

II.D.6. Social Media

Policy Manual | II. Administration

Social Media is a useful tool in delivering information and maintaining channels of communication with current and future students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors and other members of the college community. Wiregrass Georgia Technical College (WGTC) believes that having a presence in these areas will allow the college to broadcast information and interact with the public. In order to operate within these mediums effectively, WGTC has developed a social media policy to ensure that any and all interactions on behalf of the college will represent the best interests of the college community. For purposes of this policy, the college community is defined as employees, students, members of the Board of Directors, members of the Foundation Boards, volunteers, and any other entity(ies) or person(s) who use internally managed college computing resources.

Within the parameters allowed by law, this policy and related procedures applies to all members of the college community, and defines appropriate use of social media, while prohibiting conduct that is illegal or adverse to institutional policies or professional standards. For that reason, the Wiregrass Georgia Technical College Social Media Policy applies to social media accounts created to represent WGTC, its departments, programs, campuses, etc., and also those privately created/held individual accounts used by members of the college community outside of normal work/business hours if said accounts impact the business of the college. This policy spans all forms of social media, such as Facebook®, Twitter®, MySpace™, YouTube®, Flickr®, LinkedIn®, blogs, text messages, and other, less popular platforms, as well as those not in existence at the time of policy adoption.

In accordance with ***Wiregrass Georgia Technical College Acceptable Computer Use and Internet Use Policy**, the use of college computing resources (including internet resources) is not private and may be monitored. In keeping with this policy, account holders are expected to use good judgment about content and refrain from using information and conducting activities that may violate privacy laws, local, state, or federal laws, and regulations. Members of the college community should not include confidential information about the college, its staff, or its students in any social media posts or updates. Representation of personal opinions as being endorsed by the college or any of its organizations is strictly prohibited, to include the Wiregrass name or likeness used to promote any opinion, product, cause, or political candidate. Further, posted content that includes comments or information that could be seen as threatening, obscene, or in violation of intellectual property rights or privacy laws, or otherwise injurious or illegal will be referred to the appropriate authorities. Violations of this policy and its procedures may result in criminal or civil penalties, and/or consequences affecting an individual's employment or student status, including but not limited to disciplinary action, and may result in personal liability.

The guidelines contained in this policy and the resulting procedures are broad in nature to accommodate any differences in online venues while maintaining a universal code of conduct. This policy may be adjusted as social media continues to evolve.

Cross Reference:

WGTC Policy Manual II.C.4. Acceptable Computer and Internet Use

Date Approved: January 27, 2011

Date Revised: March 17, 2011

*Links Requiring Internet Access

II.D.6a College-owned Social Media Account Use

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Hundreds of current and future students, faculty, staff, alumni, and donors are utilizing social networking mediums such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest and many others social media sites to stay connected. Wiregrass Georgia Technical College believes that having a presence in these areas will allow the College to broadcast information and interact with the public. In order to operate within these mediums effectively, WGTC has developed a social media policy to ensure that any and all interactions on behalf of WGTC represent the College's best interests.

These guidelines are broad in nature to accommodate any differences in online venues while maintaining a universal code of conduct; the policy may be adjusted as social media continues to evolve. For the most current policy, please visit <http://www.wiregrass.edu/about/pr.php>.

***The Wiregrass Georgia Technical College Social Media Policy only applies to social media accounts created to represent WGTC, its departments, programs, campuses, etc. and does not apply to private individual accounts of WGTC faculty, staff, or students.

Officially Recognized Social Media Accounts

The Office of Public Relations coordinates the communication efforts of the College in all social media applications. Request to begin an official social media site representing Wiregrass Georgia Technical College, its programs, services, or student organizations should be submitted to the Executive Director of Public Relations. Members of the Public Relations Office will review all social media inquires. This office should also be used as a resource for the college community for any social media needs. The PR Office will make the final decision in any situation regarding the use of social media.

Account Administrators

Under the direction of the Executive Director of Public Relations and Information, the Internal Communications Coordinator will set up all official college social media accounts. The staff of the public relations department will be listed as administrators on each official college account. The Executive Director of Public Relations will also decide when additional administrators are needed on any social media account. WGTC employees identified as administrators of accounts are held responsible for managing and monitoring content of their officially recognized accounts. All Administrators are responsible for removing any content that may violate the College's Conduct Policies.

