

Alma College Social Media Policy

How Alma College uses social media

Social media platforms are powerful tools that enable the college to connect and communicate with our key audiences and share news from campus. Conversations about the college happen every day in the social media environment, creating opportunities to build relationships with our various audiences.

The Alma College Social Media Policy applies to Alma College faculty, staff and students who create content intended for the Internet as part of their institutional responsibilities or who use Alma College in their profile name. This includes (but is not limited to) social platforms, blogs, wikis, or any other kind of social media. We encourage the use of these media to tell Alma's story and promote college news and the work of faculty, students and staff.

This policy has been developed to help define acceptable use by those members of the Alma community who are authorized to post on behalf of the college. However, these guidelines also provide helpful tips for personal use of social media as well.

Before creating a Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other social media account or profile that represents Alma College, you must notify the Director of Marketing. The Communication and Marketing Department monitors all social media activity related to the Alma College brand and provides training and resources for social media users. Information regarding brand, logo use, graphic standards and the college's style manual can be found at: <http://www.alma.edu/offices/communication-and-marketing/resources/>

Social media use guidelines

We have prepared the following guidelines for your social media participation as a representative of Alma College.

- **You are Alma College.** Reflect the mission and core values of the college in your interactions. The opinions of those outside the college are shaped by the way you talk about it, both positively and negatively. The external public does not take into consideration our internal organizational structure, so what you say is often interpreted to represent the entire institution.
- **Check it twice.** Proofread your post before making it visible to your audience. Ensure that posts are free of spelling and grammar errors. Recognize the wide range of sensibilities in the college's audiences and avoid content that is offensive, denigrating or profane.
- **Protect confidentiality.** Do not disclose confidential college information, non-public strategies, student records, or any personal information concerning past or present members of the Alma College community without proper authorization. If you have questions about whether something is appropriate to post, ask the applicable executive staff member before posting.

- **Add value.** Ask yourself if you are the right person to answer a question or engage in a discussion. Might there be someone else on campus better qualified to provide a response? If the subject falls under your area of expertise and/or job responsibilities, you may be the best person to respond. If not, please pass the information along to the appropriate person or department so that they can provide a helpful response.
- **Share.** Whenever appropriate, share content directly from the Alma College social media platforms rather than duplicating it. When content is directly shared, it is linked back to the college's social media accounts. This facilitates the college's efforts to analyze social media traffic and engagement. In addition, posts originating from Alma College will have the appropriate links attached to bring the viewer back to the website or coordinating landing page.
- **Respect the copyrights and trademarks.** Unauthorized use of the Alma College name, logo or trademarks without the express permission of an authorized official of the college is prohibited. Before posting content created by others, make sure you've obtained appropriate permission and that you've attributed the content to its creator. For helpful information about fair use and copyright requirements, visit <http://fairuse.stanford.edu/>
- **Accept responsibility.** If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and be quick with your correction. If you are posting to a blog, you may choose to modify an earlier posting. Just make it clear that you have done so.
- **Use moderation.** Remember that messages on the Internet are public, permanent and easily shared. There is no such thing as private information on the Internet. Operate under the assumption that everyone will see everything you share, and refrain from posting anything you might regret later.

For additional information and practical tips, see Social Media Best Practices at the end of this document.

Regarding personal versus professional accounts and freedom of expression

In personal posts, you may wish to identify yourself as an Alma College faculty, staff or student. However, please be clear that you are sharing your views as an individual, not as a representative of Alma College. If you identify yourself as a student, faculty member or employee of Alma College in your personal use of social media, you are encouraged to observe the Social Media Policy guidelines.

Professional contact information should be reserved for any account that represents your work at Alma College. Alternatively, personal contact information should be used in connection with accounts that are strictly personal or a mix of personal and professional information. When in doubt, use your personal contact information. If you choose to add links to personal social media accounts to your faculty or staff profile on the Alma College web site, these guidelines must be followed.

The following excerpts from the Alma College Manual of Organization and Operation outline the college's policies on freedom of expression for faculty and administrators.

