Email Best Practices

As a member of the HSU community, you are being granted a Google Apps for Education account to help you communicate and collaborate with others in support of your university business. Here are some things you should know about this account, some recommendations for getting the most out of it, and some advice on how to avoid some pitfalls others have run into.

Privacy and Access
This is a state issued account, and therefore has key differences from a personal email. Because your HSU mail account is sponsored by a government agency, any mail that you send and receive (as well as any saved chat logs and calendar events) is subject to disclosure under specific circumstances:

- Under the Public Records Act, members of the public can request access to emails and other correspondence
- In the event of a possible lawsuit, you and the university may be asked to hold all the email in your account and to turn over specific (search matches) to the legal teams involved.
- Warrants, HR investigations, IT security investigations, and subpoenae can also result in access to your university email account by others.

Emails sent from your campus account to an off-campus address are no longer under the control or protection of the campus. It may be forwarded again or retained indefinitely by the recipient and should not be considered protected in any way.

Personal Accounts
We strongly recommend that you establish and maintain a personal email account to use for non-work conversations and to connect to any personal accounts (banking, online shopping, etc). That way, if your campus account needs to be accessed by others for any of the above reasons, your personal communication stays private.

Departmental Accounts
Another good practice is to use a departmental email account or group as the published contact address for your outreach activities (eg. department@humboldt.edu). That account or group can be configured to be monitored by anyone you designate. That way if an individual retires or changes positions, your business processes can continue in an uninterrupted manner, and individuals can retain their personal accounts.

Calendars
The Google Apps suite provides a calendaring function which is a very useful collaboration tool. For students and faculty, ITS provides a tool to add all your scheduled courses into your Google Calendar as part of the My Calendar Pagelet in the Portal. By default Google shares your free/busy time to the organization, which makes it easy for people to arrange meetings,

while hiding the details of who and where you are meeting. You can also adjust the visibility of specific events if you are concerned about privacy.

Retention and Disposition of Institutional Records in Email
Some emails may qualify as institutional records. You should make a habit of regularly reviewing your email and moving records you need to retain from your mailbox to a campus file share. Examples of official records are:
- Final reports
- Contracts
- Meeting minutes
- Memoranda
- Decision papers

Drafts and discussions leading up to final versions are typically not considered records. The records custodian and Data Owner in your area will be developing more specific guidance. A more detailed decision matrix is available at:

https://www.umsystem.edu/media/fa/management/records/record_flowchart.pdf

When is it gone?
Unless there is a litigation hold in place on a given account, emails and chat records put in the trash will be automatically deleted after thirty days, unless you manually empty your trash earlier. Third party mail clients may retain a copy on your local device if you use them.

Chat History
Google Talk or Hangouts sessions will be captured and saved unless they are set to "Off the record" or "No Hangout History." Saved chats can be seen by searching for in:chats or looking at the chat label.

Keeping accounts after leaving campus
Alumni and employees retiring from the campus can retain their HSU email accounts as long as they keep them active (log in once a year and change your password on schedule). The campus may need to change the email domain associated with those accounts in the future. That could mean your abc123@humboldt.edu account is migrated to either abc123@alumni.humboldt.edu or abc123@emeritus.humboldt.edu or something along those lines.