

## SOCIAL MEDIA

### Social Media Guidelines & Best Practices

Adapted from the Villanova University Office of University Communication Social Media Handbook

The Alumni Association implements the following guidelines for creating and maintaining official VUAA Chartered Organization social media accounts. These guidelines ensure that communications taking place on official VUAA social media accounts on behalf of the University represent the best interests of the institution.

### Proper Use of the Villanova University Brand

If you intend to create or maintain an official recognized social media site, you should use simple approved graphics that represent the Villanova University brand. The University's name, in any word form, logos and other registered trademarks are protected by intellectual property laws. No unofficial social media account should ever use a Villanova logo or any other University graphics, symbols or wordmarks, and the University reserves the right to take any steps, including legal action, necessary to protect its intellectual property interests. Any questions about the proper use of the Villanova name or brand-related iconography (logos, symbols, wordmarks, etc.) should be directed to your AR staff liaison.

### Social Media Best Practices

University Communication recommends that Villanovans who are involved in social media understand and employ the following best practices to increase the likelihood of success in building a vibrant online community.

#### Be Strategic

Because of the significant commitment required for effective social media activity, the Villanova entity that you represent should have a well-reasoned and clearly defined purpose for wanting to establish and maintain a social media account. What objective does your group desire to achieve using social media; does that objective align with larger University objectives and what strategies will be employed to attain it? Remember, too, that a clearly articulated rationale for engaging in social media is a factor in the decision to grant (or deny) official status to your group's account.

#### Make Time to Post

Don't start a social media effort unless you intend to dedicate time and resources to post new, interesting content regularly. Good content—both original posts as well as responses to comments and inquiries from followers—is critical to nurturing and maintaining social media communities. Accounts that are updated infrequently are considered stagnant or dormant, which is grounds for denial or revocation of official status.

#### Conduct Research

Tune in to successful social media accounts that you believe are working toward objectives that are similar to yours. Take note of the frequency of new posts and their content. As important, note whether or not the account engenders any response from followers.

#### Be Respectful

As a Villanovan, you should understand the University's commitment to respecting the dignity of others and to embracing civil and thoughtful discussion of opposing viewpoints. Feel free to respectfully disagree with a position. However, don't be confrontational or acrimonious, and under no circumstances should you resort to a personal attack. Such behavior reflects poorly on both you and the University.

#### Be Positive

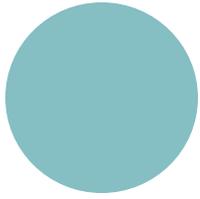
Being upbeat and cheerful in your social media interactions requires no more effort than projecting acrimony and cynicism. You may attract regular followers simply by being a consistent bright spot in their day.

#### Be Accurate, Give Credit

Do not speculate—know the facts before posting. Also, properly attribute content to sources using citations and links whenever possible. Above all, correct your errors quickly and visibly. This is vital to building credibility and earning the respect of others in your online community. The following post to a Twitter account (i.e., a "tweet") is an example of proper attribution: Sheila Reid named National Women's Track Athlete of the Year <http://bit.ly/jmPdRI> (via @NovaAthletics).

#### Be a Valued Member

If you join a social network or comment on someone's blog post, contribute valuable insights. Don't write on a topic unless you are reasonably sure that it will be of interest to other community members. Account managers or discussion leaders in particular should pay attention to their selection of discussion topics. Topics should be timely, relevant and also align with the overarching strategy that is guiding social media involvement.



## **SOCIAL MEDIA (continued)**

### **That's Why it's Called the Web!**

A significant part of the utility and appeal of the Internet is the interconnectedness of websites and the content within them. Whenever possible, your social media posts should be briefly informative and redirect followers to relevant, more detailed content within Villanova's main website or microsites.

### **Stay On Topic**

Engage in open discussion about Villanova University and local events and activities. Posts and updates that have little or no relevance to your target audience community are of no strategic value to your overall social media efforts.

### **It's a Conversation**

Listen to people and respond with constructive feedback to as many comments as possible. Encourage feedback by asking questions. Examples of conversation starters include "Where's the best place to study on campus?" or "What's your favorite menu item in Dougherty?"

### **If it Gives You Pause, Pause**

If you are about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, then take some time to review these guidelines and think about your post. If you still are unsure, voice your concerns to your AR staff liaison.

### **Comments are Great**

In general, commentary—whether positive or negative—that is thoughtful, respectful and relevant to an ongoing conversation should be approved for publication. Comments of community members add depth to a discussion and provide credibility and gravity to your original posts. Moreover, as social media communities grow, they trend toward engaging in self-corrective behavior.

### **Monitor and Evaluate**

Social media initiatives yield the most value when time spent posting thoughtful content is counterbalanced by efforts to listen to what others are saying about the group you represent. The feedback you obtain from listening allows you to gauge prevailing attitudes and perceptions that, in turn, allow you to modify your actions and converse more effectively.

Beyond listening to conversations, social media account administrators should become familiar with any built-in analytics functions of their social media platforms and regularly monitor the data captured. No long-term improvement in account metrics that are relevant to the objectives underlying your involvement in social media might be cause to reevaluate that involvement.

University Communication recommends thinking about the following questions to determine the efficacy of your social media efforts and whether or not you should proactively downgrade your account to unofficial status.

- Does your Villanova organization or group have a potential audience large enough to need its own account and sustain it over a longer term?
- Are your posts authentic and relevant to your audience?
- Are you posting too often—spamming your audience—or posting too rarely?
- Do your posts conversation starters or are you engaging in a monologue?
- Is anyone commenting?