



NASHVILLE SCHOOL of LAW

EDUCATING TENNESSEE'S LAWYERS SINCE 1911

Policy: 2016-02: Social Media Policy

Date: November 15, 2016
October 10, 2023 (Amended)

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to establish uniform standards for the use of social media channels affiliated with, or reasonably appearing to be associated with, the Nashville School of Law and for the use of social media channels by students, faculty, and staff.

Effective: October 10, 2023

Review: This policy will be reviewed annually or as needed.

Policy/Procedure:

1.01 Importance of Civil Discourse on Social Media

Civil discourse is central to the practice of law and to the School's mission. The School recognizes that social media has become a regular part of interaction and information. Accordingly, the School supports the proper use of social media because it encourages and enables the active exchange of ideas, discussion, and debate. This policy establishes standards to ensure that the use of social media by students, faculty, and staff is appropriate and consistent and that their personal use of social media does not adversely affect the reputation or educational mission of the School.

1.02 Definitions

- (A) "Social media" refers to any technology or platform that enables users to create and share content and to virtually connect with other users. These networks include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Flickr, and YouTube, as well as messaging applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and blogging platforms including but not limited to Tumblr, WordPress, Google "Blogger," and BlogSpot.
- (B) "Official representation" includes social media channels maintained by the School and persons with specific, written authorization to communicate on social media on behalf of the School. Examples of official representation include the School's Facebook account and the School's Twitter account.

- (C) “Unofficial representation” is defined as (1) any use of a social media channel in which a student, faculty member, or staff member identifies his or her affiliation with the School or (2) any use of social media in which the subject matter being discussed is related, directly or indirectly, to the School, its students, faculty, or staff. Examples of unofficial representation include a Facebook page that identifies information about students at the School; a Facebook page or personal blog focused on subject matter directly related to the student experience at the School, such as a specific course or evaluation material; or participation in online discussions about the School or subjects related to a student, faculty member, or staff member.
- (D) “Personal use” is defined as any participation in social media that is strictly personal in nature and in no way relates to the School.

1.03 Official Representation

- (A) The only persons permitted to speak on behalf of the School are those who have received specific written authorization to do so by the School.
- (B) Any social media channel, other than those maintained by the School, that is or appears to be representing the School must be approved by the School.
- (C) Students, faculty, or staff who wish to represent the School on an individually-established social media channel must register the channel or page with the School by contacting Kristin Smart, Director of Communications, at kristin.smart@NSL.law. Registration is not required for unofficial representation or personal use.
- (D) The School will monitor registered social media channels that have been approved to officially represent the School and may request that the channel be deleted or removed if it is found to contain posts or communications that violate this policy.
- (E) Only those with login credentials may initiate posts on the School’s official channels. Upon termination of employment (by either party), passwords will be changed and any implied access that accompanied employment will be terminated.

1.04 Rules Governing Official Social Media Channels and Official Representatives

- (A) The following rules apply to students, faculty, and staff who are communicating as official representatives of the School or who are communicating on one of the School’s official media channels. Nothing in

these rules is intended to interfere with the rights of students, faculty, or staff under applicable laws.

- (1) Posts and communications may not contain vulgar, defamatory, offensive, threatening, or harassing language.
 - (2) Posts and communications may not contain personal attacks of any kind or offensive comments that target or disparage any ethnic, racial, national, color, age, or religious group, creed, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, citizenship status, veteran status, disability status, or any other legally protected class status.
 - (3) Posts and communications may not advocate illegal activity or violate intellectual property laws.
 - (4) Posts and communications may not contain comments supporting or opposing any person campaigning for public office.
 - (5) Posts and communications may not contain any promotion, solicitation, or advertisement of a business or commercial transaction without the School's specific written authorization.
 - (6) Posts and communications may not request or solicit donations for any person or entity other than the School without the School's specific written authorization.
 - (7) Posts and communications may not contain private or protected academic information regarding any student or former student. This guideline does not apply to a student's posts or communications that contain his or her own personal or protected academic information.
- (B) Students, faculty, and staff communicating as official representatives of the School or communicating on one of the School's official social media channels may not represent themselves as another person, real or fictitious, or otherwise attempt to obscure their identity as a means to circumvent the standards contained in this policy.

1.05 Unofficial Representation and Personal Use

- (A) References to the School on social media channels may inherently affect the School and the other members of the School community. These references may also blur the line between the School's official business and the personal affairs of the School's students, faculty, and staff.

Accordingly, students, faculty, and staff are encouraged and expected to make a clear distinction between their personal social media presence and the School.

