

# Communication Methods

College students today have many choices when it comes to communication – not only the use of face-to-face, telephone, and written communication, but also email, text messages, instant messaging, and social networks. Students often fail to use the appropriate communication method in the correct circumstance. While there may not be specific guidelines for certain communication methods, students may encounter difficulties by selecting an inappropriate method. For example:

- A student is directed to attend a face-to-face judicial hearing (the message includes deadlines and procedures that pertain to this hearing). The student misses the hearing and calls two weeks later to reschedule. They are told that the case is closed, and they are past the deadline to appeal.
- A student leader on campus is given a staff member's mobile phone to be used in case of emergency. Instead of calling the office, the student sends a text to the supervisor and says that they won't be in to work because they are sick. The staff member counts their absence as a no-show.

It is important to recognize that not all communication styles are appropriate in all situations. As a general rule, **written** communication – typewritten or printed on a computer, not handwritten – is appropriate for almost all academic assignments and papers.

**Email** is most appropriate for friends and family, but may also be appropriate for communication with faculty and university administrators, depending on the circumstances and the content of the message.

**Face-to-Face** communication includes making an appointment or walking into an office to see an individual. This method is usually best for conflict resolution, asking questions to clarify or ease confusion, and debating differing viewpoints, although some offices have specific policies and practices about dispute resolution that need to be followed.

**Social Media**, such as text messaging and instant messaging, are best used for social or “non-official” business. Students should not expect faculty or administration to use social networks for critical information. As an exception, the University uses the SB Alert system to send text messages to students in the event of an emergency.