

Institutional Text Messaging

Policy Number:

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Policy Statement:

The text messaging policy applies to individuals granted permission to text groups of students regarding college-related matters from a school authorized system.

Text messaging (which includes SMS and MMS messages) can be used by authorized college officials to relay information about cancellations, closures, admissions and academic requirements or deadlines, registration information, financial aid, financial student account information, alumni giving, and other matters that are time sensitive and necessary for student success.

Students must consent to receiving text messages. Obtaining consent to text an individual does not mean that consent is provided indefinitely.

Note: Emergency Situations

This policy is intended for every day, non-emergency use. Individuals should use judgment in case of emergency and contact Campus Police with any questions about GCCC's emergency guidelines at 620-272-6828.

Procedures

Student Groups

Texting Prospective Students:

For prospective student communication, students must opt-in to receiving text messages. Students may opt in through a process on a request for information form, inquiry card, or on the application. Students may also opt in by texting office contact numbers.

If prospective students indicate they are not attending, choose to stop out, or do not enroll in the semester for which they originally applied, an opt out will be assumed and they will be removed from receiving future communications.

Staff in the Admissions and Financial Aid will typically be responsible for texting with prospective students.

The types of text messages that can be sent to prospective students include:

- a. Application status - submitted, incomplete, missing documents, etc.
- b. Financial Aid status - FAFSA deadline, submitted, missing documents, scholarships, work study, etc.
- c. Campus visit/tour/orientation information/recruitment event information - visit confirmation, reminder, survey, etc.
- d. Admission status - congratulations on acceptance, enrollment next steps, advisor introduction, deposit due, etc.

Texting Current Students

Current students update their texting preferences when enrolling each term through Self-Service. Students can also update their opt-in preferences for texting at any time through Self-Service.

Self-Service allows students to opt-in across multiple teams for a similar use case (i.e. opting students into texting with Financial Aid, Academic Advising, Registrar, Retention, Business/Student Accounts, etc.) for student retention or student success. Students can opt-out from individual teams.

The types of text messages that can be sent to current students include:

- a. Academics - add/drop deadline, major selection, transfer credits, etc.
- b. Class registration - advisor meeting, class registration deadline, registration holds, etc.
- c. Housing - housing application/deposit, meal plan payment, RA introduction, etc.
- d. Financial Aid status - FAFSA deadline, submitted, missing documents, scholarships, work study, etc.
- e. Career services - career fairs, resume review, internship placement, etc.
- f. Graduation preparation - application for graduation, purchase of cap and gown, commencement details, etc.
- g. Student Account information – 1098t, refunds, financial obligations

Texting Alumni & Donors

Alumni may be asked to opt-in to texting through graduation campaigns, preparation for alumni engagement prior to graduation, requests to update their communication preferences including how to stay in touch with the college (email, phone, text), and what types of information they would like to receive, and verification of contact information (address, phone#).

Staff in the Advancement, College Foundation, and Alumni Relations departments will typically be responsible for texting with alumni and donors.

The types of text messages that can be sent to alumni and donors include:

- a. Giving requests - Giving Day information, initiative-specific gifts, stewardship, etc.
- b. Donor recognition - acknowledge past donations, share how gifts support the institution, special initiatives, etc.
- c. Alumni engagement - networking events, regional events, homecoming celebrations, mentoring students, etc.

Department Responsibility

Each team or department must appoint at least one authorized official to be responsible for monitoring and approving text messaging requests on behalf of their department to ensure compliance. The official should be able to access documentation of obtained consent for texting including the following:

- a. Contact name and mobile number
- b. Opt-in status
- c. Date the status was last updated

Text Message Content:

Messages should be as concise as possible (while still maintaining a conversational tone) and should address the student directly by name or with “you/your.” They should include essential points and, if needed, further instruction (e.g. Check your email for full details).

Authorized text messaging officials should abide by all policies and ensure the following:

- a. Content is accurate.
- b. Wording is appropriate and fits GCCC's voice and brand.
- c. Tone is casual but professional and ends with a question when a response is desired.
- d. List of recipients is correct and relevant to the message being sent.
- e. Information within the message is directly related to the student and/or their studies.
- f. Message clearly states the action that the student needs to take or how the information impacts the student, and who to contact for additional information.
- g. All messages must be tagged with the appropriate identifiers (your institution's name and department) so recipients can immediately recognize who it's from. The exception being in follow up messages of an ongoing conversation.
- h. The number of messages received by a student is appropriate to ensure he/she will continue to regard the text messages as important information and does not choose to opt out of future communication.
- i. Messages are sent with adequate time for a response, action, or activity.
- j. Abbreviations and text messaging lingo are not used.
- k. Emojis approved for use by the institution are used appropriately, with no more than one emoji per message. Not every text message should include an emoji.
- l. Use hyperlinks sparingly, and instead, use text messaging to encourage a student to check their email or your website for more information. When you do use links, it should be the full website URL and not shortened through a service like Bitly.
- m. Initial messages must include instructions for opting out such as "Reply STOP to unsubscribe".

Text messaging will not be used for the following:

- a. As the only form of communication. The text message must be supplemented by some other means of communication, such as an email, phone call, or paper notice, to ensure that all students, including those who have not opted in, receive the message.
- b. To communicate personal or confidential information (e.g. GPA, academic standing).
- c. Personal matters (e.g. items for sale, farewell messages).
- d. Appeals on behalf of individuals or groups of students (e.g. to attend social, cultural, or sporting events, unless the student opted in for these text messages).
- e. Sending any messages containing social security numbers, passwords, credit card numbers, or any FERPA-protected data.

Response Timeframe:

As a best practice, text messages should only be sent during designated business hours to be respectful of a student's time and the team's availability to respond.

Any incoming replies to messages should be reviewed and responded to in a timely manner (preferably next business day), so as to provide optimal student support and prevent future messages from being ignored or a student opting out.

If a staff member is out of the office for an extended period of time, they are required to create an "Out of Office" away message with information about how a student can receive assistance in their absence, such as another staff member's contact information.

Revocation of Texting Access:

Failure to comply with the above policy may result in the revoking of texting permissions.

Student Expectations:

Students are expected to follow the student code of conduct found in the Student Handbook when texting with offices. Individual offices may revoke texting privileges as needed.

Category:

Student Services

Policy History:

September 10, 2025: Approved