



Bluefield College Social Media Policy

Introduction

Social media are powerful communications tools that have a significant impact on organizational and professional reputations. Because they blur the lines between personal voice and institutional voice, 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, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Examples include but are not limited to LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and MySpace.

Both in professional and institutional roles, employees need to follow the same behavioral standards online as they would in real life. 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: 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 at Bluefield College at publicrelations@bluefield.edu.

- **Don't use Bluefield College logos for endorsements:** Do not use the Bluefield College logo or any other university images 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.
- **Social Media pages and accounts:** When creating a social media page or account please contact the Public Relations office first. A member of the Public Relations office must have administrative access to any social media account or page created for the college by college personnel.

Section 2: 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 Public Relations Office at publicrelations@bluefield.edu.
- **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. (See "Institutional social media" below.)
- **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.
- **Photography:** Photographs posted on social media sites easily can be appropriated by visitors. 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.

Section 3: Institutional Social Media

If you post on behalf of an official institutional unit, the following policies must be adhered to in addition to all policies and best practices listed above:

- **Notify the college:** Departments or institutional units that have a social media page or would like to start one should contact the Public Relations office. All institutional pages must have a full-time appointed employee who is identified as being responsible for content. Ideally, this should be the unit head of the department.
- **Acknowledge who you are:** If you are representing Bluefield College when posting on a social media platform, acknowledge this.
- **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 you with your 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 release on the Bluefield College website 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 post—names, profile images, and posts should all be clearly linked to the particular department or unit rather than to the institution as a whole.

References

Ball State University – Office of Marketing and Communications