Social Media Best Practices Summary

INTRODUCTION

The rise of social media creates powerful new opportunities to communicate with colleagues, friends, alumni, students, and the world. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, and others play a significant role in determining the digital reputation of Hellenic College Holy Cross (HCHC) and its faculty, staff, and students. Because social media often can blend the personal with the professional, it is important to exercise caution when using social media at all times.

While new social media platforms are emerging and old platforms fading, a general definition of social media includes forms of electronic communication that create communities of users who share messages, content, videos, and other material. In addition to the platforms noted above, examples include listserves, user groups, blogs, wikis, virtual social worlds (such as World of Warcraft or Second Life), and community ratings sites (such as Yelp and TripAdvisor).

This Social Media Best Practices Summary is designed to clarify the expectations that HCHC has for faculty, staff, and students (including student employees) who use social media platforms, and to help faculty and staff better utilize these platforms to enhance their individual reputations as well as the reputation of HCHC.

As a general matter, the social media world is no different than the in-person world. The same laws, rules, policies, guidelines, and best practices that govern our relationships with students, parents, alumni, the media (whether new or traditional), and the community all apply online. Faculty, staff, and students are as responsible for their online posts as they are for their personal, verbal, or written interactions.

SECTION 1: GENERAL POLICIES APPLICABLE TO ALL SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING PERSONAL ACTIVITIES

Protect confidential and proprietary information. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about students, faculty, staff, alumni, others, or HCHC. All employees of HCHC are subject to FERPA and other laws mandating the non-disclosure of private information about students, fellow employees, and others. Even on your personal social media sites, you must follow all HCHC policies on privacy and confidentiality. Faculty and staff who share confidential or proprietary information are subject to disciplinary action, including termination.

Be respectful of others. Do not post information or content that is false, misleading, defamatory, abusive, harassing, threatening, discriminatory, obscene, or harmful to others. HCHC policies on harassment-free workplaces and discrimination apply in the online community as well as the physical community.

Respect copyright and fair use. When posting and commenting, honor the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of HCHC. When you use or share material that belongs to others, be sure to cite your source appropriately.
Do not use HCHC’s name, trademark, or logo for endorsements. Do not use the HCHC name, trademark, logo, or other school images on personal social media pages. Do not use HCHC’s name to promote non-college enterprises, products, causes, or political candidates.

Respect school time and property. HCHC allows minimal time and use of school equipment for personal uses, but excessive use of equipment, resources, and time for personal social media activity may result in disciplinary action, including possible termination of employment.

SECTION 2: INSTITUTIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA

HCHC utilizes a variety of official social media sites and accounts to implement its marketing strategy and to build its reputation with alumni, employers, educators, and the wider community. The following policies apply to all HCHC social media sites and accounts.

Permission required. Before establishing any social media account as an official HCHC site or account, the person or office involved must obtain written permission from Melanie Pappas, Marketing Design Manager (mpappas@hchc.edu). The Office of Marketing and Communications will maintain the list of all approved HCHC social media sites or accounts, and has the right to revoke authorization for any such site or account at any time.

Content regulation. Although HCHC is not compelled to do so, it may monitor the content of all HCHC social media accounts. The Marketing Design Manager has the right to remove content that violates HCHC policies at any time.

Paid participation and endorsements. If anyone offers to pay an HCHC student or employee for participating in a social media platform, or offers to pay an HCHC student or employee for an endorsement in connection with that person’s role at HCHC, that student or employee must obtain the permission of Kevin Kovalycsik, Chief of Staff, prior to accepting the offer.

SECTION 3: BEST PRACTICES

Everything posted is public. Whether you are posting for school business or on your own personal page, you must assume that everything you post is public, will be available to the public forever, and can be forwarded well beyond where you think your comments might land. If you wouldn’t say what you’re saying to a reporter or in a public space, then you probably shouldn’t say it online.

Your opinions are yours. If you identify yourself on a personal social media account as an HCHC student, faculty member, or employee, be sure that readers and viewers know that your views are your own and not those of HCHC. That is, you must clearly indicate that the content and views are not HCHC’s.

Be thoughtful about personal life and business life. If you use social media for professional purposes, be careful about mixing personal views and activities with your business sites. Some users have found it easier to keep separate individual accounts on specific platforms for personal and business content.

Be careful and accurate. Before you post or comment, check your facts. Review your comments for clarity, grammar, and spelling. It’s your reputation, and you don’t want to look foolish.
Be thoughtful. Always take care in the way you present yourself and your relationship to HCHC. Even with a disclaimer in place, personal posting may be interpreted as reflecting the official positions of HCHC, and will reflect on the school as well as on you.

Know privacy policies. Take the time to understand the privacy policies of the social media platforms you use. When those policies change, evaluate how those changes will affect you.

Protect your private information. Be careful about disclosing personal information, including birth dates, family information, and that you are away from home.

Protect your passwords. Just as is necessary with any computer accounts, take care to choose strong passwords and keep them private.