



Social Media Guidelines

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I. Introduction

As social media evolves, South Florida State College (SFSC) employees and students are engaging in new methods of communication, internally and externally. With new opportunities for communication and collaboration come further responsibilities.

SFSC has crafted guidelines to clarify how to enhance and protect personal and professional reputations as well as the College's image when participating in social media.

Social media platforms are web-based tools that can provide immediate publication of content to the web and enable interaction between the person posting the message and their audience. Examples are blogs (Tumblr, WordPress), micro-blogs (Twitter), social networking sites (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram), wikis (Wikipedia), bookmarking sites (Pinterest), review sites (TripAdvisor, Yelp), and video hosting sites (YouTube, TikTok).

These guidelines are for SFSC faculty, staff, and administrators; students acting as official SFSC representatives; and contractors creating or contributing both on and off southflorida.edu.

When using social media in professional and institutional roles, employees and students should follow the same behavioral standards as they would in everyday life offline. The same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, alumni, donors, media, and other College constituents apply to social media as they do in everyday life. Employees and students are liable for anything they post to social media sites.

This set of guidelines is a living document and will be periodically updated to reflect current trends, norms, and best practices in the use of social media.

II. Instructional Use of Social Media – Preparation

- A. Although various social media platforms can be used to foster a sense of community and motivate students, it is preferred that instruction take place in Brightspace, Zoom, the classroom, or using other media provided and supported by SFSC. These locations provide security within the College environment.
- B. When a social media application offers the option, instructors should use a private page, e.g., Facebook group, which can only be joined by invitation. Such measures protect students from certain online risks.
- C. Some social media platforms may stipulate that content posted on their sites becomes their property; therefore, users should think carefully about giving up intellectual property rights--a user's posted content could potentially show up elsewhere on the internet or other media. Instructors should discuss this concern with students.
- D. Instructors should provide students with
 1. Written instructions, or a link to instructions within the application, regarding how they can safeguard privacy and report abusive content.
 2. A disclaimer noting that any product advertised on the site is not endorsed by the College or instructor.

3. A disclaimer noting that opinions expressed do not reflect opinions or policies of the College.
4. A reminder that social media sites' policies on privacy and other issues change often and that students should check sites regularly for updates.
5. A statement that postings may be removed by the page owner at any time (when the tool allows this action).
6. A statement that the page administrator may block user posts (when the tool allows this action).
7. A statement that all content must comply with the College's Technology Usage Guidelines.

The following is a sample paragraph for course handouts that addresses items above. Instructors must advise students of these issues, but the wording is optional.

I invite you to join the class (Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.) group. Participation is voluntary, and the purpose is to form a community of learners and to provide extra resources and information that enrich the class experience. Please be sure to view this site, _____, which explains the current privacy settings and policies associated with (Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.). These policies may change frequently and without notice. Be sure to check this page regularly.

Please note that any harassing posts and any posts violating SFSC's Technology Usage Guidelines will be removed, and those users may be blocked. Comments posted on this site do not reflect SFSC's views. Products advertised are not endorsed by the College.

The suggested syllabus statement regarding social networking:

This class uses social media to build community and enrich students' overall experience. Participation in this site is optional and not a required element of the class. All essential course information will be presented in [the classroom, on Zoom, or in Brightspace]. The instructor takes careful precautions to safeguard students on the internet; however, as with many internet interactions, risks still exist. By choosing to participate in the class' social media group, you accept responsibility for the information you post and assume the risks associated with the use of social media.

- E. Effective use of social media requires that the instructor check the site *daily* and update it at least *weekly*. Unattended sites will be abandoned by users.
- F. Instructors who set up instructional pages using social media accept complete responsibility for maintenance of these sites.
- G. Students should be instructed about the special requirements of the populations with which they are working, e.g., the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) for nursing students and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) for elementary education students.
- H. All students should be instructed on social media etiquette and about information regarding their classmates that they should not disclose (see III.B.).

