

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to encourage the use of social media by St. Petersburg College (SPC) users while making sure usage is in line with applicable state and federal laws and regulations, and to provide protection to the College's reputation and other members of its community.

This document also outlines guidelines for those who administer and leverage social media accounts representing SPC and its different facets, such as its campuses, centers, Career and Academic Communities, departments, programs, offices, athletic teams, organizations, or clubs, on all forms of social media including but not limited to blogs, Facebook, X/Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Tumblr, Snapchat, YouTube, Threads, Reddit, Titan Hub, etc.

- The goal of social media networking is to foster a virtual community that enhances communication between the College and various audiences as well as increases awareness of SPC.
- Following best social media practices improves the effectiveness of that communication.
- Using the College's name and branding on social media impacts the image and reputation of specific individuals, groups, and the College.

Therefore, the College has established policy and procedures for the creation and use of social media channels representing SPC, its campuses, centers, departments, programs, offices, athletic teams, organizations, and clubs.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to the entire St. Petersburg College community. While this policy primarily applies to social media accounts that are College-owned and College-controlled, it will also provide general guidelines regarding personal use.

### Social Media Defined

For the purpose of this policy, social media is defined as Internet or mobile digital tools and systems used to share and/or receive information or conversation including but not limited to blogs, Facebook, X/Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Tumblr, Snapchat, YouTube, Threads, Reddit, etc.

## POLICY

St. Petersburg College acknowledges that social media may be used to further the College's mission by providing channels of interaction and engagement between the College and students, parents, faculty, employees, alumni, fans, media, the surrounding community, potential students and donors, etc. The College supports this kind of participation in social media and is committed to academic freedom in these channels.

The College does not prescreen posted content, but it shall reserve the right to remove, in its sole discretion, any content that it considers to violate this policy. The College does not endorse or take responsibility for content posted by third parties. All social media accounts maintained by College

employees, recognized student organizations, and/or departments for College-related purposes are required to share administrator access/rights with SPC Marketing & Strategic Communications Department. Any existing websites or pages that represent the College are reviewed routinely and may be amended or, when necessary, removed.

The College does not permit explicit or implied institutional endorsements of any kind through the use of its names, trademarks, logos, or images, including but not limited to pictures of campus buildings.

Acceptable content may be positive or negative in context to the conversation, regardless of whether it is favorable or unfavorable to the College. However, language that is illegal, obscene, defamatory, threatening, infringing of intellectual property rights, invasive of privacy, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing, abusive, hateful, or embarrassing to any person or entity, or otherwise injurious or objectionable is unacceptable and shall be removed.

St. Petersburg College will not tolerate content that infringes on proprietary information, or that is defamatory, pornographic, harassing, libelous, or inhospitable to a reasonable work environment.

Nothing herein is designed to be so far reaching that it might foreclose any legal rights of an employee or student, including an employee's right to discuss conditions of employment as protected under the National Labor Relations Act.

## **Acceptable Use**

You are personally responsible for the material that you post on SPC's social media sites and can be held personally liable for any material deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libelous (whether pertaining to SPC, individuals, or any other entity). Outside parties may pursue criminal and/or civil legal action against you for postings.

College employees and students using social media are also subject to SPC's policies involving conduct and the acceptable use of information technology and penalties for violating those policies.

SPC reserves all rights to refuse to post any material or remove any material that violates SPC policy.

Certain applications, including TikTok, are blocked on all St. Petersburg College devices and networks, as required by Florida law (Sec. 112.22, Fla. Stat.). As a result:

- St. Petersburg College and any entities associated with the College do not maintain an official presence on prohibited applications. Entities include, but are not limited to campuses, centers, Career and Academic Communities, departments, programs, offices, athletic teams, organizations, and clubs.
- Any student, employee, or College visitor logged into a cellular phone, desktop computer, laptop, tablet, or other electronic device capable of connecting to the internet that is owned or leased by St. Petersburg College cannot download or access prohibited applications.

- Any student, employee, or College visitor connected to a network or virtual private network (VPN) owned, operated, or maintained by St. Petersburg College cannot download or access prohibited applications.
- Any organization, entity, or community-partner space connected to a network or virtual private network (VPN) owned, operated, or maintained by St. Petersburg College cannot download or access prohibited applications. This includes, but is not limited to, campus libraries.

## Account Management on Behalf of St. Petersburg College—

### Accessibility

Digital accessibility is the practice of making websites and web applications usable for people of all abilities. With more and more social media platforms offering accessibility tools and options, it is important to extend this practice to the posting of social media content. The goal is for all users to have equal access to information and functionality. The guidelines SPC follows are based on global industry web standards created by the [Web Accessibility Initiative](#) and specifically the [WCAG 2.1 - Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#).

