

SIMMONS UNIVERSITY SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

OVERVIEW

The rapid growth of social media technologies combined with their ease of use and pervasiveness make them attractive channels of communication. However, these tools also hold the possibility of unintended consequences. To help you identify and avoid potential issues, we have compiled these guidelines. They are examples of best practices from various institutions and are intended to help you understand, from a wide range of perspectives, the implications of participating in social media.

If you have any questions, please reach out to the Lead Social Media Strategist at social@simmons.edu.

Things to Consider When Beginning to Use Social Media

Applications that allow you to interact with others online (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter) require you to consider carefully the implications of friending, following, or accepting such a request from another person. For example, there is the potential for misinterpretation of the relationship or the potential of sharing protected information. Relationships such as faculty-student, manager-subordinate, and staff-student merit close consideration of the implications and the nature of the social interaction. The following are some guidelines to follow in these cases.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

WHEN POSTING ON BEHALF OF SIMMONS

Online collaboration tools provide low-cost communication methods that foster open exchanges and learning. While social media tools are changing the way we work and how we connect with the public and other higher education institutions, Simmons policies and practices for sharing information remain the same. In addition to the individual guidelines discussed below please follow these official guidelines when you create or post to a social media site on behalf of Simmons:

Process for Creating a Simmons Social Media Presence

To ensure that your social media efforts adhere to the design and policy standards of Simmons and that your efforts are not tied specifically to a Simmons community member's personal account, all official Simmons social media accounts must be created by the Lead Social Media

Strategist in the Online Communication and Design office. The Lead Social Media Strategist will advise on social media strategy, available resources, and posting frequency.

The Lead Social Media Strategist will then grant the appropriate person(s) administrative access to new accounts. To request an account, [fill out this form](#).

If you have any questions, please reach out to the Lead Social Media Strategist at social@simmons.edu.

Administrative Access to Accounts

To ensure continuity and prevent blocked access to social media accounts due to the departure of an account administrator, login information for official Simmons social media accounts must be shared with the Lead Social Media Strategist.

University Announcements

University announcements will be handled by the Lead Social Media Strategist. If you see anything on social media that should be brought to the attention of University leadership, or need advice on how to handle sharing content or responding to a message or comment, contact the Lead Social Media Strategist at social@simmons.edu in the Online Communication and Design office.

Crisis Communication

Any communications related to a crisis at Simmons will be shared by the main Simmons University accounts with other Simmons accounts resharing or retweeting the original content unless otherwise instructed.

Maintain Simmons Confidentiality

Many Simmons employees sign confidentiality agreements as a condition of their employment and it is important to keep that agreement in mind if you intend to engage in social media.

Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Simmons, its students, its alumni, its Trustees, or your fellow employees. Use good ethical judgment and follow the University's [policies and federal requirements](#).

Maintain Privacy

Do not discuss a situation involving named or pictured Simmons community members on a social media site without their express permission. As a guideline, do not post anything that you would not present in any public forum.

Be Thoughtful

Before composing a message that might act as the “voice” or position of the University or a school/department, please discuss the content with The Lead Social Media Strategist. If you ever have any question about whether a message you are crafting is appropriate to post in your role as an Simmons employee, please contact the Lead Social Media Strategist.

Respect University Time and Property

It’s appropriate to post at work if your comments are directly related to accomplishing work goals, such as seeking sources for information or working with others to resolve a problem. You should participate in personal social media conversations on your own time.

Be Responsible

What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social computing on behalf of Simmons is not a right but an opportunity, so please treat it seriously and with respect. Keep in mind that if you are posting with a University username, other users do not know you personally. They view what you post as coming from the University. What you say directly reflects on the University. Discuss with the Lead Social Media Strategist in the circumstances in which you are empowered to respond directly to users and when you may need approval.

Be Accurate

Make sure that you have all the facts before you post. It’s better to verify information with a source first than to have to post a correction or retraction later. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible—that’s how you build community.

Frequency

- Assign an administrator who regularly monitors postings and content.
- Create a content calendar with pre-planned content for slow periods. Aim for standard times for postings and updates.
- Consider managing your social platforms via Hootsuite or Sprout Social to communicate with multiple admins and monitor communications from students and/or the public.
- While the recommended minimum frequency is once to twice a week, be sure not to overload your followers with updates.

Scheduled Posts

Accounts holders at Simmons can pre-write and schedule posts using a variety of softwares. If an account holder schedules social posts, they must ensure that duplicate content is not being shared on every social media platform and that the software’s scheduler tool allows for the immediate pause of automatic posts should the need arise.

Automated Posts

No Simmons account may use any social media software, apps or RSS feed to automatically generate social media posts. Social media algorithms value organic content over automated content, and the Simmons social media strategy focuses on authenticity, engagement, community building, and meaningful contributions.

Live Streaming

All live streaming on behalf of the Simmons University brand on social media **must be approved** by Lead Social Media Strategist.

Stagnant Accounts

The Lead Social Media Strategist reserves the right to **disable or temporarily unpublish Simmons social media accounts that are dormant (no posts, no activity) for more than SIX months**, as such stagnancy reflects poorly on the University.

Departed Admins

When page editors and administrators, especially students, have left the University and no longer require access to social media accounts, you must update/adjust your page roles immediately. Please contact the Lead Social Media Strategist **any time an admin is removed or added**.

Proper Branding

Abide by the University [Visual Identity System](#). Provide the Lead Social Media Strategist with your proposed social media profile avatars. The Social Media Lead can advise on best practices.

