

Employees of Grand Rapids Community College are reminded that when they use social media platforms (such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, etc.) these platforms are immediate and permanent. Accordingly, they should give the ramifications of anything they publish due consideration, regardless of whether it is personal or professional. Everything we do ultimately reflects on the college.

Legal Considerations: There are several aspects of communications law that pertain to the use of social media:

- **Accreditation:** all content published by the college must be accurate and consistent – as such, information distributed via social media must match the information distributed through our print materials and website.
- **Intellectual Property Law:** representatives of GRCC do not appropriate content for use by the college without the approval of the copyright holder. Employees should not use text or media (video, images, etc.) without the permission of the owner. In addition, wherever possible all sources should be cited. (If you have questions about Fair Use, visit this website set up by Stanford University: <http://fairuse.stanford.edu/>)
- **Confidential Information:**
 - Privacy: like all educational institutions we are bound by the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) – as such we require permission from our students before publishing content about them. Similarly, please be respectful of the privacy of colleagues and ensure that you have their approval before publishing content about them.
 - Other Confidential Information: employees are encouraged to get the approval of their supervisors before publishing sensitive information.
- **Transparency:** all social media efforts on behalf of the college must be open and transparent and readily acknowledge one's connection to GRCC.
- **Conflict of Interest:** all social media efforts are subject to GRCC Policy 6.7 – Conflict of Interest. (Available here: <http://web.grcc.cc.mi.us/Pr/bfs/policies/2008/6.7ConflictofInterest.pdf>)
- **Employee Handbook:** you are liable for anything you publish online as it pertains to GRCC employee guidelines and employees may be held accountable for content published in affiliation with GRCC that contains content which is defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous, or that creates a hostile work environment.
- **Authorized User Agreement:** All GRCC employees and their use of college resources to use social media platforms are subject to the college's AUA: <http://www.grcc.edu/aua>

Practical Considerations

GRCC-Related Social Media

Any social media endeavor that is published directly on behalf of the college (as opposed to for personal interest) should ideally meet each of the items on this list:

- Connection to the College?: All official presences should be tied back to GRCC's website (www.grcc.edu) in some way so that those using the website's search engine may find these external presences, and also so that users who happen across these social media platforms can find their way back to the college. Ideally this would include two elements:
 - A splash/description page on GRCC's website that is integrated into a department's navigation menu and offers a link or redirect to the social media presence.
 - A link back to the GRCC website (where possible) in either the description of the social media presence or in the menu structure of the presence.
- Contact Information?: The presence should (where possible) provide information about who maintains the presence (bet it a department or individual employee) and how they may be contacted (preferably by email and/or phone).
- Descriptive Information?: The presence should (where possible) identify what the purpose of the presence is and who the presence serves.
- Visual Identity?: The presence should be readily identifiable as being part of the college by adhering to the Graphic Identity guide published by the Communications and Graphic Services departments at GRCC.
- Responsive?: We should strive at all times to be accountable to our audiences which means committing to regular updates, accuracy, and responding promptly to them when appropriate (whether it be admitting error, correcting misinformation, or taking action on their behalf).

Personal Social Media

When accessing social media for personal use – realize that these are highly public forums that can be accessed by students, co-workers, and the community .

- Be Respectful: Please respect the interests and privacy of your colleagues and students online.
- Seek Approval Before Representing GRCC: Unless you have approval from a manager, please do not speak as a representative of the college.
- Notify Communications: As a courtesy, if you may be mentioning GRCC using social media, please let the Communications Department know that you may be doing so by registering your presence with this form: <http://www.grcc.edu/grccsocialmedia>
- Respect GRCC's Intellectual Property: You may not use logos, trademarks or any other images (including photos taken/owned by GRCC) from the college without the approval of the Communications Department.
- Refer News Media to Communications: media contacts about GRCC should be referred for coordination and guidance to the Communications Department. As a courtesy, if your personal content is featured by the media or you are interviewed, the Communications Department would appreciate notification (primarily so that the college can promote the story).

Best Practices for Specific Platforms

Facebook

- Groups: Groups are best used when active collaboration must take place within an organization.
- Fan Pages: Fan pages are best when representing a singular entity that may require interaction with large numbers of stakeholders.
- Advertising: When engaging in any type of advertising, it is best to solicit the input of the Communications Department. Facebook is primarily used for advertising if one has a very specific audience to target. Given the constraints on space, it is permissible to use the acronym “GRCC” as opposed to the full “Grand Rapids Community College” because we are able to target the advertising to those geographically proximate to the college or by topic.

MySpace

- Groups: Groups are best used when active collaboration must take place within an organization.
- Advertising: When engaging in any type of advertising, it is best to solicit the input of the Communications Department. Facebook is primarily used for advertising if one has a very specific audience to target. Given the constraints on space, it is permissible to use the acronym “GRCC” as opposed to the full “Grand Rapids Community College” because we are able to target the advertising to those geographically proximate to the college or by topic.

Twitter

- Given the constraints on space, it is permissible to use the acronym “GRCC” as opposed to the full “Grand Rapids Community College.”
- If one intends to speak on behalf of GRCC or one of its departments/programs, the description of the Twitter account must mention the department/individual’s relationship to GRCC.
- The “website” link must provide a link back to content on the www.grcc.edu/ domain (ideally to the department’s page; i.e. www.grcc.edu/communications)
- If possible, all tweets should include the #grcc hashtag to more easily enable users to find them.

Twitter Best Practices

1. Staffing: Avoid using “Twinterns” for your social media. It’s imperative that the staff updating the content and responding to students be knowledgeable not only about the college, but about good customer service practices as well.
2. Proofreading: As a higher education institution, we must be aware that we are held to a higher standard for grammar/spelling than other organizations using social media. Grammar/spelling are important – proofread content before publishing whenever possible.
3. Profile Photos: When selecting a profile photo, it is important to choose something that is 1) easily recognizable even as a small image (50 x 50 is typically the size of Facebook thumbnails) and 2) that ties the presence back to GRCC. Contact the Printing and Graphics department (grceprint@grcc.edu) for help with images (they have a library of great photography to draw from and can add GRCC logos/text to the images so that they clearly represent the college).

4. Timeliness: Cultivating a group of people around a social media presence takes time and energy – if done badly (if it is not updated regularly, if it is not responsive to contact from audience members, etc.) it can do more harm than good. Think about your ability to commit time to this venture before engaging.

Other Considerations

Requests to Remove Information From GRCC's Web and Social Media Presences

- Grand Rapids Community College will consider the removal of content from its social media presences by request of individuals affected by that content if it compromises their privacy, is inaccurate, or compromises their ability to learn in some other way (however the college can make no guarantees that the content will not be cached and preserved online by a third party such as Google).

Resources

- [Blogger Code of Ethics](#), Charlene Li (Forrester Research)
- [WOMMA Code of Ethics](#), Word of Mouth Marketing Association