Social Media Policy

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Social media is used by many members of the Goucher community for many different purposes. Social media accounts enable members of the Goucher community to lead and/or engage in important conversations with key audience members, including alumni, the community, prospective students, and parents. Goucher exercises different levels of control over various types of social media accounts. The purpose of this policy is to provide basic guidelines and expectations for all members of the Goucher community who use or communicate on social media, as well as to define and delineate areas where Goucher will exercise control or oversight over social media postings.

This policy is therefore divided into four main components:

- Guidelines relevant to all types of engagement on social media by members of the Goucher community;
- Policies and procedures for Goucher's institutional accounts;
- Policies and procedures for Goucher-affiliated accounts; and
- Policies and procedures relating to personal use of social media by employees and students of Goucher.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. **Account Managers:** any individual responsible for creating, managing or publishing content on a social media account.

B. **Goucher-Affiliated Accounts:** officially recognized and sanctioned accounts administered by Goucher programs, offices, student groups, etc. These sites have designated account administrators who oversee the content and dialogue. They are required to comply fully with the College's social media guidelines and visual identity standards.

C. **Institutional Accounts:** the official social media platforms for Goucher College. They operate as the main avenues for college news and updates.

D. **Social Media:** any platform for online publication and communication, including but not limited to Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and YouTube.

E. Social Media User: any individual who utilizes social media for personal or professional purposes.

F. **Unofficial/Unaffiliated Accounts:** groups or users who may have an interest in and identify with the College, but who have not started or completed the steps to become a Goucher-affiliated social media account.

III. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

- Act in a manner consistent with Goucher's Community Principles.
- Be respectful. Avoid posting material that is malicious, obscene, threatening, intimidating or defamatory, or that might constitute harassment or bullying.
- Adhere to Goucher's Code of Conduct and other policies. Goucher's policies apply to activities over social media just as they do "in real life."
- Do not use Goucher's identity, such as name, color, and emblems, except as permitted by the Vice President of Marketing & Communications or their designee.
- Be accurate. It is better to first verify information with a source than to post a correction or retraction later. Make sure you have all the facts before you post and cite and link to your sources whenever possible.
- Correct any mistakes quickly and be the first to report your mistake; followers will appreciate your accountability.
- Maintain the confidentiality of proprietary or protected information. Do not disclose, post or share confidential or proprietary Goucher information, data, or communications.
- Do not use or disclose personally identifiable information. Examples of such information include, but are not limited to, protected health information, student records protected by FERPA, employee information, home addresses and social security numbers.
- Be respectful of intellectual property rights and laws. Use of third-party copyrighted or trademarked material or use of a person's likeness without permission in digital content may be illegal and may expose the poster to significant financial liability and reputational risk.
- Use good judgment. Your actions and statements reflect on you, but also on Goucher College. Please bear in mind that posts on social media may be replicated quickly, be taken out of context, and will remain public for an indeterminate amount of time.
- Minimize security risks to social media accounts and profiles. Social networking services and accounts—and particularly those with a Goucher affiliation—are an attractive target. To minimize risks that an account may be compromised, use strong passwords and other security, and regularly monitor social media accounts—especially when they are not used frequently. Have a plan for recovering social media accounts in the event they are compromised.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTS

Goucher College's Office of Marketing and Communications oversees the institution's official social media accounts. These accounts include the following:

- Facebook
- X/Twitter
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Snapchat
- YouTube
- Flickr
- TikTok

The social media accounts listed above are the only "official" accounts created and curated by the Office of Marketing and Communications on behalf of the College. The Office of Marketing and Communications curates the content on these websites and reserves the right to delete or hide postings that it deems offensive, threatening, defamatory, harassing, or otherwise inappropriate. Only employees whose job duties are to create or curate content are authorized to post on these accounts on behalf of Goucher, although all community members are encouraged to follow and post on these sites in their individual capacity. All social media accounts, including any and all log-in information, data, passwords, trademarks, and content related to the account, including all followers, friends, connections, subscribers, and contacts are the property of Goucher College.

V. GOUCHER-AFFILIATED ACCOUNTS

There are over twenty (20) active Goucher-affiliated channels across social media. Faculty, staff, and students manage these accounts, and Goucher College is not responsible for the content of these sites. A full list of Goucher-affiliated accounts is available on the college website. This resource can be used to tag relevant offices, programs, and student groups in content applicable to them.