- (B) Students should be aware that the persons reading their posts could, and probably will, include current and prospective students of the School, faculty, staff, donors and supporters, graduates, parents, public officials, and the news media.
- (C) School email addresses should not be used for personal purposes, including registering new accounts, on any social media channel. Thus, unless use of the social media channel involves the official representation of the School, students, faculty members, and staff members should use a personal email address when posting on a social media channel.
- (D) Students, faculty, and staff who include their affiliation with the School in personal posts on social media must make clear, either in the post or otherwise, that they are posting as an individual, not as an official representative of the School.
- (E) The following actions are “best practices” with regard to the use of social media and are strongly encouraged:
 - (1) Use privacy settings to limit unknown or unwanted access to your profile or application.
 - (2) Due to the frequent updating of social media sites, regularly check your privacy settings to optimize privacy and security.
 - (3) Consider minimizing personal information on social media profiles. Do not include address, telephone numbers, social security numbers, passport numbers, driver’s license numbers, birth dates, or any other information that could be used to obtain personal records.
 - (4) Avoid the use of vulgar, threatening, or harassing language.
 - (5) Avoid using language containing personal attacks of any kind or offensive comments that target or disparage any ethnic, racial, national, color, age, or religious group, creed, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, citizenship status, veteran status, disability status, or any other legally protected class status.
 - (6) Avoid presenting personal photographs or photographs of others that may be interpreted as condoning irresponsible use of alcohol,

substance abuse, or sexually inappropriate behavior.

- (7) Avoid posting potentially inflammatory or unflattering material on another person's social media account; and
 - (8) Think before you post. There is no such thing as a "private" social media channel, post, or account. Search engines can turn up posts and photographs years after their publication date. Comments can be forwarded, screenshot, or copied. Archival systems can save information even if you delete a post.
- (F) The following actions by students, faculty, or staff are not permitted on private social media channels or in private posts or communications:
- (1) Using the School's official seals, logos, graphics, or photographs without the specific permission of the School.
 - (2) Reporting private or protected academic information of a currently enrolled student. This does not apply to a student's posts or communications containing his or her own personal or protected academic information.
 - (3) Representing yourself, either directly or by implication, to be an official representative of the School without receiving prior written authorization to do so.
 - (4) Knowingly reporting false information, statements, or charges against a student, faculty member, or staff member.
 - (5) Engaging in any activity that substantially disrupts or obstructs the educational mission of the School.
 - (6) Using the School's name to promote a product, service, cause, political party, or candidate.
 - (7) Representing yourself as another person, real or fictitious, or otherwise attempting to obscure your identity as a means to circumvent the standards contained in this policy.

1.06 Monitoring Social Media Channels

The School monitors all content posted on its official social media outlets. While it does not actively monitor the personal online activities of its students, faculty, or staff, the School will address issues involving unprofessional behavior or violations of this policy brought to its attention by others. Students, faculty, and

staff should keep in mind that by identifying themselves with the School, they are creating perceptions not only about themselves but also about the School and their chosen profession. Therefore, all students, faculty, and staff are expected to ensure that their social media content is consistent with the values and standards of the School and the legal profession.

1.07 Reporting Negative Posts

Nothing in this policy is intended to or will be applied in a manner that limits the rights of students, faculty, or staff. In an effort to protect the good reputation of the School, students, faculty and staff, or others who encounter posts they believe in good faith violate this policy or otherwise place the School in a negative light are encouraged, but not required, to forward the posts to the School by emailing kristin.smart@NSL.law.

1.08 Consequences

- (A) Failure to comply with the provisions of this policy may result in corrective action up to and including dismissal.
- (B) Each student, faculty member, and staff member is legally responsible for his or her individual postings and may be subject to liability if individual postings are found to be defamatory, harassing, or in violation of any other applicable law. Persons may also be individually liable if their postings include confidential or copyrighted information.
- (C) Licensing authorities and future employers may review social media channels when considering applications for licensure or employment. Accordingly, when posting to a social media channel, students should consider carefully whether the image their post projects is one they desire their friends, family, colleagues, licensing authorities, potential employers, and the public to see.

1.09 Disclaimers

- (A) The School's official social media channels do not provide legal advice and do not endorse any service obtained through information provided on these channels or any links to these channels.
- (B) The School is not responsible for the content posted by participants on any of its official social media outlets. Users participate in the School's official social media channels at their own risk, taking personal responsibility for their comments, user name, and any information provided. Comments posted on the School's official social media channels do not reflect the opinions or position of the School, its officers, faculty, or staff.

