

**Bluefield College Social Media Policies**

**Introduction**

Social media are powerful communication tools that have a significant impact on organizational and professional reputations. Consequently, Bluefield College has crafted the following policy to help clarify how best to enhance and protect personal and professional reputations when participating in social media.

Social media are defined as media designed to be disseminated through social interaction and created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Examples include, but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Pinterest.

Because social media can blur the lines between personal voice and institutional voice, employees should follow the same behavioral standards online as they would in real life, both in professional and institutional roles. In other words, the same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, alumni, donors, media, and other university constituents apply online as in the real world. Employees are liable for anything they post to social media sites.

**Section 1: Institutional Social Media Pages and Accounts**

The following policies are designed for departments, divisions or individual employees who post on behalf of an official unit of the college or who represent the school in a social media platform.

* **Involve the BC Office of Public Relations:** Departments or institutional units considering the creation of a social media page or account must first notify the Office of Public Relations to facilitate the process and to ensure consistency and quality in the presentation of the BC brand.
* **Share access to your social media account with the Office of Public Relations:** Departments or individuals who have or would like to start a social media page or account must give administrative privileges to the PR Office or provide the account username and password to PR. A member of the PR Office must have administrative privileges to all social media accounts created for the college in order to gain access to the accounts when necessary.
* **Devote someone to keeping your social media page current:** All institutional social media pages must have an appointed employee (or student work-study or intern) who is identified as being responsible for keeping the content current.
* **Have a plan:** Departments should consider their messages, audiences and goals, as well as a strategy for keeping information on social media sites up-to-date. The Public Relations Office can assist and advise with social media planning.
* **Link back to the college:** Whenever possible, link back to the Bluefield College web site. Ideally, posts should be very brief, redirecting a visitor to content that resides within the Bluefield College web environment. When linking to a news article about Bluefield College, check first to see whether you can link to a news article on the Bluefield College web site, instead of to a publication or other media outlet.
* **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. No individual Bluefield College unit should construe its social media site as representing the college as a whole. Consider this when naming pages or accounts, selecting a profile picture or icon, and selecting content to poss. Names, profile images and posts should all be clearly linked to the particular department or unit rather than to the institution as a whole.

**Section 2: General Policies for all Social Media Sites (including personal sites)**

* **Protect confidential and proprietary information:** Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Bluefield College, students, employees or alumni. Employees must still follow the applicable federal requirements such as FERPA and HIPA, as well as NAIA regulations. Adhere to all applicable university privacy and confidentiality policies. Employees who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination.
* **Respect copyright and fair use:** When posting, be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the college. For guidance, consult the Public Relations Office.
* **Don't use Bluefield College logos for endorsements:** Do not use the Bluefield College logo or any other university image or iconography on personal social media sites. Do not use Bluefield College’s name to promote a product, cause or political party or candidate.
* **Respect college time and property:** College computers and time on the job are reserved for college-related business as approved by supervisors and in accordance with the Information Technology Users’ Acceptable Use Policy.
* **Terms of service:** Obey the Terms of Service of any social media platform employed.

**Section 3: Best Practices**

This section applies to those posting on behalf of an official university unit, though the guidelines may be helpful for anyone 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 poster and the college. 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 conference 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 BC Public Relations Office.
* **Strive for accuracy:** Get the facts straight before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors. This is especially important if posting on behalf of the college in any capacity.
* **Be respectful:** 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.
* **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.
* **On personal sites, identify your views as your own:** If you identify yourself as a Bluefield College faculty or staff member online, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the institution.
* **Protect your photography:** Social media users can easily appropriate photographs posted on social media sites easily. Consider adding a watermark and/or posting images at 72 dpi and approximately 800x600 resolution to protect your intellectual property. Images at that size are sufficient for viewing on the web, but not suitable for printing.

**References**

Ball State University – Office of Marketing and Communications

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