**Tacoma Community College**

**Social Media Guidelines**

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Prepared by the Social Media Advisory Group

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Quick Q&A:

Q: Should I have a social media channel?

A: Social media channels are a great opportunity to communicate with current and prospective students, the community, and supporters of TCC.

However, social media channels require time and energy. A few important things to consider:

* Content should be updated frequently (at least once per day during business hours).
* Responding to posts should be handled in a timely manner.
* You need to be willing to adhere to the College’s Social Media Guidelines. Please read on for more information.

Overview

Social media technologies and their ease of use make them attractive channels of communication. However, these tools also can open the possibility of unintended consequences. To enhance the effective use of these technologies, these guidelines draw upon examples of best practices from various institutions to outline the most appropriate use of social media. Due to the rapid changes in technology, these guidelines may be reviewed and updated as needed.

Social media provides Tacoma Community College’s employees, students, alumni and others (“Users”) an opportunity to interact online to exchange thoughts, ideas and experiences through discussions, postings, photos and videos. These guidelines address the use of Facebook, blogs, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, LinkdIn, Pinterest and other social networking sites and tools used by TCC, its employees, and student and alumni groups affiliated with the college while performing their duties. These guidelines do not seek to dictate the personal uses of social media by employees, students, or alumni. This document addresses the responsibilities and obligations associated with access to computer systems and networks owned or operated by Tacoma Community College. Use of all social media through the College’s computer systems and networks shall at all times adhere to the College’s *Information Systems Acceptable Use Policies* and *Copyright Guidelines,* as well as social media sites’ communications standards, applicable local, state and federal laws, ethics, and privacy and intellectual property rights. These guidelines govern the use of the College’s computer resources for all social media activities in order to maintain standards of quality and relevance to our primary goals of teaching and learning, and our position as a community institution.

In professional roles, TCC employees shall maintain the same behavioral standards online as are required in person. Therefore, the same policies, professional expectations and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, alumni, donors, media and other college constituents apply online.

The information contained in this document is not in any way an endorsement of personal use of social networking sites on work time or on work equipment. All use outlined here is intended for the interactions and participation on our TCC sites and pages to enrich our students’ and other stakeholders’ online social network experience with TCC. Unaccepted uses are strictly prohibited pursuant to the *Information Systems Acceptable Use Policies*.

Questions regarding the use of social media or this guideline should be referred to the Director of Marketing, Communications, and Social Media. Questions regarding the *“Information Technology Acceptable Use Policies”* should be referred to the Human Resources Department.

General Guidelines

**Maintain Confidentiality**:

All Users are prohibited from posting confidential or proprietary information about TCC, students, employees or alumni. All Users shall adhere to all applicable College privacy and confidentiality policies. Examples of confidential information include but are not limited to student ID numbers, home addresses, SSNs, and contact information. For more information regarding the definition of confidential information, see FERPA. Proprietary information includes quotation of copyrighted materials without proper citation or attribution, etc.

**Respect Copyright and Fair Use**:

When posting, be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the college. Permission to use or reproduce copyrighted works is required unless the intended use is clearly permitted under the “fair use” exemption. This includes music, art, literary works, copyrighted photographs or texts, video clips, audiovisual works and audio recordings. Questions regarding fair use or the *Copyright Guidelines* can be directed to the Library.

**Respect College Time and Property**:

College computers and time while at work are reserved for college-related business as approved by supervisors and in accordance with the *Information Technology Acceptable Use Policies.*

**Do No Harm**:

Let your social networking activities do no harm to Tacoma Community College or to yourself and others when you are conducting college social networking activities.

**Understand Your Personal Responsibility**:

Staff and faculty are personally responsible for the content they publish on social media sites, blogs, other websites, wikis, forums, or any other form of user-generated content. What you publish online will be publicly accessible for an extended amount of time. Be mindful of what you post and protect your privacy and the privacy of others.

**Maintain Transparency**:

The fine line between personal and professional activities on social media sites is blurred easily. Be conscientious about what you post and how you portray yourself. Be honest about who you are and what you represent. In personal posts, employees are strongly advised against identifying themselves as a TCC employee. However, if an employee does identify him/herself as a College employee, the employee must be clear that the post is of a personal nature and does not represent the views of Tacoma Community College.

**Correct Mistakes**:

If you make a mistake, correct it. Be open and honest; admit you’ve made an error. If you can correct the original post, do so and be clear that you are making a correction. If you need to add an amended post, do so.

**Be Respectful and Professional**:

If you are respectful and professional, even while disagreeing with a person or post, you will achieve more positive results. View comments or concepts you disagree with as an opportunity for candid and respectful dialogue.

