



# Social Media Guidelines & Best Practices • 2016

# Table of Contents

## OVERVIEW 1

## GENERAL INFORMATION 1

## 10 QUICK TIPS 1

## ENGAGEMENT 1

### COMMUNICATING VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

*Know Your Audience*

*Social Technographics*

*Building Communities*

*Be a Valued Member*

*Conversational Language*

*Visual Content*

*Quantity*

## PARTICIPATION 3

### LEGAL AWARENESS & ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY

*Personal Responsibility*

*Social Media Guidelines when Posting as an Individual*

*Social Media Guidelines when Posting on Behalf of Gordon College*

*Creating Content*

*Working within the Blogosphere*

*Conflict Support*

*Brand Consistency*

## TECHNICAL APPLICATION 5

### WHICH PLATFORM IS BEST?

### MEASUREMENT

### LISTENING

### STANDARD PROCEDURES

## SAFETY ON THE SOCIAL WEB 6

## OVERVIEW

This document was developed to provide a set of guidelines for the use of social media applications within the Gordon College community. Gordon College uses social media to supplement traditional press and marketing efforts. Employees are encouraged to join this effort. To provide some engagement tools—and help employees identify potential issues—we have compiled these guidelines. They are examples of best practices from other organizations, such as the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and various institutions. These guidelines are intended to help employees understand, from a wide range of perspectives, both the value and the unintended implications of social media and communication tools through the internet.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Sharing news, publicizing events, and promoting faculty and student work through social media tools are excellent, low-cost ways to engage the public and build on Gordon's academic reputation. Employees are encouraged to repost and share with their fans/followers information that is available to the public, such as press releases and articles from Gordon's many print and electronic publications.

## 10 QUICK TIPS

- » Link to the original source in your posts.
- » Link to the exact page URL, not the homepage of Gordon's website.
- » Increase exposure and participation by linking to photos and video, not just text.
- » Focus on the audience.
- » Widen the conversation: Link stories of interest on a fan's wall—especially if the story includes them. This tactic increases the original audience base.

- » Correct errors. Label the new content with "UPDATE."
- » Monitor daily.
- » Avoid update overload—followers will stop paying attention if you overload them with information.
- » Join the conversation—make one comment once a week on a group or community outside of the Gordon network.
- » Choose the right social media site for your needs.

## ENGAGEMENT

### COMMUNICATING VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

#### *Know Your Audience*

Social media communication starts with developing a clear understanding of the audiences who interact with Gordon College online. Knowing your audience helps you tailor content and match it with the right social media outlet in which to reach that audience. A good place to begin is with the hierarchy or fan/followers. Remember that some people seek information; some prefer to pass information along; some are spectators; and others take the lead in determining what the group will do.

#### *Social Technographics*

Social Technographics, developed by Forrester Research, is an organizational profile of community members based on action and engagement. Understanding this tool helps you think about categories as you work on a social media outreach, which helps you cultivate a network of individuals and understand their preferences for two-way dialogue.

Here are some categories based on social media participation.

- » **Creators** are the members of a social media community who create more content than anybody else. They are highly motivated, and will produce blogs, upload videos, write online articles, and more, on your site and other networks.
- » **Critics** will react to online content, comment on blogs, post ratings and reviews, edit wikis, etc. This group is more likely to critique than to create.
- » **Collectors** organize and aggregate content by saving a URL and tags on social bookmarking services, voting for news stories on sites like Digg, or gathering RSS feeds, etc. Collectors play an important role in organizing and spreading the content Creators and Critics develop.
- » **Joiners** build profiles on typical social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, but limit their activity to select networks.
- » **Spectators** passively absorb what others put out in the form of blogs, podcasts, videos, etc. Like Joiners, Spectators are necessary to fill out the ranks but should not be considered prime targets for motivation. (Challenge: This will always be the largest group.)
- » **Inactives** are members of a social media community, but don't do much of anything, such as Facebook members who haven't updated their profiles in years.

### *Building Communities*

Gordon's main social media page on Facebook and Twitter will always have the largest audience base for most departments' desired social media exposure. But we realize some departments may feel that a department page is warranted. Some of the most successful social media campaigns are not department-based, but rather focus on themes for greater appeal and participation.

For example: A financial aid community | An arts community | A green chemistry community | A great books community

Consider the value of theme communities—it may be a better option to help build on the Gordon College brand and reputation for quality. This approach can help build awareness of Gordon College on an unlimited domain.

### *Be a Valued Member*

**Interactions**, conversations and comments should reflect an area of expertise—contributing important insight to the conversation. Content is valuable to your audience when, for example, it enables people to learn more, discover new talents or skills, build their businesses, make decisions, do their jobs better or solve problems.

