

Email Style Guide

The emails that you send to outside audiences, such as prospective students or community partners, are important. Research shows that, in addition to conveying necessary information to your readers, your emails shape the perceptions they have about UCCS.



To help you create emails that will accomplish your goals and enhance the reputation of the university, we've compiled best practices from higher education experts and communication strategists.

Most importantly, this guide will help you avoid common mistakes. By using this guide, your communications will become more effective. Please use it consistently.

There are two sections to this guide:

- Best practices
- Style guidelines

To view this email as a web page, go here.

Dear %%First Name%%,

You are invited to join Chancellor Venkat Reddy for an evening of celebration and an **exclusive behind-the-scenes tour** at the Ent Center for the Arts, the premiere arts destination in Southern Colorado. Celebrate the Ent Center's first two years, learn more about its impact and success, and **join the conversation with other UCCS alumni about its future.**

Details:


Date: Thursday, January 16, 2020
Time: 5:30 - 7:30 PM
Location: Ent Center for the Arts

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5:30 - 6:00 PM | Check-in & Light Appetizers
6:00 - 6:45 PM | Discussion led by Chancellor Reddy and Senior Vice Chancellor Martin Wood
6:45 - 7:30 PM | Exclusive Behind the Scenes Tour


Limited spaces available. Reserve your space today!

[Reserve Your Space Today](#)



f t @

Alumni & Friends Association
 University of Colorado Colorado Springs
 1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway, Colorado Springs, CO, 80918
www.uccs.edu/alumni | 719.255.3180 | alumni@uccs.edu



This email was sent to: %%emailaddr%%
 This email was sent by the University of Colorado
[Manage your email preferences](#) | [Update your contact information](#)
 Your CLID: %%Contact.ID%%

Best Practices

Make sure email is the right way to reach your audience

Before committing to an email, consider whether this is the best way to reach your audience.

Factors to consider include:

- How many emails has your audience already received from you and/or UCCS? High volumes cause some audiences to tune out.
- Do you want your audience to respond electronically? Email may be the appropriate vehicle if you want a return email, an online registration or a visit to a website because email provides the ability to include live links that guide audience members to a direct call to action.
- Would your communication be better conveyed through another vehicle (i.e. telephone call, on-campus marketing or postal mail)?

Keep it brief

In general, emails should be brief and include links to more information or a call to action. People scan email on a variety of devices, so keep paragraphs short and use bullets and headlines to highlight important information and quickly convey points.

Use a single call to action

The focal point of your email should be the action you want the recipient to take. Make only a single request. If you ask recipients to do several things, they may fail to respond to your primary request.

Be consistent

Refer to programs, events or actions you wish the recipient to take in the same way within each email; if you create multiple emails, you should talk about these concepts in the same way across emails.

Keep subject lines short and clear

Readers often decide whether to open an email based on the subject line. Some things to consider when creating your subject line:

- Keep your subject line straightforward; avoid ambiguity and word plays.
- Limit your subject line to about 50 characters.
- Avoid “tricking” recipients into opening your email – be transparent.
- Avoid using special characters (i.e. \$ @ %)

Reflect UCCS’ brand

The content of your email should reinforce – and not conflict with – UCCS’ mission and brand. If your email is promotional, you also may want to include any key messages that have been developed for your program.

For more information about the UCCS brand and voice, visit uccs.edu/brand.

Avoid jargon

Use the same language your readers would use. Explain terms that are familiar to you but that your readers may be seeing for the first time.

Use spelling and grammar-check wisely

While spelling- and grammar-check programs can help you spot mistakes, remember that these programs do not know what you are trying to say nor do they follow UCCS style. Review each suggested correction before you accept the change.

Test all emails before sending

Always test your email before a mass mailing. View the email through several different web browsers (FireFox, Google Chrome, Safari etc.) and providers (Outlook, Gmail etc.) to make sure there are no formatting errors or unrecognizable characters.

Review email metrics

If your email capabilities allow, review any available metrics that give you a picture of the effectiveness of your emails. This should be completed in the days after you send your email (or after the end of an email campaign). Doing so will provide valuable insight into the effectiveness of your emails or campaigns in the future.

Some of the most common and useful email metrics include:

- **Open rate**, or the number of recipients who open your email. Good open rates measure anywhere from 3% to 18% depending on your audience and the context of your message (i.e. a “cold-call” email or a transactional email).
- **Click-through rate**, or the number of times a recipient clicks on trackable links within your email. Click-through rates generally fall between 1-10%, depending on the nature of your email’s message.
- **Unsubscribes**, or the number of recipients who unsubscribe to your email/ mailing list. Unsubscribe rates should be very low – between 0.3-1% per email.
- **Sent messages**, or the number of outbound emails sent with your mailing.
- **Delivered messages***, or the number of emails that actually deliver to your recipients’ inboxes.
- **Hard bounces***, or emails that are permanently undeliverable.
- **Soft bounces***, or emails that are temporarily undeliverable.