Unaffiliated account managers may contact the Office of Marketing and Communications for instructions on how to become an affiliated account. The account will be included on this list following the process.

VI. PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES TO CREATE AND USE A SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT

If a college department, program, or office wishes to create a Goucher-affiliated social media account, it should gain approval from the division vice president and the Office of Marketing and Communications regarding official participation and representation on specific social media sites. Should the request be approved, a social media account is to be used for business purposes only. Any non-business use or misuse of a social media account is a violation of this policy. The Dean of Students will determine sanctions if a student violates this policy and the divisional vice-president, if a faculty or employee violates it. Violations of this policy will result in the social media site losings its status as a Goucher-affiliated account and could lead to disciplinary action. Prohibited activities include, but are not limited to:

- sending and responding to private messages unrelated to college business.
- engaging in vulgar language, personal attacks of any kind, or using offensive language related to individuals or groups.
- endorsements of commercial products or services, or political parties or candidates.
- fundraising without permission from Advancement.
- posting photos or videos unrelated to the College; or
- lobbying on behalf of a party or candidate.

If Goucher's requirements are met, the Office of Marketing and Communications will include accounts in its list of Goucher-affiliated social media accounts.

A. How to Create a Goucher Social Media Account

If you are an official representative of the College looking to create a Goucher-affiliated social media account, the Office of Marketing and Communications can assist you with an account. You will need to:

Obtain approval from your department head, chair, associate provost, or vice president. Contact the Office of Marketing and Communications to help you set up your account, and guide you with graphics, design, and branding for your social media presence. Learn more about social media policies and guidelines, such as those in this policy.

B. Duplicate Account Search

Individuals will be required to conduct a thorough duplicate account search before launching a new account. The search must be conducted on each social media platform on which the individual wants to establish an account. For example, if a faculty member wants to start a Facebook page for science majors at Goucher, they will need to search for "Goucher College Science" or any similar page on Facebook.

If the individual finds an inactive page that resembles the page they wish to start, they should try contacting the administrator of that page to gain access. If they are unable to become the administrator of that account, they may start a new page. We recommend, however, establishing a process by which account credentials are passed to future account managers. The existence of multiple pages can make it difficult for users to find a page.

C. Terms and Conditions

Social media users are required to agree to the terms and conditions (i.e., rules) outlined by a social networking site. Failure to abide by the terms and conditions could result in the suspension or deletion of an account and appropriate disciplinary action. The Office of Marketing and Communications encourages individuals to review each social site's terms before signing up. Individuals may view a list of terms and conditions from a few social media sites below:

- Facebook
- X Twitter
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Snapchat
- YouTube
- Flickr

D. Copyright Laws

When sharing the works of others, it is important to follow copyright laws. Account managers should seek permission before using any work that is protected by copyright. These works include but are not limited to music, books, movies, and art. In all instances where permission is required, account managers should include their intended purpose for the work when contacting the author.

Account managers do not need to provide attribution on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn content that (1) links to an article or website or (2) is directly shared or retweeted.

Reposting a photo on Instagram or using a photo an individual did not take on Snapchat, is not allowed without attribution. Account managers must seek permission from the user/author before posting their content. Once approved, they should tag the creator of the work, and include their profile name in the caption. They should acquire written approval for any work they are allowed to repost.

The above guidelines apply when posting content to YouTube. Account managers must seek permission for any audio or video components that are not their own.

On Flickr, every photograph is marked with licensing information. If account managers see "© All Rights Reserved," they are not allowed to use the work without permission. Any photos marked with a Creative Commons license can be used but with caution. Account managers should view the attribution requirements and follow the instructions carefully. Misuse of the license could result in copyright infringement fines and permanent prevention from sharing the artist's work.

Additionally, account managers are allowed to share portions of work that are under the "fair use" category. If they are unsure how to obtain permission for copyrighted works, what works are protected, what legal peer-to-peer file sharing allows, or otherwise, they should view Goucher's Copyright Policy page. Following are links to each social media site's copyright policy mentioned in this section:

- [Facebook](#)
- [X Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Snapchat](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [Creative Commons Flickr Licenses](#)

E. Academic-Specific Guidelines & Privacy Laws and Policies

Faculty and staff wanting to use social media as part of teaching, learning, and research activities should take active steps to prevent violations of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) regulations. Any content or online activity created by the site owner or a poster that violates these regulations is prohibited and should be removed. See Privacy Laws and Policies below.

