



## **COMMUNICATIONS STANDARDS**

Early in 2016, an ad hoc team came together to carefully consider the communications methods we most often use here at the Adler Graduate School and, more importantly, the methods and standards to which we aspire as a group of people and as an institution

The ad hoc communications group met for three sessions and then a subset of this group continued the process by working to review and articulate the initial group's dialogue. After creating a working, Communications Standards draft, this sub-group asked the initial ad hoc group for feedback and then prepared and adopted a final set of Communications Standards for the Adler Graduate School.

Although it is always a struggle to articulate standards for any behavior, and trying to define communications standards for an organization that seeks to train professional communicators may seem like a daunting task, who better than a graduate school operating in the fields of mental health and education to take on the task of identifying general standards for healthy, constructive communications.

I emphasize the word general because the standards identified below are somewhat general. Although they will be emphasized, in the foreseeable future, as the Adler Graduate School's adopted communications standards, I encourage every individual associated with the Adler Graduate School to feel free and empowered to build upon these baseline standards, consistent with her/his own high standards for interpersonal communications. Please keep these standards close at hand as you discharge your responsibilities and as you relate to AGS students, AGS Faculty and Staff Members, and other colleagues and members of both the Adler Graduate School community and/or our broader community.

Dan Haugen, PhD  
AGS President

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- In all communications, strive for that which helps, in any given situation; that is, those communications that add value.
- In all communications, look inwardly for those things you can uniquely contribute that add value; that is, those things for which you can take responsibility.
- In all communications – whether agreeable or disagreeable, in any given situation – dedicate yourself to considering what can be learned from each communications experience.
- In all circumstances, strive to communicate in a manner that reflects your “better self”.
- As Paul Wellstone frequently said – and he might as well have been speaking about healthy, constructive interpersonal communications – “We all do better, when we all do better”.
- Strive for composure in all communications.
- Strive for civility in all communications.
- Strive to keep members of the organization well-informed, as appropriate – especially those persons for whom you may have administrative/supervisory responsibility.
- Distribute frequent, regular and de-centralized communications on a program-by-program and institutional unit-by-institutional unit basis – especially with those persons for whom you may have administrative/supervisory responsibility.
- Conduct de-centralized exit interviews with persons who leave AGS by graduation or other routes – de-centralize these interviews at supervisory/program/unit-specific levels – especially with those persons for whom you may have administrative/supervisory responsibility.
- Make use of email and other electronic/written communications strategies whenever appropriate but, as a general rule, communicate on an In-person basis whenever the sensitivity of a message suggests that in-person communications are/will be more constructive/effective than electronic/written communications.
- As it concerns email and other electronic/written communications strategies, as a general rule, strive to never write what you are not willing to say on an in-person basis.
- When you are part of a group meeting (e.g., council, committee, discussion forum) , please do not bring or use electronic devices such as cell phones and computers unless, for example, you are the convener and may need to access information in order to effectively facilitate proceedings. Please keep in mind, it is acceptable to either not attend a group meeting or to step out of a group meeting if you need to address pressing matters, on any given day, and you believe that is the best use of your time.
- Address issues on a situation-by-situation basis. For example, if an issue is better addressed on a one-to-one basis than as a group, then strive to address that issue accordingly and do not treat it as a group issue.
- Strive to courageously confront gossip whenever you hear it – do not rely on others to stand up to gossip. Strive to uphold the standard – “Talk to people – not about people”.
- Conduct conversations with everyone in such a way that if our students were listening you would be proud to stand behind your conversations.
- Consistent with our commitment to diversity – including the diversity of perspectives, beliefs and opinions, and our commitment to constructive communication patterns – communicate in a manner that honors the belief, we are all related.