



Faculty and Staff Use of Social Media: Sample Policy

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Social media—including sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, blogs, and other online discussion forums—has extended its reach into many areas of modern life, including (or especially) the lives of students, as well as teachers and administrators. While the origins of these services are social in nature (i.e., not job-related), they have evolved to the point where certain uses of these outlets may impact the reputation and well-being of your school and its members (for example, if they inadvertently serve as a conduit facilitating inappropriate relationships between students and faculty/staff). Due to this possibility, the use of social media resources becomes part of the school's appropriate purview with respect to employees.

ISM encourages all schools to implement policies that will help the school and its employees to more safely navigate the uncharted waters regarding the impact of social media activities on the school and its students. The following represents a sample policy designed to serve a range of private-independent schools. As with all policies, we recommend that you modify it as necessary to align with and support your mission, culture, and values—and, prior to implementation, all policies should be reviewed with your employment attorney.

Please note: This policy concerns the personal (but job-related) use of social media by individual employees. This is only one part of the entire social media equation, however. The other significant part is the school's "official" use of social media for its own purposes—such as staying in touch with alumni, parents, and potential donors, or getting its message out in an accessible way to prospective parents and students. In this way, the marketing, admission, and development functions of the school all may have direct need of social media resources (e.g., setting up a Facebook page for the school, sending out regular "tweets" on Twitter). As noted in provision No. 2 of this policy, we recommend that the school develop a second policy describing how the school uses social media resources for official purposes—and delineating which individuals or departments are responsible for managing this usage.

Because of the formatting of this issue, we're providing the whole article as a PDF. [Please click here to download.](#) We encourage you to save this to your desktop or an easy to access folder on your hard drive.

Future issues of I&P will discuss the appropriate use of social media in a private-independent school setting, particularly in the areas of admission, marketing, and development.