

American Association of
Colleges of Pharmacy **AACP**

Social Media Resource Guide for Faculty, Students, Staff, and Administrators

*Harnessing Its Power to Further the Professional Goals and
Image of the Profession*

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, Arlington, VA

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Disclaimer

The information provided in this Guide does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal advice. Instead, all information, content, and materials included are for general informational purposes only. See also the disclaimer in [Appendix C](#), Section 1.1.

Executive Summary

The Social Media Resource Guide for Faculty, Students, Staff, and Administrators is intended to assist educators and learners at colleges and schools of pharmacy in the United States in understanding the benefits, risks, and ethics associated with social media use. The Guide was developed by the 2021-2022 AACP Professionalism and Social Media Task Force and describes how the positive use of social media can advance health care, the profession, and individuals. The Guide addresses gaps that were identified in current social media policies, guidelines, and training programs across pharmacy schools and their parent institutions. Case examples and related resources illustrate the potential ramifications of social media misconduct on individuals and the profession. In developing or revising a social media policy, schools must balance a desire to promote professional behavior online with state and federal laws, existing school policies, and guiding documents that are designed to protect the freedom of speech, academic freedom, and the personal privacy of individuals. The Guide culminates in a list of suggestions for institutions and individuals, as well as recommendations for AACP.

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Introduction

Social media use is embedded within the personal and professional lives of the majority of Americans.¹ In the historical sense though, online communication via social media is still in its infancy with the uses, expectations, norms, and laws continually evolving. These abrupt changes have disrupted the cultural fabric of communications in ways that can be simultaneously positive and negative to individuals and society as a whole. Many of these same changes have also occurred within higher education and the health professions, resulting in the need to examine how social media practices affect pharmacy schools, faculty, preceptors, staff, and students.

When discussing social media's influence on health care and health care education, it is important to recognize that there are various platforms with different user demographics, forms of media, relationships among users, and subcultures. Nuances must be taken into consideration when examining the issues of social media. See [Appendix A](#).

Benefits of Social Media

The ease of connecting with others and sharing information are two aspects of social media that can greatly benefit users. The ability to network with peers and colleagues through social media platforms helps maintain professional relationships, as well as strengthen “weak ties” (i.e., relationships that are new or built on single or infrequent encounters).² These connections can help foster creative and collaborative teaching and research endeavors, provide emotional support, and promote job or career development opportunities.^{3,4,5} From organizational perspectives, social media marketing affords easy, customizable, and far-reaching messaging potential to attract new students, engage students and alumni, and promote faculty and student accomplishments.

Issues Arising Because of Social Media

There are also several concerning issues that arise due to social media. Anonymity and reduced social disinhibitions found in online settings can create fertile environments for cyberbullying and the spreading of misinformation (intentional and unintentional). Limits on the number of characters and loss of visual and verbal cues undermine online communications because tone, nuances, emotion, and intentions are easily missed or misinterpreted. Social media algorithms exacerbate differences among people by siloing like-minded people in their own information circles. This incites disagreements by over-promoting controversial and inflammatory statements, and enabling the viral spreading of emotionally harmful content. Excessive social media use has been associated with a variety of issues pertaining to mental health. Finally, opinions around acceptable and unacceptable speech in online settings are constantly evolving and attempts to regulate online communications for controversial content can result in arguments over freedom of speech. The emergence of social media “call out culture” and the tactics used adds further complexity to the topics of online speech, activism, suppression of thought, and cyberbullying.⁶

From the perspectives of professional schools, the boundaries of the professionalism construct are vague and evolving with shifts along cultural and generational lines. The “gray areas” of e-professionalism make it challenging for administrators, faculty, and students to navigate social media landscapes with regard to acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. In many cases, social media speech that is legal may run counter to traditional codes of professionalism. The laws regarding the regulation of speech and behavior may also differ depending on whether the institution is public, private, or religiously affiliated. There is a continued need for guidelines or policies to help all parties understand the legal and ethical boundaries of social media communications. Based on the results of a survey conducted by the AACP Professionalism and Social Media Task Force in August 2021, there also appears to be significant disparity across the academy with respect to the availability and extent of such guidelines and policies. Of the 46 institutional respondents, 43 percent indicated their pharmacy school did not have any social media policies or guidelines in place for students and 80 percent did not have policies or guidelines for pharmacy faculty. See [Appendix B](#).

Positive Aspects of Personal and Professional Social Media Use

Social media can be an effective, positive tool used to advance the pharmacy profession. Schools, educators, and students alike should utilize social media in a healthy way to advance health care, the profession, and themselves through career advancement and social connection. This section describes the positive aspects of both personal and professional social media use, with examples of how individuals and organizations are leveraging social media as a useful tool.

Advance Health Care

The most obvious way for pharmacists to use social media is through public health promotion, education, and research. The public increasingly uses social media as a health information resource.⁷ Accordingly, pharmacy educators and learners should be encouraged to provide information on social media about clinical and public health matters. For instance, pharmacists have utilized social media in a vital role in COVID vaccine administration and education.

Advance the Profession

In addition to advancing health care and public health initiatives, social media can be an outlet to celebrate the successes, contributions, and expertise of individuals or groups within the profession. It can also facilitate professional networking within and outside of pharmacy, fundraising efforts, and the sharing of resources. If used effectively, social media can help advance the profession’s standing among other health care professionals and increase trust with the public. Pharmacy schools can use social media as a recruitment tool to attract the best and brightest students from diverse backgrounds by highlighting the exciting, emerging, or rewarding aspects of pharmacy education and career pathways. Social media can also be used to train and educate students and faculty; and encourage open inquiry, innovation, and diverse viewpoints.

Table 5: Potential Benefits of Social Media for Schools, Organizations, and Individuals

Potential Social Media Benefits	Description
Pharmacy Student Recruitment	Promote the profession to help increase the quality and quantity of students in the pipeline.
Profession Advancement	Contribute to advancing the profession and the public's understanding via advocacy, storytelling, and education.
Educational Tool	Inform communities about public health, opportunities, and resources.
Innovation and the Potential for Viewpoint Diversity	Disseminate a wide variety of viewpoints and new information via social media and encourage healthy competition, spark new ideas, and build better solutions.

Organizations and individuals within pharmacy use social media professionally in creative, unique ways. The specific content and approach often vary based on the social media platform used. For example, educational articles are well-suited to blogs and LinkedIn, but would exceed the character limits of other sites. Table 6 highlights examples of how pharmacy organizations and individuals utilize social media in their efforts within pharmacy education, recruitment, networking, and other activities.

Table 6: Examples of Professional Social Media Use

Platform	Examples	Description
Podcasts	PharmacyForward	The Pharmacy Forward podcast is hosted by the 2021-2022 AACP President, Stuart Haines, in collaboration with the Division of Pharmacy Professional Development at the University of Mississippi School of Pharmacy. It explores a wide range of topics related to pharmacy practice, patient care, and health care delivery in every setting.
	HelixTalk	The HelixTalk podcast was created by Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science. It is produced by pharmacy faculty to supplement study materials and provide relevant drug and professional topics.
	Pharmacy Fika	Pharmacy Fika is a podcast for pharmacy educators by pharmacy educators. The mission is to create a positive, compassionate, and fun "place" where pharmacy educators gather to discuss teaching and learning, standards of teaching and learning (SoTL), and academic life.