### *Conversational Language*

The social web is not a business presentation or a marketing forum for canned messages—so leave the formal language for institutional emails. Write in a manner that invites a response and encourages comments. Create a sense of excitement—sharing new things our faculty, students, alumni and campus community are doing.

### *Visual Content*

Forty percent of your audience learns visually. Photography and video provide excellent content for the social web. A recent study by the UMass-Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research documents that pages with robust imagery have more followers/fans. Though quality standards are not as important as in institutional marketing, blurry imagery or duplicate shots are frustrating to fans. The study also reports that posting stock photography has neutral impact at best, and may even decrease a page's fans/followers. With this in mind, when adding imagery to a post, the goal is to communicate authenticity while highlighting action or engagement.

To find video content of interest to your audience, visit the Gordon College YouTube page, or contact CET. Video on the Gordon YouTube is public and is approved

for sharing by the College (all signed permission releases are in and music has been vetted to comply with copyright law).

### *Quantity*

Engage your social web audience three times a week. If you're not able to commit to this frequency of communication, Gordon's main social media pages are the ideal alternatives—and may be more powerful communications channels due to the volume of their audience. Just as important as supplying content, avoid over-supplying or over-posting information—especially on Facebook. Doing so can turn followers away.



## **PARTICIPATION**

### **LEGAL AWARENESS & ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY**

What you publish on social media sites is widely available to the public and may be archived indefinitely, kept by others, reposted elsewhere and/or shared with others without notifying you or asking your permission. There is no such thing as a “private” social media site. Comments can be copied and forwarded—even years after the publication date. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Gordon College, its students, its alumni or fellow employees. Only public information will be “shared”; you should not discuss planned programs, public relations initiatives, financial data, or Gordon College news unless this information is already in the public domain.

Please consult with the Office of College Communications if you are unsure what information you are able to disclose. When representing Gordon College in any online community, please disclose your “connection” to the College—even if your personal profile assumes the affiliation.

Use good ethical judgment and follow federal requirements, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the Family Educational Rights

and Privacy Act (FERPA), and Gordon policies.

When specifically authorized to do so by the President or a Cabinet member (such as the VP for Marketing and Communications), Gordon College employees with social media accounts representing the College may help to represent Gordon in social media forums during an emergency. This includes responding to tweets and online blogger inquiries, and replying to comments on off-site articles, blogs and other social media platforms. In the event of an emergency, all Gordon College social media accounts and groups should work with the Office of College Communications to unify messaging. Always identify yourself and your role at the College when participating in emergency social media communications.

### *Personal Responsibility*

It's appropriate to post at work if your comments are directly related to accomplishing professional goals, such as seeking sources for information or working with others to resolve problems. Participation in personal social media conversations should be done on your own time.

### *Social Media Guidelines when Posting as an Individual*

You are responsible for what you post on your 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). Be honest about your identity. We understand that the line between professional and personal sometimes blur. That said, in personal posts, employees may identify themselves as a Gordon College faculty or staff member, but please be clear you're sharing your views as an individual, not as a representative of Gordon College. Gordon places a high value on academic freedom and respects all employees' right to free expression. That

said, good judgment in discerning how certain positions, opinions or perspectives may reflect on the College is always advisable. If you're publishing content to the internet and it has something to do with the work you do or subjects associated with Gordon College, use a disclaimer such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and do not represent the Gordon College position, strategies or opinions."

Do not use the Gordon College logo or wordmark on personal online sites. Do not use the Gordon College name to promote or endorse a product, cause, political party or candidate.

### *Social Media Guidelines when Posting on Behalf of Gordon College*

**Seek approval.** Senior staff or their assigned delegates must approve any message that might act as the "voice" or position of the College. Discuss with your supervisor the circumstances in which you are empowered to respond directly to users, and when you may need approval. If you are asked to comment on an situation or topic with which you are not familiar, please refer the question to a subject matter expert in a timely fashion. Gordon College reserves the right to decide how, where, when, and to what extent you may use and disseminate its intellectual property through social media.

**Be accurate.** Have all your facts confirmed before posting to a social media site. Cite and link to your sources when possible and remember that excerpts of information created by others can be shared only with proper credit and attribution.

**Be timely.** Respond to questions and comments within a 24-hour period.

**Be responsible.** Abide by Gordon's policy.

**Be "on brand."** If you have a social media site or group on behalf of the College, use simple graphics that represent the Gordon College brand. The Design Center and College Communications can provide guidance with this area.

