

**SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
SCP-1200**

SUBJECT: Social Media Policy

REFERENCE: W. Va. Code § 61-3C-14A; W. Va. Code § 6B-1-1 et seq. (*WV Governmental Ethics Act*); W. Va. Code § 6-9A-1 et seq. (*Open Governmental Proceedings Act*); FERPA, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; National Labor Relations Act; U.S. Constitution, First Amendment; 135, C.S.R. 9 (*Academic Freedom, Professional Responsibility, Promotion and Tenure*)

ORIGINATION: April 11, 2025

EFFECTIVE: August 19, 2025

REVIEWED:

SECTION 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College (“the College”) recognizes and supports the official use of social media as a valuable tool for engaging with audiences across our service district, including current and prospective students, employees, customers, visitors, board members, and other stakeholders. This policy affirms the expectation that all employees and affiliated individuals uphold standards of conduct that are safe, lawful, ethical, and consistent with the mission and values of the College.
- 1.2. Given that social media can often blur the distinction between personal expression and the voice of the institution, the College has established this policy to provide clear guidance for the appropriate use of social media platforms. These guidelines are also intended to assist College employees, students, board members, and other constituents who reference their affiliation with the College on personal social media profiles, helping them navigate the balance between personal expression and institutional representation, while respecting constitutional protections of free speech and academic freedom.

SECTION 2. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

- 2.1 This policy affirms the College’s expectation that employees, students, volunteers, and board members uphold behavior on social media that is safe, legal, ethical, and aligned with the mission and values of the College. These standards are intended to protect both individual personal and professional reputations, as well as the reputation of the College as a respected institution of higher education.
- 2.2 The College values open expression and encourages the use of social media by its administration, faculty, staff, board members, and students to support and enhance student learning. While upholding the right to free speech and individual expression, the College also emphasizes the importance of maintaining professionalism and protecting one’s professional reputation in all social media interactions. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to limit constitutionally protected speech, academic freedom, or rights guaranteed under state or federal laws, including the National Labor Relations Act.

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 Social Media – Any media for online publication and commentary, including, but without limitation, all blogs, wiki’s, memes, and social networking sites such as X (formally known as Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Flickr, LinkedIn, and Snapchat.

3.2 Social Media Administrator – Director of Communications.

SECTION 4. POLICY

- 4.1 The College is deeply committed to higher education and to meeting the needs of its students and community each day. It values open communication and the right to free speech, and encourages employees, students, volunteers, and board members to share their experiences and enthusiasm for the College through personal social media, blogs, and online discussions. Social media provides powerful opportunities to exchange ideas and connect with others.
- 4.2 As technology continues to evolve, these guidelines will be regularly reviewed, updated, and revised as needed. The College has established these guidelines to help the College community navigate the safe, legal, and ethical use of social media.
- 4.3 The improper use of social media is strictly prohibited. Such misuse may include, but is not limited to, the following:
- 4.3.1 Inciting violence or actions that disturb the peace; posting content that ~~conflicts with the best interests of the College~~ unlawfully threatens or harasses others, or otherwise violates federal, state, or local law.
 - 4.3.2 Disclosing confidential information without authorization, including protected educational records under FERPA, protected health information (where applicable), personnel records, personal financial details, or sensitive research data.
 - 4.3.3 ~~Sharing content that disrupts discipline or harmony among colleagues~~ Engaging in unlawful harassment or threats that materially disrupt College operations.
 - 4.3.4 ~~Negatively affecting relationships requiring trust and loyalty~~ Making statements that constitute unlawful defamation or violate confidentiality agreements.
 - 4.3.5 Hindering an employee's ability to perform official duties through misuse of official College social media accounts.
 - 4.3.6 Intentionally ~~Int~~ interfering with the College's operations and its ability to provide services efficiently.
- 4.4 Any violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, consistent with due process requirements under applicable law and College policies.

SECTION 5. BACKGROUND OR EXCLUSIONS

- 5.1 None.

