

Social Media and Social Networking Guidelines

Overview

Social media and collaborative websites offer Minnesota West Community & Technical College many ways to engage with constituents by sharing and exchanging ideas, news, events and experiences through discussions, postings, photos and videos. Social networking enhances communications with constituents to better serve students, nurture professional relationships, strengthen bonds with communities, and cultivate productive relationships with our institutions.

These guidelines will evolve as use of these technologies grows and develops. Social media includes such things as: blogs, microblogs (X and Tumblr), podcasts, message boards and other community forums, streaming and online video, websites, social networking sites such as Facebook, X and Instagram, individual pages on social networking sites, professional networking sites (LinkedIn), wikis and media repositories (YouTube, Flickr).

Employees are encouraged to repost and share publicly available information with their family and friends, such as news releases, articles in college/university publications and websites. The following guidelines are to be used to ensure the most effective use of social media for the internal and external marketing and outreach efforts. Keep in mind that whatever you post reflects Minnesota West Community & Technical College.

Official college sites

The official social media pages for college/university are maintained by the marketing department. They are:

- Facebook — www.facebook.com/minnesotawest
- Instagram — www.instagram.com/minnesotawest
- X — www.twitter.com/minnesotawest
- YouTube— www.youtube.com/MinnesotaWestCollege
- LinkedIn — www.linkedin.com/school/mn-west-technical-college
- TikTok — www.tiktok.com/@minnesotawestctc

Individuals or departments wishing to contribute information or make suggestions for the main college pages should contact Marketing, Enrollment and Communication. Departments or groups that establish an online presence separate from these pages are solely responsible for the content. Contact Marketing, Enrollment and Communication if you have a concern about content posted by the site administrators of the college's main social networking pages or accounts.

Creating social media accounts

Any individual, department or division wanting to create and manage a social media account affiliated with Minnesota West Community & Technical College must obtain approval from Marketing, Enrollment and Communication. Approval of a social media account will include the assignment of a site administrator. In cases where pages already exist, please provide the coordinator of communications, marketing and advertising with the links to the page(s) and name(s) of the site administrator(s) to be added to a database of all college-affiliated social media pages.

Assume all postings are in the public domain and may be re-published and discussed in all forms of media. There is no personal voice on college social media; there is only an institutional voice. When posting on behalf of college, seek approval from the coordinator of communications, marketing and advertising for messages that might act as the “voice” or position of the college.

Follow web branding standards and logo use guidelines if you operate an official social media site.

When sharing information that is not a matter of public record, faculty and staff or student groups should follow the guidelines below if their social media presence could be construed as affiliated with the college.

Personal social media sites

Personal pages of faculty, staff and students are not covered by these guidelines. An individual’s perspectives are best aired on personal social media sites managed at home outside of work hours. Outside the workplace, your rights to privacy and free speech protect online activity conducted on your personal social networks with your personal email address.

However, what you publish on personal online sites should not be attributed to the college and should not appear to be endorsed by or originated by the college. If you list your work affiliation on a social network, you should regard all communication on that network as that of a professional network. Online lives are ultimately linked with the college if you mention the college in your personal online networking activity.

To help distinguish a personal site from a professional site, consider including a statement, such as: The information and views expressed on this site are mine and do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of Minnesota West Community & Technical College or the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

Rights and responsibilities

Minnesota West Community and Technical College respects First Amendment rights and embraces free speech values. Our goal is to encourage free speech on college-affiliated social networking pages, as well as to promote community values and ideals.

In general, content is guided by the terms and conditions of the specific social media tools you are using. However, site administrators should remove any comment or post deemed inappropriate due to harassing or threatening language, slander or profanity. It is the right of the site administrator to block posts from users who violate this.

Most social networking sites establish guidelines about language, posting of pictures and videos, and various other topics. Be sure to read the guidelines carefully, follow them strictly and report users who violate any terms or conditions.

Because social media sites are interactive tools, site administrators should monitor pages closely and frequently to supervise user conduct. Any questionable conduct can be reported to the coordinator of communications, marketing and advertising.

Legal and professional obligations

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and Minnesota West Community & Technical College

requires strict adherence to all applicable laws regarding intellectual property (trademarks and copyrights), disclosure and confidentiality, defamation, harassment and invasion of privacy.

In general, the laws, ethics and behavior expectations that govern your professional life apply in the same way when posting content on behalf of the college. Specifically, the Employee Code of Conduct is in force when social media site administrators publish on behalf of the college.

Follow all MnSCU and college/university policies. Refer to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system Board Policy 5.22.1 “Acceptable Use of Computers and Information Technology Resources.” This policy also applies to employee behavior within social networking and other public online spaces.

