This memorandum will provide guidance regarding the ways in which the School of Journalism faculty and staff communicate their ideas and opinions via e-mail. The memo underscores the university’s highly valued principles of respect, dignity, and fairness.

The preamble of the Code of Conduct in the Arizona Board of Regents Policy Manual, which applies to all university employees, states, in part: “The educational process is ideally conducted in an environment that encourages reasoned discourse, intellectual honesty, openness to constructive change and respect for the rights of all individuals. This Code of Conduct is designed for the promotion and protection of such an environment at each state university.”

In light of these factors, the School subscribes to these principles in e-mail communication:

- E-mail is an effective tool of communicating factual information and praise, but can be misinterpreted when conveying critical opinions or sarcasm because readers do not receive facial expressions or voice inflection.
- Personal criticism or concerns about a faculty or staff member, or how they are carrying out their professional responsibilities, should not be expressed via e-mail.
- If a faculty or staff member has ideas or opinions about another faculty member’s performance, personal situation, or choices regarding how to perform research, teaching, service or other duties, that faculty or staff member should share them in a face-to-face discussion with the person about whom they are concerned or in a meeting with the director.
- Replying to everyone in an e-mail can be inferred as an attempt to publicly shame an individual or embroil others in a debate. Be cautious to avoid giving this impression by instead replying directly to the sender or talking in person.
- Avoid writing words in capitals, bold or underline that might be viewed as “shouting” via e-mail. Also, avoid “quotes” to prevent readers from interpreting sarcasm or innuendo.
- Avoid writing e-mails when angry. If writing an e-mail in anger, hit delete, put off a response for a day, and then discuss the issue in person.
- Provide cues to the reader to convey a collegial tone, such as “thank you,” complimentary language, or even emoticons. 😊

Contributing to an environment where the rights of others are respected, and where everyone feels free to express ideas and information in ways that will help the School accomplish its mission, is an inherent part of School citizenship, which is an element of faculty and staff members’ duties. It is important that the School have a climate in which information is exchanged in a way that – in the words of the UHAP Statement of Professional Conduct – recognizes the responsibility “to respect the dignity of others.” Only when such an environment has been established can every faculty and staff member believe that they can contribute their thoughts, ideas and concerns without fear of humiliation or reprisals.