AMERICAN UNIVERSITY WASHINGTON, D.C.

Social Media Guidelines

Policy Category: Guidelines associated with Policy on Responsible Use of University Website and Content Management System

Subject: Guidance for using social media

Office Responsible for Review: University Communications and Marketing

Related University Policies: Responsible Use of University Website and Content Management System, Information Technology Security Policy; Computer Use and Copyright Policy; AU Web Copyright and Privacy Policy Statement; Political Activities Policy

---

I. SCOPE

Social media are powerful communication tools that have a significant impact on organizational and professional reputations. Because they blur the lines between personal voice and institutional voice, American University has crafted the following policy to help clarify how best to enhance and protect personal and professional reputations when participating in social media. Blogs, social networks and websites including, but not limited to, Wikipedia, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, LinkedIn, Foursquare and MySpace are exciting, fairly new venues to share information, knowledge and to connect with key audiences, including colleagues, students and others. AU supports this kind of participation in online communities and maintains its strong commitment to academic freedom in these venues.

II. INTRODUCTION

Both in professional and institutional roles, employees need to follow the same behavioral standards online as they would in other forms of business communication. The same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, alumni, donors, media, and other university constituents apply online as in person. Employees are accountable for their posts on social media sites.

III. GUIDELINES

SECTION 1: General guidance on employee use of social media sites

AU employees have wide latitude to create and maintain a presence on social media channels. They should do so in ways that are professional, technically secure and transparent. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that content posted by, or on behalf of, any unit, division, or department

adhere to all American University policies and to appropriate laws that govern the dissemination of public information.

Because social media channels are fairly new and evolving every day, the following guidelines were adapted from respected university and industry sources to provide guidance in using these forums effectively, protecting personal and professional reputation.

- **Protect confidential and proprietary information:** Do not post confidential or proprietary information about American University, students, employees, or alumni. Employees must still follow the applicable federal requirements such as FERPA and HIPAA, as well as NCAA regulations and adhere to all applicable University privacy and confidentiality policies. Employees who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action.
- **Respect copyright and fair use:** When posting, be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the University.
- **Do not use AU logos for endorsements:** Do not use the AU logo or any other University images or iconography on personal social media sites. Do not use AU's name to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate.
- **Respect University time and property:** University computers and time on the job are reserved for University-related business as approved by supervisors and in accordance with AU policies.
- **Terms of service:** Obey the Terms of Service of any social media platform used.

SECTION 2: Best Practices For Individuals

This section applies to posting on social media in any capacity that identifies the author as a member of the American University community.

- **Think twice before posting:** Privacy does not exist in the world of social media. Consider what could happen if a post becomes widely known and how it may reflect on both the poster and the University. If the proposed posting is something you wouldn't say at a conference or to a member of the media, consider whether you should post it online. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, ask your supervisor for input.
- **Strive for accuracy:** Get the facts straight before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors.
- **Be respectful:** Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Responses should be considered carefully in light of how they would reflect on the poster, the unit and/or the University.
- **Remember your audience:** Be aware that a presence in the social media world is or easily can be made available to the public at large. This includes prospective students, current

students, current employers and colleagues, and peers. Consider this before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate or harm.

- **On personal sites:** Identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as an AU faculty or staff member online, it should be clear that the views express are not necessarily those of American University.
- **Photography and comments:** Do not post any comment or picture involving an AU employee, volunteer or student without their express consent.

SECTION 3: Institutional Social Media

If you post on behalf of an official University unit, division, or department, the following policies must be adhered to in addition to all polices and best practices listed above.

- **Acknowledge who you are:** If you are representing a unit at American University when posting on a social media platform, acknowledge your role directly..
- **Have a plan:** Units, divisions, or departments should consider their messages, audiences, and goals, as well as a strategy for keeping information on social media sites up-to-date. Beyond department goals, units, divisions, or departments should consider the overall university social media strategy.
- **Link back to the University:** Whenever possible, link back to the AU web site, Facebook, Twitter, or other appropriate social media site. Ideally, posts should be very brief; redirecting a visitor to content that resides within the AU web environment.
- **Photography and comments:** Do not post any comment or picture involving an AU employee, volunteer or student without their express consent.
- **Protect the institutional voice:** Posts on social media sites should protect the University's institutional voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste. Only the American University social media sites administered by University Communications and Marketing represent the University as a whole. No other individual or departmental site should be construed to represent the institution as a whole. Consider this when naming pages or accounts, selecting a profile picture or icon, and selecting content to post—names, profile images, and posts should all be clearly linked to the particular unit, division, or department rather than to the institution as a whole. Use the appropriate college or school visual identity for pages representing those units.
- **Deleting posts and comments:** Notify users and followers that any comment or post that is vulgar, slanderous, spam, solicitations, or otherwise inappropriate will be deleted. Post this policy in the info section of your social media account and refer people to it when questioned over a deleted comment/post.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE(S)

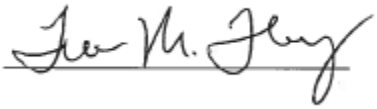
These guidelines are effective June 24, 2011.

Policy last reviewed August 2015, no changes.

V. SIGNATURE, TITLE AND DATE OF APPROVAL

This policy needs to be signed by the appropriate officer (listed below) before it is considered approved.

Approved: Teresa Flannery, Executive Director, University Communications and Marketing



Date Approved: 6.24.11