

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

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**POLICY****Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear expectations of the acceptable use of social media by faculty, staff, and students employed by Ridgewater College. The policy's intent is to permit a high degree of freedom for individuals to employ social communication platforms for the benefit of the college while ensuring accuracy and appropriate protections for the College's overall brand, image, and reputation. This policy aims to outline recommended practices for official Ridgewater College social media accounts as well as professional and personal use of social media by Ridgewater College employees and students.

**Policy**

Ridgewater College (hereinafter "the College") uses social media to further the College's mission by providing channels of interaction and engagement between the College and students, parents, faculty, employees, alumni, fans, media, the surrounding community, potential students, and donors, etc. The College's social media accounts are limited public forums, and all communications should represent the mission, vision, values, and guiding principles of the College.

The College supports this kind of participation in social media and is committed to academic freedom in these channels. Nothing in this policy shall prohibit or infringe on speech or expression that is protected by law.

This policy covers employees and contractors while at work and while using company communications devices in accordance with the Minnesota State College and University System [Appropriate Use of Electronic Communication and Technology Policy](#), and at any time the individual can be understood to be officially representing the College. Professional use of college social media accounts is to remain separate from personal use. Employees may not represent Ridgewater College on their personal accounts. They may share content from college accounts and comment but not post original college content on their own pages.

Employees and/or student workers managing official college social media accounts are expected to release accurate content and information to the public and comply with all applicable laws and policies. They must also implement and maintain reasonable safeguards to protect the security, confidentiality, and integrity of private information. This includes but is not limited to:

- Copyright, Trademark
- Fair Use
- FERPA, HIPPA
- Minnesota Government Data Practices Act
- Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act
- Accessibility Standards
- Acceptable Use Policies
- Student Code of Conduct, Employee Handbook
- Defamation Laws
- Other Ridgewater College Policies and Procedures

The College's Marketing and Communications staff have the authority and responsibility to monitor all official Ridgewater College social media accounts and must be given administrator access and rights to any and all official college accounts maintained by college employees, departments, etc. Social media accounts that have been inactive for 90 days may be deleted.

Release of confidential college or third-party information is prohibited. Consent must be obtained prior to posting photos or videos on social media. The appropriate [Consent Form](#) should be used when necessary. Content and information released on social media is equivalent in stature to content and information released to the press and the

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50 public in any other format. It is therefore subject to review, revision, or removal at the request of Marketing and  
51 Communications.

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53 The College does not prescreen posted content but reserves the right to remove posts or comments that violate the  
54 College's policy governing Acceptable Use of Computers and Information Technology Resources, its policy  
55 governing Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination in Employment and Education, and other applicable College  
56 policies or law or that are unrelated to the content posted. Multiple off-topic posts by a single user, or repetitive posts  
57 copied and posted by multiple users may also be removed. When external accounts comment, reply to, or message  
58 more than one time in a manner that violates these restrictions, the account will be considered for "blocked" status.  
59 Any blocked account will be added by the social media manager to a "Social Media Blocked Accounts" list that will be  
60 retained by the Marketing and Communications Department.

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62 The College does not endorse or take responsibility for content posted by third parties.

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64 Staff, faculty, and students do not have the authority to speak on behalf of the College on any social networking  
65 platform unless authorized by the Marketing and Communication Department; college employees should assume all  
66 postings are in the public domain and may be re-published and discussed in all forms of media in perpetuity. The  
67 Minnesota State Employee Code of Conduct and the Student Code of Conduct apply respectively when posting on  
68 behalf of Ridgewater College, partner agencies, or organizations.

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70 The College does not permit explicit or implied institutional endorsements of any kind through the use of its names,  
71 trademarks, logos, or images, including but not limited to pictures of campus buildings.

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73 Nothing herein is designed to be so far reaching that it might foreclose any legal rights of an employee or student,  
74 including an employee's right to discuss conditions of employment as protected under the National Labor Relations  
75 Act.