Content

Account Administrators are expected to use good judgment about content and respect privacy laws. Account Administrators may not post any information that violates FERPA, Student Privacy Rights, or the Wiregrass Georgia Technical College Acceptable Computer Use and Internet Use Policy.

Account Administrators may post any content that is not threatening, obscene, a violation of intellectual property rights or privacy laws, FERPA, Student Privacy Rights, WGTC Acceptable Computer Use and Internet Policy, or otherwise injurious or illegal.

Representation of personal opinions as being endorsed by the College or any of its organizations is strictly prohibited. No one is authorized to use the WGTC name to promote any opinion, product, cause, or political candidate.

By posting content to any social media site, persons agree that you own or otherwise control all of the rights to that content, that your use of the content is protected fair use, that you will not knowingly provide misleading or false information, and that you hold the College harmless for any claims resulting from the content.

WGTC Public Relations Office has the right to remove any content for any reason, including but not limited to, content that it deems threatening, obscene, a violation of intellectual property rights or privacy laws, or otherwise injurious or illegal.

We do not suggest that negative comments from students or the public be deleted from any official College social media page, unless the comments are obscene in nature. We encourage Account Administrators to respond respectfully to negative comments in order to understand the complaint and answer the complaint in a positive fashion.

When using or posting online material that includes direct or paraphrased quotes, thoughts, ideas, photos, or videos, always include citations. Provide a link to the original material if applicable.

Refrain from using information and conducting activities that may violate local, state, or federal laws, and regulations.

Questions about this policy should be directed to **Angela Hobby**, Executive Director of Public Relations and Information, or **Lydia Hubert**, Internal Communications Coordinator.

Official College Social Media Sites

As of the publication of this document, Wiregrass Georgia Technical College has the following social media sites.

- Wiregrass Official College Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/wiregrasstech>
- Wiregrass Professional Services Programs Facebook page –
<https://www.facebook.com/wiregrasstech#!/wiregrassps>
- Wiregrass Business and Computer Sciences Programs Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/wiregrasstech#!/wiregrasscomputerscience>
- Wiregrass Cook Campus Facebook page -
<https://www.facebook.com/wiregrasstech#!/cookcountyworkforcewiregrass>
- Wiregrass Economic Development Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/wiregrasstech#!/wiregrassecondev>
- Wiregrass Pinterest page
<http://pinterest.com/wiregrasstech/>
- Wiregrass Twitter page
<http://twitter.com/wiregrasstech>
- Wiregrass YouTube channel
<http://www.youtube.com/user/WiregrassGaTech>
- LinkedIn groups:
 - Student Professional Development Network at WGTC,
 - WHITS (Health Information Technology student organization group)

Cross Reference:

WGTC Public Relations Webpage

WGTC Policy Manual II.C.4. Acceptable Computer and Internet Use

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*Links Requiring Internet Access

II.D.6a Personal Social Media Account Use

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Use of social media in ways that violate federal, state, and local laws, regulations, rules, and policies, including Wiregrass Georgia Technical College Local Board of Directors policies and the Technical College System of Georgia State Board policies, may result in criminal or civil penalties as well as disciplinary actions. Students must also abide by the Student Code of Conduct. Please refer to the [*Wiregrass Georgia Technical College Student Code of Conduct](#).

Acceptable Use

Social media users must abide by [*Wiregrass Georgia Technical College Acceptable Computer Use and Internet Use Policy](#).

Confidentiality of Student and Applicant Records

Federal laws (including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or "FERPA"), Georgia law, and Wiregrass Georgia Technical College policies governing the confidentiality of student and applicant records (and information from such records) apply to social media use. Information from student, alumni, or applicant records (including but not limited to academic records, disciplinary records, correspondence through e-mail or other means, or (with limited exceptions) any other records individually identifying students at the college or applicants to the college) should never be released via social media, without approval of the Executive Director for Public Relations. Any release of protected records should be accompanied by a signed and dated statement from the student or applicant consenting to the disclosure. For more information about the privacy of student and applicant information, please view the following resources:

- [*FERPA](#)
- [*Student Privacy Rights](#)

Patient Privacy

Use of social media, even in a personal capacity, must comply with state and federal law concerning patient information including but not limited to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). For a general overview of HIPAA, please visit:

- [*HIPPA](#)

Violating a patient's privacy by releasing his or her protected health information is prohibited. Protected health information includes photographs and videos of the patient, even if the patient asked for the photo/video to be made or consented to it being made.

