

STATE BOARD FOR TECHNICAL AND COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION

STATEMENT OF POLICY

POLICY NUMBER: 8-0-108

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POLICY TITLE: SOCIAL MEDIA

LEGAL AUTHORITY: Section 59-53-20 of the 1976 Code of Laws of South Carolina, As Amended; Section 19-719 of the State Human Resources Regulations

DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY: HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES

DATE APPROVED BY BOARD: September 28, 2021

DISCLAIMER

PURSUANT TO SECTION 41-1-110 OF THE CODE OF LAWS OF SC, AS AMENDED, THE LANGUAGE USED IN THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT CREATE AN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT BETWEEN THE EMPLOYEE AND THE SC STATE BOARD FOR TECHNICAL AND COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION/THE SC TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM. THE STATE BOARD FOR TECHNICAL AND COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION/THE SC TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REVISE THE CONTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT, IN WHOLE OR IN PART. NO PROMISES OR ASSURANCES, WHETHER WRITTEN OR ORAL, WHICH ARE CONTRARY TO OR INCONSISTENT WITH THE TERMS OF THIS PARAGRAPH CREATE ANY CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT.

It shall be the policy of the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education (SBTCE) to ensure guidelines are in place for the appropriate use of social media by employees of the System Office/College and to make clear that disciplinary action may result from the use of institutional and personal social media accounts in a manner that is inconsistent with such guidelines. The policy prohibits the disclosure of confidential information; misrepresentation; representing the System Office/College in a manner not authorized by the System Office/College President or his/her designee(s); unprofessional conduct or language; defamation; conveying or accepting endorsements on behalf of the System Office/College; and any other social media activity that violates System Office/College policies or procedures or reasonably could be expected to adversely affect the efficient operations of the System Office/College.

Last Review Date: September 28, 2021

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Employees will be held to the same standards of professionalism in their use of social media as for any other public conduct. All System Office/College policies and procedures that cover employee conduct also apply in the social media environment. Therefore, any violation(s) of such policies and/or procedures may result in disciplinary action regardless of whether the conduct at issue consists of one or more of the specific activities identified herein.

The State Board for Technical & Comprehensive Education expects all employees to interact in ways that promote cooperation and mutual respect.

Each College/System Office may develop specific guidelines to address social media issues at their respective institutions.

ADDENDUM

Sample Social Media Procedure

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I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this procedure is for the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education (SBTCE) to set forth guidelines for the appropriate use of social media by employees of the System Office/Colleges. As provided more fully in this procedure, SBTCE's guidelines prohibit the disclosure of confidential information; misrepresentation; representing the System Office/College in a manner not authorized by the System Office/College President or his/her designee(s); unprofessional conduct or language; defamation; conveying or accepting endorsements on behalf of the System Office/College; and any other social media activity that violates any System Office/College policies or procedures or reasonably could be expected to adversely affect the efficient operations of the System Office/College.

Employees will be held to the same standards of professionalism in their use of social media as for any other public conduct. All System Office/College policies and procedures that cover employee conduct also apply in the social media environment. Therefore, any violation(s) of such policies and/or procedures may result in disciplinary action regardless of whether the conduct at issue consists of one or more of the specific activities identified herein.

II. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this procedure, the following definitions apply:

Social media - an electronic form of communication (e.g., social networking, multimedia, blogs, micro-blogs, wikis, text messages) in which participants share information, ideas, and personal viewpoints via online communities. Forms of social media include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Social networking and multi-media websites (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, TikTok)
2. Blogs and micro-blogging websites (e.g., Twitter, Instagram)
3. Wikis (e.g., Wikipedia.org, Wikihow.com) - websites in which the content can be manipulated or changed by its viewers.
4. Text and Instant Messages (e.g., iMessage, SMS text, Messenger)
5. Learning Management Systems (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle, Desire2Learn)

III. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES AND POTENTIAL MISUSE

The System Office/College reserves the right to monitor social media and other online activity engaged in by employees through the use of institutional resources and equipment to ensure that applicable policies/procedures are being complied with and that such activities are for legitimate purposes. Employees are personally responsible for what is communicated on or through their social media and must adhere to the standards of behavior outlined in this procedure and any applicable System Office/College policies and procedures.

Employees are further cautioned that there is no reasonable expectation of privacy in the information they share publicly or with others they are connected to through social media (e.g., Facebook "friends" and Instagram or Twitter "followers"), as employees are expected to be aware that there are numerous ways in which social media content can be disseminated to a broader audience by others. The System Office/College reserves the right to act on information provided by any person concerning employees' social media activity that may violate any applicable policy, procedure, or state or federal law.

This procedure applies equally to social media content posted by employees and any social media activity that signifies approval of content posted by others (e.g., "liking," "retweeting," or by using emojis).

A. Relevant Procedures

All use of social media must comply with the SBTCE policies and procedures, including:

- a) SBTCE Policy 8-5-101 and Procedure 8-5-101.1: Non-Discrimination, Anti-Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct
- b) SBTCE Policy 8-5-100 and Procedure 8-5-100.1: Disciplinary Action

B. Hate Speech

Social media should not be used to spread hate-speech, defamatory comments, or disparaging remarks concerning co-workers, faculty, staff, students, or third parties.

Employees must not make or signify approval of threatening or incendiary comments/posts on social media about co-workers, faculty, staff, students, or third parties.

