Elon University Social Media Policy

Who: This policy applies to Elon faculty and staff who use social media on behalf of the university and/or in their professional communications.

What: This policy relates to interactive online social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, TikTok, Wikipedia and others.

Social networks are powerful and can shape personal and professional reputations. The lines between what is public and private, personal and professional, as well as individual voice and institutional voice, are often unclear on social media. Simply identifying yourself as an Elon University employee means you are creating perceptions about your expertise and about the university. Be sure that all content you post on social media is consistent with your work and with Elon University's mission and values.

Elon University employees should understand that **all university personnel policies related to standards of personal conduct, unacceptable behaviors and use of the university's resources apply equally to the use of social media.** The same laws and professional expectations for interacting with students, parents, alumni, donors, media and other university constituents apply online as in other situations. Employees are liable for any activity they conduct using Elon University computers or devices, the Elon University network, Elon University email accounts or any activity that was conducted on the elon.edu domain. On personal accounts, if you identify yourself as an Elon faculty or staff member, you should be clear that you are sharing your personal views and not necessarily the views of Elon University.

Policies for all social media activities

- **Protect confidential and proprietary information:** Adhere to all applicable university privacy and confidentiality policies. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Elon University, students, employees or alumni. Pay particular attention to the applicable federal requirements, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), as well as to NCAA regulations. Sharing such private information can result in legal action against you and/or Elon University. Never comment on anything related to legal matters, litigation or any parties with whom the university is in litigation.

- **Respect copyright and fair use:** At all times, adhere to copyright laws, fair use guidelines and the intellectual property rights of others and of the university. A good resource for information on this is found on the Electronic Frontier Foundation website: https://www.eff.org/issues/bloggers/legal/liability/IP

- **Do not use Elon University logos or graphic symbols for endorsements:** Do not use the university's name to promote a product, business, issue, cause or political party or candidate.

- **Respect university time and property:** University computers and time on the job are provided for university-related business. Supervisors must make decisions on appropriate use of social media by employees in accordance with individual job responsibilities. In general, use of university equipment and work time for social media should be restricted to activities that benefit and support the mission and work of the university.

- **Terms of service:** Obey the terms of service of all social media platforms.

Posting on behalf of an Elon University department or organization

- **Your responsibility:** You are responsible for what you post, so make sure all content is consistent with the university's policies, mission and values. Be aware that postings on social media may be available to anyone. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created or deleted, and comments can be forwarded or copied without your knowledge. If you wouldn't say it in a public setting, don't post it online. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, ask your supervisor for input or contact the University Communications social media manager.

- **Acknowledge who you are:** If you are representing Elon University when posting on a social media platform, acknowledge this clearly. Provide your Elon University contact information upon request. If you express an opinion on a site, make it clear the views are yours and not necessarily those of Elon University.

- **Strive for accuracy:** Confirm facts before posting information on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors. Correct errors promptly and transparently.

- **Be respectful and polite:** Understand that content contributed to a social media site will encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. In the same way that we foster respect for human differences on campus, make sure that your social media interactions are restrained and cautious, being especially careful about responding to criticism or engaging in online debate or sparring over an issue. Hostile, threatening or offensive content is prohibited.

Elon University department/organization social media accounts

- **Creation of Elon University social media accounts, pages and hashtags:** Before launching a social media account on behalf of a unit of the university, get approval from your supervisor. The department must commit to maintain the

account, determine the goals of investing the university's resources in this effort and designate a person who will be responsible for the account and for creating content on a regular basis.

Once the department has determined it will establish the account, contact the university's social media manager in the Office of University Communications, who will create the account through an institutional login and email address before providing access for individuals designated by departments to manage the page or account.

If your university department or unit is sponsoring an event or campaign and you'd like to create a unique account or event page, contact the University Communications social media manager for guidance. When possible, contact the social media manager prior to creating a dedicated hashtag for your department, event or campaign so that staff member can aid in the promotion and use of the hashtag when appropriate.

- **Account security:** Individuals must NOT **create** social media pages or accounts on behalf of departments or units of the university through personal or departmental logins. Tying these accounts to personal emails or logins makes it difficult or impossible to pass management of the accounts from one person to another when personnel changes occur. It also increases the risk of a university-affiliated account being hacked. If you are a manager/administrator for a Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or LinkedIn account that allows you to **manage** it through a personal login, it is a best practice to ensure your personal password is strong and unique from the passwords you use to log in to other online sites. If your personal account that is tied to the management of a department/unit account is compromised or hacked, alert University Communications immediately.

  Because of the security considerations associated with social media systems, student workers who are allowed to manage department or program social media accounts should be monitored by a faculty or staff member and should not be given full administrative rights to the account.

  The University Communications social media manager must have access to and ownership of the account at all times. Though content management of department/unit accounts might be left to one or several individuals, all accounts created and managed on behalf of a university department/unit belong to the university, not the individual who created or manages it.

  University Communications encourages account managers to limit to three (3) the number of administrators/managers of a department social media account (in addition to the University Communications social media manager).

- **Previously created accounts and pages:** Departments or units of the university

that have previously created social media accounts through personal logins by employees should contact the University Communications social media manager to determine whether those accounts can be transitioned to university ownership.

- **Content on department accounts:** Use a high-quality image or icon that is in line with Elon University's Graphic Identity Standards to represent the department in the account's profile/cover photos. If you don't have access to an appropriate image or would like help creating one, contact the University Communications photographer or design staff. Some imagery, such as the university seal, should not be used as art for social media accounts. Make sure the account includes an accurate description of the department and contact information as well as a link to the department's website on elon.edu.

- **Maintenance of content:** All social media accounts and pages must be actively maintained with regular posting of content by those responsible for those accounts. If you need help discerning what makes for good content or developing a strategy for creating or managing posts, contact the University Communications social media manager. Accounts that are abandoned, with no content posted within a four-month period, may be deleted by the Office of University Communications.

- **Managing comments posted by users:** In keeping with the university's mission as an institution that encourages freedom of thought and liberty of conscience, Elon University's social media pages should allow most comments, even those that are critical of the University or its programs. There are a few exceptions:
    - Comments that constitute a personal attack or criticism of an individual.
    - Hostile, threatening or obscene comments that are not allowed under Elon University's employee policies or student honor code.
    - Commercial messages that are meant to use the university's social media sites as vehicles to promote ongoing businesses.
  Content that falls within these categories should be immediately deleted from university-managed pages and accounts.

Student organization social media accounts

- **University Communications will not create or manage accounts on behalf of recognized student organizations.** Responsibility for the creation of a social media presence rests with the members of recognized student organizations. It is recommended that student organization leaders work with their advisors to devise a process to ensure continuity of access to accounts as membership changes over time. It is recommended that group advisors have the passwords and rights to administer the student organization accounts.

- **Ensure proper identification:** Student organizations must be clear in descriptions of their accounts that they are not departments or offices of the university.

- **Standards for social media conduct and messages:** All content published through social media accounts managed by student organizations is governed by existing policies in the Student Handbook and by the Elon University Honor Code.

University Communications staff are available to provide assistance and answer questions at 278-7415.

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