

Rocky Mountain Student Media Corporation

Social media policy

Adopted: 12/18/15

As members of The Rocky Mountain Student Media Corporation, you are encouraged to participate in social media sites (including but not limited to Facebook and Twitter). These sites can serve as valuable reporting tools, and means to share and promote your work and the work of the company.

Whether it is through a personal or company-branded account, your actions on social media represent, and therefore have the power to impact, RMSMC. In order to ensure high journalistic and company standards, and to avoid any unnecessary problems or misunderstandings, here are some guidelines to follow when participating on a social media site as an identifiable member of RMSMC.

These guidelines have been culled from a variety of sources, including The Poynter Institute and the Society of Professional Journalists.

GENERAL PRACTICES

1. Think twice before publishing. If you are about to post something that makes you uncomfortable, review it. If it still makes you uncomfortable, consider an alternative. Remember that common sense trumps everything.

In a situation like this, staff members are encouraged to apply the “reasonable journalist” standard. Would a professional journalist share this on social media? Although we are a student media organization, that doesn’t make us any less legitimate. As such, staff members will be held to the same standards as other publications, student-level or professional.

2. Social media should be an active community, not a one-way conversation. Should a reader contact RMSMC through one of our social media accounts, a timely response is encouraged and (with few exceptions) expected.

Engage with, but also respect our audience. Don’t use ethnic slurs, personal insults, and obscenities or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the classroom or newsroom.

Find yourself involved in a so-called Twitter battle? Step away from the desktop, laptop, device, etc., and contact the Social Media Editor about the situation.

3. Avoid posting opinions that could embarrass yourself or RMSMC, or call into question your ability to act independently as a journalist. This can include expressing political views or opinions about newsmakers that you are responsible for covering.

4. Although RMSMC staff members are college students, and many are 21-and-over, act responsibly about sharing content related to alcohol and marijuana. Took a tour of New Belgium? Not a problem. Sharing pictures of a drunken night? Think twice.
5. Act professionally, when sharing RMSMC content (including but not limited to stories, photos and video), commenting on that content or commenting on decisions made by members of the company (including but not limited to professional staff, ad managers and top editors). When in doubt, remember this: praise publically, criticize privately. Don't have conversations online that should happen face-to-face.
6. Sharing anything that could be considered confidential company information is strictly off limits. When in doubt, just ask.
7. Remember copyright law. If it's not yours to share, then don't. Always ask permission.
8. Remember attribution. If you're sharing information that's not yours, then give proper credit.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A REPORTING TOOL

1. Social media sites should be viewed as an additional avenue for reporting, not as a substitute for face-to-face interviews and gathering information in-person.
2. Whenever possible, information gathered via social media sites should be confirmed by interviewing sources in-person or over the phone.
3. Be transparent with your audience when using information that was obtained solely through a social media site, or messaging through a social media site.
4. When contacting sources through a social media site, be clear on who you are, what you need, and where your story will and/or could run. The informality of social media sites makes it easier for potential sources to misunderstand your intentions and the impact of cooperating.

CREATING NEW ACCOUNTS

1. No company-branded account can be created without the prior approval of the Social Media Editor and Student Media Adviser.

The Social Media Editor will monitor the RMSMC social media policy, with assistance from the Executive Editor and Student Media Adviser. Any violations of this policy could result in disciplinary measures, as determined on a case-by-case basis by the Social Media Editor and Executive Editor.

This policy can and will be changed as social media evolves and new situations arise. Any changes will be presented to RMSMC staff in a timely manner.