Methodist College UnityPoint Health	**Approval:** *Dr. K.QA.Jose*	**Date: 03/2015** **Review by: 03/2018**
	Date Revised: 03/2015;05/2014; 06/2012	
	Policy/Revision Submitted by: Dr. Matt Hertzog	

SUBJECT: Social Media Policy for Employees and Students

I. POLICY:

To help employees and students understand how to publish and engage in conversations on the internet, both on MC and MMCI sponsored sites and in other public domain sites. Appropriate use of systems and features, as well as the appropriate content of electronic communication, is required.

II. GENERAL INFORMATION:

The rapid growth of social media technologies combined with their ease of use and pervasiveness make them attractive channels of communication. However, these tools also hold the possibility of a host of unintended consequences. This policy has been created to assist the faculty, staff and students of Methodist College ("MC") with identifying and avoiding possible issues.

This policy is not intended for internet activities that do no associate or identify a faculty, staff member, or student with MC, do not use MC e-mail addresses, do not discuss MC and are purely about personal matters.

Definitions

Users are any faculty, staff, or students utilizing social media platforms.

Social Media Platforms are technology tools and online spaces for integrating and sharing user-generated content in order to engage constituencies in conversations and allow them to participate in content and community creation. Examples are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram and YouTube. Because of the emerging nature of social media platforms, this list is not intended to be exhaustive of all platforms available. These policies apply to those cited and any other online platform available and emerging including social networking sites and sites with user-generated content.

Official College Communications

Institutional representation via online social media platforms can only be initiated and authorized through the efforts of College Administration. There can be no official MC sites or pages on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, etc. unless they are developed or authorized by the Director of Community and Alumni Relations. Any sites or pages existing without prior authorization as required above will be subject to review when discovered and may be amended or removed.

Faculty, Staff or Students who utilize MC-sponsored sites must follow these guidelines:

1. *Do No Harm.* All Users must ensure that their internet social networking does no harm to the College or to themselves whether navigating those networks on the job or off.

2. *Relationships.* Users should give careful consideration to assess the implications of "friending", "linking", "following" or accepting such a request from another person. For example, there is a potential for misinterpretation of the relationship or the potential of sharing protected information.

Relationships such as faculty-student, supervisor-subordinate or staff-student merit close consideration of the implications and the nature of the social interaction. Therefore, staff and faculty are not recommended to "accept" parents, students or volunteers as "friends" on social networking sites.

3. *Personal Responsibility.* Users are personally responsible for the content they publish on blogs, wikis or any other form of user-generated content. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time - protect your privacy. In addition, Users are responsible for what they post on their own site and on the sites of others. Individual bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to be copyright infringement, defamatory, proprietary, libelous, or obscene (as defined by courts).

4. *Comply with Regulations.* Users must follow the same HIPPA, FERPA, and MC policies including respecting copyrights and disclosures, and not revealing proprietary financial, intellectual property, patient care or similar sensitive or private content. Users should not post content that includes personal health information (or employer-related information such that someone could deduce the identity of person references) including patient images on any social media site.

5. *Identify your Affiliation.* If users identify themselves as a member of the college community in any online forum and/or use their MC e-mail address, they must make it clear that they are not speaking for MC, and what they say is representative of their individual personal views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of MC.

6. *Maintain Transparency.* The line between professional and personal business is sometimes blurred. Therefore, users must be thoughtful about a posting's content and potential audiences. Users must also be honest about their identity. In personal posts, they may identify themselves as a member of the MC community. However, they must be clear that they are sharing their views as individuals, not as representatives of MC.

7. *Be Thoughtful.* Users must be thoughtful about how they present themselves as a MC faculty, staff or student in online networks.

8. *Conflict of Interest.* If someone or some group offers to pay Users for participating in an online forum in their MC role, offers advertising for pay and/or for endorsement, this could constitute conflict of interest and MC policies and guidelines apply.

9. *Media Contacts.* If someone from the media or press contacts Users about posts made in online forums that relate to MC in any way, Users must alert the Director of Community and Alumni Relations to respond.

10. *College Resources.* Faculty and staff should respect College time and property. Faculty and staff should participate in personal social media conversations on their own time. Use of internet and use of social media or networking sites for purposes not authorized by MC during any employee's paid work time is prohibited. Violations of the policy can lead to discipline including termination from employment.

