



## **Social Media Guidelines for Faculty, Staff, Employees and Learners**

**October 2015**

### **Introduction**

Social media are powerful communications and marketing tools that may have a significant impact on organizational and professional reputations. Because there is not a clear distinction between personal voice and institutional voice, Southern Illinois University School of Medicine (hereinafter “School of Medicine”) has developed the following guidelines to help clarify how best to enhance and protect personal and professional reputations and promote a harassment---free environment while participating in social media.

Social media from the School of Medicine is intended to supplement, not replace, the channels currently in place for press, news, events, announcements and learner communication.

Social media is defined as media designed to be disseminated through social interactions, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Examples include but are not limited to LinkedIn, Wikipedia, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, podcasts, message boards and blogging. Because of the emerging nature of social media platforms, these guidelines do not attempt to name every current or future platform.

Both in professional and institutional roles, employees and learners need to follow the same, if not better, behavioral standards online as they would in the workplace, in the classroom or clinical setting. The same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with employees, faculty, learners, parents, alumni, media, and other university constituents apply online as in the workplace, classroom or clinical setting. These guidelines apply to all existing and future social network pages. The School of Medicine respects an individual’s right to interact knowledgeably and socially; however, interaction with social media can greatly impact not only the individual, but also our patients, our colleagues, fellow employees, our learners and alumni. Therefore, the entire School of Medicine community has a responsibility to maintain the integrity of the institution no matter where, when or how they interact with social media.

### **Freedom of Expression**

The School of Medicine encourages freedom of expression and recognizes the value of diverse opinions. The Information Resources administrators, however, have a responsibility to remove from university websites or social media pages, any comments, images or other material deemed inflammatory, vulgar, discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate, especially when the item(s) appears to threaten the welfare or safety of employees and learners or is done as a form of harassment. There can be no official School of Medicine sites or web pages on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, etc., unless they are developed and/or authorized by the School of Medicine pursuant to the Social Media Development Policy for SIU School of Medicine/SIU HealthCare.

The Web pages and social media pages of employees and learners are not considered official pages of



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the School of Medicine. The School of Medicine does not attempt to monitor nor exercise control of those Web pages or social media accounts, unless a specific problem or complaint is reported.

When the School of Medicine wishes to communicate publicly as an institution, it has well established means to do so. Only those officially designated by the School of Medicine have the authorization to speak on behalf of the institution. A social network or public blog is not the place to communicate School of Medicine policies to the public. Others who do so without permission will be subject to disciplinary action. While the School of Medicine encourages all of its employees and learners to join a global conversation, it is important for those who choose to do so to understand what is recommended, expected and required when they discuss School of Medicine---related topics or engage in a global conversation about their fellow co---workers, learners, or others they encounter in their business relationships, whether at work or on their own time.

## ***Section 1: Guidelines for All Social Media Sites, Including Personal Sites***

**Respect fellow faculty, staff members, employees, patients, learners and alumni when posting to social media sites and Web pages either personal or belonging to a third party.** Do not post anything to social media sites and personal or third---party Web pages that could be deemed as insulting, obscene, derogatory, discriminatory, unprofessional, a form of harassment, offensive to any minority group or individual's national origin, targeted to a specific gender, religion or sexual orientation, or related type of posting, or engage in virtual conduct that would not be acceptable in the actual workplace, classroom or clinical setting. Engaging in such conduct may result in disciplinary action up to and including discharge depending on the severity of the incident(s). Employees may disagree in a respectful manner, but do not use a blog or other online social media to air your differences in an inappropriate manner.

**Protect confidential and proprietary information.** Do not post confidential or proprietary information (e.g., business practices, financial interests or similar sensitive or private information) about the School of Medicine, learners, employees, patients or alumni. Employees must still follow the applicable federal requirements such as FERPA (Federal Education Records Protection Act), HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), and Title IX regulations and the School of Medicine Policy on Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment. It is never permissible to share patient information under any circumstances. All HIPAA rules apply to social media outlets. Refrain from sharing information about patients' families, or School of Medicine employees, and donors without obtaining permission from them or the Office of Student Affairs or the Department Chair. Adhere to all applicable School of Medicine privacy and confidentiality policies. Employees who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action up to and including discharge.

