

Policy Name: Social Media

Policy Number: L-3

Functional Area(s) Responsible: Enrollment Management

Owner(s) of Policy: Marketing and PR and Communications

Most Recent BOT Approval Date: May 2016

Most Recent Review Date: Spring 2025

Most Recent Review/Revision Type: ☐ none ☒ minor/non-substantive ☐ substantive/extensive

Policy Statement:

Social media is a means of communication that can advance the college mission provided that users follow applicable federal and state laws and best practices. FLCC social media accounts must be sponsored by a department or office and approved by a supervising office that will have administrative rights. Any pre-existing account that meets the definition of an FLCC social media account may continue to operate but must comply with this policy within 12 months of its adoption. The Marketing and PR and Communications offices will provide advice on the creation and operation of FLCC social media accounts.

Reason(s) for Policy:

Social media posts are instantaneous by nature and have a wide reach. Communications must be well thought out and in compliance with applicable laws and standards to protect the reputation of the college and advance its mission. Distinctions must also be made between personal and institutional social media use.

Applicability of Policy:

This policy applies to all FLCC employees and all FLCC social media accounts.

Definitions:

Social media: Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Social media accounts assume two-way communication, meaning any office or department seeking to open or maintain an account must be prepared to routinely post, respond and monitor the account.

FLCC social media account: Any social media account that uses the Finger Lakes Community College name or any of its logos in the screen name, account name or representative image or any social media account that is intended to represent the college or any of its departments or functions. FLCC social media accounts should not also be a personal social media account.

Supervising Unit: An office that gives permission for and oversees another unit's social media account

Sponsoring Unit: An office, department or program that seeks to operate a social media account.

Editor: An individual responsible for content development, monitoring content and keeping it up-to-date. Editor will follow all guidelines and best practices outlined in this document.

Related Documents:

None

Procedures:

Operating Agreements for FLCC Social Media Accounts

A department, program, or office (sponsoring unit) seeking to start a social media account must seek approval in writing from a supervising unit by providing the type of social media platform, the rationale for the account, the cost – if any – and how it will be covered, a plan for its use, and the name of the editor.

The supervising unit may require the sponsoring unit to provide content in advance for up to 8 weeks. Content will be tested on an existing FLCC account to ensure enough best-practice content, audience reaction and moderation warrants the creation of a new account.

Once a social media account is approved, the sponsoring unit shall provide the supervising unit with administrative access to the account for the purpose of managing reputational or technical issues if the sponsoring unit is unable to respond. The sponsoring unit shall also provide a list of the individuals who will be administrators of the social media account and those who will have the right to post to the account.

Departments, programs, and offices that cannot maintain an existing social media account (generally weekly activity) should contact their supervising unit about closing the account and contributing to another existing account.

Supervising units are as follows:

- The Office of Student Life will have administrative rights to all FLCC student club social media accounts.
- The Athletics Department will have administrative rights to FLCC social media accounts related to athletic teams.
- The Marketing and PR & Communications offices will have administrative rights to all other FLCC social media accounts.

The sponsoring unit or office will agree to:

- Respect copyrights and FLCC branding guidelines.
- Post content that is accurate, respectful, and related to the sponsoring department's function. Student club social media accounts must not violate the Student Code of Conduct.
- Post at least weekly unless there is a natural "dormancy" period such as summer or January session. Accounts that go dormant should have a "signoff" post with specific information on when the account activity will resume.
- Contact Marketing or PR & Communications before replying to questions or comments regarding general college policy or those that do not relate to the sponsoring department's function.
- Reply to comments or questions within 24 hours or as soon as practicable.
- Monitor posts and remove those that are racist, sexist, abusive, obscene, violent, advocate illegal activity, contain falsehoods, or libel, or make ad hominem attacks on FLCC students, employees, or others.
- Comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and other applicable state and federal laws regarding privacy of students, employees, and others.

Monitoring

The supervising offices reserve the right to remove content that does not comply with this policy. Accounts that consistently fail to comply with this policy will be closed.

