



NORTHWEST
MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

SOCIAL MEDIA USE POLICY GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY, STAFF AND STUDENTS

Policy Name:	Social Media Use Policy Guidelines for Faculty, Staff and Students
Effective Date:	September 10, 2015
Responsible Office:	Marketing and Communications
Category:	Personnel, Student Life and Operational

I. Purpose

The rapid growth of social media technologies combined with their ease of use and pervasiveness make them attractive channels of communication. However, these tools also hold the possibility of a host of unintended consequences. This policy has been created to assist the faculty, staff and students of the University with identifying and avoiding possible issues.

This policy is not intended for internet activities that do not associate or identify a faculty, staff member, student employee or student organizations with the University, do not use University e-mail addresses, do not discuss the University and are purely about personal matters.

II. Policy

Philosophy

These guidelines are intended to assist University faculty, staff, and students who create, manage, or utilize social media presences as representatives of the University. These guidelines apply regardless of one's status as an individual professional, on behalf of particular academic or administrative departments, or as a student representing college student organizations.

Process

Definitions

- *Content Owners*, for the purposes of this policy, are those assigned the responsibility of maintaining, monitoring, and moderating a University social media platform and web content.

Content Owners should aim for standard times for postings and updates. The recommended minimum frequency is once to twice a week.

- *Official communications* refer to those done in the University's name.
- *Moderator* is assigned by the Content Owner and/or department as the individual for moderating comments and postings by internal and external users, including deleting comments and posting that do not meet the criteria set forth in this policy.
- *Users* are any faculty, staff, or students utilizing social media platforms.
- *Social Media Platforms* are technology tools and online spaces for integrating and sharing user-generated content in order to engage constituencies in conversations and allow them to participate in content and community creation. Examples are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Because of the emerging nature of social media platforms, this list is not intended to be exhaustive of all platforms available. These policies apply to those cited and any other online platform available and emerging including social networking sites and sites with user-generated content.

Official University Communications

1. Institutional representation via online social media platforms can only be initiated and authorized through the efforts of the Marketing and Communications department(s). There can be no official University sites or pages on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, etc. unless they are developed or authorized by the Marketing and Communications department(s). Any sites or pages existing without prior authorization as required above will be subject to review when discovered and may be amended or removed.

2. University official sites on social media platforms can have pages or content areas that are assigned to departments, divisions or programs at the University. These policies apply to such pages, as well as content maintained by the University.

3. Content Owners are responsible for posting and using content and maintaining compliance with HIPPA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) regulations and University policies concerning privacy, security, human services and FERPA (Federal Education Records Protection Act).

4. Content Owners are responsible for monitoring and maintaining web content as follows:

- a. Content is current and accurate.
- b. Content Owners engage in communications that are acceptable to the University workplace and respect copyrights and disclosures. Proprietary financial, intellectual property, patient care or similar sensitive or private content may not be revealed.
- c. Content Owners are responsible for gaining the expressed consent of all involved parties for the right to distribution or publication of recordings, photos, images, video, text, slideshow presentations, artwork and advertisements whether those rights are purchased or obtained without compensation.
- d. Content Owners are responsible for constantly monitoring postings and comments to social media sites, and for deleting postings that do not adhere to our policies.

General Guidelines for Online Professional or Personal Social Media Activity

Online social media allow University faculty, staff, and students to engage in professional and personal conversations. These guidelines apply to faculty, staff and students who identify themselves with the University and/or use their University email address in social media platforms

such as professional society blogs, LinkedIn, Facebook, etc. for deliberate professional engagement or casual conversation. These guidelines apply to private and password protected social media platforms as well as open social platforms.

By posting a comment or other material to University-sponsored sites, users give the University the irrevocable right and license to exercise all copyright, publicity, and moral rights with respect to any content provided, which includes using the submissions for any purpose in any form and on any media, including but not limited to: displaying, modifying, reproducing, distributing, creating other works from, and publishing submissions. The University reserves the right to review all comments before they are posted, and to edit them to preserve readability for other users.

The University further reserves the right to, in its sole discretion, reject or remove comments for any reason, including but not limited to our belief that the comments violate this policy. Any submissions that fail to follow this policy in any way or are otherwise irrelevant will not be posted. Due to the sheer volume or appropriateness, the University will not respond to every posting, especially those that address individual medical issues.