**Be Involved and Use Etiquette**:

If you participate in social networking sites, follow etiquette and contribute constructive content. Social media sites are not the place for domineering conversations, self-promotion, or spam postings. These types of behaviors are not tolerated and can result in your being banned from the sites where you use this behavior. Removal as a content manger can also take place at the departmental level.

**Communication between Employees**:

Personal Facebook profiles or other social media sites may not be used by supervisors or subordinates to communicate on official College business. When in doubt, contact the Human Resources Department.

**Be Mindful; Think Before You Submit Content**:

There is no expectation of privacy on any social networking sites. Search engines can index and display posts, content, remarks, and pages anytime after they have been published. There are archiving services that cache sites even if they have been taken down and replaced or updated. If you are having a heated reaction to content, take a moment to compose yourself in a respectful and professional way before you respond or act. Post only information, photos, images, and other user-generated content that you are comfortable being completely public and archived by third-party sites or services.

**Does It Pass the “The News Tribune” Publicity Test?**

If the content you wish to post would not be appropriate for a face-to-face or telephone conversation, it is also not appropriate for social networking sites. If you would not be comfortable reading about your actions, comments, or content in the local paper or defending them in a TNT interview, then do not post that content.

**Be Respectful**:

Use the same behavior that is expected of you while on campus. Don’t use insults, slurs, obscenity, or inflammatory language at any time.

When Posting as an Individual

**Use A Disclaimer**:

If you post content to any social networking site outside of TCC that has to do with the college, its staff, or your work, use a disclaimer such as: “This post contains my own personal opinions and does not represent Tacoma Community College’s official opinions, views, or positions.”

**Prohibited Use of TCC Logos or Making Endorsements**:

All staff, faculty, and employees are prohibited from using college logos, trademarks, or images on personal sites. Do not use TCC’s name or likeness to endorse products, causes, or political actions of any kind. Questions regarding proper use of TCC logos and associated materials should be directed to the TCC Marketing & Communications Department.

**Don’t Use Pseudonyms**:

Do not pretend to be someone else or use fake names. Tracking tools enable supposed anonymous comments and posts to be tracked back to their origin.

**Protect Your Identity**:

While you should maintain transparency and honesty in your social networking interaction, be careful to not reveal confidential information about yourself that could be used to steal your identity. Never post your home addresses, home phone numbers, where your children go to school, or other information of a sensitive nature on social network sites.

When Posting on Behalf of Tacoma Community College

**Social Media Site Implementation Process**:

Before creating a social media account on behalf of the college it is required that you contact the marketing department for process guidelines and best practices information. Administrators of sites created prior to this document will be provided a copy for use and reference and should ensure the site complies with all guidelines now and moving forward. Only authorized individuals may send or post messages on social networking sites on behalf of TCC. Current social media administrators should ensure social media sites meet the listed guidelines within 30 days of receiving this document.

**Acceptable Use & Monitoring**:

All TCC policies, including those related to harassment, discrimination, respect for diversity, retaliation, workplace violence, ethics, and conflicts of interest apply to all Users’ postings and social media content.

TCC reserves the right to monitor employee use of College social media. As set forth in the *Information Technology Acceptable Use Policies*, employees may be disciplined for violating the confidentiality of TCC, of fellow employees, posting harassing or defamatory content or other infractions of TCC’s normal workplace standards of conduct.

**Misrepresentation**:

When engaging in personal social media activities and identifying as a TCC employee, employees must specify that they are speaking for themselves and not on behalf of TCC. Employees should refrain from identifying TCC in personally owned or controlled social media sites or personal commentary posted to social media discussions or pages, or their messages should have clear disclaimers that the views expressed are personal to the author and do not necessarily represent the views of TCC. Employees are reminded that they bear personal responsibility for the content of their posts, blogs or other social media content.

**Use of Photographs**:

For personal social media activities, TCC employees should be respectful of co-workers, students, management, and other colleges and universities. It is recommended that you obtain authorization from a photo subject before posting his or her image, especially if the person will be identified by name.

Unless it is necessary to the story (i.e., when reporting on an award or an athletic achievement), our policy is that we avoid identifying photo subjects by first and last name.

TCC does not require that a media release be obtained for images posted to social media. However, photos that contain identifiable images of children should not be posted without the written consent of a parent or guardian. (Common-sense exceptions may be made for crowd shots at public events, such as basketball games or Commencement.) Check with the Marketing department before using images of children enrolled in TCC’s Early Learning Center.

**Monitoring Sites**:

Social media demands a high level of responsiveness. Administrators are not required to be available 24/7, but are expected to monitor their sites and respond as necessary on a daily basis, during regular hours.

Sites should be updated frequently. Facebook and Twitter administrators should plan to update these sites every day the college is open. Blogs and photo-sharing sites (such as Flickr and Pinterest) should be refreshed frequently, preferably on a weekly basis.