### *Creating Content*

The best way to create a powerful network on the social web is to generate user value—a value that starts with content. It is not just the network itself, but the participation that the network affords users, that makes a platform powerful.

Design your content to be active—to allow fans to react, comment, praise, laugh and contribute. When you create a group, you're creating an environment not available anywhere else. Think about the interests of your audiences and provide content that not only attracts your members, but also keeps them engaged over the long term.

### *Working within the Blogosphere*

Similar to pitching ideas to traditional media, there are best practices for engaging bloggers. An unsolicited e-mail to a blogger might be considered spam. The most effective way to reach a blogger is to engage him/her as a member of the blogging community yourself. It is crucial to have read the blog to which you are pitching. It is also important to build up your presence in the sight of that blogger by participating in blog comments, linking back to his/her site in your own blog, and even reading and commenting on other blogs that he/she reads. Enter into these conversations in meaningful ways to boost your credibility.

Find out how the blogger prefers to be contacted, and use that method. Pitches should be brief, engaging, and intensely tailored to the particular blogger—do not simply copy and paste a standard press release into the body of an email. All information that you "pitch" on behalf of Gordon College should be meaningful, relevant, accurate, and public.

### *Conflict Support*

Sensitive topics about Gordon College found online should be reported to a department head or supervisor for support from the President's senior leadership team. College Communications uses the Air Force Web Posting Response Assessment

model when negative or harmful comments about the institution are discovered. If you make an error in a posting or comment on the social web, a best practice is to admit the mistake quickly, correct it and move on. Label new content with “UPDATE.”

### *Brand Consistency*

The Gordon College Brand Standards guide was developed to maintain the integrity and voice of the College brand. As an employee, it is necessary that you make sure your department’s social media presence protects and upholds the Gordon College brand by complying with these guidelines.

Given the number of Gordon College programs, employees and communities, and the level of autonomy with which they operate, it is paramount to communicate with a look, feel and voice that is consistent across the organization and that conveys the high quality standards of Gordon College. This includes:

- » Websites
- » Social media properties (URLs, avatars, hashtags) and descriptions
- » News releases, publications, white papers, research studies and reports
- » Podcasts and videos



## TECHNICAL APPLICATION

### WHICH PLATFORM IS BEST?

How do you know which platform will most effectively communicate your message to your audience? Platforms may include:

**Email marketing** allows you to deliver exclusive content that’s relevant to your individual subscribers. Content should be exclusive, relevant and familiar, and should respect subscribers’ privacy.

**Facebook** provides a way to entertain your fans so they’ll be more likely to engage in your brand. Facebook provides connection, self-expression, entertainment and discovery, and also gives fans control over viewing or removing brands.

**Twitter** helps influence the influencers by delivering insider information, responding directly to Tweets, and providing “velvet rope” access to the personalities behind your brand. Twitter provides influence, brevity, accessibility, interaction and versatility.

### MEASUREMENT

You can’t manage what you can’t measure. A social media initiative should place tremendous value on planning and evaluation. Begin with a clear set of measurable objectives, which can be arrived at by asking four basic questions at the onset of a campaign:

- » Who are you seeking to affect?
- » What about them are you seeking to affect?
- » How much must they be affected for the initiative to be successful?
- » When does this effect need to occur?

## LISTENING

It is important to have a listening strategy for any social media campaign or group page. Develop a weekly listening schedule—set time in your work schedule to listen to your audiences, and to other social communities in which the Gordon brand would be well received. In addition, actively seek out and follow people who, whether or not they have engaged with you, definitely would sit on the other side of a given issue or argument with you.

## STANDARD PROCEDURES

Academic department pages should be identified as “Gordon College Department of . . . NAME.” The “about” field should include “Official” in the description. (Twitter “handles” must include the words “Gordon College.”) Administrators will be full-time employees of the College. Students may be added as content editors once trained by an administrator. A member of Gordon’s Office of College Communications & Marketing will be authorized to act as a secondary page administrator, to assist with the page creation process should the need arise for emergency communications. This requirement does not apply to informal Gordon social media groups or student clubs by major. Page profiles and headers will be designed by the College Design Center and include College branding; a job ticket must be submitted for this design work. (Financial support may be available for one hour of design services; contact the Office of College Communications & Marketing to learn the requirements.)

## SAFETY ON THE SOCIAL WEB

If you create social media profiles in relation to your job, please read the following information on safety and privacy.

