

H. Council Trenholm State Community College

POLICY NAME:	Social Media Policy
EFFECTIVE:	July 2020
REVISED:	
APPROVED BY POLICY COMMITTEE:	Yes - July 13, 2020; October 31, 2023
APPROVED BY PRESIDENT'S CABINET:	July 16, 2020

Social Media Policy for Colleges

The College recognizes that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on particular topics using a wide variety of social media. The College further recognizes that employees and students have free speech rights to engage in speech on topics that are of public concern. At the same time, employees and students' use of social media can pose risks to the Colleges' safety, operations, confidential information, or reputation. To minimize those risks, the College expects its employees and students to adhere to the following policy regarding social media use.

Social media should never be used in a way that violates any ACCS or College policy. For example, employees and students are prohibited from using social media to violate confidentiality or privacy obligations, or to engage in unwelcome, harassing, threatening, or discriminatory conduct, regardless of forum.

True threats, intimidation, and stalking on social media directed at ACCS or College students or staff is prohibited. A true threat is (1) a serious expression of intent to commit an act of unlawful violence against a particular individual or identifiable group, if (2) the group would reasonably fear the threatened violence. This includes threats to self. Intimidation is physical conduct threatening a specific individual with the intent to place those individuals in fear of bodily harm or death. Stalking is (1) a course of conduct committed with the intent to kill, injure, harass, or intimidate another person that (2) places that person in reasonable fear of the death of, or serious bodily injury to (3) that person, an immediate family member, a spouse, or an intimate partner of that person; or (4) causes, attempts to cause, or would be reasonably expected to cause substantial emotional distress to a person listed above.

Employees and students shall not use College names, images, logo, or other branding in social media without the written approval of the appropriate College authority.

Employees should not post or otherwise comment on or to social media during the workday **unless it is directly related to your position and work at the College.**

Free speech rights apply in the classroom, in all other programs and activities of our institutions, and to the speech of students and employees. Great care must be taken not to inhibit open discussion, academic debate, and expression of personal opinion, particularly in the classroom setting. Nonetheless, speech or conduct of a harassing, sexual, or hostile nature exceed the protections of academic freedom and constitute prohibited harassment.

Any speech by students or employees that prevent the College from (a) operating safely or effectively, (b) maintaining proper discipline, (c) that threatens the integrity and/or public trust of the College, or (d) causes reputational harm to the College as determined by the President can result in disciplinary action, including reprimands, suspension, or termination. This includes posts, comments, or likes that are or could be perceived as offensive to any current or potential student or employee of the college. The College may also require deletion, withdrawal, or apologies related to personal social media activity.

While the right to free speech applies to communication in all forms, including in social media, the College encourages civil and respectful discourse, especially by its employees. We are all responsible to one another and to the thinking and thoughtful community of which each of us is a valuable part. The College encourages and requires professionalism, maturity, and honesty in social media communications. The College believes that derogatory, incorrect, misleading, cruel, obscene, crude, vulgar, offensive, profane, threatening, harassing, hostile, racist, or sexist comments are unprofessional and have no place in the community or in public discourse.

The College encourages and requires its employees to use good judgment about what is posted on social media. Remember that anything you say can reflect on the College. Whether you identify yourself as a College employee or not in personal online social media profiles, even if such accounts are private or have otherwise restricted access, make it clear in your social media activity that you are speaking on your own behalf. However, be aware that making this statement will not shield employees from disciplinary action if the posts otherwise violates this policy.

This policy is not intended to restrict speech protected by state or federal law. However, unprotected social media speech that violates this policy can result in disciplinary action.