**Social Media Comments**:

TCC encourages interaction from social media users, but is not responsible for comments or postings made by visitors.

TCC asks that employees making comments on TCC pages show respect for other users by ensuring the discussion remains civil. Employee comments and content are also subject to the site’s terms of use and code of conduct.

TCC reserves the right, but assumes no obligation, to remove content and/or comments that are not related to official college business and consistent with the college’s mission. We also do not permit messages selling products or promoting commercial or other private for-profit ventures.

Negative comments can be handled with a careful response. Always try to:

● Provide a polite and friendly answer to the question/criticism

● Direct him/her to a source of information/assistance, or offer to assist if you can

● Remember that a negative comment is an opportunity to showcase TCC

Guidelines for Use of Facebook on Behalf of Tacoma Community College

Facebook is referenced as an example. These guidelines apply, however, to all social media sites.

**TCC’s Official Facebook Page**:

The Marketing and Communications and Outreach Department are administrators for the College’s official page on Facebook. Those who wish to contribute information to the TCC Facebook page as an official message from the college should contact the department.

Fans of the page, including students, representative of student clubs, faculty and staff, are also encouraged to post comments and announcements.

**Creating and Managing a Facebook Page**:

Anyone who wishes to create a Facebook page or group for a college-affiliated department, program, club or organization, must first contact the Marketing, Communications and Outreach Department.

Pages or groups created by a department or organization on behalf of the college must be created by authorized representatives of the College. The department’s initial page creator must include a member of TCC’s Marketing & Communications Department as a page administrator. While the marketing staff does not intend to actively maintain or monitor these sites, this designation will enable the Marketing and Communications Department to properly track college Facebook pages and respond quickly in the event of a problem, such as the unavailability or departure of the staff member who has administrative control of the page.

At present, Facebook page creators have super-administrator rights over the pages they create, however these rights can be transferred to additional administrators if needed through the submittal of a help ticket to Facebook.

The administrators designated by the department or program will control content and maintain the page as described in this document.

To comply with Facebook terms of service and enable the college to track authorized college pages, any department or organization wishing to create a page or group must provide the Marketing & Communications Department with the name and contact information for the individual(s) who will be authorized by the department to administer the page on an ongoing basis.

**Account Security**:

The department’s authorized page administrator(s) must maintain the security of his/her Facebook password and is fully responsible for all use of and any actions that take place using his/her account, including those that result from the failure to protect his/her user ID against unauthorized use. Any changes in the designated page administrator(s) must be promptly communicated to the Marketing & Communications Department. Departments may not register for more than one User account, or register for a User account on behalf of another individual, group, or entity. At all times, a department’s authorized page administrator shall maintain with the Marketing Department an updated Facebook password.

**Graphics**:

Facebook pages should feature the department, program or organization’s official image or identifying logo, if one exists. If one does not, contact the Marketing & Communications Department to discuss creation of a logo. Departments and programs are encouraged to use photography to display campus beauty.

**Collecting User Information**:

Facebook may not be used to collect personal information of users. Facebook terms and conditions, as well as state and federal law, impose significant requirements and restrictions on the collection of personal information of users. In the case of minors, significant additional penalties can apply to violations.

**Facebook Site Monitoring**:

TCC Facebook pages and groups must be monitored and updated on an ongoing basis by the department or units that create them to enable rapid response to any problems that may arise and to ensure an engaging, interesting environment for visitors. Minimally, pages should be reviewed on a daily basis, and ideally, they should be checked morning and afternoon. A stale or outdated page can be more damaging to the image of an entity than not having a page at all.

**Facebook Advertising**:

All advertising on Facebook must be approved by the marketing department before placement.

Social Media Best Practices

Share information only appropriate for the public. Keep in mind that content posted may be distributed through the Internet and other media channels and may be viewed by the general public. If deleted or modified, older versions may continue to exist online.

Content that promotes or depicts illegal activity, is threatening or harassing, includes obscenities, or defames a person is prohibited. In addition, the College’s social media channels should not be used for political, religious or commercial purposes.

Strive for accuracy: get the facts straight before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors. This is especially important when posting on behalf of the College.

Be respectful: understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussions of opposing ideas. Responses should be considered carefully in light of how they would reflect on the poster and/or the College.

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 through the Internet. 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.

Employees are reminded to use discretion when using social networking media. If unsure about how policy or guidelines apply to your posting or social media site, employees are encouraged to consult with their supervisor before taking action whenever possible.

**Resources**:

In developing the College’s social media policy and guidelines, the Social Media Advisory Group drew upon a variety of resources, including those made available through the National Council of Marketing and Public Relations, Mount Wachusett Community College, the University of Washington and www.socialmediagovernance.com.