		<p>Dave Dixon, PharmD, Chair and Associate Professor, at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Pharmacy, is an active Twitter user who posts and reshapes content related to the pharmacy profession and literature updates.</p>
LinkedIn®	<p>Literature Dissemination</p> <p>Educational Resources</p>	<p>LinkedIn can be a useful method for both individual authors and scientific journals, such as The American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education (AJPE), to share important literature updates.</p> <p>Pharmacy Times includes clinical updates, information about the current job climate, and insights into professional development.</p>
Instagram®	<p>Educational Accounts</p> <p>Individual Accounts</p> <p>Groups</p>	<p>Apothecademy provides daily quizzes of recall-style questions. Learners may use it to supplement core education to assist with knowledge retention. A variety of subject areas are covered by this site.</p> <p>RxKeySlides, by Lynne J.S., PharmD, BCGP, BCMTMS, BCACP, provides one-slide overviews with memory aids to support learning.</p> <p>IDStewardship by Tim Gauthier provides educational, informational, and humorous posts related to infectious diseases.</p> <p>The Public Health Pharmacist account is hosted by Dr. Christina Madison, founder and CEO of The Public Health Pharmacist, PLLC, and provides public health updates.</p> <p>Functional Medicine Pharmacists Alliance, founded by Dr. Lauren Castle, connects individuals with mutual professional interests in functional medicine pharmacy and provides information about educational resources and events.</p>
YouTube®	<p>Educational Accounts</p> <p>Individual Accounts</p>	<p>Learners may use YouTube as a supplemental educational resource to assist with understanding difficult concepts.</p> <p>The Focus Rx channel provides career development and planning resources targeted to pharmacy learners and pharmacists.</p>

Extramural Speech and Academic Freedom

Social media is the wild, wild west of media; a new and emerging frontier for public discourse and socialization. Differing opinions regarding free speech and access to communication channels have caused social media to be a polarizing topic in our current national discourse. In higher education, social media has brought to light renewed discussion concerning free speech, academic freedom, and other related issues. Many institutions of higher education have developed social media policies to regulate faculty, staff, and students, primarily as a means to protect the institution. However, many social media policies created are often intentionally vague and at times, unlawful.⁸

The following section provides guidance on what we *should do* and what we *may do* regarding social media use. Students, faculty, and institutions must be knowledgeable of these areas to properly leverage social media for positive use. Furthermore, administration and institutional leadership must understand what students and faculty may legally do on social media. Otherwise, leadership may inappropriately overstep their authority and bring punitive sanctions to faculty and students, leading to explicit or implicit censorship and potential backlash via successful litigation and bad press. In the current admissions environment and for the future health of pharmacy as a whole, we cannot afford negative perceptions of pharmacy academia and the pharmacy profession.

In terms of *what should* and *what may* be done, there are many nuances and “gray” areas. It is important to interpret the guidance provided here with this in mind. By doing so, individuals and institutions can better appreciate and understand the complicated juxtaposition of legality, first amendment rights, academic freedom, and professionalism. For example, just because a student or faculty member may do something on social media, doesn’t mean they should. Conversely, just because a student or faculty member does something on social media that you disapprove of, doesn’t mean they can be sanctioned or punished.

Personal Social Media Use

When speaking as private citizens, students and faculty have extensive protection under the First Amendment. For example, in a recent Supreme Court case that sided with a student who had been punished by their school for social media posts criticizing the school, Justice Stephen Breyer noted “Courts must be more skeptical of a school’s efforts to regulate off-campus speech, for doing so may mean the student cannot engage in that kind of speech at all. When it comes to political or religious speech that occurs outside school or a school program or activity, the school will have a heavy burden to justify intervention.”⁹

However, students and faculty should be mindful that they represent the institution and the profession and that their personal social media accounts should reflect professional expectations. The Oath of a Pharmacist emphasizes these professional expectations and states, “I will hold myself and my colleagues to the highest principles of our profession’s moral, ethical and legal conduct.”¹⁰ Furthermore, the fourth principle of the Code of Ethics for Pharmacists states, “A pharmacist has a duty to tell the truth and to act with conviction of conscience. A pharmacist avoids discriminatory practices, behavior or work

conditions that impair professional judgment, and actions that compromise dedication to the best interests of patients.”¹¹

Given their important role in society, faculty especially should be held to high standards. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure describes these expectations well and states, “College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence, they should be accurate, exercise appropriate restraint, show respect for the opinions of others, and make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.”¹²

As indicated above, when using a personal account, it is generally a good practice for students and faculty to include a disclaimer indicating that their views do not necessarily represent the institution. However, it is important to note that this nuance can be lost as the communication becomes decontextualized in the digital space. With enough iterations and sharing, a particular social media post may become connected to an institution, through no fault of the faculty or student who originally posted the content. In these cases, others may wrongly conclude that the controversial viewpoint shared *does* represent the institution. The AAUP Academic Freedom and Electronic Communications report addresses this common issue and advises that “faculty members cannot be held responsible for always indicating that they are speaking as individuals and not in the name of their institution, especially if doing so will place an undue burden on the faculty member’s ability to express views in electronic media.”¹³

Faculty, staff, and students should refrain from inappropriately utilizing institutional social media accounts in a personal manner. Many institutional policies make this distinction and caution sanctions against individuals who misuse institutional accounts (e.g., an individual faculty member uses a school’s Twitter account handle to express controversial opinions that may oppose the school’s mission or values).

Faculty Rights

In 1967, AACP became the first health care organization to endorse AAUP’s landmark 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure.¹⁴ This critical document helped lay the foundation for free speech and academic freedom protections for generations of faculty in higher education. In our current tumultuous academic environment, it is critical for pharmacy academia and AACP to recommit to the pursuit of open inquiry and free expression.

Although these protections were developed prior to the creation of social media, these protections extend to social media use in our current digital age. Concerning academic freedom, AAUP’s Academic Freedom and Electronic Communications report states, “Academic freedom, free inquiry, and freedom of expression within the academic community may be limited to no greater extent in electronic format than they are in print...” and goes on to say that “... the far wider audiences that electronic messages

may reach, would not, for example, warrant any relaxation of the rigorous precepts of academic freedom.” Furthermore, social media use in teaching is also protected since the digital space serves as an extension of the physical classroom. AAUP’s Academic Freedom and Electronic Communications report states, “... a classroom is not simply a physical space, but any location, real or virtual, in which instruction occurs...”¹³

Institutional Culture and Responsibility

In light of these assurances, it is imperative that institutions set a clear, consistent, and protected environment for faculty and students to pursue the above-mentioned aspirations; advance health care, the profession, and themselves. As institutions seek to advance their priorities, they must simultaneously remember to uphold free speech and academic freedom. Protecting these rights for students and faculty may come at a cost, as there may be cases in which the institution faces consequences from student and faculty social media use (i.e., financial and/or political fallout). However, the cost is worth it. Free speech and academic freedom are integral to learning and open inquiry. After all, “an institution’s brand should take account of the fact that colleges and universities are places where people voice controversial ideas, where competing ideas are welcome, and where ideas can be fearlessly debated, defended, and rejected.”¹⁵

Failure of institutions to uphold these values has contributed to disturbing trends in higher education; including increased prevalence of student and faculty self-censorship (speech, teaching, research), increased academic sanctions and targeting, and worsening public trust and perception.^{16,17,18,19,20} How can educators foster learning and innovation in such an environment? Institutions can implement key strategies to ensure student and faculty rights are protected while also pursuing core principles of the academy. See also the [Suggestions for Colleges and Schools of Pharmacy](#).

