

Guidelines for Social Media Managers

Using Social Media During a Crisis

DO NOT post information relating to a current emergency event on campus unless you are directly instructed to do so by the WCU Police or Bill Studenc, PR Director. If you are in the vicinity of the crisis or have information crucial to the safety of WCU students, faculty or staff, contact WCU Police by calling 828-227-8911. If you are experiencing an instance of hacking or viral negativity on your social media accounts contact the social media manager immediately (Donna Presnell, 828.227.2629 or 917-657-2261).

Contributing to Other Social Media Sites on Behalf of WCU

If you are authorized by your supervisor to represent Western Carolina University in other social media channels, allow the following points to guide the tone and substance of your official posts:

Be transparent. Be honest about your identity. If you are authorized to represent Western Carolina University in social media, say so. If you choose to post about the university on your personal time, please identify yourself as a WCU faculty or staff member. Never hide your identity for the purpose of promoting WCU through social media.

Don't endorse without permission. Assure that the WCU name is used in a manner that does not imply university endorsement or responsibility for a viewpoint, activity, product or publication. A common practice among individuals who write about the industry in which they work is to include a disclaimer similar to this: "The views expressed on this [blog, website] are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of Western Carolina University." Don't use a university account or official post to endorse any product, vendor, politician or site unless you have permission from your supervisor to do so.

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; after all, that's how you build community. If you make an error, correct it quickly and visibly. This will earn you respect in the online community. Always spellcheck and grammar check BEFORE you make a post. The social media community can be unforgiving of typos.

Be respectful. Some online communities can be volatile, tempting users to behave in ways they otherwise wouldn't. Your reputation and WCU's are best served when you remain above the fray. Refrain from profane, obscene, harassing or defamatory speech. You are more likely to achieve your goals or sway others to your beliefs if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

Be a valued member. If you join a social network such as a Facebook group or comment on someone's blog, make sure you are contributing valuable insights. Don't post information about topics such as WCU events or a book you've authored unless you are sure it will be of interest to readers. Self-promoting behavior is viewed negatively and can lead to you being banned from websites or groups.

Maintain confidentiality. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about WCU, its students, its alumni or your fellow employees. Use good ethical judgment and follow university policies and state and federal requirements, such as FERPA, HIPPA and the Health Insurance Security/Privacy. If you discuss a situation involving individuals on a social media site, be sure that they cannot be identified. As a guideline, don't post anything that you would not present at a conference.

Respect trademarks and copyright. By posting content to any social media site, you agree you own or otherwise control all of the rights to that content, your use of the content is protected fair use and you are not knowingly providing misleading or false information. Media such as photographs and videos are copyrighted, including those commissioned by the university. You should only post photos you have taken yourself or have permission from the photographer to use.

Know the rules. Follow the community guidelines of the site you are using. Become familiar with the terms of service and policies of sites and networks in which you participate.

Utilizing Social Media Platforms on a Personal Basis

Social media often span traditional boundaries between professional and personal relationships. If you identify your affiliation with WCU in your comments or your personal profile, readers will associate you with the university, even with the disclaimer that your views are your own.

Think before you post. There's no such thing as a "private" social media site. Search engines can turn up posts 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. Employers are increasingly conducting Web searches on job candidates before extending offers. BEFORE you post any content, ask yourself how this post could affect the reputation of yourself or the university today or in the future.

Be authentic. Be honest about your identity. In personal posts, you may identify yourself as a WCU faculty or staff member. However, please be clear that you are sharing your views as a member of the higher education community, not as a formal representative of WCU.

Protect your identity. While you want to be honest about yourself, don't provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use against you. Don't list your home address or telephone number or your work telephone or email address. It is a good idea to create a separate email address that is used only with your social media site. Use privacy settings to restrict personal information on otherwise public sites. Choose profile photos and avatars carefully. Be thoughtful about the type of photos you upload.

Don't use the WCU logo or make endorsements. Do not use the WCU logo, athletic logo or any other WCU marks or images on your personal online sites. Do not use WCU's name to promote or endorse any product, cause or political party or candidate. 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 Western Carolina University."

WCU Community Guidelines

Western Carolina University's social media outreach encourages active discussion and sharing of information and thoughts. Western Carolina University is not responsible for comments or wall postings made by visitors to the page. Comments posted also do not in any way reflect the opinions or policies of the University. Please show respect for your fellow users by keeping the discussion civil. Comments on Facebook are subject to Facebook's Terms of Use and Code of Conduct.

WCU Social Media Administrators reserve the right to remove comments that are racist, sexist, abusive, profane, violent, obscene, spam, that advocate illegal activity, contain falsehoods or are wildly off--topic, or that libel, incite, threaten or make ad hominem attacks on Western Carolina University students, employees, guests or other individuals. Messages selling products or promoting commercial, political or other ventures are prohibited.

In addition, election campaign materials or postings otherwise deemed inappropriate will be deleted by the page administrators.

Multimedia

A social media post that includes a photo or video will generally get a better response than a text post. We do not post photos, videos, memes or gifs without a WCU connection because we want to give our followers an experience that is unique to the University.

Credit the original source when posting user-generated content. User-generated content can be obtained when the owner of a photo or video shares it with a WCU social media account

via message, mentions the account's handle, uses a hashtag promoted by the account or mentions the department, group, unit or initiative the account represents.

Do not take or share photos or video of children under 18 without written consent by a parent or guardian. Most students sign a release when they start at WCU giving permission to have their photo taken and published. Those who have not given permission may have placed FERPA restrictions on their records, so it's best to ask first.

Use of copyrighted materials

Rights and permissions must be secured before posting, sharing or distributing copyrighted materials, including but not limited to: music, art, copyrighted photographs or texts, portions of copyrighted video or information considered proprietary by a University partner, vendor, affiliate or contractor.

Contact

Questions and requests for more information can be directed to Donna Presnell, social media manager in University Marketing, at dlpresnell@wcu.edu or 828-227-2629