

Valparaiso University

Social Media Policy

I. Introduction

At Valparaiso University (University), we understand the dynamic role that social media can play in the private and professional lives of members of the University community. Social media has changed, and continues to change, the way in which people interact with each other. Therefore, we believe that it can be effectively utilized to further the University's mission by providing channels of interaction and engagement between the University and students, parents, faculty, employees, alumni, fans, media, the surrounding community, potential students and donors, etc.

Social media are defined as media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Social media includes, but is not limited to:

- Virtual worlds/social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, YouTube, blogs, wikis, audio/video file sharing, Twitter)
- Video and photo sharing websites (e.g. YouTube, Flickr)
- Blogging sites (including university blogs, personal blogs or blogs hosted by media publications, Twitter)
- Forums, discussion boards (Yahoo Groups, Google+, Google Groups), news article comments and online encyclopedias (e.g. Wikipedia)

The purpose of this policy is to encourage the use of social media by institutional users while making sure usage is in line with applicable state and federal laws and regulations, and to provide protection to the University's reputation and other members of its community. While this policy mostly focuses on the social media accounts that are University-owned and University-controlled, it will also provide a few general guidelines regarding personal use as well.

Because of the rapidly-changing world of social media, the University will be continuously monitoring this policy and its strategies in handling social media.

Nothing herein is designed to be so far reaching that it might foreclose any legal rights of an employee or student, including an employee's right to discuss conditions of employment.

II. Employee Use of the University's Social Media Accounts

This section outlines Valparaiso University's rules of engagement and expectations when you are using University owned and controlled social media on behalf of the University within the scope

of your employment. This section does not apply to an employee's use of their personal social media accounts.

1. USE COMMON SENSE!

2. Represent the University in a positive light. Keep in mind that a non-active or poorly managed social media account can and will reflect negatively on the University.

3. Administrators of University-owned and controlled social media accounts must observe all other University policies while utilizing social media.

4. Do not disseminate confidential information. This is especially important in relation to the federal HIPAA and FERPA laws and regulations.

5. Be mindful of copyright and intellectual property rights of others and the University.

6. If you are representing the University when posting on social media platforms, acknowledge this.

7. Have a plan. Departments should consider their messages, audiences, and goals as well as strategy for keeping information on social media sites up-to-date. Integrated Marketing and Communications can assist and advise you with your social media planning.

8. Protect the institutional voice. Posts on social media sites should protect the University's institutional voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste.

9. Use good judgment with content. Valparaiso University will not tolerate content that is threatening, defamatory, illegal, obscene, infringing of intellectual property rights, invasive of privacy, profane, libelous, discriminatory, harassing, bullying, abusive, hateful or embarrassing to any person or entity, or otherwise injurious or objectionable. The University reserves the right to take down any content it deems intolerable. However, the University does not intend this paragraph to limit opposing ideas and viewpoints in the course of legitimate social media interactions.

10. Strive for accuracy and give credit where credit is due. When using the thoughts, ideas, quotes, pictures, videos, etc. of other parties, give them credit for their work. Provide a link when possible.

11. If using social media in the recruitment of potential student-athletes, do so in accordance with NCAA rules and regulations.

III. Personal Use of Social Media

This section applies to an employee or student's personal use of social media. Further, it outlines the potential impact of personal social media use to your employment or student relationship with Valparaiso University.

1. Think first, post second. The things that can get you in trouble in "real life" with the University can also get you in trouble in the realm of the internet and social media. Some examples include: sexually harassing a colleague, inappropriate interactions with students, derogatory statements, threatening or intimidating others, or defamation.
2. Generally, employees should manage their personal social media accounts on their own time. There may be *de minimis* personal use of social media while utilizing University resources but only to the extent such use does not hinder an employee's job productivity. However, it is acknowledged that faculty may choose to use their personal social media accounts in furtherance of their academic endeavors and employment with the University and this policy is not intended to hinder that option.
3. Computers, hardware, and information technology infrastructure are property owned and operated by the University. As a result, the law does not grant you an expectation of privacy in your usage of them.
4. You are prohibited from using the Valparaiso University name or image to endorse an opinion, product, cause, business, or political candidate or otherwise holding yourself out as a representative of the University when you are not. When expressing a personal opinion, acknowledge this, especially if your statement could be reasonably interpreted by the message receiver that you are speaking on behalf of the University. You can use the following statement to help dissociate your opinions from those of the University: "The views expressed herein are my personal opinions and are not necessarily those of Valparaiso University."
5. Only authorized institutional staff members may recruit potential student-athletes. The University may be held in violation of NCAA rules and regulations if you use your personal social media accounts to contact potential student-athletes in an attempt to recruit or entice them to attend Valparaiso University.

IV. Non-Compliance/Breach of Policy

Non-compliance with this policy by University employees will result in a review of the incident. Disciplinary action may involve a verbal or written warning, suspension or potentially termination of employment or privileges with Valparaiso University. This section is not a substitute for any applicable University processes that implement employee or student disciplinary proceedings.