Proper Use of Information Technology Resources
[Revised SPG 601.07]

Major Differences Between Current and Proposed SPG

- The proposed SPG is a single policy document replacing two documents: SPG 601.07 (1990) and the associated Guidelines for Implementing the Proper Use Policy.
- The proposed SPG emphasizes that U-M information technology resources are provided for university-related purposes to be used in a manner that advance its core institutional missions.
- Policy provisions are more explicitly defined; there are better-defined sections and organization than the existing SPG.
- The policy scope and applicability is more clearly defined in the proposed SPG. This policy applies equally to students as well as faculty and staff.
- The proposed SPG retains very little of the text of the original SPG and Guidelines.
- The proposed SPG is device and platform neutral. It does not matter whether a laptop, smartphone, tablet or other device is used to access resources and it does not matter whether a user is on a wired or wireless network.
- The primary orientation and focus of the proposed SPG is on good digital citizenship rather than a collection of “thou shalt nots.”
- The proposed SPG assumes that other laws, regulations, and U-M policies that deal with appropriate or inappropriate conduct (e.g., sexual harassment, discrimination, professional standards) will apply equally to electronic environments and do not require repetition.
- The policy is tailored to reflect the values and objectives of an academic community, as opposed to non-academic or corporate environments.
- Violations and sanctions are more clearly defined and spelled out.

Proper Use of Information Technology Resources

I. Overview

The university provides a broad array of information technology resources with the expectation that members of the university community will access and use these resources safely, responsibly, ethically, and legally.

U-M information technology resources are primarily provided for university-related purposes and should be used in a manner consistent with its academic, teaching, learning, research, clinical, campus life, public service, and administrative missions. The continuing ability to use these resources is contingent upon their appropriate and responsible use. Members of the university community are expected to be good stewards of the university’s information resources and data.

This policy is consistent with and in addition to relevant federal and state law and other university policies (see Related Policies), including those specific to computers, other electronic devices, data, and networks as well as those that may apply to personal conduct.
In addition, such generally applicable laws, regulations, and university policies that deal with appropriate conduct apply equally to the use of university computing resources. Specifically but non-exclusively, all U-M policies dealing with discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, and violence apply equally in instances where the misconduct has an online or electronic origination.

II. Purpose

The rights to freedom of thought, inquiry and expression, as defined in Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression (SPG 601.01), are paramount values of the university community. The university’s commitment to the principles of open expression extends to and includes Internet environments, and interference in the exercise of those rights is a violation of this policy.

It is the policy of the university to maintain access to local, national, and global sources of information and to facilitate an open culture that encourages vigorous exchange of ideas, including ideas that may be controversial or contain content that may be perceived by some as offensive. In general, no conditions or restrictions should be imposed upon access to and use of electronic communications technologies more stringent than limits that have been deemed acceptable for the use of traditional channels of communication.

III. Scope

This policy applies to all members of the University of Michigan community and users of its information resources and services whether located at the university or elsewhere. It encompasses all university owned or contracted-for information, as well as electronic and digital resources, whether individually controlled, shared, stand-alone, cloud-based, or networked.

This policy is platform and device neutral, and it applies to current and emerging modes of electronic exchange and communication. Members of the university community who use personally owned devices (including those for which a university subsidy is received) to access U-M IT resources must abide by this policy while using such devices. Personally maintained services that individuals sign up for or subscribe to on their own should never be used to maintain or share U-M sensitive institutional data.

Users are solely responsible for their personal use of U-M information resources as well as the content of their personal communications. For faculty and staff members, such personal use must not interfere with the employee’s obligation to carry out job-related responsibilities in a timely, effective, and appropriate manner.

Individual units across U-M serve diverse purposes and constituencies and may define additional conditions, restrictions, or guidelines directed at their specific community so long as they are consistent with this policy and do not lower the requirements established by this SPG.
IV. User Responsibilities

The University of Michigan aspires to a high standard of digital citizenship for all its members. Members of the university community agree to abide by the following norms of behavior with regard to technology use:

A. Comply with Applicable Laws, Regulations, and U-M Policies

Comply with all federal, State of Michigan, and other applicable laws, regulations, contracts, and university policies regarding electronic communications, protection of institutional data, and operation of information technology resources.

1. Respect and do not infringe upon intellectual property rights, including university or third party copyright, or patents, trademarks, software license agreements and other contracts.
2. Take responsibility for understanding and complying with laws, regulations, and policies of systems or networks not controlled by U-M or in foreign countries, when engaged in university-related activities.