*These metrics show the deliverability of your email to your audience. It is recommended that you work with your eComm specialist to troubleshoot and strategize the appropriate next steps in order to improve the deliverability of your electronic communications.

Compliance with the CAN-SPAM Act

Emails that contain messages of a commercial nature must adhere to the guidelines set forth by the Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing (CAN-SPAM) Act. This act gives recipients the right to opt-out of any emails that have a primary purpose of distributing commercial content. The law defines commercial content as “any electronic mail message the primary purpose of which is the commercial advertisement or promotion of a commercial product or service.”

If your email contains messaging that falls within the category of commercial content, please ensure that it adheres to the guidelines of the CAN-SPAM Act.

Style Guidelines

A Use the UCCS & CU System logos on all mass email communication

The UCCS logo is an important part of our brand image. The logo ties your message to all other communications that your audience has received from UCCS. It also tells your readers that your message is legitimate and not SPAM. Using the CU System lockup logo also tells your audience that your communication is a part of the University of Colorado system.

For digital downloads of these logos and guidelines for their use, visit uccs.edu/brand.

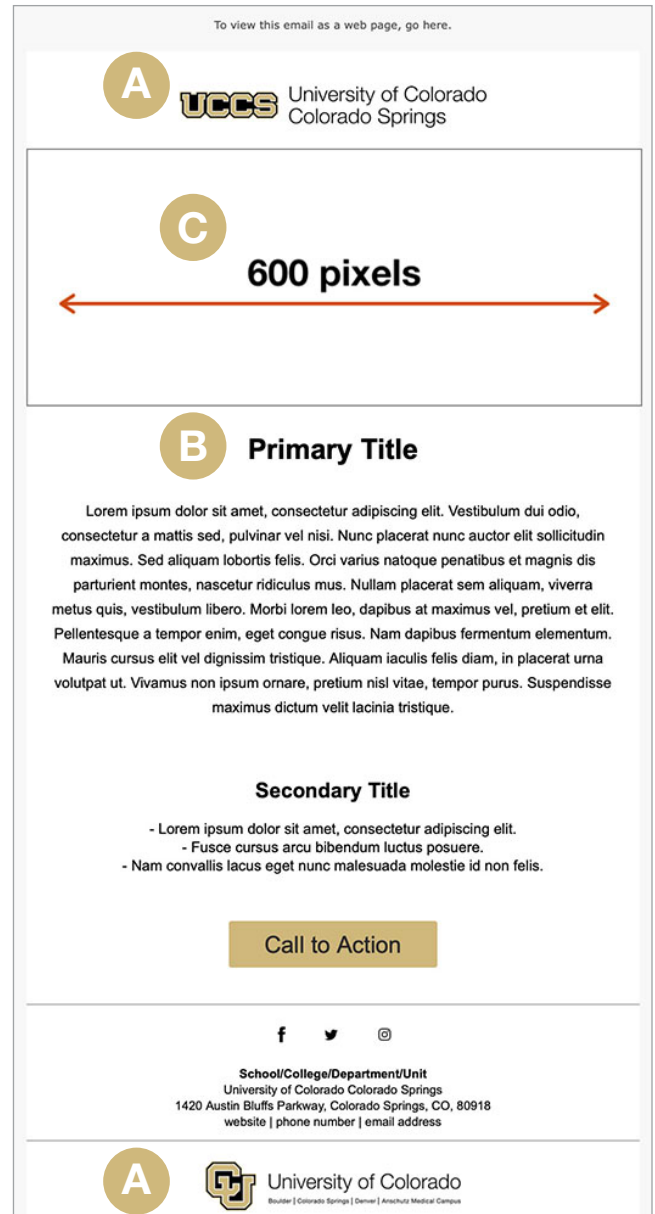
B Put your key message/offer in the upper-third section of your email

This is the first place email users look, so put the most important information here. If a reader employs a preview panel, they often see nothing beyond the top few inches of an email. Should they choose to ignore the email and your key message/offer is at the bottom, they will never see the call to action you desire them to take. A creative placement of a call to action in the upper-third can also be utilized to increase engagement. Take the time to prioritize your content.

C Make sure your images are sized appropriately

Images in emails can add visual interest to your message. If you are using graphics, make sure they are sized appropriately for the placement within your email.