**Respect copyright and intellectual property rights.** When posting, be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the university. For guidance, contact the Office of Technology Transfer.

**Don't use the School of Medicine logo for any personal gain, endorsement or commercial purposes.** Do not use the School logo or any other university images or iconography on personal social media websites. For appropriate use of the logo, consult with the Office of Public Affairs. Do not use the School



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of Medicine's name or likeness to promote a product, business, cause, demonstration, political party, movement or candidate.

**Respect university time and property.** School of Medicine computers and time on the job are reserved for School of Medicine---related business as approved by supervisors and in accordance with the Guidelines for Computer and Email Use.

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

**Posting on Personal Sites.** Employees and learners are encouraged to share School of Medicine news and events that are a matter of public record, with their friends and families. We advise linking directly to the information source as the most effective way to share news or information on personal sites. On personal sites, identify your views as your own and avoid creating confusion over whether or not the account is associated with the School of Medicine. If you identify yourself as School of Medicine faculty, staff member, employee or learner online, it should be clear in the posting that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the institution. A disclaimer such as, "The views expressed in this [blog/website] are my own and do not reflect the views of the School of Medicine," may be appropriate.

**Assess the implications of "friending," "liking," "linking," and "following" or accepting a request from another person.** There is the potential for misinterpretation of relationships such as doctor---physician, faculty---learner, supervisor---subordinate, and staff---learner (including minors) in social interactions. If you are in doubt, please contact the Office of Human Resources for advice.

**Social media is a public forum.** There is no such thing as a private or personal media site. Remember that all content posted or published on all social networks becomes immediately searchable and can be immediately shared.

**Conflict of interest.** If someone or some group offers to pay faculty/staff/learners for participating in an online forum in their School of Medicine role, offers advertising for pay and/or endorsement, this could constitute a conflict of interest, and School of Medicine policies and guidelines apply.

**Media interest.** If someone from the media or press contacts faculty, staff, or learners about posts made in online forums that relate to the School of Medicine in any way, alert the Office of Public Affairs before responding.

**Job postings.** Job postings follow the School of Medicine's Office of Human Resources established protocols. Social media may not be used in place of the Human Resources protocols.

**School emailing.** The use of a School of Medicine---provided email address for personal social media activity is prohibited.



## **Section 2: Best Practices**

These consist of widely recognized guidelines, ethical considerations, and conventions in order to create a harmonious working environment for learners, faculty, staff and employees. This section applies to those employees and learners posting on behalf of an official School of Medicine department or the institution but is also applicable to 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 person posting it and the School of Medicine. Search engines can discover posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. If you would not say it at a conference, to another employee or learner, 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 or contact the Office of Human Resources.

**Strive for accuracy.** Investigate your facts and be sure they are correct when posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors. This is especially important if posting on behalf of the School of Medicine in any capacity. Correct errors immediately.

**Be respectful.** Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Responses should be carefully considered, with thought given to how they would reflect on the person posting and/or the School of Medicine and its institutional voice. Do not bash, bully or make fun of employees, learners or patients.

**Your audience is everyone.** 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 learners, current learners, employees, current employers, future employers, colleagues, patients, alumni and peers. Consider this before posting to ensure the post will not alienate, harm or provoke any of these groups in filing a complaint with the School of Medicine.

**Protect the institutional voice.** Posts on social media sites should protect the School of Medicine's institutional voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste.

**Photography.** Photographs posted on social media sites can easily be appropriated by visitors. Consider adding a watermark and/or posting images at 72 dpi and approximately 800 x 600 resolution to protect your intellectual property. Images at that size are sufficient for viewing on the Web, but not suitable for printing.

## **Section 3: Reporting Acts of Misconduct, Proper Postings, Individual Responsibility and Disciplinary Action**

The School of Medicine strives to create a workplace and school environment free from discrimination and harassment, and the School of Medicine takes steps to remedy any problems. If an employee or learner encounters an inappropriate situation in a social network or blog, they should report it to their supervisor, the Office of Human Resources or the Office of Student Affairs.

