

# THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

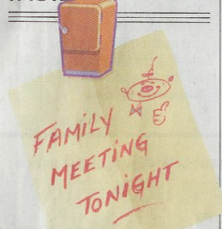
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## INSIDE



### On the agenda: Family relationships

Family life just feels so busy, with everyone going off in their own directions and communication getting lost. Read how to get your family talking. **E3**

### Dance marathon helps children

University of Michigan Dance Marathon, which raises money for rehabilitative services at U-M C.S. Mott Children's Hospital and William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, is coming up. Read why it draws 700 or so dancers. **F1**

### Harrington gone; Lions hope for trade

Now tha: quarterback Joey Harrington is no longer with the Lions, the team hopes to trade the former starter. **D1**

### Stem cell company plans partnership

Ann Arbor adult stem cell therapies company Aastrom Biosciences Inc. will partner with an orthopedic products firm in a deal that could move Aastrom's technology from the laboratory into the marketplace. **C1**

## IN BRIEF

### Whitewashing mouthwashes?

NEW YORK - Procter & Gamble says Pfizer is lying to dentists about the effectiveness of mouthwashes, a charge Pfizer disputes.

Procter & Gamble Co. made the claim in court papers responding to a lawsuit brought by Pfizer Inc. against it over its mouthwash advertising.

Cincinnati-based P&G disputed the claims in the lawsuit filed earlier this month by Pfizer, the maker of Listerine. Pfizer said P&G falsely advertised its Crest Pro-Health mouthwash to gain an unfair advantage over Listerine.

Pfizer Inc., based in New York, said P&G falsely claims that four out of five dentists recommend Crest Pro-Health for reasons related to the product's efficacy, superiority or other characteristics.

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## Professors find their mailboxes never empty



ROBERT CHASE/THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Thad Polk, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, says he is inundated with e-mail from the 300 students in his cognitive psychology class in the days before an exam. He sometimes sends copies of his answer to one student's question to everyone in the class to save time. "Students learn a lot from these e-mail exchanges," he says.

### Students' e-mails run from reasonable to rude

BY GEOFF LARCOM  
News Staff Reporter

The e-mail is familiar to Nick Valentino. It will come from another campus, perhaps from across the country.

"I'm writing a term paper in an area that my Google search tells me you work in," the student writes Valentino, an associate professor of communication studies at the University of Michigan. "Can you give me feedback on this topic, or would you be willing to read this draft?"

Welcome to the world of e-mail, where professors have descended from the ivory tower into the cluttered, instant-access world of cyberspace communication.

This new 24/7 form of access offers new

benefits for professor-student interaction, but also some new pitfalls, including the frequent queries from students on distant campuses wanting help with their research.

"It doesn't seem as preposterous to them as it does to those of us who grew up before the age of e-mail," Valentino says. "We never would have done that. We were socialized differently."

Faculty and students are finding their way along the information superhighway as they figure out boundaries and rules for online behavior.

Valentino and other faculty members at U-M and Eastern Michigan University say that most student requests and e-mails are appropriate, helpful and constructive. Notes

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## Sports gender dispute resurface

### School district defends exclusivity of girls teams

BY DAVE GERSHMAN  
News Staff Reporter

The lawyer who forced Ann Arbor Public Schools to let a boy play on a girls middle school field hockey team now wants a state civil rights panel to tell the district to open up other girls teams to boys.

Attorney Marla Linderman appeared before the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, which met Monday in Ann Arbor, to request a declaratory ruling that the school district's team sports policies violate the state's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act.

The issue, she said, is that the district cannot legally prohibit boys from playing on girls teams when the district does not offer a comparable team for boys.

Field hockey and volleyball are examples of two sports that have teams restricted to girls.

"Across the board, they have excluded from elementary school to high school all boys from girls sports, even if there

isn't a comparable (b sport)," Linderman said.

Liz Margolis, a spokeswoman for Ann Arbor Public Schools, said there isn't enough depth to offer sports like field hockey for boys, too. But the district committed to resolving complaints about its middle school teams on a case-by-case basis. The district still believes should not play on girls teams at the high school level, she said.

The civil rights commission held off making an immediate ruling. Members asked several questions related to legal precedent and Linderman's legal argument.

Linderman said there's a problem with having separate boys and girls teams. The problem is only when the district offers sports like field hockey for girls, but not for boys. On the other hand, girls can play boys teams, she said.

The question was raised in a lawsuit filed by Linderman.

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## Warmer weather boosts state tourism

However, not everyone benefits from 'season creep'

BY MEGAN HOLLAND  
Ann Arbor News Bureau

LANSING - Just imagine: Michigan golfers hitting the links in March rather than late April or T-shirted tourists sunning themselves on a ferry to Mackinac Island in late October. It all could come true for the tourism industry, thanks to the

warmer weather that accounted for a 4 percent boost in tourism year-over-year - one of the few bright spots in the Michigan economy, says Don Holecek, a research analyst at the Michigan State University Tourism Center.

Of course, there are downsides: ice-fishing and snowmobile festivals canceled due to lack of lake ice or snow, for example.

Still, casinos, restaurants, hotels and retailers always benefit when highways are clear

## E-MAIL FROM A1

# Professor's least favorite student e-mail: 'I wasn't in class Tuesday. Did I miss anything?'

explaining why the student won't make a lecture or asking for clarification on a point contribute to the sense of connection students feel with the class, faculty members say. A decade ago, such inquiries would have to be saved for harried after-class discussions or the professor's limited office hours – or they might never be asked.