Potential Detriments of Social Media Use

This section of the Guide outlines the inappropriate uses of social media and provides supporting examples. There are differences in how “inappropriate” can be defined by individuals, the institution, the profession, and society. For the purposes of the Guide, inappropriate social media uses with **legal ramifications** are separated from those with **professional ramifications**. The following sections are devoted to each of these categories; however, it is important to acknowledge that a significant overlap exists between the two categories and that the sections below pertain to *personal* social media accounts. Social media accounts that are owned or directly tied to an institution may have stricter guidelines relative to what behavior is or is not permissible.

Legal Ramifications

Prior sections highlighted the ambiguity surrounding what *may be done* and what *should be done*. This section details the areas that clearly *should not be done* without the potential for legal repercussions. Perhaps the most clear-cut and widely recognized example within the health professions is sharing protected health information or breaching patients’ confidentiality using social media. Although it is

commonly assumed that social media posts must directly tie protected health information to patient identifiers for it to be a violation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) or other privacy laws, direct connections do not have to be made in order to constitute a breach of patients’ rights. The sharing of pictures, images, videos, or descriptions of patient cases that can be reasonably extrapolated back to the patient has been subject to medico-legal action. For example, an ongoing legal case in Michigan involves a group of surgeons who posted photos from the operating room next to a woman’s organ. The caption of the photo asked viewers to “guess the weight” of the organ.²¹ This behavior is a major breach of the patient’s rights and represents a serious ethical concern. In short, patient information should only be shared (on social media or otherwise) with explicit written permission from the patient.

Analogous to breaches in patients’ privacy are breaches of *students’* privacy. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires written permission from students in order to share their educational information. Examples include photos, personally identifiable information, and information pertaining to grades. Faculty and preceptors should be aware of FERPA and refrain from sharing student information on social media platforms. Other notable types of unprotected speech are defined in Table 7.²²

Table 7: Examples of Unprotected Speech

Term	Description
Defamation	It is “...a false communication that harms an individual's reputation, causes the general public to despise or disrespect them, or damages their business or employment.” Defamation must be stated as fact, which can be proven false, and must directly or indirectly identify the victim.
Fighting Words	Words that “...by the very act of being spoken, tend to incite the individual to whom they are addressed to respond violently and to do so immediately, without any time to think things over.” This term only applies to exceedingly rare instances and must involve face-to-face interaction.
Harassment	It is “...unwelcome, discriminatory conduct that is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive, and that so undermines and detracts from the victims’ educational experience, that the victim-students are effectively denied equal access to an institution's resources and opportunities.” The harassment behavior must be extreme and repetitive.
Heckler’s Veto	It occurs when an individual suppresses someone else’s speech and First Amendment rights. These individuals or “hecklers” often pursue speech suppression by claiming a “disruption of the public order if the speaker were to continue” and/or “shouts down the speaker so as to make it impossible for the speaker to be heard.”

Incitement	It is speech that is “directed to inciting imminent lawless action and is likely to produce such action.”
Obscenity	To be legally determined as “obscene”, the following criteria must be met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Whether the average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the “prurient interest” (an inordinate interest in sex)” ▪ “Whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct” ▪ “Whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value”. These criteria are applied to a national standard, rather than local ones.
True Threats	It is defined as “those statements where the speaker means to communicate a serious expression of an intent to commit an action of unlawful violence to a particular individual or group of individuals.”

Similarly, online impersonation designed to defame, harass, or share misinformation is illegal, though exceptions are permitted for parody or satire. Examples of student behaviors from Table 7 that could be subject to legal ramifications include, but are not limited to, posting threats towards individuals, including faculty members, sharing protected health information, and exhibiting harassing behaviors.²³

Professional Ramifications

While the legal ramifications of unprotected speech have fairly clear boundaries, the professional ramifications associated with inappropriate use or construed as the inappropriate use of social media amongst pharmacy professionals are described in this section. There is often a clear and definite crossover between the legal and professional consequences of misconduct on social media, however, professional violations may occur without falling directly under the confines of legal consequence (e.g., “indecent speech” and “hate speech” are protected under the First Amendment).²²

Table 8: Examples of Controversial Protected Speech with Professional Implications

Term	Definition
Indecent Speech	This “...speech may include material that is deemed by some or many individuals to be sexually explicit, tasteless, or offensive, but does not meet the previously described Miller test for obscenity. Public universities cannot outright ban or punish speech simply because it is indecent.”
Hate Speech	“There is no constitutional exception for so-called ‘hate speech’. The First Amendment fully protects speech that may be unpopular or that some may find downright offensive.”

Potential professional ramifications for improper social media content or behavior may include direct actions, such as administrative or disciplinary sanctions by employers (for those in the workforce), schools of pharmacy (for pharmacy learners), or sanctions from state boards of pharmacy (for any licensed pharmacy professional). Other potential risks for individuals include employability, experiential training site acceptance, and the ability to obtain post-graduate training positions. In addition to these tangible measures, it is also worth discussing that inappropriate conduct via social media has the potential for negative effects on the image of the pharmacy profession among patients, other health care professionals, stakeholders and beyond, as well as the potential to damage the reputation of the institutions associated with the violator.

Faculty have additional professional expectations that if breached could lead to institutional imposed sanctions. The 1940 AAUP with 1970 interpretive comments states:¹²

- Faculty “should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject”
- “Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment”
- Faculty should avoid extramural utterances that “raise grave doubts concerning the teacher’s fitness for his or her position”

Examples of the inappropriate use of social media that may hold professional ramifications without legal consequences include posting or sharing content that is racist or discriminatory; related to the use of excess alcohol, illicit drugs, or misuse of medications; crude or exploitative; or supports or promotes violence (without meeting criteria of “incitement” or “true threats”). Pharmacy faculty and students should also be cognizant of the professional ramifications of sharing medical misinformation and the liability associated with it. Although “indecent speech” and “hate speech” may also have professional consequences, they are protected rights under the First Amendment.²⁴ Several examples of this type of inappropriate use are described in Table 9.

An additional consideration for potential inappropriate social media use for pharmacy professionals is determining how “friending” and “following” should be handled between faculty and students, as well as between pharmacy professionals and patients. As a general rule of thumb, the “power differential” should be considered when sending requests to friend or follow someone on a personal social media account. Individuals in power (i.e., faculty and pharmacists) should avoid initiating requests in which approval is required from subordinates (i.e., students and technicians). While there are no universal rules as to if or under what circumstances these online connections may be considered inappropriate, there are some potential professional ramifications to consider. For instance, there could be an accusation of bias or favoritism if there is “friending” or “following” between faculty and student, particularly if the opportunity is not provided to all students. “Friending” on social media blurs the lines of personal versus professional relationships with patients, employees, and students.