Personal Social Media Accounts

Use of personal social media accounts should not interfere with the employees' work or purport to represent the college or any of its departments or functions. Personal account posts should not disclose protected information as defined by FERPA about other employees or students. Personal accounts should be registered under personal email addresses, not FLCC-issued email accounts.

Employees may call the Marketing and PR & Communication offices with questions about what is appropriate to include in your personal blog or social networking profile.

Forms/Online Processes:

None

Appendix:

- A: Best Practices for FLCC Social Media Account Use
- B: Best Practices for Personal Use

APPENDIX A: BEST PRACTICES FOR FLCC SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT USE

- **Asking Marketing and/or PR & Communications** for information on best practices for a particular type of account as social media companies change their rules and practices over time.
- **Treat social media just as you would a face-to-face conversation.** Think before you post; try to anticipate the other person's reaction. Remember that the other person cannot see your facial expressions or hear your tone. Avoid making jokes or using sarcasm that may be misunderstood.
- **Be accurate and correct errors.** Make sure that you have all of the facts before you post. It's better to verify information with a source first-hand than to have a post correction or retraction later. But if you do make a mistake, fix it as soon as possible and apologize. Whenever possible, link to the source of your information, particularly if the information is on the FLCC website.
- **Review content for grammatical and spelling errors.** Double check the spelling of anyone's name.
- **Ask permission before sharing information about another person.** When employees and students win awards or take part in community activities, we want to share the good news, but it's always a good idea to let them know you would like to post about them. If someone asks you to remove a post about him or her or a photo showing him or her, do so immediately.
- **Stay above the fray.** Some online communities can be volatile, tempting users to behave in ways they otherwise wouldn't. Your reputation, and FLCC's, are best served when you remain above the fray. Never post when you are angry.
- **Nothing is ever truly deleted.** 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 college. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. If you wouldn't say it at a public meeting, consider whether you should post it online.
- **Keep your personal views separate.** Uphold the college's mission and values. Don't include political comments or comments on social issues except in support of positions FLCC has already taken when posting as a representative of FLCC.
- **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.



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APPENDIX B: BEST PRACTICES FOR PERSONAL USE

- **Be authentic.** Be honest about your identity. In personal posts, you may identify yourself as an FLCC faculty or staff member. However, please be clear that you are sharing your views as a member of the higher education community, not as a formal representative of FLCC.
- **On personal sites, identify your views as your own.** If you identify yourself as an FLCC faculty or staff member online, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the institution.
- 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 Finger Lakes Community College."
- If you identify your affiliation with FLCC in your comments, readers will 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.
- **Protect your identity.** While you want to be honest about yourself, do not provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use against you. Do not list your home address or telephone number or your work telephone or e-mail address. It is a good idea to create a separate e-mail address that is used only with your social media site.
- **Know the rules.** Become familiar with the terms of service and policies of sites and networks in which you participate. Pay attention to updates. If the legal language is hard to follow, follow a respected blogger or two who discuss service changes in their posts.
- **Be aware of liability.** You are legally liable 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 proprietary, copyrighted, defamatory, libelous, or obscene (as defined by the courts). Employers are increasingly conducting Web searches on job candidates before extending offers. Be sure that what you post today will not come back to haunt you.
- **Follow a code of ethics.** There are numerous codes of ethics for bloggers and other active participants in social media, all of which will help you participate responsibly in online communities. If you have your own social media site, you may wish to post your own code of ethics.

Blogger Code of Ethics

- 1) I will tell the truth.
- 2) I will write deliberately and with accuracy.
- 3) I will acknowledge and correct mistakes promptly.
- 4) I will preserve the original post, using notations to show where I have made changes to maintain the integrity of my publishing.
- 5) I will never delete a post.

- 6) I will not delete comments unless they are spam, off-topic, potentially libelous, defamatory, or otherwise inappropriate.
- 7) I will reply to emails and comments when appropriate and do so promptly.
- 8) I will strive for high quality with every post – including basic spellchecking.
- 9) I will stay on topic.
- 10) I will disagree with other opinions respectfully.
- 11) I will link to online references and original source materials directly.
- 12) I will disclose conflicts of interest.
- 13) I will keep private issues and topics private, since discussing private issues would jeopardize my personal and work relationships.