**SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES**

Social media is an ever-changing, extremely valuable communications tool that creates opportunities for Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM) to bring awareness to the College and its campuses, its programs, attract future students, engage in conversation with influencers and reach the broadest possible audience.

The following guidelines aim to raise awareness of current best practices and lend support for PCOM community members to effectively manage and participate in social media activities. If you have any questions about these guidelines, or about your online presence for both campuses, please contact the Social Media and Marketing Manager or the Office of Marketing and Communications for assistance.

**CREATING A PCOM-AFFILIATED SOCIAL MEDIA PAGE/ACCOUNT**

Before creating a PCOM-affiliated social media page/account, discuss your intention to do so with your department chair or manager. In the process of determining the need for a social media page/account, the following questions should be taken into consideration:

- What social media accounts have already been established by colleagues or the College for this purpose? Answering this question will help you avoid duplicating efforts or mixing messages.
- What do you hope to accomplish with this social media presence?
- What communications goals will the social media help you accomplish that other media, such as the College's website, couldn't?
- What content do you want to have contributed on a regular basis to the social site and what audiences are you intending to reach?
- Which social media channel would be most effective to relay your messaging? Each channel has its own unique purpose and it's important to determine which is best suited for your content.
- Who will own this page and update it regularly? This is instrumental to the success of your account.

All College administrative departments and personnel must obtain approval by the Office of Marketing and Communications before starting a college-affiliated social networking page/account. To request approval, please submit an email to socialmedia@pcom.edu outlining your intent to begin a social media page/account.

**SET UP OF THE PAGE/ACCOUNT**

Each social media channel has specific instructions for setting up an account. Guidelines for starting your page/account, information to include in your profile and specifications and templates for profile imagery can be found in the list of links below. Please contact the Social Media Manager for assistance or questions regarding set up of accounts:

- [Facebook](Facebook)
- [Twitter](Twitter)
- [Instagram](Instagram)

The primary account holder or manager is required to obtain a *profile photo* from the Office of Marketing and Communications. PCOM profile photos are a specifically designed version of our logo or word mark which allows us to keep the College's brand visually consistent across the board. To request a profile photo, please submit a Marketing & Communications Work Request . This form can be found on myPCOM under Documents and Forms in the Marketing section. When completing the online request, select "social media graphic" under project type.

Although profile images must always be designed and provided by the Office of Marketing and Communications, *cover photos* (Facebook) and header photos (Twitter) are permitted to be chosen by the account holder. Cover photos should be an image that best represents the audience, mission or purpose of your department or organization. For assistance or guidance in choosing a cover photo, please contact the Social Media Manager. You may also request a cover photo when submitting a Marketing & Communications Work Request.

**SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSIBILITY**

By owning, operating and maintaining a PCOM-affiliated page/account, you are representing PCOM and are ultimately responsible for what you write and post.  It's important to remember that what you post on your social media pages/accounts can be shared with anyone and will be searchable and discoverable for years to come, even after deactivating an account.

Maintenance, monitoring and consistency are key components of establishing an effective and impactful social media presence. While your department, program or organization's use of social media will depend upon a number of factors, such as objectives and time available to dedicate to your page/account, your followers will expect to engage with you via social media once you begin posting. It is considered a best practice to post once per day, but this can vary depending on the outlet and your follower base.

**AUDIENCE**

When crafting and curating your messages and content, it's important to consider your audience. PCOM speaks to a broad audience comprised of current students, prospective students, parents, alumni, donors, friends and leaders in the academic and higher education community. Although it's key to speak to your specific audience, posting content that appeals to each of these segments will help extend the reach of your message and will help you to build a more diverse and engaged community.

**MESSAGING, CONTENT AND POSTING**

Planning ahead is an important first step in the development of messaging and content for social media purposes.  Before starting to post, create an action plan including clearly defined roles and responsibilities for those handling your account, a strategy for implementation and a calendar outlining when your messages will be executed.

It's also important to identify one or more team members who can assist in the development of content on behalf of your department or organization.  These team members can serve as social media contributors and can assist in brainstorming new ideas.  Choose a responsible team member to serve as an editor, checking messages for accuracy, appropriateness, grammar and punctuation prior to execution. Any team member who will be posting content to your page/account should be a full-time employee of the College, familiar with these guidelines and best practices in social media. Work-study students and interns should not be the primary owners or operators of a PCOM-affiliated social media account, but may assist with social media related tasks if monitored and approved by a supervisor.

