

**Social Media Policy  
For all SMHS Students**

Section: 3  
 Policy number: 3.10  
 Responsible Office: Office of Associate Dean for Health Sciences  
 Issued: 06.20.16  
 Latest Review: 06.20.17

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**POLICY STATEMENT**

This policy describes expected student behaviors when using social media sites.

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**REASON for POLICY**

The School of Medicine and Health Science faculty recognize the role social media plays in today’s society. However, as healthcare professionals in training, SMHS students are held to a high standard when it comes to the presentation of themselves in the community and on social media sites. As students enter their professional careers it is important that they carefully consider what they are posting on social media sites, who they are asking to network with them, and how they respond to others on social media sites. Information placed on social media sites must not violate the University’s Code of Conduct.

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**SCOPE of POLICY**

This policy applies to:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deans, Directors, and Department Heads	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faculty
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Managers and supervisors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students	
Others:	

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**WEB SITE REFERENCES**

Policy Office: <http://www.med.und.edu/policies/index.cfm>  
 Responsible Office: <http://www.med.und.edu/administration/deans-office/index.cfm>  
 A Nurse’s Guide to the Use of Social Media. National Council of State Boards of Nursing. [https://www.ncsbn.org/Social\\_Media.pdf](https://www.ncsbn.org/Social_Media.pdf)  
 Canadian Federation of Medical Students Guide to <http://www.cfms.org/files/internal-policy-bylaws/CFMS%20Guide%20to%20Social%20Media%20Professionalism.pdf>

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Medical Professionalism:  
Recommendations for  
Social Media.

Professionalism <https://spahp.creighton.edu/current-students/office-academic-and-student-affairs/policies-procedures>

Considerations for Online  
Social Networking Usage.  
Creighton University School  
of Pharmacy and Health  
Professions.

Social Networking Policy. <https://medschool.duke.edu/sites/default/files/field/attachments/Social%20Media%20Policy.pdf>  
Duke University.

<b>CONTENTS</b>	
Policy Statement.....	<b>1</b>
Reason for Policy .....	<b>1</b>
Scope of Policy.....	<b>1</b>
Web Site References .....	<b>1</b>
Definitions.....	<b>4</b>
Related Information .....	<b>4</b>
Contacts.....	<b>4</b>
Principles .....	<b>4</b>
Procedures .....	<b>7</b>
Responsibilities.....	<b>7</b>
Forms .....	<b>7</b>
Revision Record .....	<b>8</b>

DEFINITIONS	
Department	All academic departments
SMHS	School of Medicine and Health Sciences
Student	Any student enrolled in Medicine, Health Sciences, or Basic Sciences within the SMHS

RELATED INFORMATION	
Code of Student Life	<a href="http://und.edu/code-of-student-life/">http://und.edu/code-of-student-life/</a>

## CONTACTS

General questions about this policy can be answered by your department's administrative office. Specific questions should be directed to the following:

Subject	Contact	Telephone/FAX	Office/Dept
Policy clarification	Dean's Office	777.2514/777.3527	judy.solberg@med.und.edu
Policy format	Dean's Office	777.2514/777.3527	judy.solberg@med.und.edu

## PRINCIPLES

- I) This policy describes expected student behaviors when using social media sites.
  
- II) Overview
  - A) The School of Medicine and Health Science faculty recognize the role social media plays in today's society. However, as healthcare professionals in training, SMHS students are held to a high standard when it comes to the presentation of themselves in the community and on social media sites. As students enter their professional careers it is important that they carefully consider what they are posting on social media sites, who they are asking to network with them, and how they respond to others on social media sites. Information placed on social media sites must not violate the University's Code of Conduct.
  
- III) Social network sites should not be considered as "private." Students should assume that what they post on a social media site is permanent. Archival systems may save information even if someone deletes a post, and search engines can retrieve posts years after the publication date. When using social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are indistinct. Mixing social, academic and professional networking may create problems. Because comments can be forwarded or copied, a person authorized to post on a student's social media page can pass it on to others. Friends may post something to a student's site regarding their social life which may prove to be embarrassing to the student's academic or professional life. Posting media that portrays students or their peers participating in what could be perceived as unprofessional behavior such as inappropriate sexualized behaviors, binge drinking, drug use and illegal activity is not advised. Students are encouraged to check their privacy settings on social media sites to limit who can and

cannot read and post to their sites. Students should also consider conducting an Internet search of their name to discover what is in cyberspace that others can see about them. If students have any social media posts that are questionable, they should remove them from their site immediately.

Employers, faculty, clinical preceptors and patients may access information on student's social media sites that may negatively influence them regarding the student's professionalism. Many potential employers go to these sites to see what students have posted and often determine if they are interested in having that student as an employee. Students have been reprimanded by clinical rotation site supervisors for social networking practices such as becoming electronic "friends" with site co-workers, interns, volunteers or patients. To promote respectful discussion, students should be courteous and productive. With due regard for lawfully protected speech and forms of expression, students should strive to avoid comments that are profane, obscene, defamatory, offensive, harassing, disruptive, sexually explicit, inappropriate, inflammatory or otherwise objectionable. Harassing speech that is severe, persistent, or pervasive, and is objectively offensive, is never permitted.

Students should use their official SMHS e-mail address for all professional correspondence and all academic issues. Student must recognize that they are a representative of their professional program and are expected to act professionally in all correspondence. Students should remember that North Dakota has an open records law which means that all SMHS e-mail is potentially subject to open records. As such, students should consider setting up a private email account with a different provider than the SMHS for personal correspondence.