Yet in this new age of accessibility, professors often get bombarded with the trivial. Holly Peters-Golden, a U-M lecturer in introductory anthropology, loves e-mail but acknowledges she routinely get questions from students to define terms when all that was needed was to check the textbook's index.

And as anybody who cleans out their e-mail in-box knows, responding takes time. Thad Polk, an associate professor of psychology at U-M, says he does little else but answer e-mails several days before exams in his course on introduction to cognitive psychology, which has 300 students.

Before one of his exams last year, he received 120 e-mails. Yet he says he's glad to help out. "I really do think it improves students' retention of the material," Polk says.

Thomas Gest, an associate professor who teaches anatomy at U-M Medical School, used to be approachable only during

**'It's a good way to draw out students. If they feel we're approachable, it helps motivate them to learn.'**

Thomas Gest, associate professor, U-M Medical School

business hours. Now, first-year medical students can e-mail him any time and he'll respond, within reason. "They can get to me as needed," he says. "It's a good way to draw out students. If they feel we're approachable, it helps motivate them to learn."

## An immediate channel

EMU and U-M faculty members say the best thing about e-mail is how it helps students better understand what professors are thinking and vice versa.

EMU senior Lindsey Robinson, who's majoring in secondary education and English, says she will e-mail professors when something big is due or when she has a family emergency that forces her to miss class.

"It's easier to just send an e-mail when you're up at midnight or 1 a.m., when you're working on stuff, rather than wait until 9

a.m. office hours," she says. "You don't always have time (during the day) as a student."

Says Sally McCracken, an EMU professor of communication and theater arts: "It provides an immediate channel to alert me that they will not be able to attend a class and then (the student can) submit a short assignment through e-mail."

Michele Mitchell, an associate professor of history at U-M, says e-mail can alert professors to problems in classroom dynamics, or reveal that she is not being as clear as she would like.

Mitchell and other faculty members say it's also an ideal outlet for quiet or shy students who don't speak up in class or for whom English is a second language.

Peters-Golden and Valentino say the best e-mails come when students get excited about something they heard in a lecture and ask questions or make a connection in real life, such as citing an article.

When Polk gets on-point questions about the course, he sends his reply to the whole class and then archives it. Such a positive response elicits more questions and a deeper understanding of the material. "Students learn a lot from these e-mail exchanges," Polk says of exam time. "They are particularly eager to learn at that point."

## 'Incredibly rude'

Despite its many, quick benefits, student e-mail can also be intrusive, unreasonable or harsh.

Peters-Golden and others report getting requests for letters of recommendation that are due in several days – things you wouldn't ask for in person.

Mitchell reports getting "incredibly rude" e-mails over the winter holidays from students complaining about final grades or trying to negotiate their way out of a bad situation in the course. Articulating a standard of fairness over e-mail during holiday break is difficult, Mitchell says.

Jeff Bernstein, an associate professor of political science at EMU, counsels his students about the tone of their e-mails and how they should address professors, noting that punctuation and capitalization are important. "Would you e-mail a future boss like that?" he asks students.

"There's a difference between e-mailing a friend and e-mailing a professor," Bernstein says. "That's a lesson we need to teach."

Valentino advises students and professors to have difficult discussions – for example, about poor academic performance or questions of unfair grading – face to face rather than via e-

**'A lot of human communication is nonverbal. A lot is lost through e-mails.'**

Mark Higbee, associate professor of history, EMU

mail. That allows better two-way discussion with empathy, eye contact and encouraging voice tones rather than the more clinical e-mail discussion.

That advice is seconded by Mark Higbee, an associate professor of history at EMU. "A lot of human communication is nonverbal," he says. "A lot is lost through e-mails."

Higbee likes e-mail for quick questions, noting one sincere but broad query that is particularly vexing. "I wasn't in class Tuesday," a student will say. "Did I miss anything?"

"I can't recapitulate 75 minutes in an e-mail," Higbee says.

Some professors now draw a line to limit e-mails and prevent communication creep from taking over their lives. Mitchell doesn't respond to e-mails after 10 p.m., so as not to fuel the perception she's available at all times.

EMU English professor Jeff

Duncan doesn't do e-mail for his lecture class of more than 200 telling students to get in touch with their classmates for assignments and routine matters. "You got one of me and 200 of you," he tells the class. Duncan wonders if e-mail can breed kind of dependency that run counter to the sense of manner and maturity college should confer. "I'm not altogether in love with it," he says of e-mail.

McCracken says she like technology and the instant accessibility it provides, but note that e-mail is yet another wrinkle in the tapestry of distractions for students, such as iPods, text messaging and TV. "I think in the long haul, it shortens the attention span," she says.

Mitchell urges undergraduates to understand the multiple professorial demands at a research institution such as U-M. At the same time, she realizes e-mail offers vital contact with teachers at what can be a large and overwhelming place.

"As long as we can understand that we won't respond instantly," Mitchell says. "And understand that just sending that e-mail out there doesn't replace human interaction."

Geoff Larcom can be reached at [glarcom@annarbornews.com](mailto:glarcom@annarbornews.com) or 734-994-6838.