



# STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS IN A DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENT

SUSAN GILL, DIRECTOR OF NEW MEDIA

FEB. 11, 2020



## 「SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND BEST PRACTICES

- “The university authorizes the creation and use of university social media accounts, provided their use is professional, protects the reputation and brand of the university, aligns with university priorities, and complies with other Virginia Tech policies and applicable state and federal laws and regulations, and is guided by the Virginia Tech Principles of Community.”
- **Policy Section 2.2.4** — Business and Personal Use of Social Media



# SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

[vt.edu/social-media](https://vt.edu/social-media)

Why do we have a policy? *Policy No. 1030: [policies.vt.edu/social-media-policy2.pdf](https://policies.vt.edu/social-media-policy2.pdf)*

- To support social media with the preservation and protection of Virginia Tech's brand identity, integrity, and reputation; also allows University Relations to address issues with non-compliant accounts more readily.
- To ensure social managers across campus are in compliance with VT policies, applicable state and federal laws and regulations, and the Virginia Tech Principles of Community.

# ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND EXPECTATIONS

Ask yourself: “Is my personal account really more of a business/university-affiliated account?”

By having a social media account that indicates you work for or attend Virginia Tech you may be perceived as being a spokesperson for Virginia Tech.

It is essential that you do not speak for Virginia Tech, the institution, but that you represent your role at the university accurately. To mitigate any potential issues, be mindful of the following:

- Keep personal accounts separate from your role at Virginia Tech when possible.
  - If there is overlap, ensure your personal views are not viewed as official Commonwealth of Virginia communications. You can include a disclaimer in your About section, but users may still have a hard time making the distinction.
- Double-check that what you’re posting is accurate. When in doubt, don’t post.
- Questions/comments that are related to a news story or press release should be referred to [@vtnews](#) on Twitter and/or the Media Relations Director of University Relations: [vtnews.vt.edu/contact](https://vtnews.vt.edu/contact)



**tracy\_vosburgh**

@tracy\_vosburgh Follows you

Senior AVP University Relations at Virginia Tech. Thoughts and opinions here are my own. Retweet does not mean endorsement

# ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND EXPECTATIONS

## Stick to your area of professional expertise

- Depending on your professional role at the university, you may be privy to sensitive or confidential information.
- This could include: Activities with a signed "non-disclosure act"; names of injured or deceased persons before they were officially confirmed/announced; embargoed announcements; Virginia Tech Foundation activities, including pending donations.
- It is essential that you do not share this information on personal or professional social media accounts, even if you think you are being helpful.
- Rule of thumb: If it hasn't been said in a VT News article, it's not your news to share.

# ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND EXPECTATIONS

## Stick to your area of professional expertise

↑ DXfrenchToast 4 points · 7 months ago

↓ It would be nice to have one of their social media people on it

Give Award Share Report Save

↑ letsgohokies05 8 points · 7 months ago

↓ Hi! 🙌 We indeed do not have an official VT account on here because, like others said, we don't want to harm the open discussions people have. Plus, this channel isn't run by the social media team, so we don't want to take over something we don't own. However, we do watch discussions on occasion (love how helpful y'all are about admissions stuff for incoming students!). If anyone wants someone from the social media team to weigh in on something (obviously if it's something we CAN weigh in on — we're not the official university spokespeople and just relay the messages to appropriate audiences), you can email [socialmedia-g@vt.edu](mailto:socialmedia-g@vt.edu) to alert us. Thanks! ~Susan Gill, VT director of new media

Share Save Edit ...

↑ DXfrenchToast 3 points · 7 months ago

↓ Wow, thanks! I wasn't expecting a reply. With your explanation, I really appreciate the hands off approach then.

Give Award Share Report Save



# BEFORE WE GET TO THE GOOD STUFF



**DISCLAIMER:**  
WE ARE NOT  
LAWYERS



## Why does your personal social media activity matter?

- It is many times the first impression of you for employers, employees, potential partners, etc.
- You can't take it back — the internet is forever.
- Nothing is private.
- Anonymity can be skirted.
- Improper use can cause you to miss out on opportunities without you knowing.
- Proper use can help your future endeavors.