In addition to determining inappropriate versus appropriate virtual relationships within our social media-heavy world today, there are numerous subjects discussed that are highly controversial or tend to polarize audiences. How pharmacy professionals respond to, share, and discuss these controversial

topics can have lasting implications on the community including the many relationships discussed above. This type of situation has the potential to occur regardless of whether the pharmacy professional is participating from a personal belief or opinion level versus a professional opinion level. One of the underlying issues is how younger generations view the construct of professionalism and their attitudes toward what is acceptable online speech. Traditional views of professionalism may have centered around respect for others, but students and others who want to take a more activist approach are questioning this notion. In particular, some in the pharmacy education community perceive it as acceptable to use shaming tactics or an uncivil tone in the name of activism to combat others with differing beliefs. Having their voices “heard” in support of personal causes may trump traditional forms of professional decorum.^{25,26} Pharmacy professionals should recognize these evolving views about the role of online speech and consider the potential implications of supporting, denying, or discussing controversial topics within a social media platform. While they are entitled to freedom of speech, others may perceive their comments differently based on their role as current or future pharmacists.

Balancing Professional Expectations with Personal Freedoms

There is an inherent tension between the evolving constructs of professionalism and open inquiry, free expression, and academic freedom. Pharmacists and student pharmacists should strive to abide by the professional values and norms of behavior to advance the profession and promote public health. Although unprofessional speech may be legally permissible, careless or inflammatory communication online may have negative consequences that damage not only the reputation of the individual and the institution, but also the pharmacy profession and the public’s trust. Likewise, institutions should intentionally encourage and support the positive use of social media among students, faculty, preceptors, administrators, and staff by providing guidance documents and training (Table 10).

Simultaneously, the academy must understand that although there may be cause to sanction an individual who has violated social media professional expectations, these sanctions may have limited legal precedence and rationale if the individual used lawful speech. Furthermore, the shifting nature and subjectiveness of professionalism warrants caution in punishing “unprofessional” social media use. What is deemed unprofessional today, may soon be considered professional tomorrow. Lastly, we must consider that most professional standards now considered the “norm” and innovative ideas had once started out as fringe and “unprofessional”. A major purpose of higher education is to challenge one’s ideas and explore new ways of thinking. There is value in considering new and alternative ideas, even if deemed unprofessional. This does not mean individuals have unfettered authority to do as they please since there are limits to academic freedom and lawful speech, as highlighted elsewhere in this document. But rather that potential ramifications of social media sanctions include self-censorship, orthodoxy, and stagnation, which are antithetical to the academy and its mission.

Examples of Professional Misconduct

Table 9 provides a list of de-identified professional misconduct examples provided by respondents to the AACP survey. The most common examples reported were related to sharing protected health information, harassing, or threatening comments, substance usage or abuse (e.g., alcohol or prescription drugs), racism, sexism, and other matters related to social justice. Among examples related

to experiential learning, sharing protected health information, photos at practice sites, and negative comments about the practice location or preceptors were the most common.

It is important to recognize that the “outcomes” provided in Table 9 are limited by the information provided by respondents and are not intended to imply action that *should have* been taken. The outcomes varied widely based on the scenario.

Table 9: Reported Examples of Professional Misconduct Involving Social Media*

Examples from Survey Results	Reported Outcome (if applicable)**
1. Related to patient privacy...	
1.1 A student pharmacist posted protected health information on social media.	The student failed the rotation and, as a result, had their graduation postponed.
1.2 A student pharmacist posted a patient chart on social media.	The student was dismissed from the experiential site and received a failing grade.
1.3 A student pharmacist was “snooping” in another student’s medical record.	The student failed the rotation and was required to speak to peers about HIPAA.
2. Related to perceived harassing or threatening behavior...	
2.1 A student pharmacist “attacked” a classmate on social media following a classroom discussion about a political topic.	NR
2.2 A former student pharmacist created a fake social media account to harass the school.	NR
2.3 A group of student pharmacists made threatening comments on Facebook that targeted specific faculty.	The students were initially dismissed from the school, but this was appealed and overturned. The students were placed on non-academic probation and required to develop and provide a training program for incoming pharmacy students.
2.4 A group of student pharmacists posted comments that were considered “bullying/harassment” of faculty and peers.	The students were placed on non-academic probation and required to develop training programs.
2.5 A student pharmacist was reported by a member of the public for harassment on social media.	Because the student was a repeat offender, the student was referred to a professional network for a mental health evaluation.

<p>2.6 A student pharmacist used a personal social media account to post hostile comments toward a religious group.</p>	<p>The provost wrote a formal letter reprimanding the behavior and added it to the student's permanent academic record. Because the comments were not directed at an individual, it was felt that harsher penalties could not be given without violating the student's right to free speech.</p>
<p>2.7 A suspended student pharmacist created a fake social media account to harass students at the school.</p>	<p>A hold was placed on the suspended student's account to be addressed if the student were to be reinstated.</p>
<p>3. Related to substances...</p>	
<p>3.1 A student pharmacist posted about their own prescription drug abuse on Facebook.</p>	<p>NR</p>
<p>3.2 Student pharmacist members of a college of pharmacy fraternity publicly posted a TikTok video about who could get the drunkest at a social gathering.</p>	<p>The students were referred to the professionalism committee, placed on non-academic professional conduct probation, and required to resign from their leadership positions. They were also required to read college & university policies related to professionalism and write a reflective essay on how their behaviors were non-adherent to the professionalism policies. They were also required to write a reflection on the use of social media for personal branding. The professional conduct probation was reduced to a warning and each student was allowed to maintain one leadership position on appeal.</p>
<p>3.3 Inappropriate screenshots from SM account for the incoming student including racial slurs and possible drug use (purchasing and selling)</p>	<p>Education re: DEI (1); tested (negative), placed on monitoring contract and not allowed to get intern certificate for 1 year.</p>
<p>3.4 A student pharmacist was pictured drinking alcohol in class.</p>	<p>The student was referred to the state's recovery program for evaluation and was not permitted to begin experiential learning until completion of the evaluation. The student was placed on non-academic probation.</p>
<p>3.5 A fourth-year student pharmacist on rotation Tweeted a photo holding a medication bottle for an antipsychotic while dressed in their white coat. In a comment on Twitter, the same student pharmacist referred to the drug as being used for "loquitos" (translated to crazy, looney, or nut job in Spanish).</p>	<p>A patient filed a complaint. The student pharmacist was banned from ever being employed by the health system.</p>

4. Related to racism, sexism, or social issues	
4.1 A student pharmacist posted profane, misogynistic comments on social media about a well-known sports personality.	The student pharmacist was expelled following their comments. Of note, the student pharmacist was a repeat offender and had previously been suspended for misogynistic comments.
4.2 A student pharmacist posted racial slurs and threats based on an interaction with an individual on Facebook Marketplace. The individual took screenshots and shared the student pharmacist's comments on social media.	The student was sanctioned for violating the university code of conduct.
4.3 A student pharmacist posted a photo wearing a white coat with a caption that contained a racial slur	The student was counseled, asked to remove the caption, and was required to write an essay on why the behavior was inappropriate.
4.4 A student-pharmacist posted disrespectful comments on social media about parents not vaccinating their children.	NR
4.5 A faculty member used social media to spur conversation about controversial topics, placing the college at odds with other colleagues in the state.	NR
4.6 A student pharmacist made comments on Facebook that involved a racial slur.	The student was referred over to Title IX but was not directly disciplined because of the student's right to free speech; however, a formal statement was sent to the student and a clinical rotation site did not permit the student to complete rotations at their facility.
4.7 Employees posted political and social justice statements on Facebook. Members of the public contacted the institution to determine if they had the same beliefs as the employee.	NR
4.8 A student pharmacist was reported for social media posts containing racial slurs that pre-dated their entrance into pharmacy school.	The incident provided a platform to discuss with the student the college's commitment to diversity and the need to have culturally competent pharmacists.