When posting on behalf of St. Petersburg, please follow the below accessible best practices:

- Write alt text for all JPG, PNG, and GIF files. [Facebook](#), [X/Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Pinterest](#) all allow users to write custom alt text for uploaded images. Do not rely on auto-generated alt text that was written by a platform's artificial intelligence program.
- Avoid posting image files with an [excessive amount of copy](#) like event flyers or press releases. These kinds of digital assets are difficult to make accessible even with alt text.
- Add captions to all videos. If closed captioning is not available on a platform, please add open captions to your video. These are also known as burned or embedded captions. [Facebook](#), [X/Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [TikTok](#) all have varying degrees of closed captioning capabilities for their video features. You can also add closed captions to a video [through YouTube](#).
- Format multi-word hashtags properly. This can be done through Camel Case, Pascal Case, or Title Case. Capitalize the first letter in each word of a compound hashtag. Instead of writing **#titanstrong**, you would write **#TitanStrong**.
- Avoid placing emoji in the middle of written content or using them in excess. If you would like to use emoji, place them at the end of your posts and limit yourself to three at most. Each emoji icon has its own description assigned to it, and we want to avoid having any descriptions conflicting with written content and making it confusing.
- Do not copy and paste alternative characters from third-party sites to make copy appear in different styles, weights, or typefaces. Not all assistive devices can properly translate these characters, making them inaccessible.

For a more extensive overview of accessible best practices for social media content, please visit [accessible-social.com](#) or contact the SPC Marketing & Strategic Communications Department at [spc\\_social@spcollege.edu](mailto:spc_social@spcollege.edu).

## Best Practices

Social media sites provide forums for thoughtful discussion of opposing ideas; if online conversations become volatile or hostile, employees and representatives of the College must remain respectful, professional, and conscious of the College's primary role as an unbiased educational institution.

Be familiar with the terms of service and policies of the sites and networks with which you interact and ensure that you follow them.

Keep in mind that SPC posts are public and may be viewed by anyone, anywhere in the world, and material can be copied, recorded, screenshot, shared, and/or forwarded. In addition, search engines may find posts years after their publication dates.

Your personal views should be kept separate from College posts. When posting on behalf of the College, ensure that the contents of your post will further the College's mission and reflect positively on your department, the College community, and SPC as a whole.

If a question or comment is directed to one of the College's social media sites or pages, strive to respond in a timely and appropriate fashion. Supervisors should determine who will be permitted to respond directly to users and whether prior approval is required before issuing a response.

## Blocking Users

St. Petersburg College values the principles of freedom of speech and expression and also recognizes the significant role that social media can play in the expression of free speech. Official College social media accounts are considered public forums and serve as extensions of the College's public communication.

In certain cases, blocking users from engaging with these accounts may constitute a violation of the First Amendment. As such, blocking users from viewing or interacting with official SPC social media accounts is strictly prohibited unless otherwise authorized by SPC's General Counsel Office.

While the College may hide or remove comments that violate platform-specific community guidelines or conflict with applicable laws or College policies (e.g., spam, threats, obscenity), users themselves must not be blocked or banned from the College's accounts without such approval. Concerns about user behavior should be reported to the SPC Marketing & Strategic Communications Department for review.

## Branding and Logo Use

College branding, logos and trademarks cannot be used without the permission of SPC's Marketing & Strategic Communications Department. This includes the creation and use of branded hashtags. Once approved, usage will follow guidelines set by that office.

## Confidentiality and Privacy

Employees must not post any material regarding any student's educational record or other confidential information regarding any student, whether you identify the student or not, as you may violate the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and may subject yourself to discipline and/or discharge.

Do not cite or reference colleagues or co-workers without their approval.

Do not publish content that could potentially reveal the location of a person's place of residence or other private spaces.

### **Consent to Use Likeness**

In accordance with St. Petersburg College policy, all students grant the College, its representatives, and staff permission to use video footage and photographs in SPC promotional and advertising materials, including social media, without compensation.

However, individuals maintain the right to withdraw consent at any time. Should consent be revoked, SPC will honor the individual's decision and take appropriate steps to ensure that their likeness is not featured in any future social media content. Reasonable efforts will also be made to remove the individual's likeness from any existing content, when feasible.

SPC reserves the right to use photographs and videos of College events where individuals are not easily recognizable (e.g., crowd shots) without seeking explicit consent. However, identifiable individuals will not be highlighted without prior approval.

When conducting interviews, taking photographs, or recording individuals on behalf of SPC for social media purposes, please communicate clearly how, where, and when the content will be used. Ensure that individuals are aware of their right to opt out of being featured or having their likeness used by the College.

