

## Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine (VTCSOM)

**Policy:** Social Media  
**Subject:** Student Affairs  
**Administrator:** A. Knight & E. Berbic  
**Rev.:** 2  
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### 1 Purpose

VTCSOM recognizes that social media sites have become important and influential communication channels. Social media includes but is not limited to blogs, podcasts, discussion forums, vlogs, collaborative information and publishing systems such as wikis, video and photo sharing sites, and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr. VTCSOM believes that having a presence in these areas will allow the school to broadcast information and interact with a broader public in an enriching way.

### 2 Policy

In order to operate within these media effectively, VTCSOM has developed a social media policy to ensure that any and all interactions on behalf of VTCSOM represent the school's best interests. These policies and guidelines apply to faculty, staff, and students and can be used in connection with social media accounts associated with schools, colleges, departments, programs and offices.

The VTCSOM Social Media Policy only applies to social media sites and accounts created to represent VTCSOM and its departments, programs, entities, groups, etc. and does not apply to private individual accounts. While VTCSOM does not monitor students' individual accounts, no confidential or patient information should be shared on them, and appropriate disciplinary action can be taken if this occurs.

#### General Guidelines

The purpose of using these communication channels on behalf of VTCSOM is to support the school's mission, goals, programs, and sanctioned efforts, including school news, information, content and directives.

Students should exercise appropriate caution with electronic communication and social networking since there are possible serious ramifications related to issues including but not limited to professionalism and confidentiality issues. When using an officially recognized social media channel, assume at all times that you are representing VTCSOM. Be clear that you are sharing your views as a member of the school's community, and not as a representative of VTCSOM. Therefore, any student-run social media site(s), unaffiliated with the official VTCSOM social media site(s), containing full or partial name(s) of Virginia Tech Carilion or VTC (or VT Carilion), Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine or VTCSOM, Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute or VTCSOM&RI (or VTCSOMRI), is required to include an *affiliation disclaimer*. You will be asked to remove or deactivate such page(s) or site(s) if they do not comply with the stated guideline.

### Affiliation Disclaimer

A common practice among individuals who use a social media platform to communicate about the organization or group that they are affiliated with is to include a disclaimer on their site, usually on their “About” page. We require that you include a statement similar to this on any unofficial student-run social media page or website:

“The views expressed on this [blog, Web site, Facebook page] are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of VTCSOM or its affiliates.”

Confidential or proprietary school information or similar information of third parties, who have shared such information with you on behalf of VTCSOM, should not be shared publicly on these social media channels.

Medical students have access to protected information about patients and the care provided to them. Simply removing a patient’s name does not render that information de-identified. As such, no confidential or patient information should be posted on public websites.

Any use of VTCSOM marks, such as logos and graphics, must comply with the VTCSOM's Trademark Licensing Policies and must be first approved by the VTC Department of Marketing and Communications.

### **Procedures**

#### Approval Process

Prior to engaging in any form of social media involving VTCSOM, students must receive permission from the Associate Dean of Student Affairs. Once approved by the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, the request shall be forwarded to the Department of Marketing and Communications for approval. If applicable, the appropriate IT department shall also be consulted.

#### Student Accountability

Students who use these websites must be aware that posting certain information is illegal. Violation of existing statutes and administrative regulations may expose the offender to criminal and civil liability, and the punishment for violations may include fines and imprisonment. Offenders also may be subject to adverse academic actions up to and including dismissal. Please be advised that the following actions are forbidden:

- You may not present the personal health information of other individuals. Removal of an individual's name or identifying information does not alone constitute proper de-identification of protected health information. Inclusion of data such as age, gender, race, diagnosis, date of evaluation, or type of treatment or the use of a highly specific medical photograph (such as photographs of cadavers, a before/after photograph of a patient having surgery or a photograph of a patient from one of the medical outreach trips) may still allow the reader to recognize the identity of a specific individual.
- You may not post comments which elicit or promote violence or violent acts towards a person, entity, or an organization.

- You may not report private (protected) academic information of another student or trainee.
- You may not present yourself as an official representative or spokesperson for the institution.
- You may not represent yourself as another person, real or fictitious, or otherwise attempt to obscure your identity as a means to circumvent the prohibitions listed above and below.

Students should make every effort to present themselves in a mature, responsible, and professional manner. Discourse should always be civil and respectful. Please be aware that no privatization measure is perfect and that undesigned persons may still gain access to your networking site. Future employers (residency or fellowship program directors, department chairs, or private practice partners) often review these network sites when considering potential candidates for employment. Knowledge of any inappropriate use of social networking should be reported to the Office of Student Affairs.