

# Hamilton Conference Staff Communication Guidelines:

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Communicating with our constituency is a huge part of the responsibility of Hamilton Conference Staff. The many benefits provided by electronic communication may be off-set by unrealistic expectations and abuses. As such, this brief document outlines some general information and guidelines about our process of handling the high volume of phone calls and electronic communication received by staff every day.

Conference Office hours are Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Phones are answered by an automated attendant and staff members can be reached by keying the appropriate extension or pressing "0" for assistance. Staff cell phones are for internal use only, and not all staff members receive e-mail messages on their cell phones.

Conference Program Staff triage messages and prioritize their responses according to several factors: the urgency of the issue; the time required to obtain the necessary information to respond to the issue; the nature of the issue (sometimes an issue requires face-to-face attention rather than an e-mail response). Because staff members often work outside the office attending meetings or giving presentations, it is not always possible for them to collect messages and respond the same day they are sent, but our staff do their best to respond to messages within a few days. When staff are on study leave, vacation, or other extended time away from their e-mail they are expected to put an auto-responder message on their email account indicating when they will be back.

Opening and reading the high volume of e-mails we all receive on a day to day basis can be enormously time-consuming. It is helpful to keep the following points in mind when sending electronic communication:

- Take a moment to consider whether it's really necessary to press "Reply All" when responding to a message sent to multiple recipients. Unless the information in your response is relevant to everyone in the conversation, it is usually more efficient to respond only to the person with whom you need to communicate.
- If your message contains one or two lines of information or instructions for someone other than the primary recipient, it is more helpful to send that person a separate e-mail addressed to them rather than include him or her in a cc. It can be frustrating and time-consuming to read through a message addressed to someone else, searching for one or two sentences of relevant information.

Hamilton Conference Staff appreciate the patience and co-operation of our constituents as we do our best to respond to the many needs of those we serve in the Conference Office!