Patient information may not be posted, even if it has been "de-identified." Please keep in mind the following:

- It often is possible to identify patients even if their names or other obvious identifying information are not included.

- Details, such as names, places of work/study, and the date/time stamp can make it easy to identify patients described, particularly to the patients themselves and their families and friends.
- If patients contact those affiliated with Wiregrass Georgia Technical College via social media, simply responding to a patient, with no medical advice, is acceptable. Providing medical advice or information through social media is not permitted, even if it is at the patient's request.

Research and Intellectual Property

Releasing unpublished research data or unprotected intellectual property may impair its protection and copyright. In keeping with the college's **Intellectual Property Policy** unpublished research data or unprotected intellectual property may not be released through social media in a manner that impairs patent protection, violates any condition of an applicable research contract or grant, or violates any applicable law.

Other Forms of Restricted Data

Revealing other forms of legally restricted records, data, or information via social media is strictly prohibited. Records protected include but are not limited to: Social Security numbers, financial information, employee or student medical information, limited access employee records pursuant to the Georgia Open Records Act 58-18-70 et seq., trade secrets, copyrighted materials, and other materials the college is required to maintain as confidential or has agreed to keep confidential.

While those affiliated with Wiregrass Georgia Technical College may disclose information about themselves, they should exercise caution in doing so for their own protection. Once disclosed through social media, the information may be accessed indefinitely and in many contexts (e.g., actual and potential employers, professional licensure authorities, current and future family members) that may not have been contemplated at the time.

Misrepresentation

Those affiliated with Wiregrass Georgia Technical College may not portray themselves as acting on behalf of the college or any part of the college, such as a department, or any other unit, or present a social media account as an official college account unless authorized to do so by the Executive Director for Public Relations. Even when acting in one's college capacity, Wiregrass faculty, staff, students, volunteers, etc. may not represent their own positions and opinions as those of the college. When using social media in a personal capacity, reasonable precautions must be taken to indicate that the activity is being conducted as a private person and not as an employee, agent, or spokesperson of the college.

Authorization

Authorization to present a social media account as an official college activity must come from the Executive Director for Public Relations. Permission to use any Wiregrass Georgia Technical College service marks, trademarks, or logos must be obtained from and may be requested of the Executive Director of Public Relations.

General

Using social media, as with any other personal activity, should not be conducted during the normal work day unless it is during personal time and/or break periods. However, in the case of employees, a vice president or his/her designee may authorize use of social media sites and accounts that further the college's interests. In the case of students, an instructor may authorize use of social media sites during class time if such use is relevant to their capacity as a student.

Social media communications that a reasonable person would consider to be a true threat of violence, or that a reasonable person knows or reasonably should know would cause severe emotional distress, would likely be a violation of the law and in turn violate college regulations. Social media communications that contain false statements that could harm a person's reputation are likely defamatory and may result in civil or criminal liability. Social media communications that are obscene or that represent child pornography violate criminal laws and college regulations. In either of these cases, social media pages found to be in violation of these areas may be referred to administration and/or local law enforcement.

Professional Standards

Those employed or in a course of study in a field that is subject to professional or ethical standards must comply with those standards in their college capacity. Such standards also apply to one's personal capacity if the standards generally apply at all times or if one's personal conduct would affect or reflect on his or her college role.

Text, photos, videos, and other material posted on social media pages, including personal accounts, should be in keeping with generally accepted professional and/or ethical standards for one's field(s) of work and/or study.

Depictions of behavior that do not comply with professional and/or ethical standards may result in disciplinary action by professional organizations or if relevant to a Wiregrass Georgia Technical College role, by the college.

Cross Reference:

WGTC Public Relations Webpage

WGTC Policy Manual V.D. Student Code of Conduct

WGTC Policy Manual II.C.4. Acceptable Computer and Internet Use

WGTC Policy Manual II.D.6. Social Media Policy

FERPA

Student Privacy Rights

HIPPA

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