5. Other	
5.1 A student pharmacist posted “racy photos” while wearing their white coat.	NR
5.2 A student pharmacist took photos of a manufacturing facility that they were visiting. The student pharmacist posted the photos on Facebook with perverted comments. The owner of the manufacturing facility discovered the comments.	NR
5.3 A student pharmacist posted negative comments about the school or specific faculty.	The student was counseled and asked to remove the posts.
5.4 A student pharmacist posted on social media comments about their preceptor.	The preceptor addressed the social media comments directly with the student. The preceptor is no longer taking students from the college.
5.5 A student pharmacist posted negative comments on social media about a rotation site. The comments were found by a friend of the student’s preceptor.	The student was removed from the rotation site.
5.6 A student pharmacist posted a video explicitly recounting their sexual encounters.	Referred for evaluation (drug and/or alcohol abuse)
5.7 A student pharmacist posted exam questions on social media using photos taken from a cell phone.	NR
5.8 A student pharmacist shared inflammatory Snapchat posts with other students in class, distracting them from in-class activities.	NR
5.9 A former student pharmacist posted photos impersonating themselves as a student at the college.	Nothing was able to be done since the individual was no longer a student.

NR = not reported

* The information provided for each example is based only on the information provided by survey respondents and may not reflect legal definitions and distinctions related to speech.

**The outcome is not intended to inform what the outcome or disciplinary action could have been or should have been. Rather, it is the *reported outcome* by survey respondents.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Suggestions for Colleges and Schools of Pharmacy

Institutions can implement key strategies to ensure student and faculty rights are protected while also pursuing the core principles of the academy and profession.

Table 10: Suggestions for Colleges and Schools of Pharmacy

<p>I. Develop professionalism and social media guidelines for students faculty, and staff, if not currently in place.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consult with the institution’s legal counsel to ensure documentation is legally defensible.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refer to recommended reference materials [e.g., FIRE].
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incorporate or connect social media documentation to other institutional policies for students (e.g., code of conduct), faculty and staff (e.g., employee handbook).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide separate policies for school-based and affiliated accounts versus personal accounts.
<p>II. Create a climate that fosters open inquiry, free expression, and academic freedom.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adopt established best practices and guiding principles, such as the following: Chicago Principles, Yale University’s Woodward Report, and University of Chicago's Kalven Report.^{28, 29, 30}
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure students and faculty “...are directly involved in the formulation and implementation of [social media] policies governing such technology usage.”¹³
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage a safe, positive culture so that students and faculty can advance health care, the profession, and themselves.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resist calls to censor students and faculty and instead, promote “more speech” or counter-speech.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that social media policies are enforced consistently.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that those responsible for implementing social media policies are trained in faculty and student rights.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Embrace social media, shifting the paradigm from “how can this hurt us?” to “how can this help us?”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be cognizant of not infringing on student and faculty rights.

III. Train and educate students and faculty on social media use that aligns with institutional and professional expectations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Develop training to ensure the faculty, staff and their students understand the issues that must be taken into consideration when implementing and enforcing professionalism and social media guidelines.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Recognize that “Faculty members need to understand more completely the implications for academic freedom of electronic-communications technologies...”¹³
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Utilize resources such as the “HxA Way”, to help cultivate these kinds of expectations and recommend the following principles:²⁷<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Make your case with evidence○ Be intellectually charitable○ Be intellectually humble○ Be constructive○ Be yourself
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Provide training opportunities for all students, faculty, and staff on an annual basis.
IV. Encourage faculty awareness and participation in the following key organizations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ American Association of University Professors (AAUP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Heterodox Academy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE)

Suggestions for Individuals in Colleges and Schools of Pharmacy

If using social media, administrators, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and other individuals in pharmacy education should follow the suggestions below.

Table 11: Suggestions for Individuals in Colleges and Schools of Pharmacy

I. Consider Using Social Media for Professional Purposes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connect and collaborate with individuals and audiences with related interests or roles.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote the profession of pharmacy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote events, programs, opportunities, or resources.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Share your expertise, perspectives, or guidance with others.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highlight the roles, successes, or contributions of individuals or organizations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advocate for positive change and drive action (awareness, attendance, etc.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bring attention to matters of injustice or inequity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build community among stakeholders.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support institutional goals, objectives, mission, and initiatives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support enrollment, retention, recruitment, or alumni relations.
II. Represent Yourself Accurately on Social Media
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not represent yourself as another person.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not present yourself as an official representative or spokesperson for the institution, unless authorized by the institution to do so.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If you identify as a member of the institution on your social media profile, state that the views expressed are yours and do not necessarily reflect the views of the institution.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connect your personal email address (e.g., Gmail), rather than your institutional email address, to your personal social media accounts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be transparent about your current status (e.g., student versus licensed pharmacist) with the understanding that your role may influence how others perceive your post.

III. Promote Responsible and Ethical Behavior on Social Media
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be familiar with and abide by all applicable state and federal laws, regulations, and institutional policies and guidelines that apply to social media (e.g., code of conduct).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be mindful of others and refrain from harassing, abusive, threatening, intimidating, endangering, fear-provoking, dishonest, deceptive, coercive, or harmful language.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strive to maintain an appropriate and respectful tone when engaging in an online discussion, and be cognizant of how the language and images you post use reflect on you, the institution, and the profession of pharmacy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When engaging with opposing ideas, respond thoughtfully and civilly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abstain from or remove yourself from unproductive debates on social media.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remember that social media posts can persist even if they are deleted.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Un-tag yourself from any photos or comments that you perceive to be unprofessional and cannot be deleted.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoid social media in a manner that interferes with your work or learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider the “power differential” when sending requests to friend or follow someone on social media.
IV. Protect the Privacy of Others
Patient Privacy (HIPAA)...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be aware that HIPAA regulations apply to social media and violators are subject to the same prosecution as with other HIPAA violations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not post photos of patients, body parts, or cadavers on social media under any circumstances without written permission using the appropriate institutional forms.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take all precautions you would normally use in public forums to maintain patient privacy when using social media.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoid any posts about specific patients, even if identifying information is excluded.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoid interactions with patients through social media due to potential violations of privacy restrictions and legal consequences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not provide any patient-specific medical advice via social media, even if requested.

Student Privacy (FERPA)...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not disclose any academic or financial information about students (e.g., grades) that violates FERPA or other privacy policies or laws.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If you are a faculty member and wish to use social media to share information about a course or engage students, provide students with the choice to opt-out of participation in social media sites or permit them to use aliases if they have privacy concerns.
Personal Privacy and the General Privacy of Others...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not post information that in any way discloses private or confidential information about any individuals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not post information that in any way discloses private, confidential, or proprietary information about institutions, third parties (e.g., vendors) associated with institutions, or information protected by institutional policies (e.g., exam questions).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refrain from “tagging” others in comments or photos without their permission.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not post any personal health information of other individuals (e.g., family, friends).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use a strong password and regularly check your personal settings on social media to protect your privacy and security.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set privacy settings so that only you have access to your personal information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimize the personal information you share on social media profiles (e.g., addresses, phone numbers, identification numbers, birth dates, etc.).
V. Be Aware of Your Rights on Social Media
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refer to the FIRE guide to understand what speech is protected by the First Amendment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refer to the FIRE guide to understand the boundaries of the limited categories of unprotected speech.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refer to the AAUP to understand how academic freedom applies to electronic communication, including social media.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refer to the FIRE guide to understand the potential implications for freedom of speech at a private institution.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refer to the FIRE guide to understand student free speech rights.

