

Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine

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VCOM Student Policy on Social Media Usage

1. PURPOSE.....	1
2. OVERVIEW.....	1
3. SOCIAL MEDIAL USAGE	1
3.1. SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE PARAMETERS	2
3.2. IDENTIFYING WITH VCOM	2
3.3. VIOLATIONS	2
4. SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE GUIDELINES.....	2
5. DURATION OF POLICY	3

1. PURPOSE

The Student Policy on Social Media Usage is to provide clarification on how to best enhance and protect personal and professional reputations of VCOM’s students when participating in the social media environment.

2. OVERVIEW

The rapid growth of social media technologies combined with their ease of use and pervasiveness make them an attractive channel for communication. However, these technologies must be used with care as what students write can disclose protected information, damage reputations, offend, be considered unethical or unprofessional. Damage can be done to both the person and to VCOM.

VCOM reserves the right to consider how a student candidate or current student presents themselves in the online media networks. This information can be used to determine whether or not that person has the appropriate characteristics (ethical and professional) necessary to be a successful VCOM student and physician. Or whether or not that person represents a threat to other students, or faculty or staff.

3. SOCIAL MEDIAL USAGE

Social media usage at VCOM is governed by the same policies that govern all other student electronic communications as found in the *Student Policies and Procedures Handbook*. This *Handbook* can be found on VCOM’s website at: www.vcom.vt.edu.

3.1. Social Media Usage Parameters

VCOM's Student Policy on Social Media Usage applies to personal activity and/or professional activity that is not part of official VCOM communications, and where you identify yourself as a VCOM student, either through a bio, comments, or by using your VCOM email address.

VCOM has established certain parameters that must be followed by students when using social media sites. Students cannot:

1. Advertise on behalf of external vendors on VCOM websites and social media presences.
2. Have interactions with patients on your social networking sites; to do so may damage the doctor-patient relationship and may have legal consequences.
3. Have online discussions of or about specific patients, even if all identifying information is excluded; someone may still recognize the patient.
4. Give medical advice—this may result in a violation of HIPAA and may cause danger to others.
5. Under any circumstances, display online photos of patients, cadavers or other photos depicting body parts of patients or cadavers.
6. Under any circumstances, display online photos from OMM or physical diagnosis labs unless VCOM Administration has given approval for the posting.
7. Use VCOM logo or any other VCOM image on personal media sites.
8. Use VCOM's name to promote a product, cause, political party, or candidate.
9. Promote or condone unprofessional or high risk behaviors such as, excessive use of alcohol, high risk sexual behaviors, and other such behaviors that would be embarrassing to the person or to VCOM.
10. Make disparaging comments about VCOM employees (faculty and staff), other students or VCOM in general.
11. Make any comment that could be viewed as discriminatory or harassment of any kind.

3.2. Identifying with VCOM

The following disclaimer should be added whenever you identify yourself as part of VCOM while not officially acting on behalf of VCOM.

The views and opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine, and they may not be used for advertising or product endorsement purposes.

If you do not identify yourself as being affiliated in any way with VCOM, the policy does not apply. However, even if you list VCOM as your school on your Facebook info tab, you will need to add the disclaimer on the tab as well.

3.3. Violations

Students found violating Sections 3.1 and/or 3.2 may be disciplined according to Policy #S004 VCOM Disciplinary Sanctions Policy.

4. SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE GUIDELINES

VCOM has developed Social Media Usage guidelines to assist students as they navigate social media sites for work or for their personal use. These guidelines will assist the user to VCOM's expectations for proper usage.

5. DURATION OF POLICY

The Student Policy on Social Media Usage established by Administration and is effective as of the date above and shall remain effective until amended or terminated by the President and the Dean.

Sources:

This policy was developed through careful review of literature and documents from:

- 1) Ball State University, Ball State University Social Media Policy, accessed August 5, 2011 at: <http://cms.bsu.edu/About/AdministrativeOffices/UMC/WhatWeDo/Web/WebPolicies/SocialMedia.aspx>.
- 2) *Inc.* Magazine articles accessed between August 5-9, 2011: "Do You Need a Social Media Policy?"; "How to Write a Social Media Policy"; "How to Handle Employee Blogging"; and "How to Avoid a Social Media Lawsuit" at: <http://www.inc.com/articles/2010/01/need-a-social-media-policy.html>.
- 3) Kind, Terry; Genrich, Gillian; Sodhi, Avneet; Chretien, Katherine C. "Social media policies at US medical schools." *Medical Education Online* 2010 15: 5324, September 2010. Accessed on August 8, 2011 at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2941429/>.
- 4) Vanderbilt University Medical Center, VUMC Social Media Policy, accessed August 5, 2011 at: <http://www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/root/vumc.php?site=socialmediatoolkit&doc=26923>.