Faculty, Staff or Students who utilize University-sponsored sites must follow these guidelines:

1. *Do No Harm.* All Users must ensure that their internet social networking does no harm to the University or to themselves whether navigating those networks on the job or off.

2. *Personal Responsibility.* Users are personally responsible for the content they publish on blogs, wikis or any other form of user-generated content. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time - protect your privacy. In addition, Users are responsible for what they post on their own site and on the sites of others. Individual bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to be copyright infringement, defamatory, proprietary, libelous, or obscene (as defined by courts). Increasingly, employers are conducting Web searches on job candidates before extending offers. Be sure that what you post today will not come back to haunt you.

3. *Comply with Regulations.* Users must follow the same HIPPA, FERPA, and University policies concerning general civil behavior guidelines cited above for Content Owners including respecting copyrights and disclosures, and not revealing proprietary financial, intellectual property, patient care or similar sensitive or private content.

4. *Identify your Affiliation.* If users identify themselves as a member of the University community in any online forum and/or use their University email address, they must make it clear that they are not speaking for the University, and what they say is representative of their individual personal views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of the University.

5. *Maintain Transparency.* The line between professional and personal business is sometimes blurred. Therefore, users must be thoughtful about a posting's content and potential audiences. Users must also be honest about their identity. In personal posts, they may identify themselves as a member of the University community. However, they must be clear that they are sharing their views as individuals, not as representatives of the University.

6. *Be Thoughtful.* Users must be thoughtful about how they present themselves as a University faculty, staff or student in online networks. By virtue of self identifying as part of the University in

such a network, users connect themselves to, and reflect upon, University colleagues, managers and even University patients and donors.

7. *Conflict of Interest.* If someone or some group offers to pay Users for participating in an online forum in their University role, offers advertising for pay and/or for endorsement, this could constitute conflict of interest and University policies and guidelines apply.

8. *Media Contacts.* If someone from the media or press contacts Users about posts made in online forums that relate to the University in any way, Users must alert their supervisor and contact the Office of University Marketing and Communications before responding.

7. *Job Postings.* Job postings follow University established processes. Social Media may not be used in place of HR processes.

9. *Relationships.* Users should give careful consideration to assess the implications of "friending", "linking", "following" or accepting such a request from another person. For example, there is a potential for misinterpretation of the relationship or the potential of sharing protected information. Relationships such as faculty-student, doctor-patient, supervisor-subordinate or staff-student merit close consideration of the implications and the nature of the social interaction.

10. *University Resources.* Faculty and staff should respect University time and property. It's appropriate to post at work if your comments are directly related to accomplishing work goals, such as seeking sources for information or working with others to resolve a problem. Faculty and staff should participate in personal social media conversations on their own time.

Guidelines for Personal Social Media Activity

Faculty and staff are encouraged to share university news and events, which are a matter of public record, with their family and friends. Linking straight to the information source is an effective way to help promote the mission of the University and build community. As stated above, when you might be perceived online as an agent of the University, you need to make sure it is clear to the audience that you are not representing the position of the University or University policy. While the guidelines below apply only to those instances where there is the potential for confusion about your role as a University agent/expert versus personal opinion, they are good to keep in mind for all social media interactions. When posting to a social media site you should:

1. *Be authentic.* Be honest about your identity. In personal posts, you may identify yourself as University faculty or staff member. However, please be clear that you are sharing your personal views and are not speaking as a formal representative of the University. If you identify yourself as a member of the University community, ensure your profile and related content are consistent with how you wish to present yourself to your colleagues.¹

2. *Use a Disclaimer.* If you publish content to any website outside of the University and it has something to do with the work you do or subjects associated with the University, use a disclaimer

¹ A common practice among individuals who write about the industry in which they work is to include a disclaimer on their site, usually on their "About Me" page. If you discuss higher education on your own social media site, we suggest you include a sentence similar to this: "The views expressed on this [blog, Web site] are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the University." This is particularly important if you could be perceived to be in a leadership role at the University.

such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and do not represent the University's positions, strategies or opinions."

3. *Don't Use the University's Names or Logos or Make Endorsements.* Do not use the University signature block, academic logo, athletic logo or any other University marks or images on your personal online sites where you are making a profit or advocating a cause or agenda not approved and endorsed by the University. Do not use the University's name or logo to promote or endorse any product, cause, political party or candidate, personal opinions, or non-University services. For further guidelines regarding Northwest logos, see the URL: <http://www.nwmissouri.edu/marketing/design/logos.htm>.