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77 Social media content or postings will not serve as a replacement for emergency notifications which occur through  
78 other communication channels including email, phone/text, and web site.

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80 Additional information on Do's and Don'ts for posting content on social media are incorporated into this policy herein  
81 via the Social Media Guidelines document.

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83 **Personal Use of Social Media on Personal Time**  
84 Use of personal social media accounts on personal time (i.e., outside of work hours) is not governed by this policy,  
85 but employees should be mindful of the personal content they post if they associate their accounts with the  
86 Ridgewater College name. Adding "Ridgewater College" to a biography section of your social media account signifies  
87 your association with the College. Employees should adhere to standards of professional conduct at all times when  
88 engaging online. Those who identify themselves as Ridgewater College employees are creating perceptions about  
89 their expertise, opinions, and about Ridgewater College.

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91 Employees should ensure that all content associated with them is consistent with the College's values and standards.  
92 They should understand that personal profiles can be linked to and associated with communities they manage  
93 professionally.

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95 **Personal Use of Social Media on College Time**  
96 Personal use of social media on college time (i.e., during work hours) is governed by this policy and encouraged for  
97 the specific purpose of promoting the College, its students, faculty, and employees. The College's Employee  
98 Handbook and [Appropriate Use of Electronic Communication and Technology Policy](#), governs personal use of social

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99 media on College time, and failure to use social media appropriately on College time could subject an employee to  
100 disciplinary action.

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102 Employees should be mindful about the amount of time spent on social media during work hours that is not related to  
103 the College and should fully review this policy and the Information Technology Services Section of the Employee  
104 Handbook. A College employee using personal social media on college time shall restrict such use to college-matters  
105 and shall refrain from making comments or sharing content of a disparaging or offensive character in violation of  
106 these guidelines. The College may require an employee delete a post or content on an employee's personal social  
107 media account if it in any way misrepresents or falsely portrays the College's mission or values.

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109 Ridgewater College encourages employees to choose between blending personal and professional use of social  
110 media or keeping personal and professional separate. Employees should take personal responsibility for their  
111 comments, usernames, and information that is public. It's encouraged that employees and students periodically  
112 check privacy settings on each platform they use.

113  
114 *In a situation in which an employee who has identified themselves as a Ridgewater College employee misrepresents*  
115 *or falsely portrays the College's mission or values, that individual may be contacted by the College's marketing team,*  
116 *human resources, or legal counsel, and may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of*  
117 *employment.*

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119 **Non-Compliance/Breach of Policy**

120 Violations of this policy will result in a review and/or investigation of the incident, as appropriate under applicable  
121 College policy, and may result in disciplinary action. This section does not preclude disciplinary action for conduct  
122 that involves social media which is in violation of other College policies. Questions regarding this policy should be  
123 directed to the College's Marketing and Communications staff and/or Human Resources Department.

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125 **Related Policies and Documents**

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127 Ridgewater College Resources

- 128 • Appropriate Use of Electronic Communication and Technology Policy
- 129 • Employee Code of Conduct Procedure
- 130 • Respectful Workplace
- 131 • Student Data Practices Policy
- 132 • Student Code of Conduct Policy and Procedures
- 133 • Reproduction and Use of Copyrighted Materials

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135 Additional Minnesota State Resources

- 136 • Minnesota State Colleges and Universities' Policy 5.22 Acceptable Use of Computers and Information  
137 Technology Resources
- 138 • Minnesota State Colleges and Universities' Procedure 5.22.1 Acceptable Use of Computers and Information  
139 Technology Resources
- 140 • Minnesota State Colleges and Universities' Guideline 5.23.1.13 Breach Notification
- 141 • Minnesota State Colleges and Universities' Procedure 1C.0.1 Employee Code of Conduct

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144 History:  
145 12.20.2023 Proposed  
146 05.30.2024 Adopted