

Social Media Best Practices

South Dakota School of Mines & Technology

The office of Marketing and Communications offers these guidelines and best practices for social media use.

When using SD Mines related social media platforms:

- **Respect confidentiality** – While posting to institutional, departmental or organizational social media platforms, always be conscious of the need for confidentiality. Do not reveal proprietary information about South Dakota School of Mines & Technology researchers or research. Also, never share private information about students, employees, or alumni. SD Mines employees are subject to [FERPA](#) and other laws protecting the personal information of students and employees.
- **Be transparent** – We recommend never blogging or posting anonymously or using false screen names.
- **Protect copyright.** Follow copyright laws and fair use of copyrighted materials. See Mines [policy V-A-1](#).
- **Respect the logo** – Never use the SD Mines logo to promote products, causes, political parties or candidates, etc. The logo should not be altered or modified.
- **Respect the university** – If you have to think twice about the professionalism or tastefulness of a post, don't post it. As a representative of the university, always think in the best interest of the school. Post in good taste. Protect our institutional voice. Avoid any posts that could be misinterpreted. Remember, irony rarely translates in social media. It's always best to err on the side of caution.
- **Be respectful** – Before you post that great photo of your peer or a student, get permission. Even if you simply ask them while taking the photo, getting permission goes a long way. Departments may even want to have students or staff sign waivers.
- **Act in a respectful way toward others** – We use social media as a way to connect with others; and as a way to talk about STEM education, research and the amazing things

happening at Mines. People will comment, and that's a good thing. Sometimes the comments might NOT be exactly what you want to hear. Nevertheless, remain respectful in your responses. If you feel the need to respond, counter with respectful facts or research. Make your "conversation" a beacon of civility. If a comment is libelous or obscene, it can be removed, but removing posts just because they counter your belief is discouraged based on First Amendment rights. Perhaps assign one person to monitor comments.

- **Only post accurate information** – Ensure that your information is factual. When possible, link back to the source and make sure the source is reputable. We are a STEM university. Stick to the facts.
- **Fix it and admit it** – If you make an error, that's ok. Acknowledge the mistake (after all, we're all human). Then fix it and move on.
- **Be cautious who you connect with or follow** – If you choose to connect to or follow another social media platform, do so carefully. By following or connecting, it can give the impression that your department or the university endorses the organization or platform. Steer clear of controversy as it could reflect poorly on your department, organization or the SD Mines community.
- **Ensure continuity** – If you choose to open a social media account for a department, organization or the university, assign an administrator to oversee it, an administrator who will be able to supervise the account over an extended period of time. Accounts need some level of continuity. In fact, always appoint two administrators to an account. That way, if one administrator is incapacitated for some reason, there is always a second person to make needed changes available. Also, use a general email address that multiple people can access. This way, if the administrator of the account is no longer with the organization, others in the department or at the university can access it. Too often, social media accounts fall out of use because an administrator graduates or moves on. The account lives in limbo, which looks unprofessional for the department, organization or university.

- **Be strategic** - Consider keeping a calendar for planning purposes. Like anything, posting strategically takes work. A poorly timed post can look sloppy, insensitive or just plain silly. By having a plan, your department or organization will have the confidence that its social media will always be right on target. There are various platforms out there that can help with scheduling posts. Some are free, others charge.
- **Watch your analytics** – Explore your options for monitoring your social media analytics to ensure you are using your social media in the best way possible. Your users are using the platform at certain times and on certain days. Find out when and post accordingly.

Personal use

Most people have their own social media. Here are a few things to consider.

- **Respect confidentiality** – Even when posting to your own social media, remain conscious of the need for confidentiality. Do not reveal proprietary information about South Dakota School of Mines & Technology researchers or their research. Do not share private information about SD Mines students, employees or alumni. SD Mines employees are subject to [FERPA](#) and other laws protecting the personal information of students and employees. It might be your own social media, but you still represent the school in a way.
- **Avoid confusion** – Don't use the SD Mines logo on your page in any way that would lead people to assume you are speaking for the university or that your page is a university page. Always make the distinction. You are welcome to link from your social media sites to the Mines homepage and Mines social media sites and to share information Mines posts on their social media sites.
- **Don't use SD Mines to promote** – Avoid using Mines to promote any product, cause, political party, or candidate on your page. In fact, avoid even the allusion of such action.
- **Use the grandma test** - If you wouldn't want to read your post out loud to your grandma, then don't post it. If you worry that a post may be a tad bit inappropriate,

probably best not to post it. The reality is, posts never die. And there is no such thing as privacy on social media so err on the side of caution.

- **Lock down your privacy** - Consider using tight privacy restrictions in order to limit who sees your private pages. Just know that won't stop most people from seeing them. Always know that what you post on personal pages could affect you professionally.
- **Be clear** – If you identify yourself in your personal social media platforms as an employee of South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, make sure to clarify that your views are your own and not those of the school's.
- **Take the high ground.** If you identify your affiliation with Mines in your comments, readers will associate you with the university, even with the disclaimer that your views are your own. Remember that you're most likely to build a high-quality following if you discuss ideas and situations civilly.
- **Don't overshare** - All social media users should be careful about sharing too much. Be cautious about sharing date of birth, bank info, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, etc.
- **Try to prevent hacking** – Wired magazine suggests adding two-factor authentication on Facebook and Twitter and using strong, unique passwords. Also, don't re-use passwords.
- **Be aware of liability.** You are legally liable for what you post on your own site and the sites of others. Employers are increasingly conducting web searches on job candidates before posting offers. Be sure what you post today will not come back to haunt you.