

University of Detroit Mercy

Social Media Policy

Introduction

Social media tools, which facilitate both one-to-many communications and presumably private communications, have grown to become a significant part of how people interact via Internet. Because social media are widely used as promotional tools, personal postings on public media sites can sometimes blur the line between the individual and the institutional voice. This policy provides guidance for members of the University community to protect both their personal reputations and the public image of the institution.

There are substantial differences between individuals representing themselves on public social media sites, individuals representing the University on a public social media sites, and individuals using University-hosted social media. This policy is not intended to regulate how individuals conduct themselves in their personal social media actions and interactions. However, it is clear that even a single instance of improper or ill-considered use can do long-term damage to one's reputation, career and to the University. Furthermore, although not intended, never forget as faculty, staff, or an administrator you may always be perceived as a representative of the University. It is therefore in the best interest of the University and all members of the University Community to provide its employees and students with a roadmap for safe, smart use of social media.

The University has a significant investment in University-owned public social media pages and personal sites on University-hosted services, as content on these pages and sites reflects directly on the institution and how it is seen by the general public. Therefore, this policy regarding posting content must be strictly adhered to in these contexts.

While this document will provide more specific guidelines to help navigate particular interactions, all these spring from a set of basic principles:

1. Be respectful.
2. Assume anything you post is public, regardless of privacy settings.
3. Assume anything you post is permanent.

FERPA / HIPAA

[www.udmercy.edu/registrar/ferpa/index.htm]

All legal privacy laws and policies regarding student and patient records must be followed without exception.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) ensures the privacy of "Educational records" of students. At no time should information that is considered part of the student's educational record be submitted, posted, or referenced through a social media network.

A social media site can be used for instructional purposes. Student content created and/or posted to fulfill a course assignment using social media does not violate students' privacy rights. Posting materials submitted directly to the faculty member may be a violation of FERPA policy. It is important to exercise extreme attention to student information and err on the side of caution in these situations. When utilizing social media for instruction, some planning can ensure that student, faculty, and University rights are protected.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA; Pub.L. 104-191, 110 Stat. 1936, enacted August 21, 1996) that is intended to provide the portability of health records, must be adhered to at all times. This act contains a Privacy Rule which establishes a provision for the use and disclosure of Protected Health Information. Under no circumstances should patient privacy be violated through the use of social media.

Intellectual Property

[<http://www.udmercy.edu/academicaffairs/ospra/compliance/intellectual/copyright/index.htm>]

Intellectual property rights must be respected when utilizing social media networks for either personal or professional purposes. When posting materials owned by others, an individual bears the responsibility of compliance with licensing and copyright requirements. For example, some materials may allow posting under Creative Commons Licensing which may have more liberal use terms, in contrast to a book publisher that may have more restrictive use terms. When in doubt, one should request permission from the publisher, content creator, or owner of the materials. These same considerations should be applied to institutional materials and your colleagues' materials.

UDM Logo and Marketing Materials

[www.udmercy.edu/mpa/id_standards/index.htm]

The use of the UDM logo shall comply with the Identity Standards published by Marketing & Public Affairs office on its website.

The UDM logo is the University's official public identifier. In the majority of UDM communications, the logo should be used to ensure consistency of the University's image. The UDM crest is to be used only on official, institutional documents issued from the Office of the President or the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Any other use of the crest is limited.

For detailed information on UDM's Identity Standards, visit the Marketing & Public Affairs website. Be advised these standards are updated periodically and should be checked regularly to ensure compliance.

Representing the University

When acting as a University representative on social media networks, conduct yourself in a professional manner and follow the general guidelines outlined in this policy. Use data and information that is accurate and not misleading. This is a responsibility that should not be taken lightly.

Violations, Concerns, and Dispute Resolution

Student or employee actions which violate this social media policy are subject to complaint or grievance processes. Failure to follow University policies and the terms of service of social media platforms could expose you to personal legal liability and the University to legal action from third parties.

Policy guidelines

UDM students and employees are personally responsible for any content they post on Twitter, blogs, wikis, or other social media venues. In light of this comment...

Be aware of liability

You are legally responsible for what you post. Take care not to infringe on copyright, defame or libel others, or otherwise violate the law when posting.

Respect copyright

The University supports and respects the intellectual property rights of copyright holders. Content posted on the internet must conform to copyright law. Contact the UDM Libraries for help posting copyright-compliant content.

Respect confidentiality

Any number of laws and policies (such as HIPAA and FERPA) may affect the confidentiality of information. Be aware of and conform to these laws, as well as broader institutional policies regarding confidentiality of information and good ethical judgment, when posting to social media sites.

Respect privacy

Do not discuss situations involving named or identifiable individuals without their consent. Do not post images, audio, or video of individuals without their consent.

Appropriate use of University logos & branding

University logos and branding should only be used on pages maintained by the University.

The University of Detroit Mercy has established guidelines for the appropriate use of university logos and branding. Please refer to the UDM Identity Standards page [www.udmercy.edu/mpa/id_standards/index.htm] when using University branding.

Be transparent

UDM students and employees should feel free to identify themselves as such when posting to social media sites. The association of a University email address with a social media account does not imply University endorsement of content. An individual must make it clear when they are expressing the opinions of the institution. Add a disclaimer if comments *may appear* to be coming from the University. Employees should be in coordination with their supervisor prior to initiation a social media account on behalf of their origination (unit/college).

Be a valued member of the community

When participating in an online community, content of postings should benefit the community as a whole.

Consider the nature of the community and the expectations of its members when contributing. Do not use membership purely as a means of promoting yourself or your organization. Do not use the name of the University to endorse products, causes, political parties, or candidates.

Do no harm

Postings, both in content and in substance, must not harm either the University network or the social networks themselves. Do not overload these networks with content that is repetitive, promotional, or will otherwise devalue the service for the rest of the community.

Be respectful of others

Keep a cool head when discussing and debating online. Be passionate on matters about which you are passionate, but always be constructive, exercise discretion, and be respectful of those with whom you disagree.

No stalking, flaming, or bullying

Abusive language, behavior, and content is not appropriate in any context. Do not insult, attack, threaten, or otherwise harass others. Remember that how a message is intended is less important than how it is perceived. If another individual indicates they find behavior threatening, cease this behavior immediately.

Think before posting

Nothing posted on the internet is truly private. Anything put online can easily be shared and re-shared, and archiving systems preserve even content that has been deleted. As a result, content posted privately now may appear in search results for many years to come. Post only content you are comfortable sharing with the general public, including current and future employers.

Maintain your social media pages

When a site or page provides space for the community to interact, usually through comments or other feedback systems, it is important to keep these spaces free of spam and abusive content. Postings in these spaces should be edited to ensure there are no liability issues (e.g., removing links to content that violates copyright or breaks confidentiality rules), but should not be edited because their content is disagreeable.

References

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