B. Respect the Intended Usage of Resources

1. Use only those computing resources that they have been authorized to use, and use them only in the manner and to the extent authorized.
2. Do not interfere with the intended use or proper functioning of information technology resources, gain or seek to gain unauthorized access to any resources, or prevent others from obtaining access to an account or computer other than their own.
3. Do not circumvent or bypass security measures or any standard protocols in place to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of U-M systems and networks.
4. Do not use university resources, including official university email lists or listservs, to campaign for or against a ballot initiative or candidate running for office or to conduct a political campaign.
5. Do not send unsolicited mass communications unrelated to university business or activities.
6. Refrain from using information resources for personal commercial purposes or for personal financial or other gain, except as permitted by Conflicts of Interest and Conflict of Commitment (SPG 201.65-1).
7. Unless authorized to do so, refrain from creating the appearance that U-M is endorsing, affiliated with, or otherwise supporting any organization, product, service, candidate, or position.

C. Respect the Shared Nature of Resources

While U-M makes every effort to accommodate the increased demands for anytime-anywhere IT resources, users should understand that these resources are finite and should:
1. Use information technology resources in a manner that respects the integrity of the 
system or network and in a manner that is consistent with the primary missions of the 
university.
2. Refrain from disproportionate uses that have the likelihood of consuming an 
unreasonable amount of resources, disrupting the intended use of these resources, or 
impinging on the access of others.

D. Respect the Rights and Privacy of Other Users

U-M is committed to respecting the privacy of individuals and will safeguard information 
about individuals subject to limitations imposed by federal and state law and other 
provisions described in Privacy and the Need to Monitor and Access Records (SPG 601.11). Members of the university community should have a reasonable expectation of 
privacy in both their institutional roles and in their personal lives; in turn, they should:
   1. Respect the privacy of other users, regardless of whether their accounts are 
      securely protected.
   2. Respect the privacy of all individuals for whom the university maintains records that 
      include private personal information.
   3. Refrain from invading the privacy of individuals or entities that are creators or 
      authors of information resources.
   4. Not falsely assume another person’s or entity’s identity or role through deception or 
      without proper authorization.
   5. Not communicate or act under the name, email address, or any other forms of 
      identification attached to a specific person or entity without proper authorization.

E. Safeguard the University’s Information Technology Resources

The university employs numerous measures to protect the security and integrity of its 
information resources and networks but cannot solely prevent unauthorized access or 
compromised accounts.

Users are responsible for following published security guidance to ensure that all their devices 
that access U-M IT resources are adequately protected.

All users of U-M information technology resources must promptly report all information security 
incidents, as defined in Information Security Incident Reporting Policy (SPG 601.25).

V. Violations and Sanctions

Misuse or abuse of U-M information resources should be reported to the IT User Advocate or 
the U-M Compliance Hotline, which allows for anonymous reporting.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including suspension or 
revocation of computer accounts and access to networks, non-reappointment, discharge, 
dismissal, and/or legal action. Discipline (SPG 201.12) provides for staff member disciplinary
procedures and sanctions. Violations of this policy by faculty may result in appropriate sanction or disciplinary action consistent with applicable university procedures. If dismissal or demotion of qualified faculty is proposed, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the procedures set forth in Regents Bylaw 5.09. The Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities and the Policy on Sexual Misconduct by Students provide for student disciplinary procedures and sanctions. In addition to U-M disciplinary actions, individuals may be personally subject to criminal or civil prosecution and sanctions if they engage in unlawful behavior related to applicable federal and state laws.

VI. Related Policies

Discipline (SPG 201.12)
Conflicts of Interest and Conflicts of Commitment (SPG 201.65-1)
Sexual Harassment (SPG 201.89-0)
Discrimination and Harassment (SPG 201.89-1)
Tech Tools: Cell Phones and Portable Electronic Resources (SPG 514.04)
Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression (SPG 601.01)
Policy and Guidelines Regarding Electronic Access to Potentially Offensive Material (SPG 601.16)
Violence in the University Community (SPG 601.18)
Identity Misrepresentation (SPG 601.19)
Security of Personally Owned Devices that Access or Maintain Sensitive Institutional Data (SPG 601.33)
Minors Involved in University Sponsored Programs or Programs Held in University Facilities (SPG 601.34)
Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities
Student Sexual Misconduct Policy
Sensitive Regulated Data: Permitted and Restricted Uses (DS-06)