Trinity College Social Media Policy

These guidelines are intended to help Trinity College faculty, staff, and students who create and manage social media presences as representatives of the College, either as individual professionals, on behalf of their academic or administrative departments, or as students representing college student organizations.

Types of Social Media

Social media include a variety of online tools and services that allow users to publish content and interact with their audiences. Today's most common social networks or Web sites within this rapidly changing media space include:
- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- MySpace
- Flickr
- Blogs

Through its institutional social media presence, the College communicates directly with and receives instant feedback from online communities that include students, faculty, staff, alumni, prospective students, families, fans, and others.

Faculty, staff, or students who manage social media as representatives of Trinity are responsible for following all normal expectations for professional behavior as representatives of the College. Social media postings, including comments and responses, can be stored by and shared with millions around the world. For more information on Internet and computer usage at Trinity, view the Appropriate Use Policy at http://www.trincoll.edu/Library/its/security/Pages/RulesandRegulations.aspx. It is important to note as well that applications developed for any mobile devices (i.e., iPhones or other smartphones and tablet computers) and that use the College's name, wordmark or other institutionally identifiable information should meet the standards set forth in the Appropriate Use Policy and these guidelines as well.

Support from the College

The Office of Communications maintains the social media platforms that operate as the voice of the College. This includes the College's Facebook fan page, YouTube channel, Flickr photostream, Twitter feeds, Foursquare university page, and Instagram feed.

NOTE: The Office of Communications manages crisis communications, public relations, and media responses via social media and is the only office authorized to communicate for the College under these circumstances. The Office of Communications also manages responses to media inquiries and other

messages to the campus community. The College's emergency management (CORE) team manages campus incident messages (i.e., TC Alert messages) and emergency global e-mail messages.

Departments, programs, and individuals at the College are welcome to have a social media presence that promotes and showcases their work at the College, as well as facilitates conversation. Below are expectations for managing those social media properties.

The Office of Communications is available to help you with guidance on strategy and planning.

Expectations

Be respectful: Be respectful of and do not disparage Trinity, its students, other employees, vendors, suppliers, and other institutions, being mindful that social media are widely viewable on the Web. Do not vent personal complaints about supervisors, co-workers or Trinity, or engage in name calling or other behavior that will reflect negatively on your or Trinity's reputations.

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 College and its institutional voice.

Comply with College policies: College policies apply to employee activity on social media as they would in other venues. Employees must not use social media to harass, threaten, discriminate against or disparage employees or others associated with Trinity. Employees may not provide job-search references for other individuals on social media. In accordance with Trinity's policy on employment verification and references, only Human Resources may verify employment or provide references for a current or former employee.

On all social media, think twice before posting: Social media has the ability to send your message around the world instantaneously. You need to be sure that you want everyone to read what you've written before you push the send button. Any comment that you would not want to make in a public forum is not one that you want to publish on a social media page.

Check your posts carefully: By their very nature, social media communications move quickly. The ease and speed with which you can post on these sites fly in the face of careful editing and fact-gathering. Be sure about your facts. Take time to look over grammar and spelling. This is especially important if you are posting on behalf of Trinity.

Understand that social media represent a conversation, not a monologue: Your posts may well generate responses. That is what social media try to encourage. But those conversations should not degenerate into uncivil, heated arguments. Evaluate responses carefully with this policy in mind.

Be aware of liability: Anyone who posts to a blog or other social media site is liable for that content. Individual bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to be proprietary, copyrighted, defamatory, libelous or obscene (as defined by the courts).

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Protect your identity: Never publish the kind of personal information that could be used against you by identity thieves. This includes your home address and your telephone numbers.

Terms of Service: Read, understand and obey the terms of service of any social media.

Representing the College: Expectations for Individuals Posting on an Official College Account

In addition to the expectations cited above, the following apply to individuals who are posting on social media accounts on behalf of the College:

Notify the College: Departments or units that have a social media presence or would like to start one should contact the Office of Communications to ensure that all college social media sites coordinate with other College sites and their content.

Acknowledge who you are: If you are representing Trinity when posting on social media platforms, acknowledge this. Discuss with your supervisor when you are empowered to respond directly to users and when you may need approval. If you are unclear, contact the Office of Communications.

Be thoughtful: If you have any questions about whether it is appropriate to write about certain kinds of material in your role as a Trinity employee, ask your supervisor or the Office of Communications before you post.

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. Consider the audiences you are hoping to reach and the kind of information that they would most like to have from the College. Recognize that the consumers of social media are accustomed to significant interaction. When you establish or manage a social media site, plan to read and update it frequently. Sites that are dormant should be reassessed or taken down. You should have a clear plan for keeping the site fresh and up-to-date. The Office of Communications can assist and advise you with your social media planning.

Protect the institutional voice: Posts on social media sites should protect the College's institutional voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste. If you see unfavorable opinions, negative comments or criticism about Trinity, do not try to have the post removed or send/post a written reply. Instead, forward this information to the Director of Communications, who may advise you on responding or may respond on behalf of the College.