

Guidelines for Social Media Use

As the use of social media becomes more prevalent, individuals commonly share content related to their work and school environments. Medical students are no exception. Social media sites serve positive purposes including maintaining connections to friends and family, remaining personally informed, and simply relieving stress. However, they are not without pitfalls.

These guidelines are presented to students to help them use social media responsibly. They are not in and of themselves a binding policy, and do not carry disciplinary weight. However, following them can help students avoid running afoul of college and university policies, as well as the problematic consequences of social media mishaps. It is also recommended that students refer to the UCF Social Media website for further guidance concerning the use of social media. <http://brand.ucf.edu/social-media/>.

Students *must*, abide by existing policies:

- Comply with HIPAA at all times, including by not sharing patient information over social media.*
- Respect student-patient boundaries at all times, including by not “friending” or otherwise communicating with patients over social media.*
- Comply with all other laws, University policies and College policies—in general and regarding the use of computer systems—at all times, including when using social media. <http://policies.ucf.edu/documents/4-002.1UseofInformationTechnologiesandResources.pdf>
- When using computers or networks owned or managed by a host institution, follow institutional guidelines for personal use and use them only within the parameters defined by the host institution.*

Students *should*:

- Remember that content (information, pictures, video recordings, etc.) posted to social media sites can have unforeseen personal and professional consequences.
- Before posting any content to a social media site, consider whether the content could be reasonably perceived as unprofessional, and refrain from posting it if so.
- Recognize that once a post is made, while it can be deleted from an individual’s profile, it cannot be retracted from the internet.
- Use privacy settings appropriately, to protect personal information as much as practical.
- Recognize that even well-chosen privacy settings are not absolutely effective, and that any information posted on social media can still be shared without knowledge or consent.
- In that light, consider the content posted in “private”, “friends-only” or otherwise audience-restricted postings, since content on social media can easily spread beyond its intended audience.
- Recognize that pseudonymous and anonymous email and online identities are not absolutely effective, and do not protect them from the legal, professional and social consequences of online activity.
- Appropriately limit social media usage so that it does not interfere with professional or academic activities and responsibilities.
- Use disclaimers when posts to social media could be construed as connected to the UCF College of Medicine, to make it clear that they are speaking only for themselves. “The views expressed in this post are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of my institution” is an example of a good disclaimer.

*Federation of State Medical Boards. <https://www.fsmb.org/Media/Default/PDF/FSMB/Advocacy/pub-social-media-guidelines.pdf>