The School of Medicine expects conversations to follow the rules of polite discourse and we ask that



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employees treat each other, as well as our learners, patients and others, with respect. School of Medicine employees and learners will not post or approve comments or videos that include: Obscene, defamatory, libelous, hateful, embarrassing (to another individual or the School of Medicine), ridiculing, profane, vulgar or abusive language. Threats of physical or bodily harm or violence. Sensitive information that could compromise public safety, copyright or intellectual property rights.

Offensive terms or language that target specific ethnic or racial group, an individual's religion, national origin, gender, or sexual orientation and harassment of any kind.

School of Medicine employees and learners are personally responsible for the content they publish on their own social media sites and the sites of others that result in civil or criminal liability regarding a posting(s) or video---related material. All copyright infringement, defamatory, proprietary, libel or obscenity (as defined by the courts) laws apply. You are responsible for monitoring your social media site(s) and for deleting posts that do not adhere to these guidelines.

In addition, employees and learners may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge for inflammatory, vulgar, derogatory, discriminatory, offensive posting or material targeting any minority group, specific gender, religion or sexual orientation, including defamatory, libelous, unprofessional, inappropriate or related type of conduct against another employee, learner, patient or other members of the public based upon the severity of the incident(s). Disciplinary action for acts against member(s) of the public applies if it brings disdain, ridicule, loss of public trust or public humiliation to the School of Medicine.

#### **Section 4: Future Revision of These Guidelines**

These guidelines may be amended at the discretion of the School of Medicine, Office of Human Resources, at any time.

**Residents are also held to the social media policy of their employing hospital.**

**Reviewed by GMEC, March 17, 2017**



## ***Acknowledgement***

Southern Illinois University School of Medicine hereby credits the University of Louisville Internal Social Media Policy in drafting and implementation of these guidelines within the institutional context of the development of these materials as a resource.

## ***\*Relevant University and School of Medicine Policies***

Academic Freedom – Rights and Responsibilities (6/12/80)

Article VI, Section I (Board of Trustees Statutes)

<http://bot.siu.edu/leg/statutes.html#6>

Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment Policy (9/10)

[http://www.siumed.edu/compliance/coi/COI\\_Policy\\_Final\\_Sept\\_2010.pdf](http://www.siumed.edu/compliance/coi/COI_Policy_Final_Sept_2010.pdf)

Electronic Information Systems Privacy Issues and Statement of Ethics (3/13/03)

Chapter 5, Section J (Board of Trustees Policies)

<http://bot.siu.edu/leg/policies.html#5J>

Identity Standards (SIU School of Medicine)

<http://www.siumed.edu/logo/Visual%20Identity%20Guidelines.pdf> Industry

Relations Policy (03/02/10)

[http://www.siumed.edu/compliance/Compliance\\_Industry\\_Relations.htm](http://www.siumed.edu/compliance/Compliance_Industry_Relations.htm)

Information Technology: University Internet Privacy Policy (11/13/03)

Chapter 5, Section L

<http://bot.siu.edu/leg/policies.html#5L>

Notice of Privacy Practices (03/23/10)

<http://www.siuhealthcare.org/Privacy%20folder.pdf>

Software Piracy Policy Statement (3/13/03)

Chapter 5, Section I (Board of Trustees Policies)

<http://bot.siu.edu/leg/policies.html#5I>

Use of University Property (3/13/03)

Chapter 6, Section C (Board of Trustees Policies)

<http://bot.siu.edu/leg/policies.html#6C>

Acceptable Use Guidelines:

[http://www.siumed.edu/ir/Acceptable\\_Use.pdf](http://www.siumed.edu/ir/Acceptable_Use.pdf)

## ***Additional Reading:***

1. Social Media Form for SIU School of Medicine and SIU HealthCare
2. Best Social Media Practices for Medical Professionals (white paper)
3. How to Handle Negative Posts (internal use only)

-----Guidelines initiated in July 2012 by Public Affairs, Legal, Human Resources and Medical Library