- Hero/header image should be no larger than 600 pixels wide.
- Two side-by-side images should be no larger than 300 pixels wide each.
- Depending on the number of images you are using side-by-side, divide 600 pixels by the number of images and resize each image (i.e. using 3 images across, each should be no larger than 200 pixels wide).



Use color carefully

Choose colors that make your message easy to read. Viewers quickly delete messages that are difficult to scan.

- Make sure your font contrasts with your background color.
 - DO use black font on white background
 - DO NOT use white font on light grey background
- Utilize UCCS brand colors for color scheme and use approved accent colors sparingly.

For more information about UCCS brand colors, visit uccs.edu/brand.

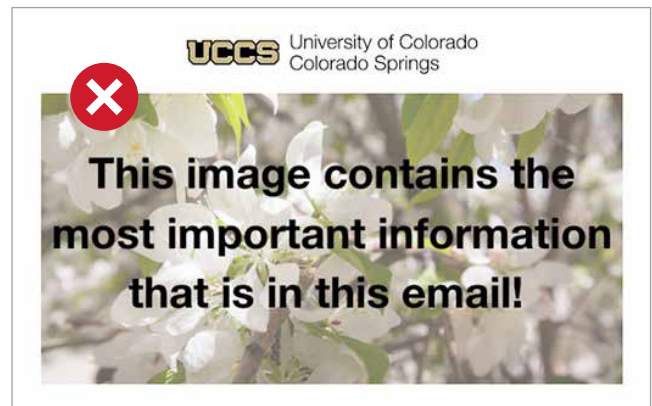
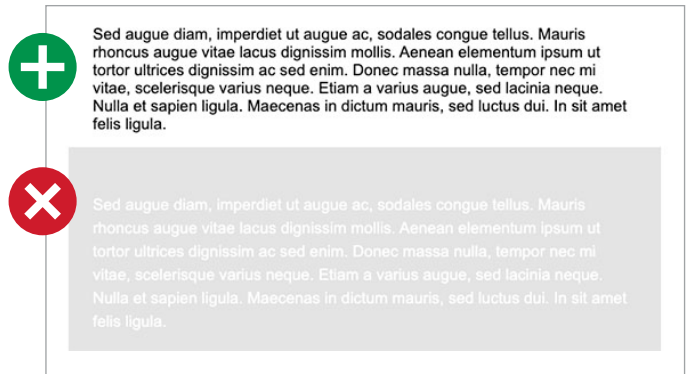
Do not use graphics for headlines, subheads or body copy when you can build content into your email manually

Email clients often suppress graphics. Many readers choose not to download images, so they will miss part of your message. Don't turn your entire message into a graphic; if readers do not choose to download your image, they will miss your message completely.

If you do choose to use graphics in your emails, always include alternative text for each graphic. Doing so not only improves accessibility of your email but also provides an explanation of the graphics if your reader chooses not to download them.

Use at least a 12-point font

Readers will skip your message if they have to strain to read it. Use a clean, easy-to-read font for your text, such as Helvetica or Arial, and make the font at least 12-point size.



Information

The UCCS Email Marketing Guidelines establishes standards for the design and content of university email campaigns. The document describes best practices and policy for ADA and CAN-SPAM compliant email messages that should be followed by eComm users. Adhering to these guidelines will ensure that electronic communications across campus will be inclusive of all audiences and reflect the image and brand of UCCS and the University of Colorado as a whole.

Questions and Comments

Contact the UCCS eComm Specialists with any questions or comments

Eric Nissen - enissen@uccs.edu

Kayla Gronseth Boyer - kgronset@uccs.edu

System eComm Information

More details about the system-wide eComm program are available at cu.edu/ecommerce

Accessibility in Emails

What does it mean?

Accessibility means a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally inclusive manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. The ADA gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications.

Why is it important?

In order to create email accessibility, you should understand why it's important. Blindness and other degrees of limited vision are quite common. 285 million people worldwide are considered to have visual disabilities and differences. 36 million are blind, and 246 million have low vision.

Additionally, many people are color blind. Among people with Northern European ancestry, the most common form of color blindness (red-green) occurs in ~1 out of every 12 males and ~1 out of every 200 females. Worldwide, blue-yellow color blindness affects ~1 out of every 10,000 people.

These visual differences are significant; especially when considering how often color is used to convey meaning or actions online.

Examples of Best Practices:

+ DO

DO write descriptive links and headings.

[Read the Chancellor's remarks.](#)



✗ DON'T

DON'T write uninformative links and headings.

[Read more.](#)



DO use a combination of color, shapes and text.



DON'T only use color to convey meaning.



DO describe images and provide transcripts for video.



<alt text>
Female college student working at computer in library.

DON'T only show information in an image or video.