The key to developing successful content is being honest about who you are, being thoughtful before you post, and respecting the purpose of the community where you are posting. Prior to posting, your messaging and content should be evaluated based on the following factors:

- Is the content representative of PCOM?

    o All posts should be thoroughly read and evaluated prior to posting to make sure that the information is consistent with the College's goals, mission, vision and values. Similarly, any images you plan to share should be evaluated based on those attributes.

- Is your message appropriate and accurate?

    o Maintain a voice and tone that's informative, educational and respectful.

    o Messages should take a non-biased, neutral stance and should not convey personal views or sentiments.

    o Topics that may be considered sensitive, such as politics, religion, and controversial events or discussions should be avoided.

    o Determine whether your messages are fact or opinion-based. Double check all of your facts before posting and link to your sources whenever possible.

- Is the content too internal-facing?

    o Social media is a public-facing platform; therefore, messages and photos need to be evaluated prior to posting to determine whether or not they would be interesting, compelling or informative to an outside source.

    o Communications that are distributed internally to faculty, staff and students should generally not be shared on social media, especially if the nature of the communication is confidential or only applies to internal parties.

    o As an example: It's good practice to share photos of students participating in community service as this demonstrates the philosophy and mission of the college to both internal and external audiences. It's generally not good practice to share photos of an employee birthday celebration as this appeals to a smaller, internal audience.

- Is proper grammar being utilized?

- While certain channels, like Twitter, limit the number of characters you can post, refrain from letting these relaxed rules get in the way of good syntax and proper punctuation. Please reference PCOM's Editorial Style Guide . This form can be found on myPCOM under Documents and Forms in the Marketing section. The Editorial Style Guide is a great resource to help employees maintain a unified grammatical and editorial standard of clarity and consistency.

- Is privacy being taken into consideration?

  - Be conscious of the laws and regulations governing the privacy of student education records, protected health information, personally identifiable information, and private information about colleagues. Do not post confidential or personal information about faculty, students, alumni, or other employees. Be mindful of copyright and trademark protections that may limit what materials you may use online and credit your sources whenever possible.  It's important to obtain consent from individuals featured in photos you take and post. Please contact the Office of Marketing and Communications to obtain a copy of the College's Photo Release form.

**MONITORING ACTIVITY**

Although social media thrives on interactivity and conversation, you should be prepared to accept and respond – judiciously – to the activity, comments and messages you receive.

Owning and operating a social media page/account requires daily monitoring of all activity. Each social media platform is equipped with a tab for alerts and notifications where the account holder can view comments, replies, retweets or direct messages received.  Notifications and alerts should be checked often to make sure that those who are engaging with your page/account are doing so in an appropriate manner.

If an online commenter posts an inaccurate, accusatory, or negative comment about the college on your page/account or if you find yourself in a position where the communications become antagonistic or deal with sensitive topics, immediately capture a screen shot of the comments and forward via email to the Social Media Manager for guidance prior to responding.

Please consider the following best practices when dealing with negative comment or messages:

- Often times, not responding to a negative comment is the best tactic. Don't remove or delete comments just because they are negative or relay a difference in opinion, as this censorship may aggravate the problem further.
- It's best to respond to negative comments professionally and by providing any additional information that may help resolve the issue. Offer understanding about the issue and ask for an email address to help direct the conversation offline.
- Comments containing vulgar language, offensive content, prejudicial statements, false information or those that are obviously spam should be deleted.

If any questions may arise about how to accurately respond to a comment or general online conversation, please contact the Social Media Manager for assistance.

**MEASURING RESULTS**

To determine the effectiveness of your content, strategy and execution, we encourage account holders to utilize analytics. [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) offer free reporting tools directly within their platforms that allow you to view new followers, engagement, reach and impressions for a specified date range. Recording and reviewing this data on a weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis can help you determine the success of your page/account and can help to identify areas of improvement. In addition to the free reporting tools offered through Facebook and Twitter, there are a variety of [free analytical tools](#) and [management platforms](#) available online. For questions related to reporting or measuring success, please contact the Social Media Manager.

**CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS**

In the event of a College-wide emergency or urgent situation, all communications related to the situation, including social media postings and outreach, will be solely handled and executed by the *official* College social media channels.

**CONTACTS AND RESOURCES**

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