Requiring students to register for, post, upload, or otherwise communicate via a public social media platform (such as Facebook, Twitter, and others) raises concerns about privacy, accessibility, and equity that make such required assignments potentially problematic. In addition, there are legal restrictions on a school's ability to require a student to disclose or provide access to a personal social media account. If needed, the provost's office can help faculty determine whether proposed content or use of social media might create the potential for a violation of any laws or regulations.

Goucher College expects affiliated account managers to seek permission from the Office of Marketing and Communications before posting information about students, faculty, staff, alumnae/i, and community members. Please be mindful that FERPA protects and governs access to student-education records. With limited exceptions, institutions are not allowed to share any information in this record without parental or student consent.

The College also requires faculty and staff to abide by the rules outlined in the Student Social Media Privacy Policy. This policy sets forth appropriate rules to protect student privacy interests while permitting the use of social media for academic, athletic, career-based, and other college activities.

F. Social Media News Submission

Goucher-affiliated account managers must submit the following information to the Office of Marketing and Communications if they would like to see their news featured on the College's institutional accounts:

A brief summary of the news, event, or individual they wish to feature.

A link to an article (if applicable) OR a photo you wish to use.

A member of the communications team will contact the account manager should they have any questions.

G. Student Photography and Videography Permission

If students are in a public space—such as the Athenaeum—account managers do not need to seek permission from students to take social media photographs. For example, account managers are allowed to take photographs of students at Get in Goucher (GIG), Breakfast After Dark, or any other college-wide event without permission.

H. Although it is legal to photograph or videotape individuals on public property, account managers are encouraged to post visible signage to notify individuals that photography/videography will be taken during an event. This could aid in protecting students who have opted out of disclosing FERPA information.

I. Community Guidelines for Bios

To encourage enriching and engaging conversations on Goucher-affiliated pages, the Office of Marketing and Communications suggests including a written policy on the page's bio that includes the following:

Welcomes the community to engage in productive and respectful dialogue.

States the categories of content that will be removed from the page.

Informs users that the page is not monitored 24/7.

Informs users to contact the authorities if they have an emergency.

1. Facebook

Goucher-affiliated account managers may use the following language in Facebook bios (without italics):

We welcome students, faculty, staff, alumnae/i, and community members to participate in productive and respectful dialogue on this page. Please note, however, that visitor posts and comments do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of our institution. Additionally, to encourage a positive online community, we ask that all users refrain from posting content that contains:

off-topic, unproductive, repetitive, abusive, unlawful, discriminatory, obscene, threatening, and harassing information;
political endorsements, advertising, promotions, or spam of any sort; or
confidential information that violates U.S. laws, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

We reserve the right to remove any content we deem to be offensive or in violation of the above guidelines. Private messages that contain the above comments will not receive a response.

This page is not monitored 24/7. If you have an emergency, please contact the appropriate authorities.

2. (Twitter) and Instagram

If Goucher-affiliated account managers are tagging, reposting, or retweeting a social media user's content, they should be mindful that account managers´ followers may visit their page. If their content is inappropriate, this may affect the reputation of the Goucher-affiliated page, and the College as a whole.

Therefore, Goucher-affiliated pages should include non-endorsement language in their bios. This could help diminish, if not prevent, backlash directed at pages if outside individuals posts offensive or inappropriate content in the future.

Goucher-affiliated account managers may use the following phrase on your profile: "Engagements ≠ Endorsements."

Additionally, account managers should consider creating a text-based "Community Guidelines" Instagram highlight at the top of their page. They may use the Facebook language above to create the highlight. Visit Instagram's Help Center for more information on [how to create an Instagram story highlight](#).

VII. ACCOUNT MANAGER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Goucher-affiliated account managers are responsible for monitoring and communicating college-related information to their followers, and engaging their followers, on a consistent basis. These individuals must not post content that is either harmful or threatening. They are responsible for deleting and/or reporting this kind of information. For more information on [reporting safety threats or concerns](#), please visit our [Campus Safety website](#).