SECTION 6. GENERAL PROVISIONS

- 6.1 None.

SECTION 7. RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES

- 7.1 Posts on Behalf of the College:
- 7.1.1 Authorization from the Director of Communications is required before posting content on any official College social media platform.

- 7.1.2 All social media accounts established on behalf of the College must be linked through the Director of Communications and must not be connected to personal email accounts.
- 7.1.3 Each College-affiliated social media account must have administrative access shared by more than one employee. If a platform requires an individual user account, a dedicated account shall be created for this purpose. Employees must not be asked, permitted, or required to use personal accounts for College-related responsibilities. Administrative access will be revoked upon an employee's resignation or termination. All social media accounts created for the College are the property of the institution; administrators hold no ownership rights.
- 7.1.4 Posts made on behalf of the College must clearly identify the individual as an official representative.
- 7.1.5 The College's official logos—including vertical, horizontal, and the Southern "S"—may not be used without prior approval. Approved logo files can be obtained by contacting the Director of Communications.
- 7.1.6 All content posted on behalf of the College should support its mission and uphold its reputation.
- 7.1.7 Refrain from engaging in any activity on social media that could result in actual or perceived conflicts of interest or commitment.
- 7.1.8 Questions or comments received through the College's social media platforms must be addressed in a timely manner. The Director of Communications will determine who is authorized to respond and whether prior approval is required.
- 7.1.9 The College encourages employees, volunteers, students, and board members to use social media in ways that reflect professionally on the institution, its students, and its mission. At the same time, the College recognizes and respects employees' rights to free speech and academic freedom. Personal views must remain separate from official College communications. Any personal opinions expressed—whether on institutional or personal social media accounts—must clearly state that they do not represent the views of the College.
- 7.1.10 Internal College information, such as campus closures, class changes, or schedule adjustments, may not be posted before it has been officially announced.
- 7.1.11 Confidential information concerning the College, its leadership, faculty, staff, board members, or students must never be disclosed on social media platforms.

7.2 Posts Using Best Practices on Social Media:

- 7.2.1 Always provide identification and clarify that any personal views expressed are individual opinions and do not represent the views of the College. When discussing College business, a disclaimer must be included.
- 7.2.2 Impersonating another person is strictly prohibited. Tracking-Authorized investigative tools may be employed to identify the authors of anonymous posts, when necessary, to investigate unlawful activity.
- 7.2.3 Harassing, intimidating, or dishonest comments toward others or their posts must be avoided. Respectful communication is required at all times. Nothing herein shall be interpreted to prohibit lawful criticism or debate.

- 7.2.4 Online interactions should be conducted with respect. Even personal posts may impact the College's reputation due to the association with it; however, lawful expression of personal opinions is protected.
- 7.2.5 Legal liability may arise from content posted online, particularly if the material is proprietary, defamatory, libelous, or obscene.
- 7.2.6 Thoughtful engagement on social media platforms is encouraged, with careful consideration given to the audience.
- 7.2.7 College e-mail remains an official method of communication for the College. However, communication through social media platforms shall not be considered official or binding in any capacity.
- 7.2.8 Responsible participation in online communities is expected.
- 7.2.9 Professionalism and courtesy must be maintained online, ~~with behavior that positively reflects the image of the College.~~ Employees, volunteers, students, and board members are encouraged to reflect positively on the College while exercising their rights to free expression and academic freedom.

SECTION 8. CANCELLATION

- 8.1 None.

SECTION 9. REVIEW STATEMENT

- 9.1 This policy shall be reviewed on a regular basis with a time frame for review to be determined by the President or the President's designee. Upon such review, the President or President's designee may recommend to the Board that the policy be amended or repealed.

SECTION 10. SIGNATURES

Board of Governors Chair	Date

President	Date

Attachments: None.

Distribution: Board of Governors (12 members)
www.southernwv.edu

Revision Notes: April 11, 2025 – Originated.