For Faculty

The faculty have adopted the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Statement of Professional Ethics as restated in the college's Manual of Organization and Operation (Faculty Section V - Professional Ethics, Rights and Responsibilities, I.A.2.d and e)

d.) As members of an academic institution, professors seek above all to be effective teachers and scholars. Although professors observe the stated regulations of the institution, provided the regulations do not contravene academic freedom, they maintain their right to criticize and seek revision. Professors give due regard to their paramount responsibilities within their institution in determining the amount and character of work done outside it. When considering the interruption or termination of their service, professors recognize the effect of their decision upon the program of the institution and give due notice of their intentions.

e.) As members of their community, professors have the rights and obligations of other citizens. Professors measure the urgency of these obligations in the light of their responsibilities to their subject, their students, to their profession and to their institution. When they act or speak as private persons, they avoid creating the impression of speaking or acting for their college or university. As citizens engaged in a profession that depends upon freedom for its health and integrity, professors have a particular obligation to promote conditions free of inquiry and to further public understanding of academic freedom.

For Administrators

Freedom of Expression: The administrator is a citizen, a member of a profession, and an official of the College. When an administrator speaks, writes, or acts reasonably as a citizen, he or she shall be free from institutional censorship or discipline. He or she must keep in mind that the public may judge his or her profession and the College by his or her utterances, writings, or actions. Hence, the administrator should at all times be accurate, show proper respect for the opinions of others, and make every effort to indicate that he or she is not an institutional spokesperson.

(Subsection B – Administrative Staff - Rights and Obligations of Employment at Alma College, I.B.4.a)

Social Media Best Practices

1. **Think about your audience.** Are they prospective students, current students, parents, staff, faculty, alumni, donors, employers, colleagues at other institutions, and/or the media?
2. **Consider your goal(s).** Is it to:
 - Recruit prospective students?
 - Help current students?
 - Connect with alumni?
 - Promote events?
 - Collect feedback?
 - Encourage discussion?

Before you post, consider how the post moves you toward your goal(s).

3. **Engage your audience.** Post what is interesting or useful. Don't just push out information; start conversations and join in on them. Ask questions and reply. Avoid posting about general topics such as lunch, the weather, etc. Your posts should be relevant to your goals and who you are.
4. **Consider the tone.** Your tone sends important messages about how helpful (or not) you are, and whether people want to study, work or live at Alma.
Are you:
 - Positive and upbeat?
 - Negative and apologetic?
 - Friendly and social?
 - Formal and professional?
 - Does your tone change appropriately with the situation?
5. **Strengthen Alma's brand.** Tell the Alma College story — and make it personal.
 - Share what you think makes Alma College distinctive from other colleges/universities.
 - When practical, tag your posts with one of the brand expressions, such as #Plaid Works.
 - If using a college logo, make sure it's aligned with Alma's brand standards, including colors, fonts, etc.
For a guide on Alma's brand standards, go to:
<http://www.alma.edu/offices/communication-and-marketing>.
6. **Be visual.** Posts with photos, graphics, videos and links perform far better than posts with just text.
7. **Be compelling.** Keep your text short and sweet. If your text is well-crafted, you won't have to wave and shout to grab people's attention.

8. **Drive people to our website.** You can't (and shouldn't!) fit everything onto social media. Include some compelling text, then link back to your Alma web page for more information.
9. **Post at peak times and days.** Social media activity is highest between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The noon lunch hour is prime time for nearly all audiences. Activity drops off at night and on Fridays. Avoid posting during evenings and weekends.
10. **Roll with the Punches.** If someone criticizes Alma College or your office, you can act in one of three ways: Respond, refer or ignore.
 - **Respond:** Be polite and respectful; acknowledge the individual's concern and thank them for their feedback. Tell them that you're on it and then follow-up.
 - **Refer:** Be as helpful as possible. If you don't know the answer, try to find it on our website. If needed, call/email someone else to find that information, then respond. If the "best person to answer" has their own Twitter account, ask that they respond to the person. Or you can suggest that the complainant contact someone with more information/authority in the matter. Providing a name, email address, phone number, or web page is most helpful.
 - **Ignore:** This is the least favorable option. Ignore the post if:
 1. A response would only add fuel to the fire,
 2. The person appears to be venting with no constructive purpose, or
 3. No help can be offered
11. **Monitor often.** Post at least once a week, but monitor several times a week for mentions and posts by others. You don't want to be days late in responding to inquiries.
 - **Pro Tip:** Hootsuite and Tweetdeck are great tools for those who want to become more advanced in monitoring and participating in conversations, as well as scheduling posts in advance.

For social media guidance, training and feedback, contact the Alma College Communication and Marketing Office.