- » Set **privacy settings** and control who can look at your personal profile, information, and uploaded photography. Sharing phone numbers, residential addresses and personal information about yourself should be carefully considered.
- » Make sure your computer has **spyware and virus protection** installed. Some sites collect profile information to spam users. Others contain links that can infect your equipment with viruses that can damage data.
- » Read through a **social site’s privacy and caching statement**—removing posts from a network cache can be difficult and some networks use technology to populate search engines. You can limit privacy settings, but not completely, so be sure to fully understand the site’s privacy policy before creating an account.

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### SOURCES:

Forrester Research—Social Technographics Profile

Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)—Toolkit: How to Build Your Social Media Policy

University of Michigan—Voices of the Staff. The Regents of the University of Michigan

Statmats, Inc.—“The Five Fundamental Steps: Developing a powerful social networking strategy for colleges and universities” white paper.

Air Force Web Posting Response Assessment

ExactTarget—“The Collaborative Future” white paper

UMass-Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research



# GORDON SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS



Instagram.com/GordonCollege

Instagram

Search

Log out



**gordoncollege**

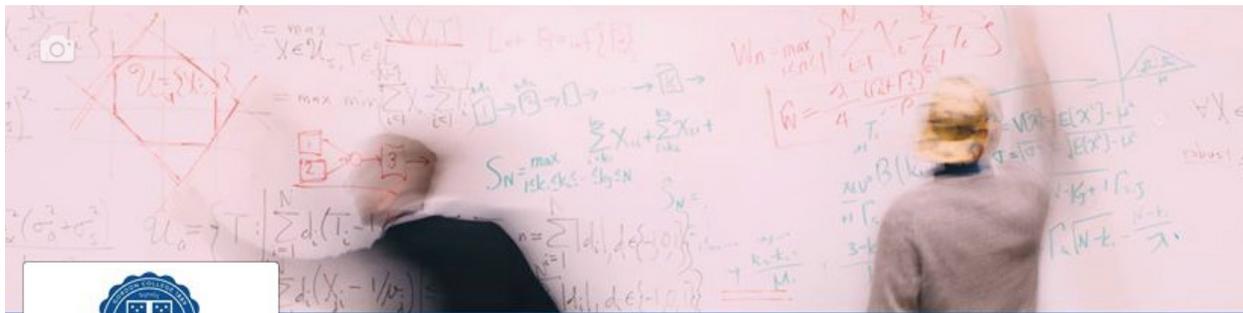
EDIT PROFILE

**Gordon College** The official Instagram of Gordon College in Wenham, MA. Photos from the campus community about our campus community #gordonmoments [experience.gordon.edu/viewbook](http://experience.gordon.edu/viewbook)

216 posts   2,464 followers   49 following



Facebook.com/GordonCollege



**Gordon College** College & University

LIVES OF EXCELLENCE

Create Call to Action

Share

...

Timeline

About

Photos

Reviews

More



85% response rate, 2-days response time  
Respond faster to turn on the badge



11k likes +61 this week

Status

Photo / Video

Offer, Event +



Write something...

Twitter.com/GordonCollege



**GORDON COLLEGE**  
LIVES OF COMMUNITY

TWEETS 6,060 FOLLOWING 559 FOLLOWERS 3,965 LIKES 6 LISTS 7

**Gordon College**  
@gordoncollege  
Gordon College is among the top Christian colleges in the nation and the only multid denominational Christian college in New England. Curated by @Gordon\_CMCMahon  
Wenham, MA  
gordon.edu  
Joined March 2009

**Tweets** Tweets & replies Photos & videos

- Gordon College Retweeted **D. Michael Lindsay** @GordonPres · 19h  
Pleased to see @gordoncollege mentioned in The Evolution of David Brooks @nytdavidbrooks momentmag.com/the-evolution-...
- Gordon College Retweeted **CommLearn Online** @CommLearnOnline · 23h  
Thrilled to have our partner @GordonCollege here exhibiting at #LIADA16!

Who to follow · Refresh · View all

- idobi Radio** @idobiradio  
Followed by Five Iron Frenzy ...
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**One Student's Story: Katie Nellis**  
5,343 views 2 years ago

Katie Nellis is as disciplined as she is motivated—and her work as a student shows a depth of intuition and insight one associates with a more mature artist. Her professional and personal growth have been augmented by a close mentoring relationship with Professor Bruce Herman—a hallmark of the Gordon experience.

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## Gordon College Wenham, MA

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Pinterest is a virtual online pinboard for collecting and sharing images of life at Gordon College. It's visual engagement, and we welcome you to follow along.

<b>25</b> Boards	<b>955</b> Pins	<b>0</b> Likes	<b>206</b> Followers	<b>45</b> Following
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**College Life** 85



**The Lectern** 49



**Alumni Leaders & Entreprene...** 31



**Vocation** 12