III. Instructional Use of Social Media - Special Concerns

A. When using social media sites in discharging College duties, instructors should ensure that the online presence reflects the professional standards of SFSC; complies with applicable federal and state regulations regarding student privacy; and adheres to College policies and procedures. These include but are not limited to FERPA, HIPAA, SFSC Technology Usage Guidelines, copyright, proper use of College symbols/logos, etc. Instructors should contact the SFSC Office of Community Relations and Marketing to ensure that the College brand is consistent.

B. The following information about students should **never** be communicated via a social media site:

Grades or test scores

GPA

Academic standing

Attendance habits

Time/day/location/course names of student's current classes

Social security number

Student ID number

Email address

Birthdate

Telephone number

PIN number

Disability status

Marital status

Disciplinary actions

Financial aid status

Financial obligations owed

C. Student participation in course social media sites must be voluntary and may not be a course requirement. Instructors should not disseminate essential class information *solely* through a social media tool, any more than they would share such information with only one or two students during office hours. The social media site should enrich the class, not substitute for it or for other College communication methods, including email.

D. In the case of Facebook, instructors may not "solicit" friends/fans for a personal page from a College website or social media site used for a college class.

E. Be aware of the impact of intellectual property rights and copyrights on information being posted. Always ensure that proper permissions have been obtained for any course or research material being posted to websites. Where images and videos are posted, it may be necessary to obtain permission from individuals identifiable in the image or video. Please contact the Office of Community Relations and Marketing for Photo Release forms.

IV. Representing SFSC Officially on Social Media Sites

If you post on behalf of an official College unit, you are required to adhere to all guidelines and best practices presented in this document. If you are using social media for instructional use, see the sections above, "Instructional Use of Social Media."

- A. If you are representing SFSC when posting on a social media site, clearly identify your affiliation with the College.
- B. SFSC organizational units that are creating social media sites should consider their messages, audiences, and goals, as well as a strategy for keeping information on social media sites up-to-date. Communicate College-related content only.
- C. Whenever possible, link back to the SFSC website. Posts should be brief, redirecting a visitor to content that resides within the SFSC web environment. When linking to a news article about SFSC, use a news release that resides on the SFSC website instead of a publication or other media outlet, if possible. SFSC maintains archived stories on its website.
- D. Posts on social media sites should protect the College's institutional image by remaining professional in tone and in good taste. No individual SFSC organizational unit should construe its social media site as representing the College as a whole. Consider this when naming pages or accounts, selecting a profile picture or icon, and selecting content to post—all of these should clearly reflect the particular department or unit rather than to the institution as a whole. The Office of Community Relations and Marketing can create profile logos for the unit.
- E. If you create promotional (non-instructional) multimedia to post, have it reviewed by the Office of Community Relations and Marketing. Videos and other online multimedia follow the same guidelines for approval as other communication products via this office. The intention is not to stifle creativity, but rather to ensure that content represents the College accurately and in accordance with institutional branding.
- F. College employees who serve as advisors to SFSC student clubs and organizations are expected to follow these guidelines and discuss them with members of the group they counsel.
- G. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about SFSC, its students, employees, former employees, or alumni. Employees must follow federal requirements such as FERPA and HIPAA and adhere to all SFSC privacy and confidentiality policies (see Resources section). Employees who share confidential information risk disciplinary action or termination.
- H. When posting, understand and abide by the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of SFSC. (See Resources section.)
- I. Do not use SFSC logos or any other College images or iconography on personal social media sites or sites that have not been given formal permission to represent SFSC

through social media. Do not use SFSC's name to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate.

- J. In accordance with College policy, SFSC's computers are reserved for College-related business and carrying out the institution's mission, goals, and objectives.
- K. Departments or College units that have a social media page or would like to start one should complete the Social Media Account Request form and submit it to the Office of Community Relations and Marketing. Community Relations staff will ensure that all institutional social media sites coordinate with other SFSC sites and their content. All institutional pages must have an appointed employee who will be responsible for content. Ideally, this should be the head of the College unit. Designate at least one other full-time employee who will be responsible for posting messages.

