



ELMS COLLEGE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Fall 2018

All users must adhere to [Elms College IT's acceptable use policy](#).

Social media tools have changed how we work, and how we connect with the public. Sharing Elms news or events, or promoting student and faculty accomplishments via social media tools is a low-cost, effective way to engage our community. Employees and students are encouraged to share and repost publicly available information such as articles, press releases, Internet news stories and videos, and more. The best way to share college news is to link to the original source.

Faculty and staff (including student interns and volunteers) must always maintain confidentiality of students' and other individuals' protected information, as outlined by FERPA and HIPAA.

New Account Creation

When a member of the Elms community wants to create an official social media account for an Elms club, class, office, or other entity, that person must contact Marketing at marketing@elms.edu to arrange for creation of the account. Students who want to create accounts for clubs or other groups should copy the club's faculty advisor(s) on the request email.

Once the request comes to Marketing, we will work with users to set up accounts with appropriate branding and information.

All accounts must be associated with an official Elms email address -- this means that accounts cannot be created with an external Gmail account, for example. An email address ending in "elms.edu" must be used. To administer any EC Facebook pages, users must create a Facebook account using their Elms email address; there is no need to add friends or use this account for anything other than page/group administration. Marketing can guide you on this.

To avoid the proliferation of small accounts that splinter the college's audience, Marketing will work with entities to determine and create the most effective type of account for each purpose. Sometimes this will mean combining multiple small accounts within a division, or creating Facebook groups instead of pages. Marketing will advise based on best practices and experience overseeing EC accounts.

Account Maintenance

- Entities (such as departments, divisions, clubs, and other groups on campus) are expected to maintain their accounts and should appoint a designated user (or users) who will post content on a regular basis.
- See content guidelines for more information about what (and what not) to post.
- All users must adhere to [Elms College IT's acceptable use policy](#).

- If the account is inactive (or mostly inactive) for 6 months, it will be considered for deletion.
- If followers do not grow sufficiently in the first year, the account will be considered for deletion.

Separation Policy

See [IT's workforce separation policy](#) for information about procedures and account access in case of termination, either voluntary or involuntary.

Content Posting Guidelines

There's a lot of traffic on social media. To get noticed -- to build an active, engaged community of followers -- we need to take specific steps to make sure our social media posts stand out.

Provide useful content

Every time you start a social media post on any platform, pause and think about your message. What is the simplest, most appealing way to say what you want to get across? More importantly, what will our audience get out of it?

Social content must be useful for our audience, whether we're promoting an upcoming event, sharing an Elms success story, or introducing a new academic program. It should tell people something they need to know or share something they might like to see.

Get to the point: On Twitter, you have 280 characters for each tweet. Use them wisely.

If you find yourself running out of room, think carefully about shorter ways to say things rather than shrinking words by removing letters. Excessive abbreviations (We wnt 2 C U @ R Xmas prty) can be hard to read, and many users won't bother to take the time to decode your message.

That said, you do want to be concise. When you've written a social media post, before you click "publish" or "tweet" or "send," look it over and see where you might be able to be clearer, where you might be able to tighten up a little. Be your own editor! Dates and times are easy places to trim characters (on Twitter, you can use only eight characters to say "8PM 10/3" instead of 22 characters for the standard "at 8 p.m. on October 3").

Outside of Twitter, on Facebook and Instagram and so on, please don't over-abbreviate. Dates and times should still be in standard format (for example: 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday, July 29, 2016). Ordinal numbers are not used in dates -- no need to write "Oct. 3rd" when "Oct. 3" is pronounced exactly the same. See the official Elms College Editorial Style Guide for more information.

Include links whenever possible: Social media is a great way to drive traffic to the college website, and links are a great way to give our audience more details about something. You can

link to our calendar listings, a feature story on elms.edu, a news article on MassLive, or a Facebook photo album, or anything else that is relevant.

Cross-posting -- posting a link to a Facebook album on Twitter, for example -- is a great way to make sure you catch people who are not on both platforms. Just be sure to include a reason for people to click that link: "Grads! Can you find yourself in our commencement photo gallery? <http://bit.ly/2a7iZly>" -- the intro entices users to click.

Note: Links do not work on Instagram captions, so it's best not to include links there.

Use simple, eye-catching images: On social media, simple and colorful images work. Images with too much text all over them and blurry group shots (where everyone is in motion so you can't tell who anyone is) are far less effective than crisp photos that depict clear subjects. Never post blurry photos! Take the time to take a good photo.

Add relevant hashtags (on Twitter and Instagram): Tags like #westernMA, #chicopee and #the413 can help local people learn about upcoming events. It also helps to use tags that relate to the content of the post: #MBA, #business, #nursing, #5K, #film, and so on. It's best to add hashtags at the end of a tweet (after a link) so that it doesn't distract the reader too much. After all, which of the following tweets is easier to read?:

#Run a #5K at @elmscollege in #westernMA and see if you can #beatBolt to the #finishline!

OR

Can you beat Bolt? Try your luck at our 5K on 10/25! #beatbolt #5K #roadrace #westernMA #running

(Hint: The second one is simpler and easier to read -- more likely to catch the eye of someone who's quickly scrolling through Twitter. Also, please note that hashtags are not effective on Facebook -- don't use them on Facebook.)

