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## Social and New Media Guidelines

The rapid growth of social and new media technologies has made communication faster and easier than ever before. These same technologies, however, have raised a set of questions and concerns regarding communication behaviors while using these tools.

These guidelines are intended to help you identify and assess potential issues related to the use of social and new media, including, but not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, FourSquare, personal web sites (including blogs), chat sites, etc.

We have adapted these guidelines from a document created by our peers at the University of Michigan.

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

Sharing news, events or promoting faculty and student work through social media tools is an excellent, low-cost way to engage the community and build our brand. Employees are encouraged to repost and share information with their family and friends that is available to the public (press releases, etc.). The best way to share university news is to link to the original source. When sharing information that is not a matter of public record, please follow the below guidelines. Please note, all state and federal laws, and university and UW System policies apply when using social media tools. These include, but are not limited to,:

Use of Marks (Trademarks)

<http://universityrelations.wisc.edu/policies/>

Appropriate Use of UW-Madison IT Resources

<http://www.cio.wisc.edu/policies/appropriateuse.aspx>

Appropriate Use of UW System IT Resources

<http://www.uwsa.edu/cert/publicat/itpolicy.htm>

Copyright

<http://www.cio.wisc.edu/security/copyright.aspx>

Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures - UWS 14:

<http://nxt.legis.state.wi.us/nxt/gateway.dll?f=templates&fn=default.htm&d=code&jd=ch.%20uws%2014>

Student Nonacademic Disciplinary Procedures - UWS 17:

<http://nxt.legis.state.wi.us/nxt/gateway.dll?f=templates&fn=default.htm&d=code&jd=ch.%20uws%2014>

Conduct on University Lands - UWS 18:

<http://nxt.legis.state.wi.us/nxt/gateway.dll?f=templates&fn=default.htm&d=code&jd=ch.%20uws%2018>

Prizes, Awards and Gifts – UWS F46

<http://www.uwsa.edu/fadmin/fppp/fppp46.htm>

### **Maintain Confidentiality**

Do not post confidential or proprietary information about the University of Wisconsin-Madison, its students, its alumni or your fellow employees. Use good ethical judgment and follow university policies and federal requirements, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Review HIPAA requirements and FERPA information at <http://hipaa.wisc.edu/> and [http://registrar.wisc.edu/ferpa\\_overview.htm](http://registrar.wisc.edu/ferpa_overview.htm)

### **Maintain Privacy**

Do not discuss a situation involving named or pictured individuals on a social media site without their permission. As a guideline, do not post anything that you would not present in any public forum. Additional information on the appropriate handling of student, employee and patient information can be found at the university web sites covering FERPA and HIPAA:

[http://registrar.wisc.edu/ferpa\\_overview.htm](http://registrar.wisc.edu/ferpa_overview.htm)

<http://hipaa.wisc.edu/>

### **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. You should participate in personal social media conversations on your own time.

### **Do No Harm**

Let your Internet social networking do no harm to the UW-Madison other individuals or to yourself whether you're navigating those networks on the job or off.

### **Understand Your Personal Responsibility.**

UW-Madison staff and faculty 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 and that of others.

### **Be Aware of Liability**

You are responsible for what you post on your 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 the courts). You are also responsible for complying with the existing rules of social media web sites. For example, Facebook has regulations regarding the use of promotions (prizes and giveaways) on its web site. 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.

### **Maintain Transparency**

The line between professional and personal business is sometimes blurred: Be thoughtful about your posting's content and potential audiences. Be honest about your identity. In personal posts, you may identify yourself as a UW-Madison faculty or staff member. However, please be clear that you are sharing your views as an individual, not as a representative of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

### **Correct Mistakes**

If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and be quick with your correction. If you're posting to a blog, you may choose to modify an earlier post—just make it clear that you have done so.

### **Follow Best Practices in Security**

To the extent possible, follow best practices for security. Do not, for example, allow someone else to create and manage accounts on your behalf unless you have total access to the logins, passwords and procedures for those accounts.

### **Respect Others**

You are more likely to achieve your goals or sway others to your beliefs if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

### **Be a Valued Member**

If you join a social network, make sure you are contributing valuable insights. Don't hijack the discussion and redirect by posting self/organizational promoting information. Self-promoting behavior is viewed negatively and can lead to you being banned from Web sites or groups.

### **Think Before You Post**

There's no such thing as a "private" social media site. Search engines can turn up posts and pictures years after the publication date. Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, it's wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear-headed. Post only pictures that you would be comfortable sharing with the general public (current and future peers, employers, etc.).

