

Social Media Policy

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Policy Title: Social Media Policy

Applicability: College-wide

Oversight Department(s): Marketing and Communications

Purpose: The purpose of this Policy is to assist members of the College community in properly promoting, portraying, and protecting the College and the reputations of members of the College community in the creation and management of social media accounts/channels.

Effective Date: Dec. 7, 2018

Policy Statement

The use of social media tools and channels is an effective communication method for College departments, employees, and students to help convey the institution's message to vital audiences and these tools can have a significant impact on organizational and professional reputations. To maximize impact, those creating social media messaging should be mindful of the College's mission and its strategic goals as described in its strategic plan. Explicitly or implicitly, all messages should attempt to engage constituents, achieve established objectives, and inspire message recipients to support the College's efforts in some way. As a Catholic college with a distinctive mission, social media messages should convey the engaged, inspired, and positive tone that is characteristic of the College's brand identity and reflective of the institutional voice.

Definition of Terms

Social Media/Social Media Accounts: Social media is defined by Merriam-Webster as "forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos)." Examples include but are not limited to blogging, microblogging (Twitter), social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn), multimedia (YouTube, Instagram), messaging services (Snapchat), podcasts, chat rooms, and digital bulletin boards.

Social Media Terms and Conditions: The rules and restrictions that users of a particular social media website are obligated to comply with as a condition for participation.

Policy

At least one manager who is a College faculty member or staff member should be assigned to each social media account/channel. Management responsibility for any College social media channel must reside with an employee (as opposed to a student), and that employee can assign specific management or other duties to graduate

assistants and students. All social media accounts/channels related to Providence College academic departments and programs, or professional and student organizations and activities, must be registered by an account manager with the College via the Division of Marketing and Communications at <https://news.providence.edu/register-for-pcs-social-media-directory>. Registration will allow for the page/site to be listed on the College's social media website (news.providence.edu/social-media), and it will create an avenue for communication, support, and guidance between College social media personnel and channel owners/managers.

Members of the College community who communicate through the institution's social media channels must comply with the site's terms and conditions, applicable federal and state laws, and with relevant PC policies, guidelines, conduct codes, and procedures, including but not limited to the following: Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy; Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and guidelines for safeguarding sensitive data; Copyright Policy; Employee Code of Conduct; Student Code of Conduct; Anti-Harassment Policy; Sexual Misconduct or Relationship Violence Policy.

The College supports the free and open exchange of thoughts and ideas, and encourages online interaction between and among constituents; however, when account managers believe that posts or comments are defamatory, obscene, illegal, spam, in violation of College policies, or are in conflict with the College's mission, they are responsible for taking appropriate action which may include removing the content.

Each approved social media channel should include a specific disclaimer statement.

Exemptions

This Policy applies to social media accounts/channels created for the express purpose of officially representing PC groups, departments, programs, organizations, and entities; it applies also to certain individuals (e.g. coaches) who post content in roles officially representing college entities. It does not apply to private social media accounts. College employees acting in an individual capacity should exercise caution to communicate clearly that they are not acting in a representative capacity, or expressing the view of the College.

Social Media Guidelines

Guidelines for Providence College Social Media Channels

Introduction. The College encourages its students, faculty, and staff to use tools such as social media to advance their work and enrich their experiences at the College. In order to connect and share information with other users effectively, it is important to be honest about who you are (and your role), thoughtful before you post, and respectful of the purpose of the community where you are posting. Used creatively and strategically, social media communications can be effective in helping the College and its units (including student organizations and alumni groups) achieve their respective goals.

The social media environment is evolving at a quick pace; thus, these guidelines likely will be updated as the College keeps up with new developments. Please email the

Division of Marketing and Communications (marcom@providence.edu) with feedback or suggestions, which are most welcome.

Encourage lively participation. Social media efforts are most successful when they feature ongoing, robust communications that encourage regular and meaningful interaction. The use of photos, videos, and other visual imagery can be helpful in effectively encouraging engagement. Owners should work to ensure multiple posts each week, in formats that engage constituents and foster lively discussions.

Provide timely and thoughtful responses to questions. If a question or comment is directed toward an area or unit you represent via your social media site or page, you should do your best to reply in a timely and effective manner. As appropriate, discuss with your supervisor/moderator under which circumstances you are empowered to respond directly to users and under which circumstances you may need approval before responding. Consider the impact of your response before posting: Will it stimulate positive discussion, provide new information or insight, or will it inflame the discussion?