- **Maintain confidentiality** – Do not post confidential information about college students, employees or alumni. Follow college and federal requirements, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and athletic association regulations.
- **Maintain privacy** – Never use a student’s, employee’s or client’s name in a blog posting or on a social networking site, unless you have permission to do so. As a guideline, do not post anything that you would not present in any public forum.
- **Be aware of liability** – College staff and faculty are personally responsible for the content they publish on blogs, wikis, X, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and any other form of user-generated content. Consider that what you publish will be public for a long time.
- **Do no harm** – Do not post content or allow others to post content that is offensive, including, but not limited to, content that diminishes others based on race, color, creed, sex, age, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, mental or physical disability.
- **Respect the intellectual property rights of others.** Using copyrighted material in its entirety, without permission, violates federal law.

General guidelines

- **Credit appropriately.** Identify all copyrighted or borrowed material with citations and links. When publishing any material online that includes another’s direct or paraphrased quotes, thoughts, ideas, photos, or videos, always give credit to the original material or author, where applicable.
- **Maintain transparency** – When participating in any online community, disclose your identity and affiliation with the college, your clients, and your professional and/or personal interest. When posting to a blog, always use your name. Never create an alias, and never be anonymous.
- **Think before you post** – If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, it’s wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear headed. Only post pictures that you would be comfortable sharing with the general public. Make sure you have the appropriate permissions when posting pictures of students or fellow employees.
- **Correct mistakes** – If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and quick with your correction. If you’re posting to a blog, you may choose to modify an earlier post – just make it clear that you have done so.
- **Be responsible** – As with all college resources, college -related social media cannot be used to advance personal views, political views, political candidates or political parties. Also, social media cannot be used to promote commercial products or services. This prohibition does not include public speakers and entertainers.

Use of college logo and titles

Use of the college logo as a Facebook profile photo is discouraged for sites other than the official college page to avoid confusion. Please check with marketing staff to make sure you are conforming to the college's graphics and design standards.

For titles of Facebook pages, we recommend using "Minnesota West" for the first two words, as appropriate, for consistency and best results in searches, for example:

- Minnesota West XXXX Department
- Minnesota West Class of XXXX
- Minnesota West Student Senate

Best practices

- Link to the college website at every opportunity. Leveraging social media to drive traffic to mnwest.edu can be particularly helpful in promoting college/university.
- Be precise. Errors of fact, bad grammar and inaccurate spelling reflect poorly on the college.
- Publish early and often. A social media site left unattended is worse than no social media site at all.
- The safest way to use information from news sites such as Times Media, CNN and ESPN, is to link to their content.
- Content that is clearly inappropriate or illegal should be deleted promptly. When in doubt consult a supervisor or leave it out.
- Accept appropriate criticism of college decisions, actions and policies. Deleting critical content undermines the legitimacy of a publication and sabotages the sense of community that is the hallmark of social media. Personal attacks on members of the college community are not considered appropriate criticism.
- Monitor comments. Social media managers are responsible for all postings, including those made by visitors. Pay extra attention to visitor postings made in the hours and days following a controversial posting.
- Be cautious when using content from video host sites such as YouTube. Where possible, protect college by tracing a video back to its originator. Look there for embedding or linking code.
- Be accurate. Always evaluate your contribution's accuracy and truthfulness. Before posting any online material, ensure that the material is accurate, truthful and without factual error.
- When posting to a blog, refrain from posting about controversial or potentially inflammatory subjects, including politics, sex, religion or any other non-business related subjects.
- Keep the tone of your comments respectful and informative, never condescending or "loud." Avoid sentences in all capital letters. Stick to this maxim whenever you are contributing to any blogs or social and professional networks.
- Get approval when responding to a negative post. If a blogger or any other online participant posts an inaccurate, accusatory or negative comment about college, do not engage in the conversation without approval of your supervisor or the marketing department.
- Posting recommendations of colleagues is a tool of professional social networking sites. The recommendations and comments you post about other current and former college employees can have consequences, even if you are making the recommendations personally and not on behalf of

the college. Therefore, we ask that you clear all potential recommendations and comments with your supervisor or the marketing department.

- If you are contacted directly by a journalist regarding issues of concern to the college. Clear the query with the marketing department before responding to any journalist.

Reporting violations

- Remove any unacceptable posts or comments that violate college's equal opportunity statement or are product advertisements, political endorsements, SPAM or personal attacks.
- To report a violation of Facebook's Terms of Use of Content Code of Conduct, please use the "report" or "flag" option next to the content or page in question. To report a violation of college policies and procedures, please email: rebecca.weber@mnwest.edu