively.
35. Mark email as important.
36. Accountability for professors to respond to emails within a certain amount of time.

Appendix 2: From Professor Suzanne Smith's Students

#1.

       I've had a few times where communication with professors could've been better. One time, I emailed a professor about an assignment deadline, and it took over a week to get a response. That made it hard to plan and stay on top of things. I do check my UT email regularly, but with so many messages from different professors, it can get overwhelming. It's not always clear which emails are urgent or how quickly I should expect a reply. There are also times when I'm unsure if it's better to email, message on Blackboard, or just go to office hours. It would help if professors set clear expectations about communication so I know the best way to reach out.

#2.

       I do have a story. It was my first semester, and it was the first big project in the class. We had three weeks to work on said project and you had to make a presentation on something you and the group you were assigned by the teacher that all had in common with each other. I was put in a group and something we all had in common was art. I was given the topics Music and drawing telling the history and culture significance and how we got to where we are today. All three weeks I was working on said presentation for the class.

       I had a series of events where for the three weeks I had things pop up for the three Mondays of the three weeks that we were given to do the project, but I did try and reach out for two of the three absences explaining what was going on, but I never got reply from the teacher. So, I thought I was in good standing, so I finish my part of the presentation the week we were presenting, just for one of my teammates to delete my slides the day of the presentation. I luckily saw this before we were set to go up and I hurried and redid them from scratch. We went up to the front and we started the project as planned but as we got to my slides, I saw that she had deleted my slides again causing me to be caught completely off guard and getting a bad grade. When I brought this us to the teacher, she told me that she given my points to everyone else in the group leaving me with an F on the assignment. She wrapped the whole incident up by telling me that I need to learn to show up and be there for my group.

       And only after I showed her the dates I was missing and the deleted slides along with the complete lack of communication among my teammates did she start to take me seriously. And even then, they only got a "talking to" but still got to keep my points.

#3.

I check my email every day. I usually check before my classes start, or if I have emailed a professor, I check to see if they emailed me back. I'm never unsure how to contact my professors. However, my experience with emailing my professors has been with Dr. Harmych and Professor Mock. Those professors are the only ones I usually email, and I have actually emailed others too, and so far all of them have replied back to me. But, the UT Rocket Solution Center emails me after sometimes a week or 4 days, and I have to wait a while to get their

response when I would prefer to get it faster. However, my professors always leave their contact information (phone number, email, office hours) in Blackboard and tell us in class.

Cc: Karen Green, Karen Hoblet, Lucy Duhon, Sally Harmych, Berhane Teclehaimanot, Samir Hefzy, Suzanne Smith, Barry Scheuermann, Paul Schaefer, Katherine O'Connell