

**Collaborative Effort with U.S. Post Office
New Address Scheme Facilitates Mail Delivery Service**

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Abstract

The University of Virginia's Mail Services (UVA Mail Services) is a department under the Office of Business Operations reporting directly to the Associate Vice President for Business Operations. The Mail Services staff recently implemented a new delivery address system that improved the timeliness and accuracy of U.S. Postal Service (USPS) and interoffice (messenger mail) departmental mail handling at the University. This system has been beneficial to the University departments because they have been assigned a new permanent department address recognized by the USPS. In addition, a new address scheme was implemented for the students living in University housing, to expedite the handling of their mail and segregate their mail from the rest of the University.

Benefit to the U.S. Post Office

The USPS also benefited from the new address scheme because the University mail is now machine sortable, resulting in less manual sorting of the mail.

Introduction of the University of Virginia

The University of Virginia, founded by Thomas Jefferson in 1819, is located in Charlottesville, Virginia. A public institution of higher education, the University is charged with teaching, research, public service and patient care. The University has a student enrollment of approximately 19,000. U.S. News and World Report has consistently ranked the University as one of the top public institutions among the nation's top 25 research universities.

Students are exposed to a wide spectrum of disciplines – from arts and athletics to humanities and technology. Our students also enjoy a unique connection to the world beyond college through the University's outstanding professional training, exemplified by its nationally ranked schools of Law, Business and Medicine.

The University of Virginia is noted for the architectural beauty of the historic Rotunda and Lawn, the heart of the "academical village" designed by Thomas Jefferson, and for a tradition of academic excellence. Many of the University's programs such as Law, Business, Medicine, Architecture, and English have ranked among the top ten in the country over the past decade or so.

Statement of the Problem/Initiative

The mission of UVA Mail Services is to provide timely, accurate sorting, distribution and processing of all U.S. and messenger mail to the University community. UVA Mail

Services sorts and delivers approximately 24,000 pieces of U.S. mail and 11,000 pieces of messenger mail daily.

The University has over 400 departments and the majority of the departments had several different addresses for both their U.S. mail and their messenger mail. The 6,500 students living in University housing were using a variety of addressing schemes which impacted the overall efficiency of the mail delivery process. With no overall commonality to the mail address scheme being used by the University, an excessive amount of time was being expended to sort and prepare the mail for delivery.

The address scheme that was being used did not allow the USPS to fully utilize their automated sorting equipment and resulted in a significant amount of manual sorting. This manual sorting by the USPS also resulted in more frequent displaced mail or late delivery of the mail. Because of the limited amount of sorting of the mail by the USPS, UVA Mail Services' personnel had to spend numerous hours manually sorting the thousands of pieces of mail by department name each day. The turn around time from when the USPS dropped off the mail until the mail was delivered to the department and student could be up to six hours.

Another issue associated with the address scheme was when departments moved to a new location or added locations, they would have to go through the laborious task of changing their address and notifying vendors, business contacts and individuals of their new address.

In addition, some mail was being delivered directly by the USPS to University departments and students depending on the nature of their mailing address. This would cause confusion whenever there was a question about a particular mail delivery.

Design

UVA Mail Services, in cooperation with the USPS, evaluated a new delivery address system for all departments at the University and the Health System and for students living in University housing. The address system that was recommended was a new permanent address, which consisted of a post office box with a corresponding ZIP+4 code for departments. Each department would have its own post office box and zip code, with the +4 being a unique identifying factor for each department. This allowed large departments, such as Athletics, to assign a P.O. Box and ZIP+4 to each of their individual sports programs. For the student mail, their room number and dorm name were used as their delivery address and each floor of each dorm had their own unique ZIP+4 code. Additionally, working with the USPS very closely, the address scheme was recognized by the USPS and loaded into the USPS National Address Database.

Implementation

The new address scheme was rolled out in three phases: Phase one was converting the academic departments to the new address system and the change was communicated through correspondence and brief presentations to the University community. Phase two consisted of rolling out the new addresses to the Health System and Phase three

completed the implementation by including student addresses. In order to be effective, the new address system would have to be adopted by all University and Health System departments. Obtaining department buy-in to the program was accomplished by a series of communications from senior University management explaining the overall benefits of the program and through a series of presentations to the University and Health System community. The majority of the departments endorsed the new address system; however, there were a number of departments that required additional information in order to be persuaded to make the change to the new address system. By working jointly with the USPS on the address system, it insured the University's new address system would meet all of the USPS standards and regulations and not conflict with other addresses in the USPS data base.

Benefits

There are numerous lasting benefits to new address scheme. The new scheme provides complete delivery addresses, ZIP+4 matching, that drastically reduces manual processing costs, and allows the USPS utilization of their automated delivery-point sorts and sequencing for incoming mail to the University. In essence 90% of the University's incoming mail is delivered by the USPS to UVA Mail Services in P.O. Box number order, which dramatically decreases the amount of time on sorting and posting of the mail by UVA Mail Services personnel. The USPS is now able to sort the mail into five major divisions: Academic, Health System, the three major student housing areas and within each division it is sorted by the ZIP+4. This in turn, improves the efficiency and accuracy of sorting the mail by UVA Mail Services personnel. Mail delivery turn around time

decreased from 6 hours to 2 hours. Training of new UVA Mail Services personnel improved with the new address scheme because we now had one official recognizable address for all the departments at the University. As the University has added departments and new buildings, UVA Mail Services has been able to process the mail without expanding its workforce. The change also simplified departmental relocations, whether temporary or permanent, by eliminating the need to change mailing addresses. Departments can move their physical locations and still utilize their existing P.O. Box and ZIP+4 mailing address. Departmental delivery was also facilitated by the new address scheme. In the past, organizations would have to sort their mail and distribute it to sub-departments within their organization. With the new address scheme, this process was eliminated.

Once departments recognized the benefits of a permanent address, the address system was accepted University-wide and the new address system became the standard for messenger mail. In addition to the improvements in delivery time and accuracy, there are savings in personnel costs.

Retrospect

None