Recommendations for AACP

AACP should be a catalyst for the professional use of social media in academic pharmacy by following the recommendations below.

- AACP should develop programming (e.g., webinars and sessions) to assist colleges and schools of pharmacy in developing and implementing policies and/or guidelines related to professionalism and social media.
- AACP should invite external experts or organizations to educate individuals and institutions on the professional and lawful use of social media (e.g., FIRE, Heterodox Academy, AAUP).
- AACP should adopt established best practices and guiding principles that promote open inquiry, free expression, and academic freedom (e.g., Chicago Principles, Yale University's Woodward Report, University of Chicago's Kalven Report).

Appendix A: Overview of Popular Social Media Channels

Table 12: Overview of Popular Social Media Channels³¹

Platform	Description	% of 18-29 Y.O.s Using Platform *	Notes	Potential Issues
YouTube®	Video sharing site, allowing for posting, viewing, and commenting on videos among users.	95	The most-used platform across all social media by 2021, and the second-most visited site in the world behind Google.com.	Users (particularly commenters) can remain anonymous; algorithms control which videos are associated with yours.
Instagram®	Photo- and video-based sharing social networking service.	71	One of the most popular features of Instagram is “Stories” in which users can post photos and videos for others to view for 24 hours before it disappears.	Since Instagram Stories disappear from public view, statements can be made and seen before administrators can be made aware.
Facebook®	Social networking service allows users to connect with one another, schools, businesses, and community groups in public or private forums.	70	Traditionally the most-used platform for all ages, Facebook is now third for users 18-29 years old behind YouTube and second for all users with 70% of all U.S. adults reporting daily visits to Facebook.	Groups, a feature where community members can post and comment to a prescribed community, can be set to private.
Snapchat®	Multimedia instant messaging app, in which pictures and messages are usually only available for a short time before disappearing.	65	Has the largest age gap in adult users of all platforms (the percentage of adults using Snapchat outside of ages 18-29 is very low.)	Like Instagram Stories, Snapchat posts disappear after 24 hours.
TikTok®	A video-focused social networking service, populated with short-form user videos from 15 seconds to three minutes.	48	By the end of 2021, data shows TikTok.com was the #1 most popular domain, followed by Google and Facebook. (This excludes data for YouTube and Instagram respectively.)	Specific comments and content can be hard to find, particularly for new users.

Twitter®	Microblogging and social networking service on which users post and interact in 280 characters or less.	42	Among U.S. adults, 10% of users create 92% of Twitter content . The median user, meanwhile, posts two tweets a month and “favorites” only one tweet a month, found Pew in 2019 .	Users can maintain anonymity; a short character count can more easily lead to misinformation or disinformation.
Reddit®	A news aggregation, web content rating and discussion website. Similar to traditional forums, except the content is curated by users.	36	The site is divided into “sub-reddits,” that is, different areas of interest. A given topic may have multiple subreddits, e.g., r/PharmacySchool, r/PrePharmacy, and r/Pharmacy.	Users are traditionally anonymous; and the open-ended nature of the platform allows users to write longer posts than on other platforms.
LinkedIn®	Employment-oriented social networking site focused on helping connect and build users’ professional networks.	30	Users traditionally represent themselves truthfully. The platform is often used for job seeking and recruiting.	As it’s a professional forum, issues raised on the platform may be more visible to more staff.
Other	Other popular social media and messaging platforms include NextDoor, Pinterest, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Discord.			

* Data is accurate as of the release date. Social media platforms and usage may change over time.

Appendix B: Summary of Social Media Survey Results

The ACCP Professionalism and Social Media Task Force was first convened in July 2021 and conducted a survey in August 2021 to determine what social media policies and guidelines were currently in place for students and faculty (employees) at colleges and schools of pharmacy and their parent institutions, the perceptions about those policies and guidelines, and the training provided to each stakeholder group. The survey also captured de-identified case examples about lapses in professional judgment online and enforcement measures, as described in Table 9: Reported Examples of Professional Misconduct Involving Social Media. The results demonstrated the need for additional resources to support member schools in social media policy and guideline development. Of the 46 respondents, 43 percent indicated their pharmacy school did not have any social media policies or guidelines in place for students and 80 percent did not have policies or guidelines for pharmacy faculty.

Table 1: Summary of Institutional Social Media Policies/Guidelines for Pharmacy Students

	NO		YES		N/A	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
STUDENTS						
The pharmacy school has policies/guidelines	20	43.5%	25	54.3%	1	2.2%
The university has policies/guidelines	18	39.1%	28	60.9%	0	0.0%

Table 2: Summary of Institutional Social Media Policies/Guidelines for Pharmacy Faculty

	NO		YES		N/A	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
FACULTY						
The pharmacy school has policies/guidelines	37	80.4%	8	17.4%	1	2.2%
The university has policies/guidelines	25	54.3%	21	45.7%	0	0.0%

Additionally, 22 percent of respondents had no social media policies or guidelines for students at either the pharmacy school or the parent university, and 50 percent had none for faculty at either level.

Table 3: Summary of Social Media Policies/Guidelines for Pharmacy Schools

POLICIES or GUIDELINES	STUDENTS		FACULTY	
	#	%	#	%
NEITHER the pharmacy school NOR the university	10	21.7%	23	50.0%
BOTH the pharmacy school AND the university	17	37.0%	6	13.0%
EITHER the pharmacy school OR the university	19	41.3%	17	37.0%

The majority of respondents with social media policies or guidelines in place at the pharmacy school or university level perceive them to be comprehensive and current. Based on the survey comments, institutional definitions, procedures, and standards may build awareness about the role of social media in professionalism and promote digital citizenship, as well as reduce the number and severity of related incidents. Some respondents expressed an appreciation for the connection between social media rules and existing institutional policies (e.g., code of conduct). Schools that share rules with the university at large or other health professions degree programs on campus generally expressed a higher degree of confidence in them due to the standardization or additional vetting.

While social media policies were generally deemed valuable, the survey comments revealed potential gaps in clarity and communication. Faculty and staff still struggle with how best to respond to online posts that violate professional policies or norms. Respondents would like additional guidance on what actions *may be done, should be done, and should not be done*; and how to better distinguish between free speech and “hate” speech. Other policies were limited in scope and only addressed institutional accounts or equipment, rather than set expectations for professional participation in social media. Others indicated the institutional policies were comprehensive but not readily accessible or promoted.

Social media training can increase awareness about the positive uses of social media. However, more than 62 percent of institutions do not currently provide any related training to pharmacy school administrators, faculty, or staff. While training opportunities are more common among pharmacy students, one-third of schools do not train them at any point. If training is offered, it may be limited to the student orientation and not revisited later in the program.

Table 4: School Social Media Training Opportunities by Pharmacy School Group

Social Media Training (Optional, Required, or Varied)	Administrators		Faculty		Staff		Students	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
NEITHER the pharmacy school NOR the university	31	68.9%	29	64.4%	28	62.2%	16	35.6%
BOTH the pharmacy school AND the university	1	2.2%	1	2.2%	1	2.2%	4	8.9%
EITHER the pharmacy school OR the university	5	11.1%	7	15.6%	9	20.0%	20	44.4%
Not Sure	8	17.8%	8	17.8%	7	15.6%	5	11.1%

Appendix C: Social Media Policy Considerations for Schools

1. GENERAL

This Appendix is intended to help institutions determine what factors should be considered in the development of social media policies or guidelines. The following guidance was compiled based on the social media policies and guidelines captured in a 2021 survey of the AACP Professionalism & Social Media Task Force and other related references. Please also refer to the model social media policy provided by [FIRE](#) for additional guidance.

