

Email Recruiting of Research Participants

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**Sr. Reviewer: Director, Research Integrity
and Compliance**

Texas State University will ensure that the recruitment process of research participants adheres to legal and ethical standards, respects the privacy of individuals, and maintains the integrity of the research.

01. SCOPE

01.01 Texas State University provides email accounts and services to its students, faculty, staff, and retired faculty and staff, to enhance communication, collaboration, and information sharing. Email's widespread use and proven effectiveness make it one of the university's primary information delivery systems. That same ubiquity and utility also make it desirable for recruiting research subjects from the extensive pool of individuals with active university email addresses.

Experience has shown that overly frequent or suspicious-looking recruitment solicitations can result in reduced recipient productivity, recipient survey fatigue, and gradually waning participation. In addition, the research itself may be subject to oversight by the university's Institutional Review Board ([IRB](#)) or to privacy laws (e.g., [Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#)) governing the nature of the data being collected. For these reasons, the university must manage email recruiting of research subjects.

01.02 This policy provides guidance to university faculty, staff, and students to assure compliance with all legal requirements, minimize unnecessary and unproductive email communication, and maximize the value of email as a tool for recruiting research subjects. It applies to all university faculty, staff, and students who employ email to solicit participation in research projects using university email addresses (e.g.,

[@txstate.edu](#)).

02. DEFINITIONS

02.01 Administrative Survey – any organized effort to collect information directly from individuals who comprise a significant proportion of one or more Texas State affiliation groups. Administrative surveys often address academic, research, personnel, management, or environmental issues in order to assess and enhance institutional, divisional, or departmental effectiveness. When a survey targets a significant portion of one or more affiliation groups, regardless of purpose, the survey originator must follow the review and approval procedures outlined in [UPPS No. 01.03.05, Administrative Surveys](#).

02.02 Principal Investigator (PI) – individual responsible for the design, conduct, and reporting of the research activity or project for which subjects are being recruited; may be current Texas State students, staff, or faculty.

NOTE: If recruiting subjects via email, the PI must be a member of one of the groups listed in Section 03.04.

02.03 Research – a systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge.

02.04 Research Participant – an individual who provides information or data to a research project.

02.05 Texas State Affiliate – any individual having an active email mailbox in the Texas State email system. Current affiliations are defined and described in Section 04. of [UPPS No. 04.01.02, Information Resources Identity and Access Management](#), and include students, faculty, staff, and other members of the university community.

03. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS

03.01 The Texas State email addresses of any Texas State affiliate, affiliation group, or subset or combination thereof, may be included in a research project’s target pool of recruitment addresses, so long as their participation is consistent with the goals and objectives of the research project.

03.02 Recruiting messages must originate from Texas State’s endorsed and purchased licensed survey software tool or a Texas State email address of the research project’s PI or approved key personnel who must be a member of one of the groups listed in Section 03.04. The recruiting message must conform to the format described in Section 04.

03.03 To ensure compliance with [IRB](#) policy and applicable privacy laws, the PI must have obtained either an approval or an exemption from the [IRB](#) prior to sending the recruitment email.

03.04 Only members of the following groups are permitted to recruit research subjects via university email:

- a. current faculty;
- b. current staff;
- c. current graduate students under faculty supervision; and
- d. Honors College undergraduates enrolled in the Honors thesis course.

NOTE: Email recruitment of subjects for all other undergraduate-level research projects is the responsibility of the project’s faculty sponsor or director.

03.05 Research projects involving administrative surveys must have those surveys approved in advance by the University Survey Committee (USC). Details about the USC and the administrative survey review process can be found on the [Administrative Surveys and Services website](#).

04. RECRUITMENT EMAIL MESSAGE FORMATTING PROCEDURES

04.01 All recruitment email messages must conform to the format described in this section, using the [Email Recruitment Message Formatting Requirements and Template](#).

04.02 Address Lines – In accord with best practice, the PI shall employ measures to avoid disclosing the email addresses of potential research subjects to others. Common techniques include the use of:

- a. individually targeted messages (one address in ‘TO:’ line) per message; or
- b. group targeted messages (all recipient addresses in the ‘BCC:’ line)

04.03 **Subject Line** – The PI shall use a standard subject line in all recruiting messages that begins with the phrase “Research Participation Invitation:” followed by the research project’s title, topic, or similar key words.

04.04 **Email Message Body** – The email message body must begin with a statement affirming [IRB](#) approval or exemption of the research project. The PI should use the bulk of the message body to describe the purpose of the research project and the anticipated value of the findings. To enhance the likelihood of recipient participation, the PI may also wish to address other topics, such as the reason for the recipient’s selection, a statement of anonymity or confidentiality, the anticipated time required for participation, the voluntary nature of participation, and any incentives for participating. The body of the email message must close with the following information:

- a. the [IRB](#) approval or exemption number;
- b. a statement directing questions about research, research participants’ rights, or research-related harm to participants, to both the current [IRB](#) chair and the director, Research Integrity and Compliance, and include their current contact information; and
- c. a statement directing questions about the research project itself to the PI and including the PI’s telephone and email contact information.

The message body should be free of special font effects such as color, bolding, or highlighting. The PI should include all pertinent information in the message body, but if supplemental information is necessary, hyperlinks (to the supplemental information) are preferred over attachments.

05. OVERSIGHT RESPONSIBILITIES

05.01 The Research Integrity and Compliance Support Services within the Division of Research shall establish and maintain procedures to facilitate compliance with this policy.

06. REVIEWERS OF THIS UPPS

06.01 Reviewers of this UPPS include the following:

Position	Date
Director, Research Integrity and Compliance	October 1 E3Y
Chair, Institutional Review Board	October 1 E3Y
Director, Institutional Research	October 1 E3Y
Director, Testing, Measurement and Evaluation Center	October 1 E3Y
Associate Dean, Graduate College	October 1 E3Y

07. CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

This UPPS has been approved by the following individuals in their capacities and represents Texas State policy and procedure from the date of this document until superseded.

Director, Research Integrity and Compliance; senior reviewer of this UPPS

Assistant Vice President for Research

Vice President for Research

President