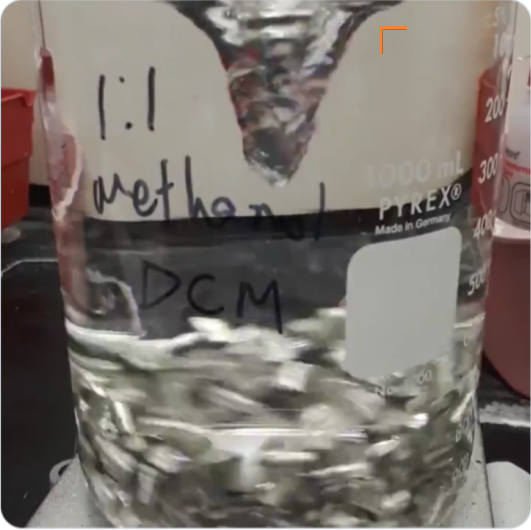


Verizon 3:15 PM 37%

Benjamin Gill liked


**UK SIGL** **Kentucky Stable Isotope Geoch...** · 1d

Tin capsules have a small C blank associated with trace amounts of machine oil left over from manufacturing. For EA-IRMS analysis where minimal CO<sub>2</sub> dilution is used (graphites, low-C sed), this can affect d<sup>13</sup>C. But! A little whirl in 1:1 methanol/DCM = 'ultraclean' capsules!



679 views

3 2 40


 **Josh Coonrod** Trying to get some productive work done

Home Search Notifications Messages

# How do social media platforms show your activity?


- Your direct posts are served up to people who follow you.
- Your likes, comments, and follows may be shared as suggestions to your friends.
- Your purchasing history may result in ads being shared with your friends that are tied to your name.
- Suggested groups will show up with attached profile pictures of your friends.

**Friends' Groups**




**MONTGOMERY COUNTY VA YARD...**  
26K Members • 870 posts a day

Join




**Everything Christiansburg**  
8K Members • 210 posts a day

Join



**What's Your Plan B?**  
14K Members • 10 posts a day

Join



**Kids Deals**  
158K Members • 60 posts a day

Join

# Quick Civics Review



# Congress OF THE United States,

begun and held at the City of New-York, on  
Wednesday the fourth of March one thousand seven hundred and ninety

## The First Amendment

The Bill of Rights of  
the United States of  
America, 1791

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.



# Congress OF THE United States,

begun and held at the City of New-York, on  
Wednesday the fourth of March, one thousand seven hundred and

## Why does this matter?

Freedom of Speech is the right of people to express their opinions publicly without **governmental** interference, with notable exceptions.



# Congress OF THE United States,

begun and held at the City of New-York, on  
Wednesday the fourth of March, one thousand seven hundred and eighty nine.



So, I can pretty  
much say what  
I want, right?

Um...sorta...

Just because you CAN say what you want  
(with notable exceptions) and not be arrested  
by the government, it doesn't save you from  
real-life consequences.



# Congress OF THE United States,

begun and held at the City of New York on

## What does this mean?

The First Amendment does not protect you from:

- Criticism
- Shame/mockery
- Loss of privacy/anonymity
- Professional and academic consequences

The laws protecting the free speech of private employees vary from state to state, aside from specifically protected speech like labor organizing.



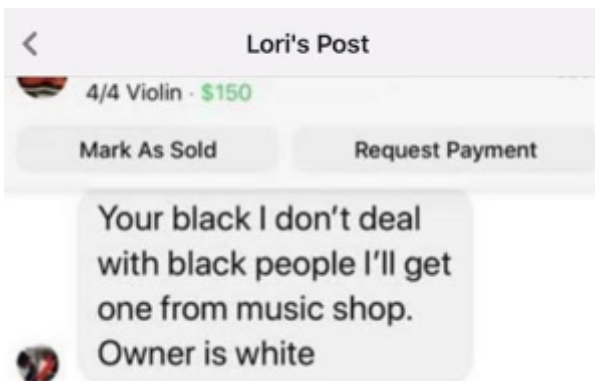
A young man with short brown hair and a light beard is sitting at a dark wooden table in a cafe or office setting. He is wearing a white t-shirt with a blue and red graphic. He is looking at a laptop screen, which is partially visible. The background features a red brick wall and a window with a view of a city street. A small plant is on the table to the left. The text "CASE STUDIES" is overlaid in the center of the image.

# CASE STUDIES

# Your private conversations aren't private



You may want to take a better look at employees. We are a very proud VT family and I do not want this person working with my nephews who are attending now or any VT students.



Always do the right thing no matter what even when everyone eles is doing the wrong thing.

Message

Works at Virginia Tech



# “Keep politics out of it.”

Vice Chancellor resigns after complaints from conservative groups about his comments on social media.

NC State:  
August 2019



**Mike Mullen**  
@NCSU\_MikeMullen

Yet another indication of the lack of ethical values inherent in Trump supporters. She trusts a president who does not tell the truth. Wow.

**Clyde Haberman** @ClydeHaberman

Speaks for itself. Wyoming woman interviewed about Trump by @nytimes at a rally of his: "I can't really say that anything he says is true, but I trust him."

11/6/18, 7:14 AM

**Mike Mullen, PhD '87**  
@NCSU\_MikeMullen

Follow

Yesterday I tweeted a message that has, rightfully, resulted in many pushing back. I believe my track record on respect for others speaks for itself, but unfortunately, I did not live up to that record yesterday.

