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## Harvard group creating privacy recommendations after secret email searches seeks feedback

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A Harvard task force this month will hold meetings to gather feedback as it develops recommendations on the university’s e-mail privacy policies in the wake of the recent revelation that administrators secretly searched about 14,000 e-mail accounts looking for a leak to the media about the school’s cheating scandal.

“It is important to reach out to the community for input and guidance about both areas of concern and possible ways forward as we move toward formulating our recommendations,” David Barron, chair of the 14-member task force and a Harvard Law School professor, said in a statement published Monday on the [university’s news website](#).

The task force has scheduled two “open meetings,” university officials said. It has also launched a blog.

The first task force meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 9, from 4 to 5 p.m. at the Walter Amphitheatre at the Tosteson Medical Education Center at Harvard Medical School in Boston, officials said.

The second is set for Wednesday, Oct. 23, from 4 to 5 p.m. in Hall D of the Science Center on Oxford Street at the university’s Cambridge campus.

The task force’s recently-launched “discussion blog” can be found at <http://ecommpolicy-taskforce.harvard.edu>.

The outreach for public feedback is the “second phase” of the task force’s work, officials said.

The task force, which consists of faculty and senior staff from across Harvard’s schools, was [commissioned](#) in the spring by university President Drew Faust shortly after it was [revealed publicly](#) that the covert searches, conducted last fall, had happened.

The searches were conducted after information – which ultimately turned into a major national news story – leaked to the media that about 125 Harvard undergraduates were accused of cheating on a take-home exam, officials have said.

Faust created the task force to develop a set of recommendations on electronic communications policies.

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The group met several times over the summer to define “underlying principles and questions that it hopes to discuss with the community in the coming months,” the university announced Monday.

“Among the principles: transparency about the realities of technology, the importance of fostering trust in the Harvard community, and respect for the privacy interests necessary to ensure academic inquiry,” the statement said.

Barron has met already with student leaders, who plan to will meet with other task force members this week, campus officials said.

The task force has already met with Michael Keating, a Boston-based attorney from Foley Hoag, who the university hired at about the same time it formed the task force, to conduct an independent investigation into the email searches.

In July, Keating **issued a report** that found that all of the searches “were undertaken in good faith” and that no administrators read any of the e-mails unearthed in the searches.

The secret searches have prompted outrage around the campus and one dean, who was at the center of the controversy, **resigned in May**.

Task force member Emma Dench, a history and classics professor, said in a statement Monday that input from faculty, students and staff would be an essential component of the task force’s work.

“This has been very much a ‘thinking and listening’ committee,” she said. “We have to make sure we cover every angle possible, so consultation is critical. We’re all going to be part of this, and it’s important that we are better informed about the issues involved.”

*Matt Rocheleau can be reached at [mjrochele@gmail.com](mailto:mjrochele@gmail.com). Looking for more coverage of area colleges and universities? Go to our [Your Campus pages](#).*

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