C. Cyberbullying

The System Office/College will not tolerate any form of bullying or harassment by or to System Office/College employees, faculty, staff, or students via any form of communication. The following non-exhaustive examples illustrate the types of social media activity the System Office/College considers to be forms of cyberbullying:

- a) spreading rumors, lies or gossip;
- b) intimidating or aggressive behavior;
- c) comments that are offensive, threatening, or reasonably could be construed as advocating or condoning violence; or
- d) posting comments/images about an individual in a manner that reasonably could be viewed as harassing, mocking or humiliating.

D. Sexual Harassment, Cyber Stalking, Inappropriate Sexual Content

Any form of unwelcome conduct, sexual harassment, or gender-based harassment as outlined in SBTCE Procedure 8-5-101.1 is not permitted. Employees must not use social media to harass, stalk/cyberstalk, or post explicit sexual images or videos. Examples of such prohibited conduct include but are not limited to:

- a) Sending manipulative, threatening, lewd or harassing emails, posts, or direct messages from any assortment of personal accounts.
- b) Hacking into another person's online account(s) (such as banking or email) and changing the person's settings and passwords.

- c) Creating false online accounts on social networking and dating sites, impersonating another, or attempting to establish contact with someone by using a false persona.
- d) Posting messages to online bulletin boards and discussion groups with another's personal information.

IV. GENERAL PROVISIONS REGARDING OFFICIAL SYSTEM OFFICE/COLLEGE SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

Social media accounts will only be utilized on behalf of the System Office/College when authorized by the System Office/College President or his/her designee(s). Only authorized System Office/College employees may create social media posts to the System Office/College social media accounts.

The System Office/College reserves the right to restrict or remove any content from its authorized social media accounts deemed to be in violation of this procedure, other policies/procedures, or any applicable laws.

Additional System Office/College social media accounts may not be created without the consent of the System Office/College President or his/her designee(s).

V. USAGE GUIDELINES

All System Office/College employees who opt to participate in social media, whether for personal use or for System Office/College business purposes, shall adhere to the following:

1. Employees shall not post information on personal accounts relating to the internal operations of System Office/College (e.g., personnel matters, financial reports, law enforcement/administrative investigations, proprietary business information, or other work products).
2. Employees shall not make comments or distribute posts via social media representing their personal viewpoints as the official viewpoint/position of the System Office/College. Content published to any website outside of the System Office/College's official online presence related to subjects associated with the System Office/College should contain a disclaimer, such as the following: "The opinions/contents of this post are my own and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the South Carolina Technical College System/College."
3. Employees should never use or reference their formal position when writing in a non-official capacity and should not use their official email to establish a private social media presence.
4. All employees must be cognizant of information shared on social media to the extent that such content may be interpreted as expressing the position of the System Office/College by virtue of the position they hold with the institution or agency.

5. Employees are prohibited from posting, transmitting and/or disseminating on personal or authorized social media outlets any photographs, video or audio recordings that specifically identify internal System Office/College operations.
6. Employees shall refrain from posting social media content that may reasonably be considered inappropriate, offensive, demeaning, or threatening to the public, present or past co-workers, vendors, contractors, or any other affiliates of the System Office/College.
7. Employees shall notify management of any content appearing on social media accounts that may reasonably be considered detrimental to the business of the System Office/College or degrading to any of its employees.
8. Unless pre-approved by the President or his/her designee, System Office/College employees will not use the emblems, logos, seals, and/or credentialing of the
9. System Office/College via personal social media accounts to endorse, promote, or advertise on behalf of the System Office/College, including but not limited to such use for any personal financial interest or gain.
10. Employees authorized to post or make comments about the System Office/College on official social media accounts will not endorse, promote, or advertise on behalf of System Office/College for any personal financial interest or gain. Authorized employees posting or making such comments shall ensure the information contained therein is accurate.
11. Employees are permitted to disseminate via personal social media accounts any photograph(s) associated with the System Office/College-affiliated events, public recognitions, community outreach initiatives, or any event related to the System Office/College's mission. The photograph(s) should be appropriate and in accordance with the System Office/College public relations standards.
12. An employee's social media presence or content appearing thereon should never interfere with his or her ability to perform primary job duties. If the System Office/College reasonably apprehends an adverse effect upon the efficiency of its operations as a result of an employee's social media activity, disciplinary action may be taken accordingly.
13. Employees should always pause before posting social media content so that they do not engage in such activity hastily or without thinking carefully about the potential consequences of their actions.
14. Faculty and staff should not send private messages via any social media platform or other format to any student(s) unless the communication is clearly related to an instructional or approved extracurricular purpose. If faculty and staff are communicating via social media or other format with students who are under eighteen years of age, the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of such students should be included on all such communications whenever possible. Unless otherwise authorized by the College President or his/her designee(s) for instructional or approved extracurricular purposes, faculty and staff are strongly discouraged from engaging in personal social media network connections (e.g., becoming Facebook "friends" or "following" on Instagram or Twitter) with students enrolled at any of the institutions in the South Carolina Technical College System.

All System Office/College employees shall be responsible for the content of any social media account(s) maintained or used by them under their own name or to which they have authorized access, including shared accounts.

System Office/College employees should be sensitive to the fact that social networks and other online forums blur the distinction between an individual's official and personal identities.

Employees are encouraged to seek the guidance of Public Information/Communications (social media designee) regarding any posting that may adversely reflect upon either the System Office/College or the professionalism or integrity of any college employee(s).

VI. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Disciplinary action for employees may be taken in accordance with SBTCE Procedure 8-5-100.1: Disciplinary Action up to and including termination for any violations of this procedure.