Guidelines for Personal Social Media Activity

Faculty and staff are encouraged to share college news and events, which are a matter of public record, with their family and friends. Linking straight to the information source is an effective way to help promote the mission of the College and build community. As stated above, when you might be perceived online as an agent of the College, you need to make sure it is clear to the audience that you are not representing the position of the College or College policy. While the guidelines below apply only to those instances where there is the potential for confusion about your role as a College agent/expert versus personal opinion, they are good to keep in mind for all social media interactions. When posting to a social media site you should:

1. *Be authentic.* Be honest about your identity. In persona posts, you may identify yourself as a College faculty or staff member. However, please be clear that you are sharing your personal views and are not speaking as a formal representative of the College. If you identify yourself as a member of the College community, ensure your profile and related content are consistent with how you wish to present yourself to your colleagues.

2. *Use a Disclaimer.* If you publish content to any website outside of MC and it has something to do with the work you do or subjects associated with MC, use a disclaimer such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and do not represent Methodist College's positions, strategies or opinions."

3. *Don't Use the MC Logo or Make Endorsements.* Do not use the MC signature block, academic logo, or any other MC marks or images on your personal online sites. Do not use MC's name to promote or endorse any product, cause or political party or candidate.

4. *Take the High Ground.* If you identify your affiliation with MC in your comments, readers may associate you with the College, even with the disclaimer that your views are your own. Remember that you're most likely to build a high-quality following if you discuss ideas and situations civilly. Don't pick fights online.

5. *Don't Use Pseudonums.* Never pretend to be someone else. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors.

6. *Protect Your Identity.* While you should be honest about yourself, don't provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use. Don't list your home address or telephone number. It is a good idea to create a separate e-mail address that is used only with social media sites.

7. *Does it Pass the Publicity Test.* If the content of your message would not be acceptable for face-to-face conversation, over the telephone, or in another medium, it will not be acceptable for a social networking site. Ask yourself, would I want to see this published in the newspaper or posted on a billboard tomorrow or ten years from now?

8. *Respect Your Audience.* Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in MC's community. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered sensitive - such as politics.

Guidelines for Professional Social Media Activity
Online collaboration tools provide low-cost communication methods which foster open exchanges and learning. While social media tools are changing the way we work and how we connect with the public and other higher education institutions, the MC policies and practices for sharing information remain the same. In addition to the general guidelines discussed above, when you are creating or posting to a social media site on behalf of MC you need to:

1. *Seek Approval.* Any messages that might act as a "voice" or position of the MC must be approved by College Administration.

2. *Be Accurate.* Make sure that you have all the facts before you post. It's better to verify information with a source first than to have to post a correction or retraction later. Cite and link to our sources whenever possible - that's how you build community.

3. *Be Transparent.* If you participate in or maintain the social media site on behalf of MC, clearly state your role and goals. Keep in mind that if you are posting with a MC username, other users do not know you personally. They view what you are post as coming from the College. Be careful and be respectful. What you say directly reflects on the college. Discuss with your supervisor the circumstances in which you are empowered to respond directly to users and when you may need approval.

4. *Be Responsible.* What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social computing on behalf of MC is not a right but an opportunity, so please treat it seriously and with respect. If you want to participate on behalf of the MC, be sure to abide by its standards and principles.

5. *Respect Others.* Users are free to discuss topics and disagree with one another, but please be respectful of others' opinions. You are more likely to achieve your goals if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

General Guidelines for Online Professional or Personal Social Media Activity
Online social media allow MC faculty, staff, and students to engage in professional and personal conversations. These guidelines apply to faculty, staff and students who identify themselves with MC and/or use their MC e-mail address in social media platforms such as professional society blogs, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. for deliberate professional engagement or casual conversation. These guidelines apply to private and password protected social media platforms as well as open social platforms.

By posting a comment or other material to MC-sponsored sites, users give MC the irrevocable right and license to exercise all copyright, publicity, and moral rights with respect to any content provided, which includes using the submissions for any purpose in any form and on any media, including but not limited to: displaying, modifying, reproducing, distributing, creating other works from, and publishing submissions. MC reserves the right to review all comments before they are posted, and to edit them to preserve readability for other users.

MC further reserves the right to, in its sole discretion, reject or remove comments for any reason, including but not limited to our belief that the comments violate this policy. Any submissions that fail to follow this policy in any way or are otherwise irrelevant will not be posted. Due to the sheer volume or appropriateness, MC will not respond to every posting, especially those that address individual medical issues.

Disciplinary Action for Violations
Any employee or student who believes that this policy has been violated shall report the incident to a member of Senior Administration. Any violation of this policy by an employee is grounds for disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment. Any violation of this policy by a student will be addressed through the Student Code of Conduct process.

You are legally responsible for any postings and therefore may be held liable if the postings are found to be defamatory, harassing, tortuous or in violation of any applicable law.