

## ARIZONA HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

### **Overview**

“Social media” have taken on increasing importance in both personal and professional life. Social media offer unique opportunities for people to interact and build relationships and enhance interpersonal and professional communication. As health care professionals with unique social and ethical obligations, health sciences students, staff, residents and faculty must be keenly aware of the public and permanent nature of social media and its content.

For purposes of this policy, “social media” comprise forms of electronic communication (such as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos).<sup>1</sup> They include Internet- and mobile-based tools for sharing and discussing information based on user participation and user-generated content, which are centered on user interaction.

This policy has been developed to ensure that individuals, including students, faculty, staff and residents affiliated with the Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, who post content to or otherwise interact with social media reflect the University’s and individual colleges’ core values of professionalism, compassion, accountability, integrity, honor, acceptance of diversity and commitment to ethical behavior.

### **Scope**

To ensure that all employees and students adhere to the highest standards of professional conduct, this policy applies to all employees and students at the health sciences colleges and relates to all interactions with social media, whether for personal or professional use. When interacting with social media, individuals must adhere not only to the restrictions and use agreements individual social media sites promulgate, but also to this policy. In accordance with University acceptable use of computer policies, when using university computer systems and/or networks to connect to a non-university system or network, individuals must adhere to the policies governing that system or network. See <http://security.arizona.edu/aup>.

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<sup>1</sup> “Social Media,” *Merriam-Webster.com*. Retrieved April 27, 2012, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media>. These include but are not limited to Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, social bookmarking sites like Del.icio.us, social news sites like Digg, YouTube and other sites that are centered on user interaction. Social media may take the form of blogs, social networks, social news, wikis, videos and podcasts.

## **Policy**

### **Use of Social Media to Conduct Official University Business**

Without proper written authorization from an appropriate Dean and the University's Office of External Relations, no individual may claim or suggest that they are acting on behalf of the University in any social media communications. Nor may such individuals use University or college-owned logos on any social media website without express written approvals by the University's Department of Trademarks and Licensing.

### **Personal Use of Social Media**

Individuals who use social media must comply with the same standards of professionalism that otherwise govern their conduct at the University of Arizona, whether accessing these sites during work, school or non-work, non-school hours. Individuals should routinely monitor their own Internet presence to ensure that the personal and professional information on their own sites and, to the extent possible, content posted about them by others, is accurate and professional. Students and employees who use information obtained through social media must adhere to the use restrictions of those sites, regardless of whether their use is for personal, educational, professional, or research-related endeavors.

### **Obligations of Individuals Using Social Media**

Students and employees who utilize social media in which they claim a University affiliation, whether for personal or approved professional uses, must:

- Adhere to all contractual and other obligations imposed by social media user agreements, including restrictions related to using information about others without their consent.
- Adhere to all community may be easily identifiable even in the absence of disclosing their names or medical record numbers.<sup>2</sup>
- Not make defamatory, untruthful, or misleading comments about employees, students, health professionals, research subjects or patients associated with the health sciences colleges or its affiliates, or post images that would denigrate anyone with whom posters might come into contact in the course of carrying out their roles as students or employees of the health sciences' colleges, or depict themselves, other students or employees engaging in unprofessional behavior.

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<sup>2</sup> "If the information that is shared is generic enough that nobody can identify a patient in the course of reading (Berkman, Massachusetts Medical Law Report, Social Networking 101 for Physicians, 2009), the post is permitted and is a valuable tool for physicians to share information and skills with other physicians faster than ever before." From "Social Networking and the Medical Practice: Guidelines for Physicians, Office Staff and Patients," published by the Ohio State Medical Association See: <http://www.osma.org/files/documents/tools-and-resources/running-a-practice/social-media-policy.pdf>.

- Not “friend” individuals through social media when they are in either a healthcare provider-patient relationship or a researcher-patient/research subject relationship. Faculty members also should not “friend” current students.

In addition, individuals who utilize social media, whether for personal or approved professional uses, should:

- Take steps to ensure that they have implemented appropriate privacy settings to avoid inadvertent dissemination of personal information to audiences outside their control. This includes making an effort to avoid being included in images posted by others depicting unprofessional conduct and making reasonable efforts to remove such references, when possible.
- As a general rule, individuals should not post anything to a social media site that they would not say in conversation to unknown “listeners.”

### **Consequences of Violation of Policy**

- The same standards of professional conduct apply to accessing and utilizing social media as to any other activity in which a student or employee engages. Failure to adhere to this policy and the ethical or professional standards applicable to such individuals could result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from a college or termination from employment.
- University policies regarding the use of computers and other technology.
- Include a disclaimer stating, for example, that “the content of this posting reflects only the views of the author and not those of the University or its affiliated colleges, hospitals or affiliates.”
- Not violate laws (including but without limitation, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Health Insurance Portability and Privacy Act (HIPAA) and the HITECH Act, and Arizona laws related to patient privacy), or policies related to student, patient or research subject confidentiality or communicate about patients or research subjects in a manner that could in any way convey a patient’s or research subject’s identity. Users should be mindful that patients or research subjects with rare diagnoses, unusual physical or other attributes or who reside in specific locations within the

### **Summary**

Regardless of whether students, faculty, staff, or residents are conducting official University business or personal pursuits, they are ambassadors for their colleges and their professions. In online social media, the lines between public and private, personal and professional, are blurred. Identifying oneself as a University of Arizona student or employee in social media may imply that you are acting on behalf of the University or are engaging in activities that are approved by the

University. Therefore, each member of the University's health sciences community should ensure that all content he or she posts is consistent with his or her position at the University and with the University's and colleges' values and professional standards. To the extent possible, individuals should be mindful of content with which he or she is otherwise associated and take steps to ensure that such content is professional in all respects. Therefore:

- Don't purport to speak for the University or one of its colleges unless you are authorized to do so or have obtained proper permission to do so.
- If you don't have such authorization or permission, either don't divulge your University/college affiliation, or if you do so, provide a disclaimer that the opinions are your own and not those of the University/college.
- Don't be unprofessional in social media postings.
- Do monitor social media sites to ensure that others have not included you in images depicting unprofessional conduct and making reasonable efforts to remove such references, when possible.
- Don't say anything that is unlawful, in violation of standards of conduct that govern your profession, defamatory, untruthful, or misleading.
- Don't use social media to engage in communications with individuals with whom you are currently involved in a healthcare provider-patient relationship, researcher-patient/research subject relationship, or instructor/student relationship.
- Ensure that your social media use complies with all applicable use agreements and restrictions.

### **Appendix**

*See* The American Medical Association policy adopted on Nov. 8, 2010, entitled *AMA Policy: Professionalism in the Use of Social Media*. <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/meeting/professionalism-social-media.shtml>. Approved by the Executive Committee, May 12, 2011. Retrieved April 27, 2012.