UNIVERSITY OF MOUNT SAINT VINCENT

Social Media Policies and Guidelines

Social media networks 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, the University of Mount Saint Vincent has adopted the following policy to help clarify how best to enhance and protect personal and professional reputations when participating in social media.

Social media can be defined as media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Examples include, but are not limited to: Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn, X, YouTube, Wikis, and blogs, as well as photograph and video sharing sites, such as Flickr and Vimeo.

Both in professional and institutional roles, employees need to follow the same behavioral standards online as they would in real life. The same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, alumnae/i, donors, media, and other University constituents apply online as in the real world.

Employees are liable for anything they post to social media sites.

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

- Don't post anything you would not say.

- Assume anything you post is public, regardless of privacy settings.

- Assume anything you post is permanent.

Institutional Social Media

If you post on behalf of an official University unit, the following policies must be adhered to in addition to all policies and best practices included in this document:

- **Notify the University:** Departments, divisions, partnerships, offices, organizations, and groups that have a social media page or would like to start one must first contact the Office of Public Relations, Marketing, and Communications. All institutional pages must have a full-time appointed employee who is identified as being responsible for content. Ideally, this should be the head of the department and a generic, office-specific email account should be used to access the account. The responsibility for content is not linked solely to an individual but to their position; if the responsible individual leaves the

University, his/her replacement would assume responsibility for content unless other arrangements are made by the head of the department.

- *All login information (username/email and passwords) for pages created to represent a department/office must be shared with the Office of Public Relations, Marketing, and Communications. Additionally, all page names, logo development, and profile images must be approved by the Office of Public Relations, Marketing, and Communications.*

- **Acknowledge who you are:** If you are representing UMSV when posting on a social media platform, acknowledge this when appropriate.

- **Have a purpose and a plan:** Departments should: define their goals in using social media on behalf of the institution, create appropriate messages to reach those goals and audiences, and develop a strategy for keeping information on social media sites up-to-date. The Office of Public Relations, Marketing, and Communications can assist and advise you with all social media planning.

- **Link back to the University:** If possible, it is advised to link back to the University of Mount Saint Vincent, where applicable. Ideally, posts should be creative, engaging, and brief. It's encouraged to include media, such as posters, flyers, images, videos, web pages, and other resources to connect accounts together and to the University. Try to avoid links in photographs and explore options like QR codes instead.

- **Protect the institutional voice:** Posts on social media sites on behalf of the University should protect the University's institutional voice. Though we ask accounts to remain professional, we also prefer our University accounts to have fun and engage with the Mount community in ways and tones that best align with the department. No individual University department should construe its social media site as representing the University as a whole. Consider this when selecting content and/or images to post— such content should be clearly linked to the particular department or unit rather than to the institution as a whole.

- **Violation of the Social Media Policy:** Any violations of the institutional social media policies risk disciplinary action or termination of employment.

Policies for All Social Media Sites, Including Personal Sites

- **Protect confidential and proprietary information:** Do not post confidential or proprietary information about University of Mount Saint Vincent, students, or alumnae/i. Employees must still follow the applicable federal requirements such as

FERPA and HIPAA, as well as NCAA regulations. Adhere to all applicable University privacy and confidentiality policies. Employees who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination of employment.

- **Respect copyright and fair use:** When posting, be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the University. Intellectual property rights must be respected when utilizing networks whether for 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.

- **Don't use UMSV logos or name for endorsements:** Do not use the University's seal, wordmark, logo, or any other University images or iconography on personal social media sites in a manner that may indicate endorsement, agreement, or sponsorship by the University. Do not use UMSV's name to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate. The use of UMSV's seal, wordmark, and logo shall comply with the Brand Guide published by the Office of Public Relations, Marketing and Communications. The UMSV logo and wordmark, known as a lockup, is the University's official public identifier (visual mark). In the majority of official UMSV communications, the lockup shall be used to ensure consistency of the University's image. Be advised these standards are updated periodically and should be checked regularly to ensure compliance.

- **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 the University's Computer Use/Appropriate Use Policy.

- **Do not violate University policies:** It is a violation of University policy to post any material that violates University policies and procedures, such as the University's policies against harassment and discrimination.

- **Terms of service:** Obey the Terms of Service of any social media platform employed.

Best Practices

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

- **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 that may reflect both on the poster and the University. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. If you wouldn't say it to someone personally or professionally, consider whether you should post it online. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, contact the Office of Public Relations, Marketing, and Communications.

- **Strive for accuracy:** Get the facts straight before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors. This is especially important if posting on behalf of the University in any capacity.

- **Think before you post:** 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 and/or the University and its institutional voice. The University supports and respects the intellectual property rights of copyright holders. Content posted on the internet must conform to copyright law.

- **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, harm, or provoke any of these groups.

- **Personal sites:** On personal sites, identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as a University of Mount Saint Vincent employee online, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the institution. 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.

- **Photography:** Consider posting images at 72 dpi and approximately 800×600 resolution to protect your intellectual property. Images at that size are sufficient for viewing on the web, but not suitable for printing. Remember that the policies of University of Mount Saint Vincent related to purchasing and using images apply online as well as in print. Contact the Office of Public Relations, Marketing, and Communications with questions.

FERPA

All legal privacy laws and policies regarding student 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 a 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, if done properly, and in accordance with FERPA. Here are some policy suggestions for instructors who want to incorporate social media into their classrooms:

- When students are assigned to post information to public social media platforms outside of the University LMS, they should be informed that their material may be viewed by others.

- Students should not be required to release personal information on a public site.

- Instructor comments or grades on student material should not be made public. (Interestingly, grades given by other students on "peer-graded" work can be made public under FERPA). (ACE, 2008)

- While not clearly required by law, students under the age of 18 should get their parent(s)'s consent to post public work.

FERPA does not forbid instructors from using social media in the classroom, but common sense should be used to ensure the protection of students.

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. Any doubts or questions can be addressed to the Provost/Dean of Faculty.

Need Help?

Remember that a successful social media account takes time to maintain and requires regular and timely updates. Inactive social media accounts reflect negatively on the institution. The Office of Public Relations, Marketing, and Communications frequently monitors accounts and may request that inactive accounts be taken down.

If you have questions about maintaining your social media account, how to increase engagement, or any other questions about social media, please contact us at publicrelations@umsv.edu or 718.405.3746—we are here to help!