



ROCKY MOUNTAIN
COLLEGE

Rocky Mountain College Text Messaging Policy

Messages intended for the campus community are best communicated by regular email and/or printed materials. Text messaging is intended to supplement RMC's communication strategy, and this policy is specific to texting. The text messaging policy applies to any RMC-affiliated individual granted permission to text groups of constituents regarding institutionally-related matters.

NOTE: This policy is intended for everyday, non-emergency use. Use your judgment in case of emergency. Contact the Dean of Students Office with any questions about RMC's emergency guidelines at 406-657-1018 or campus-safety@rocky.edu.

Text Messaging Across the Student Lifecycle

Text messaging (which includes SMS and MMS messages) can be used by the institution to relay information about cancellation, closures; admissions and academic requirements or deadlines; registration; financial aid; alumni giving; and other matters that are time sensitive.

Texting Prospective Students

For prospective student communication, recipients must grant permission to communicate via text message during the application process, on a request for information form, on an inquiry card, or on the application itself. Students may opt in or opt out of each communication channel provided, including: text, email, phone, and mail. If a student does not choose to attend the institution, an opt-out preference should be assumed and the student should be removed from receiving future communications. Staff in the Admissions department will typically be responsible for texting with prospective students.

The types of text messages that can be sent to prospective students include but are not limited to:

1. Application status - submitted, incomplete, missing documents.

2. Financial Aid status - FAFSA deadline, submitted, missing documents, scholarships, work study availability.
3. Campus visit/tour/orientation information - visit confirmation, reminder, survey.
4. Admission status - congratulations on acceptance, enrollment next steps, advisor introduction, academic program information, deposit due.
5. Athletics -recruiting, official visit, letter of intent.

Opt-In and Opt-Out Management

Opt-out and opt-in preferences are automatically logged and updated within the institution's texting database based upon any student's texting preferences. Updates are generated manually by the student or manually by an administrator.

Consent to text must be established before sending any messages. Students must opt-in (provide name and mobile number) to receive text messages that are non-emergency updates and ensure their contact information held by RMC is current. If a student chooses to opt-out of receiving text communications from a specific department, they are not automatically opted out from other departments. Students must have the ability to text 'STOP' or "OPT OUT" at any time to opt-out of messages.

The administrator of the institution's texting platform will run regular reporting and update the database to manage contact texting preferences. Students can be notified of these modified preferences and asked whether or not they would like to receive institution communications through another channel such as email, phone, mail, or if they'd like to opt-out of all modes of communication.

Consent Collection:

Methods for obtaining consent must be documented and provable in the event that messaging activity leads to large spikes in opt-out rates or spam complaints. A record of all opt-ins shall be maintained and is housed within the institution's texting platform.

Places to ask for consent (opt-in) may include:

1. Application or document submissions
2. Forms that ask for contact information
3. Websites or student portals
4. Event registrations
5. Appointment scheduling

Re-Establishing Consent:

Obtaining consent to text an individual does not mean that consent is indefinite. The date/time stamp of the last text received from an individual, along with a contact's opt-in status, may be used to determine if consent is still current.

Consent and opt-in must be re-established if a reasonable time (10-12 months) has passed without any messages being sent to the contact.

Text Message Content:

Messages should be as concise as possible (while still maintaining a conversational tone) and should address the student directly by name or with "you/your." They should include essential points and, if needed, further instruction (e.g. "check your email for full details").

Authorized individuals must abide by all policies and ensure the following:

1. Content is accurate.
2. Wording is appropriate and fits the institution's voice and brand.
3. Tone is casual but professional and ends with a question when a response is desired.
4. List of recipients is correct and relevant to the message being sent.
5. Information within the message is directly related to the student and/or their studies.
6. Message clearly states the action that the student needs to take or how the information impacts the student, and who to contact for additional information.
7. All messages must be tagged with the appropriate identifiers (the institution's name and department) so recipients can immediately recognize who it's from. The exception to this is in follow up messages of an ongoing conversation. For example, if an authorized individual is sending an initial text message, open with, "Hi Becky, it's Chris Smith from Admissions at RMC." On all subsequent communications, authorized officials can sign off at the end of a text message: "- Chris Smith, Admissions."
8. The number of messages received by a student are appropriate to ensure he/she will continue to regard the text messages as important information and does not choose to opt-out of future communication.
9. Messages are sent with adequate time for a response, action, or activity.
10. Abbreviations and text messaging lingo (such as LOL or TTYL) are not used.
11. Emojis approved for use by the institution are used appropriately, with no more than one emoji per message. Not every text message should include an emoji. These include the smiley face, thumbs up, and bear head emojis.

12. Use hyperlinks sparingly, and instead, use text messaging to encourage a student to check their email or website for more information. When links are used, it should include the full website URL and not be shortened through a service like bitly.
13. Initial messages must include instructions for opting out such as “Reply STOP to unsubscribe”.

Emergency vs. Non-Emergency Communications:

Text messaging must not be used as the sole means of communicating an essential message or announcement. The text message must be supplemented by some other means of communication, such as an email, phone call, or paper notice, to ensure that all students, including those who have not opted in, receive the message.

Non-emergency text messaging must NOT be used for the following:

1. Sole method of communication - to ensure that students that have opted out still receive this information.
2. Communicating personal or confidential information (e.g. GPA, academic standing).
3. Sending general information to large populations (e.g. Fall classes start Monday!).
4. Personal matters (e.g. items for sale, farewell messages).
5. Appeals on behalf of individuals or groups of students (e.g. to attend social, cultural, or sporting events, unless the student opted in for these text messages).
6. Sending any messages containing social security numbers, passwords, credit card numbers, or any FERPA-protected data.
7. Emergency alerts.

For any emergency-related communication, please consult the Dean of Students Office for the emergency communication policy at 406-657-1018 or campus-safety@rocky.edu.

Response Timeframe:

As a best practice, text messages should only be sent during designated business hours (e.g. between 9:00am and 5:00pm Monday-Friday) to be respectful of a student’s time and a team’s availability to respond. Any incoming replies to messages should be reviewed and responded to in a timely manner (preferably 24 hours), so as to provide optimal student support and prevent future messages from being ignored or a student opting out.

If a staff member is out of the office for an extended period of time, they are required to create an “Out of Office” away message with information about how a student can receive assistance in their absence, such as another staff member’s contact information. Admissions staff may assign

their number within Mongoose-Cadence to another staff member to respond to received messages during an extended period of leave.

Text Messaging Approvals and Institution Policies

Individuals wanting a message sent on their behalf must request and receive approval before a text can be sent to students. Institutional personnel who have access to the institution's texting platforms do not need prior approval to send periodic messages. Text messages containing images or video must be reviewed and approved in advance by the Office of Marketing and Communications to ensure proper logo usage, branding, colors, fonts, voice, etc.