Furthermore, account managers should be mindful that social media users could post comments/questions on their page outside of business hours. It is recommended that account managers check for engagements at the beginning and end of the day and respond in a timely fashion. If account managers are unsure how or if they should respond to a comment, contact the [Office of Marketing and Communications](#).

VIII. MANAGING CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

Goucher College's institutional pages are the primary source for a response to crisis communications, including but not limited to campus safety threats and crimes.

Goucher-affiliated pages should not respond or post information about a crisis unless it is a repost or retweet from the official institution's page. This will prevent miscommunication, rumor spreading, and inconsistent messaging. We also suggest canceling all scheduled posts until the crisis has subsided.

If a social media user sends or posts information about an actual or potential safety threat on a Goucher-affiliated page, the receiver should immediately contact the Office of Public Safety at 410-337-6112. Keep a screenshot of the threat and, if possible, hide the post on the page. Do not delete the post as it could interfere with the investigation process. Non-safety-related inquiries can be reported to the Office of Marketing and Communications. General questions can be directed to the appropriate office or center.

The Office of Marketing and Communications also suggests including a sentence in the Facebook page's bio section that states the page is not monitored 24/7 and to contact the appropriate authorities in the event of an emergency.

IX.   PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

A. Use by Goucher Employees

Goucher College understands that social media can be a fun way to share extracurricular activities, accomplishments, and opinions with people around the world. However, the personal use of social media presents certain risks and carries certain responsibilities.

Goucher's policy on private social media accounts is in line with the American Association of University Professors' guidelines which recommend that college administrators and educators "should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence, they should always 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."

Goucher does not regularly monitor its employees' or students' personal use of social media and is not responsible for what individuals post on personal social media accounts. However, if an employee's use of social media adversely affects the employee's job performance, the performance of fellow employees or of students, or otherwise adversely affects Goucher's legitimate business interests or its education program, Goucher may take appropriate disciplinary action. Employees may be held responsible for violations of Goucher policies committed through social media. Thus, for example, a Goucher employee may not use a personal social media account to harass or discriminate against a fellow employee or a student on the basis of a protected characteristic. Employees should also refrain from the use of personal social media during their scheduled working hours.

When using social media for professional or personal reasons, express only your own personal or professional opinions. If Goucher College is the subject of the content you are creating, to ensure compliance with regulations relating to paid endorsements, you must be clear that you are an employee and make it clear that your views do not represent those of the college, or anyone working on behalf of the college. If you do publish a blog or post online related to the work you do or subjects associated with the college, make it clear that you are not speaking on behalf of the college. It is best to include a disclaimer in a prominent location such as:

"The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Goucher College."

Employees must keep in mind that if they post information on a social media site that is in violation of college policy and/or federal, state, or local law, the disclaimer will not shield them from disciplinary action.

B. Use by Goucher Students

Students are expected to be responsible and accountable for their use of social media. Postings by students on social media can have consequences in terms of impact on others, judgments made about the speaker by third parties, or the impact on future employers.

Goucher does not regularly monitor the language and/or actions of students on public social media platforms. However, it will hold students accountable for reported Code of Conduct violations if they are brought to Goucher's attention. As an example, students may not use social media to harass another student on the basis of protected characteristics, or to threaten violence. Any social media activity that violates the law, violates Goucher's codes of conduct or disrupts or has the potential to disrupt student learning and campus operations is prohibited and subject to discipline.

X.   ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Goucher College has established a number of policies and procedures that play a role in institutional communications. The Office of Marketing and Communications encourages individuals to review the following policies—and direct your questions to the appropriate office or program:

1. College Branding Guide
2. College Style Guide
3. Computer Use Policy
4. Copyright Policy
5. Digital Identity Policy
6. Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA)
7. Electronic Communication Policy
8. Family Education Rights and Privacy Act
9. Intellectual Property
10. Internet Fraud Information
11. Peer-to-Peer File Sharing and Copyright Law
12. Appropriate Internet Behavior Policies
13. Unauthorized Distribution of Copyrighted Material Policy
14. System Administrator Policy

XI.   CONTACT AND RESPONSIBLE OFFICE

For questions regarding this social media policy, please contact the Office of Marketing and Communications. Media inquiries to Goucher College may be directed to the Office of Marketing and Communications.

XII. HISTORY

Updated: January 2020; June 2024.