SENDING EMAILS

The information below is meant to guide alumni volunteers as they prepare and send emails to their alumni community using UChicago Community Online (UCCO) newsletters. It is intended to help prevent emails from being diverted to a spam filter and to increase rates of opening and reading by alumni, parents, families, and friends.

AVOIDING SPAM

US antispam law requires that the organization responsible for sending an email be clearly identified, including a valid postal mailing address. It also requires a simple unsubscribe mechanism be provided, requiring the requester to submit no more than his/her email address. Making it difficult for people to unsubscribe can also increase the number of spam complaints, which threatens the deliverability of your emails as a whole. Unsubscribe links and postal addresses are already preloaded into UCCO newsletters, so volunteers sending emails via a UCCO site do not need to be concerned with adding this information.

Spam filters look at the image/text ratio, so volunteers should avoid emails that are mostly images with very little text. Unusual font colors, such as red or green used for emphasis, can trigger spam filters. Certain words can also lead to higher spam scores. These words and phrases are common in true spam emails, including “Viagra,” “mortgage,” and “extra inches,” but also includes words like “free,” “percent off,” and “reminder.”

BREVITY

Be clear and concise, stay to the point, and don’t overwhelm readers. Instead of including long or detailed descriptions, link to external websites in order to provide additional background information.

COLORS

Avoid using background colors. Various email clients will not render the background colors.
CONTENT

Emails should have specific actions for recipients to take, such as making a gift or registering for an event. Make the links to these actions easy to understand and easy to find within the body of the email. Create a hyperlink from text that describes the destination, such as “make a gift,” “view our blog page,” or “visit the club website,” rather than from generic text such as “click here” or “go here.”

EMAIL DATA PROTECTION

When sending a personal email, make sure to BCC or Blind Carbon Copy all the recipients rather than inserting names/emails in the To or CC (Carbon Copy) fields. This ensures that we are protecting email privacy.

TEXT AND FONT

Body text should be no smaller than 12px and no larger than 14px. Headings or titles should be between 16px and 21px. The longer the heading, the smaller the font should be.

Each browser and/or email client displays text differently, so text should not be center aligned, since it becomes difficult to read.

SPECIAL CHARACTERS

Special characters like em dashes (—) and smart quotes/apostrophes (‘ ’) often trigger errors in html, producing strange text like “yearâ€™s” and other gibberish. When editing material for email use, be sure to eliminate such characters.

SPELLING AND GRAMMAR

While it should go without saying for UChicago alumni, we would be remiss not to mention it: Be sure to reread and then proofread all writing before sending or posting.

SUBJECT LINES

Email subject lines should tell readers what to expect from the content of the email, not trick them into opening the email. There is no single rule for subject line length, but some email clients will begin to cut subjects off at about 50 characters, so they’ll only be seen when the email is opened. Use normal letter cases (sentence case or title case) and punctuation (go easy on the exclamation points). If relevant, localizing the subject line, such as including the name of the city where an event is taking place, can