#### IV) Academic Integrity and Professionalism

A) Discussion or posting information regarding content of examinations, tests, quizzes or assignments could be considered a violation of a department's policy on Academic Integrity. It is the student's responsibility to read their student handbook regarding academic integrity and professionalism as defined by their department. The use of social media or personal devices to threaten, intimidate, ridicule, humiliate, insult, or harass someone may constitute cyber-bullying and must be reported to either the Department Head, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Admissions, the Associate Dean for Health Sciences or the UND Dean of Students Office.

SMHS students have a responsibility to help maintain public trust and confidence in their professions. Students should refrain from posts that use institutional intellectual property, copyrights, trademarks or logos without explicit written permission. Such care should also extend to the unauthorized dissemination of copyrighted material, such as lecture notes and recordings. Students should not represent themselves as official representatives of the University or clinical facility in public forums. Consent obtained for educational purposes does not extend to consent for public dissemination. Even when appropriate consent is obtained for public posting and the media-containing posts are sufficiently anonymized, public perception remains an important consideration. An individual viewing a sensitive picture posted online by a SMHS student will not assume consent has been obtained and may therefore come to think less of the student, their profession and the institution. The separation between personal and professional online profiles should be made explicit.

#### V) Clinical Experiences

- A) Students participating in clinical experiences must consult with the hospital/clinic or agency policies or an appropriate leader within the organization for guidance regarding work related social media postings. Clinical experiences are also frequently governed by a legally binding agreement between the host facility and the University. Unless authorized, students are not allowed to post or speak on behalf of the clinic, hospital or agency. Students must be aware of and comply with clinical affiliation policies regarding use of computers, cameras and other electronic devices and the use of personal devices at the clinical site. Students should not ask their faculty, clinical preceptors, clinical instructors or fieldwork supervisors to “friend” them during their time in the clinical setting. This puts the student, their faculty and their supervisors in an awkward situation by sharing personal information. If students and supervisors mutually decide to do this after the student graduates, that is their personal choice. Students are strongly advised to refrain from posting remarks about faculty or clinical site employees and from making comments that are or may be perceived to be threatening, harassing, profane, obscene, sexually explicit, racially derogatory, homophobic or otherwise offensive. Harassing speech that is severe, persistent, or pervasive, and is objectively offensive, is never permitted.

#### VI) HIPAA and FERPA

- A) Students violating HIPAA, FERPA or other university/hospital/clinic policies may be subject to disciplinary action including dismissal from their professional program, criminal and/or civil charges and fines. Students must not present themselves as licensed practitioners, and must be careful about offering medical advice in any non-educational setting, including on social media.

SMHS students must recognize that they have an ethical and legal obligation to maintain patient privacy and confidentiality at all times. Releasing confidential health information is unethical and unlawful and could result in irreparable harm and suffering to the patient as well as fines or imprisonment for the healthcare practitioner. SMHS students must not identify patients by name or post or publish information that may lead to the identification of a patient. Students must not refer to patients in a disparaging manner, even if the patient is not identified.

SMHS students are strictly prohibited from transmitting by way of any electronic media any patient related information or images that may be reasonably anticipated to violate a patient’s rights to confidentiality or privacy. This includes references to family, employment, relatives, conditions, locations of treatment or any circumstances surrounding the patient’s situation. Posting information about, or images of, a research subject is strictly prohibited.

SMHS students must follow SMHS clinical affiliation and UND policies for taking photographs or video of patients for treatment or other legitimate purposes using employer-provided devices. SMHS students must not share, post or otherwise disseminate any information, including images, about a patient or information gained in the student-patient relationship with anyone unless there is a patient care related need to disclose the information or other legal obligation to do so. Online social contact with patients is discouraged, and students must use caution when having online social contact with former patients. The fact that a patient may initiate contact with the student does not permit the student to engage in a personal relationship with the patient. It is unprofessional and inadvisable to form or accept a social media connection with patients or individuals with whom there is an active therapeutic, supervisory or evaluative relationship.

VII) Documented Examples of Inappropriate Social Media Behavior

- A) A PT graduate working in a local hospital noticed a patient name on the new admission sheet and confirmed that the patient is a former professor from her PT program. The student, a frequent user of Facebook, wrote a message on her “wall” about the fact that her former professor has been hospitalized. Within minutes she was chatting with several of her former classmates about the professor. Later in the evening the professor’s daughter read about her mother’s hospitalization on the daughter’s favorite social networking site.
- B) A hospital employee was forced to resign after she tweeted the governor of her state regarding a medical exam he had scheduled after regular hours. The tweet indirectly referenced the governor thus revealing he had received care as a patient at that medical center. Although the employee didn’t believe that she had broken any privacy laws, attorneys for the governor said that just because the governor was a public figure it did not mean that his health information could be considered public knowledge.
- C) A student used a cell phone to take photographs of examination questions from a computer screen. The examination questions were passed on via a social network. Since unauthorized release of examination questions occurred, the action was considered misconduct.
- D) A college sophomore was expelled for comments he posted on Facebook. The action marks the first time that college has expelled a student for a posting on the popular website.
- E) A student took an examination and tweeted the following comments and posted them to Facebook with the caption “Wow! Just finished the exam; it was the hardest exam I have ever taken. Better make sure you study chapter 4 really well!” The student was charged with misconduct.

<b>PROCEDURES</b>	
I) Disciplinary Action	
A) Violation of the social media policy may result in disciplinary action by the student’s department, the SMHS, UND and/or the clinical facility. Faculty reserve the right to monitor student’s publicly viewable social media sites.	

<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	
Department	Provide a copy of the Social Media Policy to all students
Student	Responsible to monitor their professional behavior on social media sites and report violations of HIPAA or FERPA to the appropriate authority

<b>FORMS</b>	
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## REVISION RECORD

06.20.16 –FAC Approved

06.20.16 –Dean Approved

06.27-17 –Minor Edits