1.1. Disclaimer

The information provided in this Guide does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal advice. Instead, all information, content, and materials included in this Appendix and Guide are for general informational purposes only. Information in this Guide, including the institutional examples provided, may not constitute the most up-to-date information, nor be verbatim or complete. This resource contains modified school examples and links to other third-party websites. Such examples and links are only for the convenience of the reader. AACP and the members of the AACP Professionalism and Social Media Task Force do not recommend or endorse the content unless otherwise noted.

Colleges and schools of pharmacy should contact their institutional counsel in the relevant jurisdiction to obtain advice concerning any particular legal matter. No one should act or refrain from acting based on this resource. Only the institution's legal counsel attorney can provide assurances that the information contained herein – and the interpretation of it – is applicable or appropriate to a particular situation. All liability with respect to actions taken or not taken based on the contents of this site are hereby expressly disclaimed.

1.2. Social Media Categories

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines social media as, “Forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)”. Institutions may wish to provide examples of the types of social media platforms that fall under the related policies or guidelines, including those that may be subject to scrutiny by the institution. Due to the rapidly evolving nature of social media, schools should also consider including a disclaimer that any list of platforms is not intended to be comprehensive.

Below are examples of social media platforms by category. Some platforms may fit in more than one category or be categorized differently by other resources:

- Blogs and forums (e.g., WordPress, Tumblr)
- Consumer review networks (e.g., Yelp, TripAdvisor, Amazon)
- Content and bookmarking networks (e.g., Pinterest, Flipboard)
- Dating sites
- Discussion boards and forums (e.g., Reddit, Quora, Digg).

- Email groups
- Media-sharing sites (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube)
- Messaging (e.g., WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger)
- Micro-blogs (e.g., Twitter, TikTok)
- Online chat
- Other interactive websites
- Personal websites
- Podcasts
- Professional networking sites (e.g., LinkedIn, AACP Connect)
- Social knowledge (e.g., Wikipedia)
- Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)
- Social shopping networks (e.g., Etsy)
- Video conferencing (e.g., Zoom)
- Virtual game and social worlds (e.g., Minecraft)

1.3. Policies vs. Guidelines

Policies generally refer to rules that can be enforced by the institution, while guidelines may refer to social media behavior that is encouraged or discouraged. Although institutional guidelines may not be implicitly enforced, they may still have potential consequences and penalties for individuals who violate them or other institutional policies (e.g., student code of conduct); or any local, state, or federal laws (e.g., HIPAA and FERPA).

1.4. Other Policies and Guidelines

Social media school policies and guidelines developed by the college or school of pharmacy should also reference any broader policies or guidelines published by the university that also apply to administrators, faculty, staff, or learners in the Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) and/or graduate pharmaceutical education programs.

1.5. School Accounts vs. Personal Accounts

Institutions should distinguish between the policies for school-based social media accounts and personal accounts maintained by individuals. Typically, school-based accounts are official accounts for institution or public-facing messages and are not tied to a specific individual for personal use. There may be more limitations placed on school-based accounts than what is deemed acceptable for personal accounts.

1.6. Public vs. Private Social Media Accounts

The institution may wish to clarify whether the policies apply to private (closed) social media networks, such as Facebook groups, in addition to any public (open) accounts. Private social media platforms and settings generally allow account holders to control who can view or access the content or communication.

1.7. Related Institutional Policies

The institution's social media policy should reference or be associated with other relevant documentation for the institution or pharmacy profession, such as the following:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and institutional accessibility requirements
- Brand and logo policies and guidelines
- Code of conduct or professionalism policy
- Code of Ethics for Pharmacists
- Copyright policies
- Employment policies
- Endorsement of commercial services or products policy
- Human resources (HR) policies and procedures
- Information technology (IT) security and web privacy
- Nondiscrimination policy
- Oath of a Pharmacist
- Photo usage policies
- Sexual harassment policies
- Student handbook
- Technical standards
- University-wide social media policies or guidelines

1.8. Related Laws

The institution's counsel should also refer to other [related acts and laws](#):

- [Anti-SLAPP](#) (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) Statutes
- [Children's Online Privacy Protection Act](#) (COPPA)
- [Communications Decency Act](#)
- [Copyright Act](#)
- [Digital Millennium Copyright Act](#) (DMCA)
- [Electronic Communications Privacy Act](#) (ECPA)
- [Federal Trade Commission](#) (FTC) Act
- [Lanham \(Trademark\) Act](#)
- [National Labor Relations Act](#) (NLRA)
- [Stored Communications Act](#) (SCA)
- [U.S. Constitution](#)

2. SCHOOL-BASED SOCIAL MEDIA

The institution should consider whether to distinguish its policies and procedures for school-hosted (sponsored) social media accounts versus school-affiliated (related or associated) accounts.

2.1. School-hosted Accounts

School-hosted (sponsored) accounts may have the following characteristics:

- Official communication channel for the college or school of pharmacy.
- Authorized to use the school or university logo, images, and/or graphics.
- The content reflects positively on the institution.
- Content is generally intended to provide promotional, educational, and/or inspirational content related to the program or associated individuals.
- Account approval, access, and content are managed by designated school administrators or offices.
- Content may be shared by other school-based accounts.

2.2. School Affiliated Accounts

School-affiliated accounts commonly represent individuals or groups who must seek institutional approval for an affiliated account and are subject to social media policies and some degree of approval:

- Student organizations
- Components of the school (e.g., department or center)
- Faculty, staff, or learners serving as representatives of the school

2.2.1. Examples of School Account Descriptions

*Auburn University Harrison School of Pharmacy
Social Media Policy (modified excerpt)*

- ❖ Official social media sites serve the primary function of sharing positive news and events of interest to target audiences.
- ❖ Sites that are affiliated with [the school] have varying functions, including sharing instrumental information and forging a community among a student organization or class.
- ❖ What may be appropriate for the affiliated sites may not be appropriate for the 'Official' sites.
- ❖ Affiliated sites that bear the [the school's] name/likeness are bound by [these] policies.

*University of California, San Francisco
Social Media Policies for UCSF Hosted Accounts or Branded Accounts (modified excerpt)*

- ❖ [School]-Sponsored Site: Official blogs and social media sites operated by [institutional] departments or schools, approved [school] approved by the deans, chairs and/or administration, and coordinated by the Office of Communications or [school] Marketing.

*University of Illinois Chicago
UIC Social Media Guidelines and Best Practices (modified excerpt)*

- ❖ Promote [school's] reputation, increase awareness, and support the University's mission, goals, programs and initiatives.
- ❖ Support institutional and departmental objectives.
- ❖ Build community among students, employees, alumni and stakeholders.
- ❖ Support enrollment, retention, recruitment and/or alumni relations.
- ❖ Drive action (awareness, attendance, web visits, etc.).