## **SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES WHEN POSTING AS AN INDIVIDUAL**

UW-Madison uses social media to supplement traditional press and marketing efforts. Employees 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. When you might be perceived online as an agent/expert of UW-Madison, you need to make sure it is clear to the audience that you are not representing the position of UW-Madison or UW-Madison policy. While the guidelines below apply only to those instances where there is the potential for confusion about your role as a UW-Madison 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:

### **Be Authentic**

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

### **Use a Disclaimer**

If you publish content to any website outside of UW-Madison and it has something to do with the work you do or subjects associated with UW-Madison, use a disclaimer such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and do not represent UW-Madison's positions, strategies or opinions."

### **Use of the UW-Madison Logo and Endorsements**

Do not use unlicensed versions of the UW-Madison Crest W, wordmark, Motion W or any other UW-Madison marks or images on your personal online sites. Do not use UW-Madison's name to promote or endorse any product, cause or political party or candidate. UW-Madison logo and trademark guidelines can be found at:

<http://uc.wisc.edu/brand/>

### **Take the High Ground**

If you identify your affiliation with UW-Madison 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.

### **Don't Use Someone Else's Identity**

Never pretend to be someone else. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors.

### **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 e-mail address that is used only with social media sites.

### **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 ten years from now?

### **Respect Your Audience**

Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, profanity or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in UW-Madison's community. Do not ridicule, exploit, or demean persons on the basis of their age, color, creed, handicap, national origin, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered sensitive — such as politics and religion.

### **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.

<sup>1</sup> 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 of Wisconsin-Madison." This is particularly important if you could be perceived to be in a leadership role at UW-Madison

## **SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES WHEN POSTING ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

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 UW-Madison 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 UW-Madison you need to:

### **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 your sources whenever possible -- that's how you build community.

### **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. Finally, if someone offers you payment for participating in a social media

environment due to your role at UW-Madison, this could constitute conflict of interest and UW-Madison policies and guidelines apply.

<http://www.grad.wisc.edu/research/policyrp/coi/index.html>

### **Be Timely**

Assign an administrator who can regularly monitor postings and content. Aim for standard times for postings and updates. The recommended minimum frequency is once to twice a week. But be sure not to overload your updates. Followers will stop paying attention if you overload them with information.

### **Be Responsible**

What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social computing on behalf of UW-Madison 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 standard practice guidelines. Please note, if you are contacted by a member of the accredited media about a posting or comment on a social or new media site, please contact University Communications.

### **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. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, profanity or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in UW-Madison's community. Do not ridicule, exploit, or demean persons on the basis of their age, color, creed, handicap, national origin, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

### **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 UW-Madison 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.

### **Be Thoughtful**

If you have any questions about whether it is appropriate to write about certain kinds of material in your role as a UW-Madison employee, ask your supervisor before you post.

### **Use of UW-Madison Trademarks**

If you create a social media site on behalf of the university, you may use simple graphics that represent the UW-Madison brand. University Communications ([questions@uc.wisc.edu](mailto:questions@uc.wisc.edu) or [www.uc.wisc.edu](http://www.uc.wisc.edu)) can provide guidance with graphics and design. The brand and visual identity guidelines website at <http://uc.wisc.edu/brand/> provides information on logo permissions and standards.

### **Special Note for Instructors Using Social Media as Part of Instruction:**

UW-Madison's CIO has developed specific guidelines regarding the use of technical resources (including social media) for classroom instruction. Please see their *Guidelines for Use of Non-UW-Madison Applications and Service for Instruction*.

<http://www.cio.wisc.edu/policies>

***Sources:***

The best practices outlined above were compiled from numerous University of Michigan staff member perspectives as well as published sources from both within the University of Michigan and externally. The following published sources are used throughout the proposed social media best practices:

University of Michigan Human Resources,  
<http://hr.umich.edu/voices/presentations/publications.html>

DePaul University:  
[http://brandresources.depaul.edu/vendor\\_guidelines/g\\_recommendation.aspx](http://brandresources.depaul.edu/vendor_guidelines/g_recommendation.aspx)

University of Michigan, Office of the Vice President for Communications:  
[http://mmd.umich.edu/forum/resources\\_socialguide.php](http://mmd.umich.edu/forum/resources_socialguide.php)

Grand Valley State University:  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/socialmediaguidelines.htm>

Human Resource Executive Online:  
<http://www.hreonline.com/HRE/story.jsp?storyId=282114288>