Please note: only the main Simmons University accounts can use the official University logo and seal.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

WHEN POSTING AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Simmons uses social media to supplement traditional press and marketing efforts. Employees are encouraged to share University news and events that are a matter of public record with their family and friends. Using links to the information source is an effective way to promote the mission of Simmons and build community while ensuring the sharing of accurate information.

When you are using social media for personal purposes and might be perceived as an agent of/expert on Simmons, you need to make clear to the audience that you are not representing Simmons in an official capacity or announcing the position of the University or a Simmons policy. While the guidelines below apply to those instances where there is the potential for confusion about your role as a Simmons agent/expert versus personal opinion, they are good to keep in mind for all social media interactions. When posting to a social media site, you should:

Do No Harm

Let your Internet social networking do no harm to Simmons, its students, your colleagues, or yourself, and that's important whether you're navigating those networks on the job or off.

Does It Pass the Publicity Test?

If the content of your message would not be acceptable for face-to-face conversation, over the telephone, or in another medium, it will not be acceptable for a social networking site. Ask yourself, would I want to see this published in the newspaper or posted on a billboard tomorrow or 10 years from now, particularly with your name attached to it?

Be Aware of Liability

You are personally responsible for the content you publish on blogs, wikis, or any other form of user-generated content. Individual bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to be copyright infringement, defamatory, proprietary, libelous, or obscene (as defined by law). Increasingly, employers are conducting web searches on job candidates before extending offers. Be mindful that what you publish will stay in the public domain for a long time—be sure that what you post today will not come back to haunt you years from now.

Maintain Transparency

The line between professional and personal business is sometimes blurred: be thoughtful about your posting's content and potential audiences. Be honest about your identity. In personal posts, you may identify yourself as a Simmons faculty or staff member. However, please be clear that

you are sharing your views as an individual, not as a representative of Simmons. If you identify yourself as a member of the Simmons community, ensure your profile and related content are consistent with how you wish to present yourself to colleagues.

Be a Valued Member

If you join a social network, make sure you are contributing valuable insights. Don't hijack the discussion and redirect by posting self-/organizational-promoting information. Self-promoting behavior is viewed negatively and can lead to you being banned from websites or groups.

Think Before You Post

There's no such thing as a "private" social media site. Search engines can generate posts and pictures years after the publication date. Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if you delete a 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 (current and future peers, employers, etc.).

Take the High Ground

If you identify your affiliation with Simmons in your comments, readers may associate you with the University, even with the disclaimer that your views are your own. Remember that you're most likely to build a high-quality following if you discuss ideas and situations civilly. Don't pick fights online.

Correct Mistakes

If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and be 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.

Monitor Comments

Most people who maintain social media sites welcome comments—it builds credibility and community. However, you may be able to set your site so that you can review and approve comments before they appear. This allows you to respond in a timely way to comments. It also allows you to delete spam comments and to block any individuals who repeatedly post offensive or frivolous comments.

Protect Your Identity

While you should be honest about yourself, don't provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use. Don't list your home address, telephone number or other personally identifying information that you would not share publicly. It is a good idea to create a separate email address that is used only with social media sites.

Don't Use Pseudonyms

Never pretend to be someone else. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors.

Use a Disclaimer

If you publish content to any website outside of Simmons and it has something to do with the work you do or subjects associated with Simmons, use a disclaimer such as this: "The postings and statements on this site are my own; they do not represent Simmons's positions, strategies, or opinions."

A common practice among individuals who write about the industry in which they work is to include a disclaimer on their site, usually on their "About Me" page. If you discuss higher education on your own social media site, we suggest you include a sentence similar to this: "The views expressed on this [blog, website] are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of Simmons." This is particularly important if you could be perceived to be in a leadership role at Simmons.

Don't Use the Simmons Logo or Make Endorsements

Do not use the Simmons seal, logo, or any other Simmons marks or images on your personal online sites. Do not use Simmons's name to promote or endorse any product, cause, or political party or candidate. Simmons logo guidelines can be found in the [Visual Identity System](#) document.

For Simmons Faculty

The [Simmons Faculty Policy Manual](#) addresses the intersection of academic freedom and faculty members communicating on topics that are of professional or personal interest to them.

Section 1.4 states, in pertinent part:

Colleges and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and institution by their utterances. Hence, they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.

SAFETY AND PRIVACY TIPS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

The Internet is open to a worldwide audience. When using social media channels, ask yourself:

Did I set my privacy setting to help control who can look at my profile, personal information, and photos?

- You can limit access somewhat but not completely, and you have no control over what someone else may share.

How much information do I want strangers to know about me? If I give them my cell phone number, address, email, and class schedule, how might they use it? With whom will they share it?

- You never know how people will use your personal information. Not everyone will respect your personal or physical space.

What if I change my mind about what I post? What if I want to remove something I posted as a joke or to make a point?

- Read the social networking site's privacy and caching statements.
- Removing material from network caches can be difficult. Posted material can remain accessible on the Internet until you've completed the prescribed process for removing information from the caching technology of one or multiple (potentially unknown) search engines.

Have I asked permission to post someone else's image or information?

- Think about whether your content infringes on privacy, hurts someone, leaves you open to a libel suit or violates network use policy or HIPAA privacy rules.

Does my equipment have spyware and virus protections installed?

- Some sites collect profile information to SPAM you. Others contain links that can infect your equipment with viruses that potentially can destroy data and infect others with whom you communicate.
- Remember to backup your work on an external source in case of destructive attacks.

This social media policy was originally developed and published by the University of Michigan, adapted by Emerson College, and has been edited and revised for the Simmons community. We thank our colleagues at University of Michigan and Emerson College for sharing this policy with us and giving us permission to adopt and modify it for Simmons University.