Tag other social media accounts when relevant: If you tweet about a new partnership with HCC, include @HolyokeCC in your tweet -- that way, HCC will be notified that we mentioned them ... and they'll probably retweet us, exposing our message to their audience, too.

Check your grammar and spelling before posting: It sounds like a no-brainer, but it's easy to forget -- and few things make us look unprofessional in front of a large group faster than typos or errors on social media.

Avoid excessive punctuation: Exclamation points are rarely necessary. Multiple exclamation points never are!!!!!! Stick to periods, commas, semicolons, question marks -- you can show enthusiasm by writing bright messages, rather than forcing it in with exclamation marks.

Don't "like" your own posts: If someone else posts something on the Elms College Facebook page, and you want to "like" the post, make sure you do so as your own personal account, NOT

as the Elms College page. (This is also true for Twitter and Instagram -- we don't want people to think we're "liking" our own posts to drive up the number of likes on the post. That's a social media no-no.)

Other tips

Remember, **social media platforms go out to the public**, so make sure you don't tweet details about internal events before the fact. Example: A #BlackLivesMatter panel discussion years ago was a private, campus-only event, but it got accidentally tweeted before the fact (the person who posted the tweet just didn't realize that Twitter goes out to the entire world, and not just our followers); Marketing had to contact the tweeter to ask that the tweet be deleted.

Also, *because* social media platforms go out to the public, make sure your posts can be understood by everyone who might see them, not just people who know you. Posting a photo of a conference room with the words "We're getting started!" is far less effective than posting that same photo with the words "The Black Issues Summit is about to begin! Follow us for live tweets during the event, and be sure to use the hashtag #blackissuesummit18 to join in the conversation." Remember to think about your message, and make sure it's clear to all.

When reposting from other accounts, check the account's main feed and make sure it's pretty decent. Sometimes people tweet something nice like "I love Elms College!" but their feed is otherwise full of obscenity, NSFW pictures, and the like -- we don't want to retweet from those accounts.

When sharing Facebook posts or tweets from other accounts, please make sure they're in context. You might need to **add details**, insert event times/places or include other info to make the posts more useful for our followers. Again: Think about the message before you post. Make sure it's very clear. If it's not clear, clarify!

In addition to the guidelines discussed above, when you are creating or posting to a social media site on behalf of Elms College, you must:

Seek Approval

Any messages that might act as the "voice" or position of the college or a school/division/department must be approved by the Office of Marketing, or the director of the school/division/department or its delegate.

Be Accurate

Gather your facts before you post. Take the time to verify information with a source first -- this is highly preferable to posting corrections or retractions later. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible, and tag social media accounts for entities you mention -- that's how we build community.

Post Often Enough

Assign an administrator who can regularly monitor postings and content.

Be Responsible

What you write on social media is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social computing on behalf of Elms College is not a right but an opportunity, so please take this responsibility seriously.

Have Respect

Users are free to discuss topics and disagree with one another, but please be respectful of other people's opinions. Be constructive and respectful even when discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

If you have any questions about whether it is appropriate to write about certain kinds of material on Elms College social media feeds, ask your supervisor before you post.

ABC's for handling negative content

Sometimes another user will post a harsh comment, Twitter rant, or other negative content about Elms (or on our own posts). Here's how to respond:

- Acknowledge the comment.
- Be transparent.
- Contact the appropriate department(s) to learn/confirm how to respond.
- Do not delete negative comments.
- Engage in constructive conversations, and disengage from combative conversations.
- Find help, if needed.
- Give contact information for additional assistance.
- Help and move on; don't dwell or draw attention.

Student / Faculty Takeovers

Elms students and faculty can give our audiences an inside look at our college through takeovers of the college's official Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram accounts (@elmscollege). A social media takeover is when a user who does not normally access the account is authorized to post for a certain length of time to promote an event or deliver a special message.

Takeovers don't have to last a full day -- three to four posts can get a message across.

Guidelines for student and faculty takeovers:

- Marketing will change the account password for that day and share it with you, then change it back when the takeover has ended.
- Before the takeover, you must submit an informal list of post ideas to Marketing for approval.
- You must include a sign-on greeting to let people know who's taking over.
- You must include a signoff at the end of the takeover.

- See below for takeover do's and don'ts. See the social media content guidelines for more detailed information about what to post.
- Marketing will promote the takeover in advance to let people know when to tune in.
- You are not permitted to change or alter the account's handle, password, or associated email account.
- Do not share the password with anyone. You are the only authorized user, and you will be held accountable for all posts.
- If you forget the password, please contact your social media takeover coordinator (do not reset it).
- The account will be monitored, and the Office of Marketing reserves the right to delete any post or revoke your account access at any time and for any reason.
- All users must adhere to [Elms College IT's acceptable use policy](#).

We want to cultivate a connection to our prospective students, current students, and alumni.

Please DO post about:

- Everyday activities.
- Classes.
- Athletics events.
- Extracurricular activities.
- Favorite spaces on campus.
- Special events.

Please NEVER post:

- Profanity.
- About drug/alcohol use.
- Personal attacks.
- Pictures or videos containing nudity.
- Personal information about other people without their permission.
- Non-Elms business promotions.
- Opinions about politics or university policies.

Email marketing@elms.edu to request/suggest a takeover time slot. If you are selected to take over our Instagram, you will be authorized to access the official Elms College Instagram account for a specified timeframe (often a few hours, up to a day).