4. *Take the High Ground.* If you identify your affiliation with the University in your comments, readers may associate you with the University, even with the disclaimer that your views are your own. Remember that you're most likely to build a high-quality following if you discuss ideas and situations civilly. Don't pick fights online.

5. *Don't Use Pseudonyms.* Never pretend to be someone else. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors.

6. *Protect Your Identity.* While you should be honest about yourself, don't provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use. Don't list your home address or telephone number. It is a good idea to create a separate email address that is used only with social media sites.

7. *Does it Pass the Publicity Test?* If the content of your message would not be acceptable for face-to-face conversation, over the telephone, or in another medium, it will not be acceptable for a social networking site. Ask yourself, would I want to see this published in the newspaper or posted on a billboard tomorrow or 10 years from now?

8. *Respect Your Audience.* Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the University's community. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered sensitive - such as politics.

9. *Monitor Comments.* Most people who maintain social media sites welcome comments - it builds credibility and community. However, you may be able to set your site so that you can review and approve comments before they appear. This allows you to respond in a timely way to comments. It also allows you to delete spam comments and to block any individuals who repeatedly post offensive or frivolous comments.

Guidelines for Professional Social Media Activity

Online collaboration tools provide low-cost communication methods which foster open exchanges and learning. While social media tools are changing the way we work and how we connect with the public and other higher education institutions, the University policies and practices for sharing information remain the same. In addition to the general guidelines discussed above, when you are creating or posting to a social media site on behalf of the University you need to:

1. *Seek Approval.* Any messages that might act as a "voice" or position of the University or a school/college/unit must be approved by the University or the director of the school/college/unit or their delegate.

2. *Be Accurate.* Make sure that you have all the facts before you post. It's better to verify information with a source first than to have to post a correction or retraction later. Cite and link to our sources whenever possible - that's how you build community.

3. *Be Transparent.* If you participate in or maintain a social media site on behalf of the University, clearly state your role and goals. Keep in mind that if you are posting with a University username, other users do not know you personally. They view what you post as coming from the University. Be careful and be respectful. What you say directly reflects on the University. Discuss with your supervisor the circumstances in which you are empowered to respond directly to users and when you may need approval.

4. *Be Responsible.* What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social computing on behalf of the University is not a right but an opportunity, so please treat it seriously and with respect. If you want to participate on behalf of the University, be sure to abide by its standards and principles.

5. *Respect Others.* Users are free to discuss topics and disagree with one another, but please be respectful of others' opinions. You are more likely to achieve your goals if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

6. *Be a Valued Member.* If you join a social network like a Facebook group or comment on someone's blog, make sure you are contributing valuable insights. Post information about topics like the University's events or a book you've authored only when you are sure it will be of interest to readers. In some forums, self-promoting behavior is viewed negatively and can lead to you being banned from websites or groups.

7. *Be Thoughtful.* If you have any questions about whether it is appropriate to write about certain kinds of material in your role as a University employee, ask your supervisor before you post.

8. *Use of the University Logo.* If you create a social media site on behalf of the University, use simple graphics that represent the University brand. Acceptable University logos can be obtained through the Office of University Marketing and Communications.

Cyberbullying

While this policy is not meant to apply to personal social media accounts, instances of cyberbullying toward any other member of the University are not acceptable whether it be from an official University account or from a personal account. This includes any violations of local, state, or federal laws. Cyberbullying includes harassment, threats, intimidation, coercion, and/or any other conduct that by design, intent, or recklessness places another individual in reasonable fear of physical harm or creates emotional distress in which others are unable to reasonably conduct or participate in work, education, research, living, or other activities.

Use of University Technology

All students, faculty and staff must abide by Northwest's technology policies or be subject to disciplinary action. For policy details, see the *Computing Policies* web address: www.nwmissouri.edu/compserv/ClientComputing/ComputingPolicies.htm

Disciplinary Action for Violations

Violation of any University policy is inappropriate and may result in disciplinary actions. Refer to the following policies for additional details on implementation of disciplinary actions:

- Students- [Student Code of Conduct](#)
- Staff- [Staff Handbook](#)
- Faculty- [Faculty Handbook](#)

Any violation of this policy should be immediately reported to the User's supervisor, Vice President of Human Resources.