### **Copyrighted Material and Permission to Use Images/Video**

Be aware that intellectual property may be protected by copyright. Appropriate image/video credit should be given where applicable on any such posts that are shared. Any agreed-to credits must be maintained.

Images of children should not be posted without express consent from the parents or legal guardian.

Care should be taken not to post images of individuals who would object. This may involve obtaining the appropriate permissions.

### **Inappropriate Images and Videos**

Do not post inappropriate images or videos. Examples of images and videos that should be avoided include but are not limited to media involving alcohol, drugs, nudity, and graphic scenes. Media that could potentially reveal the location of a person's place of residence or other private spaces is also prohibited.

### **Misrepresentation**

Do not misrepresent yourself as any person or entity on social media or falsely state or otherwise misrepresent your affiliation with a person or entity. Those affiliated with the College may not indicate they are acting on behalf of the College or present a social media account as an official SPC account unless they have been authorized to do so.

### **Paid Promotion**

Paid advertising and/or promotion cannot be launched using a College social media account without prior approval from the SPC Marketing & Strategic Communications Department. Requests should be submitted to that office for review. Promotions launched without prior approval are subject to editing or closure.

### **Restricted Information**

Do not publish any information that you have learned through your job, such as closings, cancellations, emergencies, or other non-public information, until it has been officially announced by SPC or other authorized persons.

Do not post material regarding any confidential information related to the College or its members, etc. This includes, but is not limited to, Social Security numbers, financial information, employee or student medical information, etc.

### **Prohibited Use**

#### **Do not upload, post, email, share, transmit, or otherwise make available:**

- Content that is unlawful, harmful, threatening, abusive or harassing, and/or brings unwanted attention toward members of the SPC community.
- Content that infringes on any patent, trademark, trade secret, copyright or other proprietary rights of any party.
- Content that is of a religious or political nature. SPC is a non-denominational, non-partisan public institution.
- Content that could potentially reveal the location of a person's place of residence or other private spaces.
- Unsolicited or unauthorized advertising, promotional materials or any other form of solicitation.
- Links to external websites that could imply the College's endorsement of the linked site.
- Material that contains software viruses or any other computer code, files or programs designed to interrupt, destroy or limit the functionality of any computer software or hardware or telecommunications equipment.
- Material that is illegal, sexually explicit, obscene, defamatory, derogatory, related to alcohol or drug use or in violation of copyright laws.

#### **Do not use:**

- Social media to collect or store personal information to be used in connection with prohibited conduct (ex. identity theft, phishing, etc.).
- College social media sites for commercial purposes. Any advertisements or other for-profit materials not authorized by SPC are strictly prohibited.
- Obscene language or imagery, disrupt the normal flow of dialogue or otherwise act in a manner that negatively affects other users' ability to engage in real time exchanges.

## Requesting an Official SPC Account

Requests for new social media accounts representing SPC, its campuses, centers, departments, programs, offices, athletic teams, organizations, clubs, and any other official SPC entities must be submitted to and approved by the SPC Marketing & Strategic Communications Department at [stpe.co/accountrequest](https://stpe.co/accountrequest).

### In addition:

- Requests involving student clubs and organizations must also be approved by the club's advisor and appropriate campus Student Life and Leadership Coordinator.
- Requests involving a College campus, department, or office must also be approved by the appropriate supervisor for that area.

### Before requesting the creation of an account:

- Define your audience and understand what social media platforms they use. What kind of content do you plan on posting? Who are you trying to reach with your content?
- Understand what accounts the College has and if they are being used to communicate with the audience you want to reach. Is the information you're hoping to share something that can be shared from existing SPC social media accounts?
- Consider whether you have the ability and time to routinely develop relevant content and respond to feedback in a timely fashion, based on the unique best practices and needs of different platforms. How frequently will you be posting new content? Who will primarily oversee posting and managing the content? Is there a plan in place for when members leave the College?
- Outline your social media objectives and metrics to measure success. What are you hoping to achieve with a new account? What does success look like to you? How will you measure that success?

Requests do not guarantee approval. If you are granted approval for a new social media account, the account will be created by the SPC Marketing & Strategic Communications Department. Organizations with one approved account must submit a new request if seeking to launch any additional accounts. Accounts created outside this process are subject to editing or closure.

## Maintenance of Active SPC Accounts

An SPC employee serving as the organization's advisor or supervisor will be included as an administrator on or be provided the password for a social media account considered an official social media account representing the College and its different facets, including but not limited to its campuses, centers, departments, programs, offices, athletic teams, organizations, clubs, and any other official SPC entities.