6:00 AM - 10 Nov 2018

7 Likes



3



7

**Mike Mullen, PhD '87** @NCSU\_MikeMullen · 10 Nov 2018

I will continue to advocate for equity, and I sincerely apologize to those I have offended.

6



12



**Students For Trump** ✓  
@TrumpStudents

.@NCState's very own Vice Chancellor Mike Mullen (@NCSU\_MikeMullen) has been calling Trump supporters and the GOP a bunch of Nazis, KKK members, and much more.

What say you, @NCState?



1:07 PM · Aug 15, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

133 Retweets 257 Likes

*The NC State official rules for university Twitter feeds advises people to "Keep your personal views separate: Uphold the university's mission and values in your activities. Don't include political comments or comments on social issues, and do not conduct any political activities on behalf of any party or candidate."*

# “You can’t say that.”

The University of Texas at Austin:  
August 2017



Ken Storey  
@klstorey

I dont believe in instant Karma but  
this kinda feels like it for Texas.  
Hopefully this will help them  
realize the GOP doesnt care about  
them

1:32 PM · 27 Aug 17 from Winter Park, FL

2 Retweets 3 Likes

## University fires adjunct professor for tweets

UT’s faculty handbook follows guidelines from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which state that “[professors] should be free from institutional censorship or discipline” when speaking in their capacities as independent individuals. A school should only discipline a professor, AAUP says, “if [there are] grave doubts concerning the teacher’s fitness” to teach.

The university asserted in a separate statement to *ABC News* that Storey’s comments were not representative of its views, since he did not make them in his capacity as a faculty member. Yet on Aug. 29, 2017, UT announced it had fired the adjunct professor, writing, “We condemn the comments and the sentiment behind them, and understand the pain this irresponsible act has caused. Storey has been relieved of his duties at UT.”



Ken Storey @klstorey · 18h

I deeply regret a statement I posted yesterday. I never meant to wish ill will  
upon any group. I hope all affected by Harvey recover quickly



2.5K



45



96





# “That’s protected.”

Fresno State  
University:  
April 2018



**Randa Jarrar** ✓  
@randajarrar

Barbara Bush was a generous and smart and amazing racist who, along with her husband, raised a war criminal. [REDACTED] outta here with your nice words.

4/17/18, 5:27 PM

121 Retweets 371 Likes



**H L Wegley**  
@hlwegley



[#FresnoStateUniversity](#) President Joseph Castro calls professor Randa Jarrar's remarks “insensitive, inappropriate and an embarrassment to the university.” But that's the end of it. Evidently, [#Jarrar](#) was right in her tweet? She will never be fired.



**Randa Jarrar** ✓  
@randajarrar



sweetie i work as a tenured professor. I make 100K a year doing that. i will never be fired. i will always have people wanting to hear what i have to say. even you are one of them!  
<3 [twitter.com/July041776/sta...](#)

9:33 PM - Apr 17, 2018



51

279 people are talking about this



"Her comments, although disgraceful, are protected free speech under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Additionally, although Professor Jarrar used tenure to defend her behavior, this private action is an issue of free speech and not related to her job or tenure. Therefore, the university does not have justification to support taking any disciplinary action."

# “That’s protected.”

Indiana  
University  
Bloomington:  
Nov. 2019

## Bigoted Views vs. Bigoted Teaching

Indiana University condemns professor's racist and misogynistic tweets in strongest terms but won't fire him over views alone.

By Colleen Flaherty // November 22, 2019

223 COMMENTS



“Indiana University at Bloomington will not terminate Eric Rasmusen, professor of business economics and public policy, for the ‘stunningly ignorant’ views he expressed on social media. So said Provost Lauren Robel this week amid calls that Rasmusen be fired.

Rasmusen ‘has, for many years, used his private social media accounts to disseminate his racist, sexist and homophobic views,’ Robel wrote in a statement. ‘When I label his views in this way, let me note that the labels are not a close call, nor do his posts require careful parsing to reach these conclusions.’”

– Insight Higher Ed

# Free speech ≠ free from consequences

## Fresno State president Castro wants donors to know that tweets do not define the university

BY [ALEKSANDRA APPLETON](#)  APRIL 19, 2018 05:34 PM

**As a result, this Fresno State professor:**

- Loss of respect from the university
- Took a Twitter hiatus and made her account private

**Fresno State president wrote in a statement:** “Jarrar's conduct was ‘insensitive, inappropriate, and an embarrassment to the university.’”



# All roads lead to social

University of Houston:  
January 2018

Messages may start on one platform and become amplified on social media beyond its original, intended audience.



**Dr. Not Your T\*oken** @tjjourian · Jan 21

Wow, the level of utter ignorance & ethnocentrism in this email...

