



## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

**Adopted by the Board:** February 7, 2018

**Review Date:** 2020

**Responsibility of:** Governance and Nominations Committee

Knox College acknowledges the benefits of using social media for institutional and personal communication.

Social media are powerful and provide instantaneous distribution, always-on connectivity, and promotion of two-way conversations and engagement. Social media increasingly span the traditional boundaries between personal and professional relationships. With such immediacy and such blurring, social media can have a significant impact on organizational, professional and personal reputations. This can be profoundly beneficial, and also can present new challenges.

Knox College has developed the principles and guidelines in this policy to assist its staff, faculty, students, board members and volunteers to make appropriate, positive and professional use of social media and communication tools on behalf of Knox, when communicating about Knox, and when seen by others as a representative of Knox.

### **DEFINITION**

In the context of this policy, social media includes the use of email; personal web presences; messaging services; and participation in blogs, chat services, comments, social media sites (including as examples: Facebook, Flickr, Google+, LinkedIn, Second Life, SnapChat, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, and similar services) and in any website, online application or platform that enables its users to interact with it and its visitors.

### **POLICY**

Knox College participates in social media to communicate and engage with internal and external audiences:

- Building the reputation of Knox College;
- Broadening awareness about Knox College, our vocation, our mission, and our activities;
- Providing overall updates about the College and College life;
- Enhancing delivery of programs and services;
- Identifying, cultivating and nurturing relationships with potential and existing students, partners, donors, and communities;
- Building relationships and communities through exploration of diverse and emerging viewpoints;
- Broadening and improving opportunities for education and research through collaboration and through promotion of research; and
- Engaging in responsive conversations and interaction with stakeholders.

Knox College allows the use of social media during working hours to achieve College commitments and duties, so long as such use upholds the principles and guidelines stated in this policy.

This policy is considered an extension of the applicable Handbook and Code of Conduct (Staff, Faculty, Student, or Board as appropriate) as well as the applicable policies of the University of Toronto.



Note that this policy also is subject to the authority of the Standing Orders of the Board, which authorize the Principal, the Director of Development, and the Convenor of the Board to represent and speak for Knox College in a wide variety of matters and situations.

## **PRINCIPLES**

Social media provide an extension of our real world. Be mindful of these four principles to guide your behaviour:

**The golden principle:** Follow the same behavioral standards online as you would in the real world. The same laws, professional expectations, guidelines, principles and values for interacting with students, college and church colleagues, alumni, and donors apply to interactions on social media as much as they do to interactions on campus or in everyday life.

**Be aware and responsible:** Always consider: what you post or publish will be around for a long time. Be accountable for any perspectives and institutionally related content you post through social media. Exercise personal responsibility and preserve trust. Ask yourself: is your site, posting or comment consistent with how you wish to be known as a professional? Is it appropriate with the public trust associated with your position? Could it bring Knox College into disrepute?

**Know your personal voice:** Be aware that the principles and guidelines in this policy apply to the use of social media as part of College responsibilities and also to those personal online activities that may reasonably leave the impression that you are representing Knox College.

**Know the Knox College institutional voice:** Be mindful that you will be seen as an ambassador of the Gospel and of the College when participating in social media.

## **GUIDELINES**

Social media thrives on collaboration and sharing. In the world of social media, there is no privacy, and nothing is truly erased. And the written response is easily misinterpreted. Every post immediately becomes public and we lose control of its distribution. Even the most careful privacy settings cannot prevent your comments being copied or forwarded. Posts are archived in most systems, even when edited or deleted, and search engines can find posts long after publication.

Use social media wisely by being mindful of these guidelines:

**Maintain confidentiality.** Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Knox College, our students, our alumni, our faculty, staff, suppliers or business partners. Use good ethical judgment and follow Knox, University of Toronto and denominational policies, including Leading With Care. As a guideline, don't post anything that you would not present at a conference. If you are unsure about whether to post, ask your supervisor or advisor.

**Respect privacy.** Avoid naming others on social media without their knowledge and permission. Exercise exceptional care when posting images and video, particularly with scenes taken in the College environment and posted to social media. Be mindful of what else an image, video or recording might reveal in addition to its principal subject, for example, in the background.

**Respect copyright.** Ensure you obtain permission before posting or reproducing copyrighted material. Wherever possible, it is good practice to link to others' work rather than reproduce it.

**Be transparent.** Be open about your identity, and your affiliation with Knox College. Never hide your identity to promote Knox College through social media. If you are authorized to participate in social media discussions on behalf of or while representing the College, make sure your name, title and affiliation with Knox are clear.



**Disclaim when appropriate.** Through social media posts, and even in personal endeavours and on personal sites, when appropriate make clear that your opinions are your own and not those of Knox College. If you have a high profile within the Knox College community, be aware that postings on a personal site or through a personal account may be construed as representing a Knox position.

**Post with great care.** Pause and think before posting. The time to edit or reflect must be self-imposed. If you would not make the comment at a public meeting, or would regret it being taken out of context, reconsider whether it belongs on social media.

**Be aware of your emotions.** The responsibility for what you decide to post is yours alone. If a situation leaves you feeling angry or upset, delay and reconsider posting until you are calm and regain your composure. Take some time to identify questions before posting. Consider having someone else review your post to provide an outside interpretation.

**Be accurate.** Before posting, double check your facts for accuracy and ensure you have all the facts. It is better to check with sources first, rather than having to post a correction later. Cite and link to sources whenever possible — and ensure the integrity of the linked sites. Use the spell-checker. The speed and range of immediate publication is a wonderful feature as well as a huge downside of social media.

**Address your mistakes with care.** For a significant issue, immediately obtain advice within the College on actions to take. For a simple mistake, correct it quickly, visibly and with grace.

**Respect others.** When others make mistakes, be gracious and apply the Golden Rule. Expressing your opinion may be laudable — use a civil tone, remain polite and respectful, and find a way to respond without alienating, harming or demeaning others. Avoid responding with anything you would not say in person. When commenting on a negative experience or dealing with a disagreeable or difficult person, you are more likely to win support if you are constructive and reasonable. If you find yourself in an escalating situation, seek advice from colleagues, or disengage politely.

**Refer questions to others.** Making connections is a key value in social media. Unless you are the designated spokesperson for a subject, try and direct questions to appropriate people. For example, if you receive a question regarding admissions, direct the person to the Knox College web site, or to the Recruitment Officer.

**Consider your reputation.** Your attention to accuracy, balance, and the use of your position will affect how you are regarded. On otherwise public sites, use privacy settings to limit or restrict your personal information. Carefully choose photos and avatars that you associate with your profile. Consider carefully the types of images you upload.

**Avoid malware.** Viruses and other malware can spread through links, even through links at otherwise innocent sites. Static documents (PDF files for example) can contain and transmit malware. When posting a link or attached material, ensure that it does not transmit any malware. If in doubt, scan.

**Handle inappropriate posts with care.** Remember that others have the right to share their opinions. However, you will inevitably encounter inappropriate or ill-considered posts of others. If possible, use the opportunity to generate a productive discussion or to solve a problem. Be cautious if you encounter any post or material within the Knox College or University of Toronto community that involves promotion of violence, or is potentially harassing, obscene, defamatory or discriminatory — in such an instance, do not respond to the post; print and save a copy for your records, making note of the posting date and the poster's identity; and notify your supervisor (or a Knox faculty or staff member, if you are a student).

**Resolve Knox issues with care.** If you have a concern within Knox College, turning to social media is not an appropriate way to resolving issues or complaints. Depending on the nature of your concern, Knox provides multiple avenues of reporting, as provided in your Student, Staff, Faculty or Board Handbook.