

HOWARD UNIVERSITY POLICY

Policy Number: 700-001
Policy Title: SOCIAL MEDIA
Responsible Officer: Executive Director of University Communications
Responsible Office: Office of the President
Effective Date: May 24, 2011

I. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy is built on the assumption that the University's core values -- truth, service, leadership, excellence -- should govern the online choices Howard University communicators make. It is the policy of Howard University to uphold respectful standards of communication that avoid untruthful or false statements and do not impugn the Howard University trademark or brand.

This policy applies to material that Howard departments, offices and related units publish on Howard-hosted websites and related Howard social media sites, as well as to actions of individuals considered Howard University communicators on other social media sites.

II. RATIONALE

As a comprehensive research university, Howard University recognizes the importance of participating in online conversations and activities. The University encourages responsible and respectful online activity and maintains a commitment to academic freedom on social media platforms.

Currently there is no single central guiding University-wide policy governing the ethical, legal, social, practical online behavior of Howard communicators. Therefore, this policy is necessary to provide tools and rules for those online users who are associated with Howard University as current students, faculty, staff and other authorized persons. The policy has importance in major ways: crisis management, information sharing and brand opportunity. It has implications for the protection, promotion, positioning of the University and the protection of individual users.

This policy complies with the University's mission by acknowledging the centrality of academic freedom; seeking to empower faculty, students, staff to participate respectfully in conversations, dialogue and content provision; encouraging teaching, learning, research and service; and encouraging Howard communicators to participate responsibly in domestic and international affairs of significance.

Failing to have a social media policy would mean the potential for placing the University and its stakeholders at risk.

III. ENTITIES AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY

The stakeholder groups affected by this policy are all Howard University students, faculty, staff who are online social media users and/or who operate, manage, and participate in online sites in the name of Howard University.

IV. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Howard University Communicators/Howard Communicators:** any person associated with Howard University as a current student, faculty member, staff member or administrator. The individual may or may not be additionally designated to officially represent his or her unit/ department/ organization at Howard.
- B. **Official Communications:** messages and other communications done in Howard's name, (e.g. a Howard departmental FaceBook page, email, Twitter messages).
- C. **Content Owner:** assigned by department/unit as the individual responsible for monitoring and maintaining web/social media content.
- D. **Moderator:** assigned by Content Owner and/or department as the individual for moderating comments and postings by internal and external users, including deleting comments and postings that do not meet the criteria set forth in this policy.
- E. **Social Media/Social Media Platforms:** 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. While not limited to the following, some examples are: email, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, RSS feeds, iTunesU and others.

V. POLICY PROCEDURES

Stakeholder groups affected by this policy - all Howard University students, faculty, staff who are online social media users and/or who operate, manage, and participate in online sites in the name of Howard University - shall follow these *Social Media Guidelines*.

A. Introduction

As a comprehensive research university, Howard University recognizes the importance of participating in online conversations and activities. We encourage responsible and respectful online activity by students, faculty and staff and maintain a commitment to academic freedom on social media platforms. We expect that the following university core values will govern the online choices Howard University communicators make:

- Truth
- Service
- Leadership
- Excellence

These *Guidelines* are provided to outline how the above core values should be demonstrated in official communications in social media spaces. The *Guidelines* apply to material that Howard departments, offices and related units publish on Howard-hosted websites and related Howard social media sites. Any questions about these *Guidelines* should be directed to the Office of University Communications and Marketing ouc@howard.edu.

B. What You Should Do

- Think twice before posting: Everything is public; privacy does not exist in the world of social media.
- Follow all applicable Howard University policies.
- Strive for accuracy: Get the facts straight before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors.
- Refer to the guidelines of the *Graphics Standards Manual* <http://www.howard.edu/newsroom/standardsmanual/> to assist with appropriate and legal uses of the Howard University trademark, logo, seal and name.
- Remember your audience: Be aware that a presence in the social media world is, or easily can be, made available to the public at-large. Consider this before publishing to ensure that posts will not alienate, harm or provoke others.
- We expect that posts on Howard University social media sites should remain professional in tone and in good taste and should protect the University's institutional voice.
- Assure that your site is technically secure.

- Be conscious when mixing your business and personal lives: The University respects free speech rights, but you must remember that the public often has access to the content you post as a content provider, moderator or general communicator.
- If an official unit (department/school, organization, office, etc.) has created or is interested in creating a social media site, contact the Office of University Communications and Marketing ouc@howard.edu for approval and endorsement of the site. (All approved sites will appear on the comprehensive directory of Howard University affiliated social media websites.)
- Be transparent about your role at Howard. On personal sites, identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as a Howard employee online, make clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the University or your position. Use a disclaimer.
- Protect your identity.

C. What You Should **Not** Do

- Do not post confidential or proprietary information or conversations about Howard, students, employees or alumni on social media websites.
- Do not collect sensitive information – such as phone numbers, student ID numbers, Social Security numbers, payment information – via social media, as these are not secure channels. You must follow all Howard University policies, particularly those that protect the confidentiality of proprietary data and information.
- Do not use Howard University's name to promote a product, cause, political party or candidate.

VI. **INTERIM POLICIES**

There are no interim policies.

VII. SANCTIONS

Violations of this policy in the form of misrepresentation of Howard University or commentary, content, or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing or libelous, or that can create a hostile work/learning environment will result in discipline as set forth by the *Faculty Handbook*, *Student Code of Conduct*, *Employee Handbook*, *Personnel Guidelines* or other pertinent personnel policies.

VIII. WEBSITE ADDRESS

www.howard.edu/policy