The SPC Marketing & Strategic Communications Department maintains a list of all active, official College social media accounts and has access to those accounts. A representative of SPC's Marketing & Strategic Communications Department is included as an administrator on or be provided the password for a social media account considered an official social media account representing the College and its different facets, including but not limited to its campuses, centers, departments, programs, offices, athletic teams, organizations, clubs, and any other official SPC entities.



Once created, account administrators are expected to keep accounts active with current, relevant content that follows best social media practices as well as guidelines set by the College.

Accounts that become inactive, fail to follow College guidelines, or represent organizations no longer active at SPC are subject to editing or closure.

### **Personal Use of Social Media—**

While SPC does not actively monitor or regulate the content or activity of personal social media accounts of employees, students, or alumni, it is expected that all members of the College conduct themselves with respect and dignity online.

If you feel that a member of the College is conducting themselves inappropriately online or breaching a platform's terms of service, please report that user directly to the platform.

As a reminder, SPC employees and students using social media are subject to the College's policies involving conduct and the acceptable use of information technology and penalties for violating those policies.

### **Be Safe**

Protect your personal information from identity thieves and scam artists. Do not post or share your home address, telephone number, work e-mail address, work phone number, or other potentially identifying information. Consider creating an email address that you use only for social media sites.

Be careful when publishing content that could potentially reveal your location such as posting from your home, place of employment, travel accommodations, or public locations that other internet users could find. When posting selfies, use neutral, non-descript, or blurred backgrounds with no identifying features.

Participate responsibly in online communities by following a code of ethics. There are many codes of ethics for bloggers and active participants in social media. If you have your own social media site, you may want to post your own code of ethics.

### **Be Smart**

You can be held legally liable for what you post on your own site and on the sites of others. Legal liability may arise for comments that are proprietary, copyrighted, defamatory, libelous, or obscene. Be mindful of copyright and intellectual property rights of others and the College and of College policies regarding those rights. A common example would be posting a video with copyrighted music attached to it. All videos are subject to review by Facebook, X/Twitter, Instagram, etc., and they reserve the right to remove content and even possibly suspend your account if copyright infringement is in play.

Before posting, consider your audience. Future employers may search the web and social media to screen applicants.

Do not post unapproved projects. If projects you worked on at the College have not been approved for publication, do not post them on your personal website until the College has done so.



Do not use official SPC branding, logos, trademarks, or images on your online sites. Do not use SPC's name to promote or endorse any product, cause, political party, or candidate.

### **Be Respectful**

Refrain from harassing, abusive, bigoted, threatening, intimidating, endangering, fear-provoking, dishonest, deceptive, coercive, or harmful language toward others. A legitimate criticism or other statement of opinion, expressed in a respectful manner, is not prohibited by this guideline.

Strive to maintain an appropriate and respectful tone when engaging in online discussion. Even though you are not speaking on behalf of the institution, readers will likely associate you with it. The actions and words of even one student may reflect on the reputation of the entire College.

### **Be Honest**

Identify yourself and indicate that you are not acting as an employee or agent of the College. State that you are sharing your personal views and that your social media activity is your own and does not represent the views of the College. SPC employees and representatives who post on behalf of the College must be mindful at all times of protecting SPC's reputation and promoting its educational mission.

If you discuss higher education or issues related to SPC, it is suggested that you add the following disclaimer to your respective profiles: "The views expressed here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect those of St. Petersburg College." Please note that this statement does not protect you from repercussions should you breach a platform's terms of service or the College's policies involving conduct and the acceptable use of information technology.

Never pretend to be someone else online and remember that tracking tools may trace the authors of supposedly anonymous posts.

### **Be Clear**

If you are a member of the faculty or a teaching assistant and wish to use social media to relay information and discuss class topics with students, take care to notify students of whether material posted on the site will remain private or will be shared publicly. Consider providing students with the choice to opt out of participation in social media sites or permit them to use aliases if they have privacy concerns.

If you are faculty or staff and require the use of social media a part of course participation, allow students the option of creating a unique personal account to be used expressly for these purposes; however, should the student choose not to, the student should be reminded that posts on the personal account regarding the course or SPC will not be considered personal or private.

## **Non-Compliance/Breach of Policy**

Violations of this policy will result in a review of the incident and may include action under appropriate College discipline processes. Corrective action may involve but are not limited to a verbal or written warning, suspension, or dismissal and/or termination of employment or privileges with St. Petersburg College. This section does not preclude disciplinary action for conduct that involves social media and that also violates other College policies. Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the SPC Marketing & Strategic Communications Department at [spc\\_social@spcollege.edu](mailto:spc_social@spcollege.edu).