



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND SCHOOL OF NURSING

Policy on Social Media Use

Responsible Administrator: Director, Legal Affairs

Sponsoring Unit: Office of the Dean

Effective Date: 10/03/2017

Last Reviewed: 11/15/2022

Next Scheduled Review: 08/2025

POLICY STATEMENT

Official University of Maryland School of Nursing (UMSON) communication channels (i.e., University email accounts, Blackboard announcements) will be used for routine communication to enrolled students. While the School also maintains an official social media presence and may disseminate official communications through those channels, they will not be the only medium of communication. All use of social media intended for audiences other than currently enrolled students will be referred to the Offices of Communications or Development and Alumni Relations, as appropriate.

Employees and students are encouraged to be mindful that personal social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) should not be branded in a way that implies or makes a reader potentially believe that the owner or administrator of the account is speaking on behalf of UMSON or the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB).

UMSON has a dedicated team tasked with responding to comments and inquiries on social media. If employees would like to bring a particular topic or discussion to the attention of UMSON for review and potential response, please contact the Office of Communications at nrscommunications@umaryland.edu. Units within UMSON must work with the Office of Communications if they desire to use social media as an official mechanism of the unit's activities. Employees are always permitted to refer individuals on social media to official content generated by UMSON by providing a link to that content.

RATIONALE

Social media provides UMSON and members of its community with unparalleled ability to share information. Given that the mission of the School centers on educating students to care for

patients/clients, this policy addresses the proper use of social media within the ethical and legal parameters of the nursing profession.

Regardless of how social media is used, employees and students are responsible for the content they post or promote on social media. Content contributed on social media platforms is immediately searchable and shareable, regardless of whether that is the intent of the contributor. Once posted online, the content leaves the contributing individual's control forever, may be traced back to the individual in perpetuity, is discoverable, and can place the individual and others at risk.

SCOPE

This policy applies to social media use related to information about the School (including its faculty, staff, and students), patients, or UMSON clinical affiliates, all of which are subject to applicable laws such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES, STATUTES, AND REGULATIONS

School of Nursing Policies and Procedures

- [UMSON Student Handbook, Student Services and Resources, Section I, B. Communication](#)¹

USM, UMB, or Other External Policies, Statutes, and Regulations

- [The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\) \(20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99\)](#)²
- [The HIPAA Privacy Rule 45, CFR 160, 162, and 164](#)³
- [UMB X-99.01\(A\) UMB Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy](#)⁴

CONTACTS

Direct questions or requests for exceptions to the policy to Responsible Administrator.

DEFINITION

Social media are defined as web-based or mobile technologies used for interactive communication. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, collaborative projects

¹ www.nursing.umaryland.edu/student-life/handbook/

² <https://ed.gov/policy/gen/reg/ferpa/index.html>

³ www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/privacy/index.html

⁴ <https://www.umaryland.edu/policies-and-procedures/library/information-technology/policies/x-9901a.php>

(e.g., Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (e.g., Twitter), content communities (e.g., YouTube), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft), virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life), and photo and video sharing applications (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok).

PROCEDURES

Students and employees are prohibited from disclosing through social media the following:

- protected health information, as defined by HIPAA. For example, individuals may not disclose patient or client names or demographic information or otherwise refer to patients or clients in any way that identifies them individually, including by their initials, diagnoses, or location (e.g., hospital name or unit). Accordingly, the use of social media for clinical discussions that include any identifiable information related to patients, clients, or UMSON-affiliated clinical facilities is prohibited.
- any information about the clinical or precepted experience to include:
 - families, clinical facility staff, or clinical institutions
 - the School, its employees, and students
 - information (including photos) about the clinical site or its location
- educational record information, as defined by FERPA. While FERPA permits sharing of certain identifiable student information that is considered directory information, students should not be compelled, as part of a course, to disclose information such as personal email addresses, personal phone numbers, home addresses, or photos of themselves. Students will not be compelled or feel obligated to participate in discussions on blogs or other social media forums. Faculty and staff should not facilitate the creation or distribution of lists that include students' personal (directory) information (personal email addresses, phone numbers, photos, etc.) without the express written permission of each student. Even though FERPA generally permits release of directory information, students can and do have a legal right to opt out. Faculty should be sensitive to the fact that students may not want their photos or contact information on display in UMSON or disseminated electronically to people outside of UMSON's control.
- copyrighted information, trade secrets, or other types of intellectual property belonging to the School or its clinical partners
- Students who violate this policy are in violation of the UMSON Code of Conduct and may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Employees who violate this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

DATE AND SIGNATURE

Date: November 15, 2022

Approved by the Dean:

