EBLAST PROCEDURE GUIDE

The Governors State University Community is committed to providing equal access to information disseminated through email.

Compliance with Section 508 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act is required by both Federal Law and State Law and university procedures. University personnel are required to ensure that the content of internal mass email communications (e-blasts) is accessible to all members of the GSU community. The following e-blast procedures provide those sending internal e-blasts with guidelines to ensure compliance with the law.

Definition:
An internal e-blast is defined as "any faculty, staff, or student generated email, sent via the university's email system to a general internal audience (e.g., Faculty and Staff, students in a specific degree program, Freshmen)."

Mission & Issue:
An e-blast must present its primary message along with any graphics/pictures in a format accessible to screen readers. The diverse GSU community includes individuals handicapped by print who primarily use screen reading software, which reads e-blasts aloud. When internal e-blasts contain a JPEG or image (e.g., a flyer promoting an event) in the body of the email, these Images cannot be read by a screen reader, making the information inaccessible. **Such e-blasts violate Section 508 and the ADA.**

Ensuring an internal e-blast is Section 508 and ADA compliant:
E-blast messages sent through Outlook must be in HTML or text based so that all GSU community members, including those utilizing screen readers, have equal access to the content.

Creating Accessible Messages: All text/information in the e-blast should be included as in the body of the email. Text may be copied from a Word document and pasted into the body of the e-blast or typed directly into the content area of the e-blast.

Limited design capabilities exist within Outlook. When stylizing the look of the e-blast, remember that certain text colors and backgrounds are not Section 508 or ADA compliant. High contrast colors (black or dark colored lettering on yellow or white or white lettering on dark backgrounds) are best. If images are included, they must be suitably tagged using the ALT Tag process. Each individual image must appear on its own line – not surrounded or edged on one side by text. Instructions on inserting and tagging images follow.

NOTICE: All HTML e-blasts must be approved by the Office of Marketing and Communication's web design manager.

Inserting Images and ALT Tagging: Each image included in the body of an e-blast must be suitably tagged using the **Alt Tag** function available through Outlook and must appear on its own line – not surrounded or edged by text.

- *First:* Insert the selected image in the body of the email. **Do not drag and drop the image.**
  To insert an image:
     1. Select "Insert" from the toolbar;
     2. Click on "picture;"
     3. Select the image from wherever it is saved. Do not use images off the Web unless you have permission to do so.
     4**. Remember, the image must appear on its own line – not surrounded or edged on one   side by text.**

- *Second*: ALT Tag the image.
  Once the image is placed in the body of the email:
     1. Right click *(ctrl + click on Mac)* on the image and select "Format Picture"
     2. Select "Alt Tag," *(under "Layout and Properties" in Windows 8)*
     3. Complete the text boxes by providing a **Title** of the image (e.g., "Harry Houdini") and a **Description** of the image (e.g., Houdini performing his famous trick escaping from a locked box while submerged in a tank of water).
     4. Even the GSU logo inserted into an e-blast requires ALT tagging. **Title:** "Governors State University Logo." **Description:** "GSU Logo containing link to www.govst.edu."

  NOTE: Flyers promoting an event, which are converted to jpgs and inserted in an e-blast, are prohibited in all e-blasts. Tagging or providing the information in text beneath the inserted flyer has been found to be insufficient to accurately and completely convey information.

E-blast Template: Contact the Office of Communications if you wish to have an e-blast template provided for use by your department/division. The Office of Communication will provide a template which will allow you to insert content and an image and ensure the footer containing the GSU logo is accurately tagged.

To save the e-blast template and preserve the tagging for reuse:
  1. Forward the e-blast template
  2. Delete all extraneous information outside of the template (e.g. your signature)
  3. Click on FILE
  4. Click on SAVE AS
  5. Name your eblast template *(e.g. Library Eblast Template 2016, CHHS Eblast Template 2016)- include the date in case you obtain a updated template*
  6. In "Save as type" field choose "Outlook Template"

To retrieve a saved e-blast template:
1. Open Outlook
2. Click on "New Item"
3. Click on "More items"
4. Click "Choose Form"
5. In "Look in" drop box, pick "User Template in File System"
6. Select the eblast template file

Insert your content into the template. Be sure to update the Subject Line and delete any names in "To" and "CC."

REMEMBER – All e-blasts recipients or distribution groups should be listed in BCC.

Individual units are solely responsible for creating and/or sending e-blasts that are accessible to all members of the GSU community as mandated by Section 508, the ADA, and GSU procedures.

The GSU Office of Communications can assist with the creation of e-blasts and e-blast templates for internal use. For additional assistance in creating compliant e-blast, or if you want an e-blast reviewed for compliancy, contact the Office of Communications.

For questions about Section 508 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, contact the Human Resources Department.