*Western New England University, College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences
2021-2022 Student Handbook, Social Media Policy, Governance (modified excerpt)*

- ❖ Day-to-day maintenance of [the college] social media platforms will be handled by the College Media Department in close partnership with members of the College students, faculty, and staff, and with direct approval from the Dean of the [college] and/or designee.
- ❖ The official social media accounts handled by the [college] Media Department should be considered as avenues to promote an event, share news, or discuss the happenings of a department, organization, or college community member. Submissions, including stories, photographs, or videos, will be submitted to [individual] for initial vetting and composition, and must be approved by the Dean of the [college] designee before being published.

3. MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL ACCOUNT REQUESTS

The school may wish to consider and publish policies and procedures to help the institution manage school-based or affiliated social media accounts and individuals and groups that request them.

- What school administrator or office will maintain and have access to the master list of school-based and affiliated social media accounts?
- Where is the master list of school accounts stored and accessed?
- What is the process to request new school accounts?
- Is there an account request form?
- What are the criteria for considering new accounts?
- Who will approve new account requests?
- When will the school consider new account requests?
- Will a probationary period be required for new accounts?
- Who is eligible to serve as the primary account administrator?
- Who may serve as the secondary administrator (e.g., student leader)?
- What administrator controls are in place?
- Who will serve as the primary content creator?
- Will there be sufficient content to keep followers engaged?
- What is the process for reviewing and approving content, if any?
- What are the ADA and accessibility requirements?
- Does a related account or page for this group already exist?
- Is the name of the account intuitive to potential followers?
- Will the content creator be able to regularly monitor the account and respond to comments?
- How will the account usernames and passwords be transferred or disabled if the authorized user is no longer at the institution?
- How will the authorized users protect accounts from unauthorized users?

3.1.1. Examples of School Account Management Policies

Auburn University

Social Media Policy (modified excerpt)

- ❖ All social media sites affiliated with the [school of pharmacy] – including closed-group sites - must have a School-affiliated site administrator; non-[school] individuals cannot serve as site administrators.
- ❖ In addition to the primary administrator, at least one faculty or staff member shall be designated to monitor the social media site, identify potential and existing problems that may emerge, and act as necessary.
- ❖ A designated social media liaison from the [student council] will also serve as a site administrator, in order to monitor the site and report any problems.
- ❖ Manager of Communications and Marketing...will keep a master list of social media accounts.

Western New England University, College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

2021-2022 Student Handbook, Social Media Policy, Governance (modified excerpt)

- ❖ If your department, club, or organization is considering starting a page/account associated with the College, please consider the following:
 - Would I be better off utilizing the official College pages/platforms that are handled by the media department?
 - Who am I trying to reach?
 - Who will be in charge of updating the page regularly?
 - Do I have enough information to regularly update the page? (Preferably multiple times per week and a minimum of once a week.)
 - What is the goal of this page? What will it accomplish?
- ❖ Answers to these questions will help you to determine a social media strategy that can shape usage. For example, depending on who is being targeted, certain social media platforms would be better suited than others based on general user habits.

3.1. Content Considerations for School-based Accounts

Schools may wish to provide additional guidance to content creators of school-based and school-affiliated accounts to assist them in determining whether the information is suitable for posting. For instance, users may wish to consider whether the social media content is...

- in compliance with FERPA, HIPAA, and other laws and regulations;
- consistent with the honor code, code of conduct, and other policies and guidelines;
- in line with the platform's terms of service;
- respectful towards the school and its students, faculty, staff members, patients, alumni, and other stakeholders;
- consistent with the values of the institution and program;
- accurate;
- professional in nature;

- appropriate for the intended stakeholder group;
- suitable for all ages;
- well written; and
- consistent with the institution's style guide.

3.1.2. Example of Recommended Content for School Accounts

Medical University of South Carolina

MUSC Social Media Guidelines (modified excerpt)

- ❖ [The] multivocal nature of how our brand is created and maintained leads us to certain all-encompassing intentions for social media and brand experience at [institutions], namely that [institution] community members must:
 - Find and empower brand ambassadors who respond quickly, consistently, compassionately and authentically, whether on official [institution] accounts or when publicly representing [the institution];
 - Anticipate both positive experiences and brand threats and have a plan of action for responding to both;
 - Share how we are changing what's possible through the pursuit of our vision, mission and values in accessible, clear, culturally relevant and engaging ways that promote interaction with and sharing of our content.

3.2. Discouraged Content for School Accounts

The institution may wish to identify the types of content that are discouraged for school-based and school-affiliated accounts that are intended to represent the institution. Examples of content to avoid may vary by account type and institution, and may include the following:

- Information about a crisis situation or school closures, unless authorized
- Promotion of private or closed events
- Roommate match requests

3.3. Forbidden Content on School Accounts

The institution may wish to identify the types of content that are deemed unacceptable for school-based and school-affiliated accounts that are intended to represent the institution.

- No content that violates privacy laws or regulations (e.g., FERPA, HIPAA)
- No copyright violations
- No threatening, discriminatory, derogatory, or inflammatory posts
- No profane, vulgar, and otherwise unprofessional posts
- No disclosure of proprietary information
- No personal posts
- No political posts
- No commercial endorsements without institutional approval.

3.4. Student or Personal Records

Schools may wish to specify what type of student or individual records should not be requested or posted on social media due to FERPA or other privacy laws. These records may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Academic records
- Transcripts
- Test scores
- Disciplinary records
- Financial aid records
- Loan collection information
- Social security number
- Driver's license
- Student ID
- Suspension status
- Expulsion status
- Migrant status
- State or federal personal documents
- Any medical record information
- Any other personal identifiable information

3.5. Images on School Accounts

Schools may wish to specify what type of images may require additional approval and what type of policies may apply. These policies may include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- Provide rules on the use of school logos
- Provide style guides and copyright policies
- Include photo release form and rules
- Link to school gallery of approved images and videos

3.5.1. Examples of School Policies for Images on School Accounts

*University of South Florida College of Pharmacy
2020-2021 Student Handbook, Computer Use and Social Media Guidelines*

- ❖ The [...] college logo and seal are not to be used by students or employees without expressed consent. The [...] college logo and seal are not to be used by students or employees without expressed permission from the Dean. Generally, they are not to be used at all. While there are guidelines for use of [the institution] logos, the [college] logo and seal do not fall under these guidelines. The [college] logo and seal are not to be copied and pasted from any website or document.

4. EXTERNAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

Colleges and schools of pharmacy may wish to define external (non-school based) social media accounts and indicate under what circumstances, if any, the administrators of school-based accounts may re-share external content.

4.1.1. Examples of School Definition of an External Account

University of California, San Francisco

Social Media Policies for UCSF Hosted Accounts or Branded Accounts

- ❖ **Non-[University] Sponsored Site:** Any site not operating under the purview of the [institution's] Office of Communications or Health Marketing [office], or under the oversight of [institutional] deans, chairs and/or administration.

5. TRAINING

Colleges and schools of pharmacy should provide training to educators, learners, and staff to promote the appropriate and optimal use of social media. Below are resources to guide the development of a training program at the institution.

5.1. For Students

Below are social media training resources for use with students:

- **Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE)**
 - [Student Rights](#)
 - [Free Speech Freshman Orientation](#)
- [Heterodox Academy](#)
- [Open Mind](#)

5.2. For Faculty

Below are social media training resources for use with faculty:

- **American Association of University Professors (AAUP)**
 - [Advancing Academic Freedom](#)
 - [Free Speech on Campus](#)
- **Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE)**
 - [Free Speech Resources for Faculty](#)
- [Heterodox Academy](#)

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