Email to students at U of **Houston** about **body odor** raises concerns about how to broach this delicate topic, if at all [ihenow.com/2FPU9dl](https://ihenow.com/2FPU9dl) [#higherred](#) [#racism](#) [#ethnocentrism](#) [#leadership](#)



Email to students at U of Houston about body odor raises concerns...  
Professor's email at U of Houston about body odor, referencing some cultures, raises concerns about how to broach this delicate ...  
[insidehigherred.com](https://insidehigherred.com)

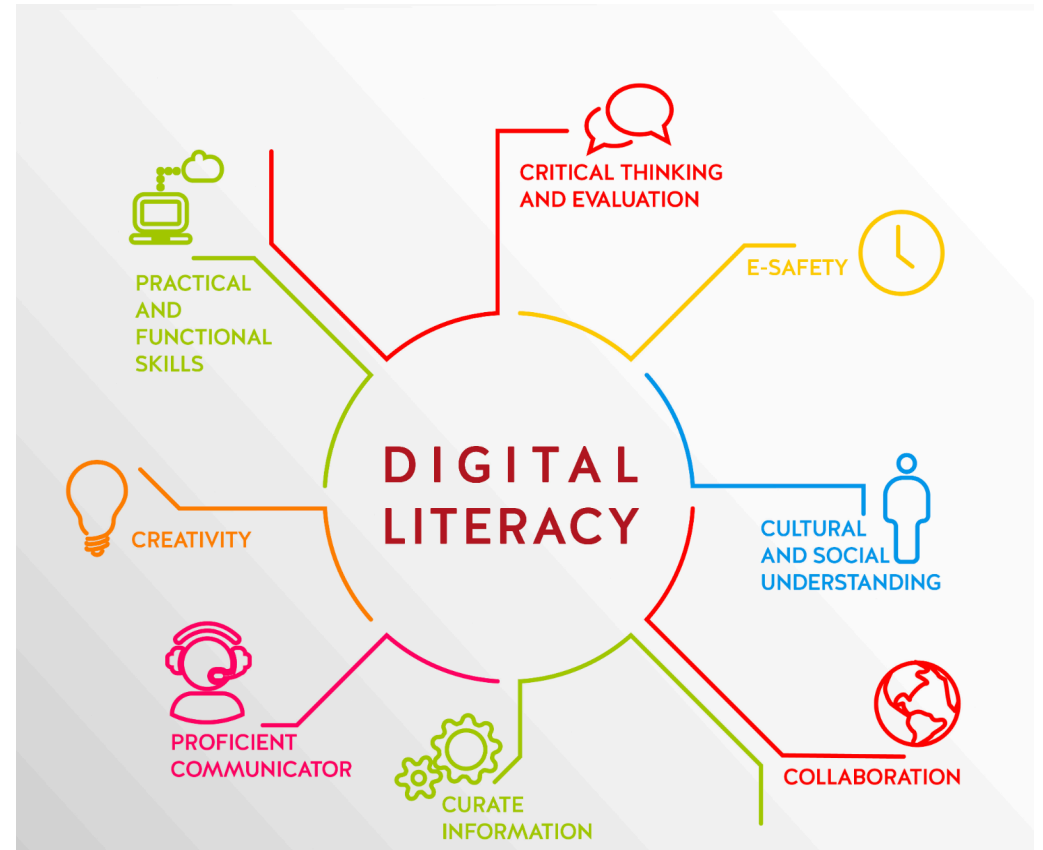




# HOW TO BE A GOOD ONLINE CITIZEN AND PROTECT YOUR FUTURE

# BE DIGITALLY LITERATE

Digital literacy is “the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills,” as defined by the American Library Association.





# POSITION YOURSELF FOR SUCCESS

- Put on a marketer's hat when writing something for public consumption.
- Keep your audiences tailored and narrow (i.e. utilize Facebook lists, protected accounts, etc.).
- Consider a private account or an account with a “no student zone” by protecting your tweets and Instagram posts to ensure you know who's following you.
- Know which account you're using – don't forget to switch from a business account to your personal account before posting something personal.
- Know that “likes” and other activities will show up on others' feeds.
- Go through your social history and remove anything questionable.
- AND ALWAYS – think before you post.

# BE RESPONSIBLE

- Don't post anything that you wouldn't want employers, coworkers, or supervisors to read.
- Be safe on the internet, be careful when sharing personal information with others.
- Know how social media algorithms share your personal interests.
- Regularly audit your online personas to see if they reflect who you are.
- Do not engage in cyberbullying, trolling, or other activities that may cause harm to others online.
- Do not speak as the university.
- Always refer to the Virginia Tech handbook and university policies.
- Contact [socialmedia-g@vt.edu](mailto:socialmedia-g@vt.edu) if you have any VT social media questions.

QUESTIONS?

SOCIALMEDIA-G@VT.EDU