Protect confidential and proprietary information. Do not post confidential information about PC, students, employees, or alumni. Employees must comply with applicable federal regulations (e.g., Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act – FERPA) and College guidelines for protecting sensitive and proprietary data. Employees who inappropriately share confidential information risk disciplinary action or termination.

Respect copyright and fair use. When posting, be mindful of and act in accordance with the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the College. As with print materials, it is necessary to provide proper sourcing for information and opinion, to give credit where it is due, to acquire permission before sharing others' content, to provide readers with the information needed to determine veracity, and to protect all parties from undue liability.

Strive for accuracy. Be sure that factual information is correct before posting. Verifying information before posting avoids having to post a subsequent correction or retraction. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors.

Be respectful. Do not disparage PC or its agents, students, employees, or other institutions. Do not vent personal complaints about supervisors or co-workers, or engage in behavior that will reflect negatively on your or PC's reputation.

Remember your audiences and keep your personal views separate. Be aware that a presence in the social media world is or easily can be made available to the public at large, including prospective and current students and employees, alumni, peers, and colleagues. Make every reasonable effort to ensure that the post will not alienate, harm, or provoke any of these groups. Do not include political or personal comments. Stay true to the College's mission and values in your online activities.

Know the rules. Become familiar with the terms and conditions for use and pay attention to updates. If the legal language is difficult to understand, ask questions or do more research.

In case of emergency. If there is a crisis on campus, College accounts should only share information posted by the College's main accounts, such as @providencecol on Twitter, or other official College messages to avoid confusion. Please refrain from posting information that has not been verified by College authorities. Please refrain from posting about other items until the emergency or crisis situation no longer exists.

Accessibility. Managers of a social media channel should strive to make content accessible to all users, regardless of ability, when posting content. For example, all videos should have captions to assist viewers with hearing impairments or who are English language learners. Twitter allows users to enter image captions for users who are visually impaired. (Read: Accessible Social Media.)

Personal Social Media Site Guidelines

In addition to several of the above standards, the following guidance is germane to personal social media sites/webpages.

Do not use a Providence College logo, watermarks, athletics logos, or other College marks or images. Use of these items requires express, written permission. Do not use the Providence College name to promote any product, cause, or political party or candidate. It is permissible, however, to use sharing mechanisms provided on College websites to share content with one's own social networks.

Demonstrate integrity by being authentic and clear. If you identify yourself as being affiliated with the College in some way, please be clear that you are sharing your personal views and that you are not authorized to represent the College. (This parallels media relations practices at the College.) It is common to include a disclaimer on personal sites, for example: "I am not authorized to speak on behalf of Providence College; rather, the views expressed on this [blog, website, site] are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of Providence College." This is particularly important if you are a department chairperson, program director, dean, or administrator. You also should consistently write in the "first person" narrative (e.g., "Today, I am going to discuss..."). If you discuss Providence College's academic, or financial programs or services, or the employability of its graduates, on social media, you must disclose that you are a PC employee.

Be transparent. Be honest about your identity. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be tracked back to their authors, sometimes resulting in negative consequences, including embarrassment, for the authors.

Avoid liability and other pitfalls. Posters are legally liable for what they post on any site. Individual bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to be proprietary, defamatory, obscene, or subject to copyright protection. Employers and graduate schools are increasingly conducting web searches on candidates before extending offers, and search engines sometimes find posts long after they are created (or even if they have since been deleted); further, comments can be forwarded or copied. If you would not say something in a public forum or to the media, consider whether you should post it online. Be confident that what you post today will not hurt you in the future.

Respect College resources. The College technology infrastructure is reserved for College-related business. Use of social media should not interfere with work commitments.

Protect your identity. While you want to be honest about yourself, do not provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use to harm you. Do not list your home address or telephone number, or your work telephone number or email address. It is a good idea to create a separate email address that is used only with the social media site.

Sample Social Media Guidebooks

Innumerable guides and tip sheets are available online. Here are a few examples of sites that provide practical advice for social media users and owners.

Facebook <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/how-to-use-facebook>

Twitter <http://mashable.com/guidebook/twitter/>

Linkedin <https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin?lang=en>

Instagram <https://help.instagram.com/>

Snapchat <http://time.com/4359877/snapchat-guide-what-is-how-use/>

<http://time.com/4359877/snapchat-guide-what-is-how-use/>

YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/yt/about/>

Flickr <http://www.flickr.com/new/>

Pinterest <https://help.pinterest.com/en/guide/all-about-pinterest>

Google+ <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/23765/The-Ultimate-Google-Cheat-Sheet.aspx>