V. Best Practices in Social Media Use

This section applies to those posting on behalf of an official SFSC organizational unit, though the guidelines may be helpful for anyone posting on social media in any capacity.

- A. Please review the Technology Usage Guidelines and Support Manual, which presents a section on cloud computing best practices (southflorida.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Technology-Manual.pdf).
- B. The world of social media provides no privacy. Consider what could happen if a post becomes widely known and how that may reflect on the person posting the message and SFSC. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. If you wouldn't make a comment at a conference or to the media, or you wouldn't want your family or a prospective employer to see it, consider whether you should post it online. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, ask your supervisor for input or contact the director of institutional communications at ext. 7379.
- C. Strive for accuracy, especially when posting on behalf of SFSC. Get the facts before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors.
- D. 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 person posting and/or the College.
- E. Be aware that a presence in the social media world easily can be made available to the public at large. This includes prospective students, current students, current employers, colleagues, and peers. Consider this before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm, or provoke any of these groups.
- F. Pay careful attention to the Terms of Service (TOS) and privacy policy of any social media you consider using. Facebook TOS can be found at facebook.com/terms.php and its privacy policy is at facebook.com/policy.php. Twitter TOS can be found at twitter.com/tos and its privacy policy is at twitter.com/privacy. A quick web search can provide the TOS or privacy policy for any social media platform.

- G. On personal sites, identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as an SFSC faculty or staff member online, be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the institution. Personal sites should never be used for instructional purposes.
- H. Protect your intellectual property. Visitors can easily pluck photographs/images from social media sites and use them for their own purposes. Consider adding a watermark and/or posting images at 72 dpi and approximately 800x600. Images at that size are sufficient for viewing on the web, but not suitable for printing.
- I. Exercise caution to avoid phishing attempts, which aim to gain control of a personal or institutional social media site by deceiving a user into revealing the account's user name and password. Monitor your social media site to ensure you notice quickly if an unauthorized person gains access.

VI. Moderating Comments on Social Media Sites

SFSC encourages its various audiences to share their thoughts with one another by commenting on a story, feature, tweet, or post. Feel free to use the following guidelines when moderating comments on your site.

- A. Comments must be constructive, relevant to the topic discussed, and to the point.
- B. Posts that are off-topic, are abusive, are threatening in tone, or contain profanity will be deleted.
- C. Excessively long comments may be edited for length, clarity, and space limitations.
- D. Anonymous comments will not be published.
- E. Posted links must include your name and explain where your link goes, especially if you are directing viewers to a for-profit organization. This is done to distinguish spam from legitimate opportunities for the SFSC community.
- F. SFSC reserves the right to review all comments and remove comments that violate any of the conditions noted above.

VII. Resources

SFSC Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines

Copyright Laws and Penalties - southflorida.edu/policy/copyright.aspx

Technology Usage Guidelines and Support Manual –
southflorida.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Technology-Manual.pdf

SFSC Policies – southflorida.edu/_documents/polall.pdf

Policy 1.14 Copyright

Policy 1.16 Intellectual Property

Policy 3.01 Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression

Policy 2.09 Course Policy Statement

Policy 5.21 Responsibility of Faculty, Professional, Career,
and Administrative Staff

Policy 6.01 Electronics Access Use

SFSC Procedures - southflorida.edu/_documents/proall.pdf

Procedure 1140 Copyright Compliance

Procedure 2090 Development of All Non-Classroom College Publications

Procedure 2100 Release of Information to the Public

Procedure 2158 Information Security

Procedure 3010 Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Express Guidelines

Procedure 6011 Student Access to Technology Resources

State and Federal Law

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) -
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) –
hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/summary/index.html

Sunshine Law - myflsunshine.com/sun.nsf/sunmanual

U.S. Patriot Act - justice.gov/archive/ll/highlights.htm

VIII. References

SFSC respectfully acknowledges using portions of the following institutions' documents in the development of the SFSC Social Media Guidelines.

Northwest Florida State College
Ball State University
Pacific University Oregon
Seattle University
Seminole State College