**University of West Alabama**

**CHAT ROOM POLICY** (from the Tiger Paw Student Handbook)

The University of West Alabama strives to ensure that students, faculty, and staff have the right and means to open access to ideas and information fundamental to and constitutionally protected in our democratic society. The University will protect intellectual and academic freedom, encourage lifelong learning, and provide services supporting open access to information, including chat rooms.

Chat rooms enable the University to provide information that otherwise is not available on campus. They allow access to ideas, information, and commentary from around the globe. While the resources available through chat rooms are significant, these resources are designed for a highly diverse user population with highly diverse information needs. Chat rooms are an unregulated medium. As such, while they offer access to a wealth of materials that may be personally, professionally, and culturally enriching to individuals of all ages, they also enable access to information that may be erroneous, out-of-date, illegal, offensive, controversial, or sexually explicit.

In accessing chat rooms, the users must exercise the responsibility as discriminating information users by constantly questioning the validity and appropriateness of information available from the rooms, just as they question the appropriateness and validity of any other information they may use for instructional and research purposes.

**Terms and Conditions for Using Chat Rooms**

1. A user should avoid actions that may make him/her or the University criminally or civilly liable to others. A user should avoid any acts or omissions that might subject him/her to criminal penalties or to civil liability to pay money to others. A user will want to be aware, as well, that some acts or omissions that might subject him/her to criminal penalties or civil liability may also subject the University to criminal penalties or civil liability. A user should also know that, under law, he/she may be required to reimburse the University for any amount of money it must pay to another because of injury caused by his/her conduct. This document presents, by way of example, kinds of conduct most likely to bring down criminal penalties or civil liability. A user should be aware, however, that if state or federal law makes the user or the University criminally or civilly liable for certain conduct, that law still applies even if not specifically described herein; and if state or federal law prescribes certain consequences for certain conduct, the user and the University may suffer those consequences even if they are not described herein. Therefore by way of example, The University of West Alabama workstations and Internet connection should not be used for any of the following purposes:
	* Making statements that are sexually explicit or grossly offensive, including blatant expressions of bigotry, racism, hatred, or profanity;
	* Indulging in abusive, defamatory or harassing behavior or insults or personal attacks or threats of harm to anyone or promoting physical harm or injury to any group or individual;
	* Promoting or providing information about illegal activities. The user also may not indulge in activities that infringe upon anyone else’s copyright(s). Specifically, he/she cannot advocate illegal conduct or participate in illegal or fraudulent schemes. He/she cannot use chat rooms to distribute unauthorized copies of copyrighted materials, including photographs, artwork, text, recordings, designs, or computer programs;
	* Impersonating someone else or falsely representing oneself;
	* Attempting to post or use of computer programs that contain destructive features, such as viruses, worms, Trojan horses, bot scripts, etc.; and
	* Posting or transmitting of unauthorized or unsolicited advertising, promotional materials, or any other forms of solicitation or other users.
2. Neither the University nor its Internet access provider is responsible for the content of chat rooms.
3. Users can be held legally liable for the contents of their speech and messages, and may be held legally accountable if their speech includes, for example, defamatory comments.
4. Due to legal requirements, neither The University of West Alabama nor its Internet access provider monitors chat rooms, but the University itself, in the interest of fostering positive uses of the Internet, urges users to access only those chat rooms that help meet the University’s mission.
5. Users agree to indemnify and hold harmless The University of West Alabama and its Internet access provider for any loss, liability, claim, damage, and expenses (including attorney fees) arising from or in connection with the contents of their speech and their use of chat rooms.
6. Academic chat always must take precedence over non-academic chat.
7. The administrative units responsible for computer labs on campus retain the authority to establish and to enforce policy that limits or prohibits excessive discussion room usage on computers within their labs.