

Northern Virginia Community College

Social Media Guidelines

social networks, social media, blogs, wikis and virtual worlds

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NOVA Social Media Guidelines

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With the availability of new communication tools, the ways that Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) faculty, staff, administrators and students communicate internally and externally continue to evolve. While this creates new opportunities for communication and collaboration, it also creates new responsibilities.

Online social media enables the College, campuses, divisions, offices, organizations and individuals to share their insights, express their opinions and communicate information through online conversations. Social media at NOVA are primarily Web and mobile-based tools for sharing and discussing information. It is important for those who choose to participate in these conversations to understand what is recommended, expected and required when they discuss NOVA-related topics, whether at work or on their own time.

These are the official guidelines for participating in any of NOVA's official social media pages/websites. We expect all who participate in social media on behalf of Northern Virginia Community College to follow these guidelines. These guidelines will continually evolve as new technologies and social networking tools emerge.

These guidelines are for you if you are NOVA faculty, staff or administrators; students; contractors or others creating or contributing to any of NOVA's official websites or services including:

- social media and social networking tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest, Google+, NOVA on iTunes U and any additional social media and social networking tools as they become available
- blogs (both official College-wide NOVA blogs and blogs external to NOVA)
- wikis, such as Wikipedia and other similar sites, where text can be posted
- virtual worlds

Please be aware that violation of these guidelines may result in disciplinary action.

Connect With NOVA: NOVA's Official Social Media

Currently, NOVA officially hosts and participates in the following social media forums:

- NOVAaccess on Facebook
- NOVAaccess on Twitter
- NOVAaccess on YouTube
- NOVAaccess on Pinterest
- NOVA on iTunes U
- Northern Virginia Community College on Google+
- Northern Virginia Community College on LinkedIn
- College-Wide NOVA Blogs

NOVA uses these sites to share daily news and events, college deadlines, school closings, relevant photos, discussion topics, student feedback, open courses, presentations, training, informative podcasts and videos in the online environments that our students access regularly. These tools help improve NOVA's internal and external communication by sharing information and engaging users in conversations about the particulars.

Post to NOVA's Official Social Media

Any campus, division, office, organization or club of the College can have news and events posted to NOVA's social media. Send an email to the Office of Web Services and Digital Media (WSDM) at wsdm@nvcc.edu with the information you want posted and WSDM will post it. WSDM staff maintain and post to all of the above listed official NOVA social media. Please include the following information in your email:

- name of the submitter
- phone number and email address of submitter
- name of campus, division, office, organization, club associated with the message
- deadline for posting
- name of the social media where you want the message posted
- message (maximum word count 250; maximum characters for Twitter 140)

The above details must reach WSDM one week prior to deadline for posting to ensure that the information will be published in a timely manner on NOVA's official social media sites. WSDM staff already post all events found in the NOVA online calendar, all college deadlines associated with registration and payment, all holiday information, school closings and major news found on the News & Events pages of the NOVA website.

Anyone can comment on any post without submitting it to WSDM first.

Posting Policy

Authorized postings. When NOVA communicates publicly as an institution, only those officially designated by NOVA have the authorization to speak on behalf of the College. Only messages posted on authorized NOVA sites/Web pages under the names NOVAaccess, Northern Virginia Community College or NOVA are considered official.

NOVA is committed to creating a community that encourages self-expression and has respect for the rights, dignity and property of others. We ask that all participants to do their part to help NOVA achieve this goal.

Do not post content that:

- is threatening, abusive, obscene, indecent or objectionable
- is deceptive, false or misleading
- violates the intellectual property rights of other people
- is illegal
- references a third-party website or is self-promoting spam
- is inappropriate, offensive or hateful

NOVA reserves the right to remove any content that we determine violates or is offensive to our community, or block users who violate NOVA guidelines.

Request to Represent NOVA Through Social Media

NOVA divisions, offices, organizations or College-wide initiatives, such as Transfer, New Student Orientation, NOVA ESL, Northern Virginia Review, may submit an online request to set up their own social media tools to represent NOVA. The following information must be completed and emailed to wsdm@nvcc.edu:

- name of the submitter
- phone number and email address of submitter
- name, phone number and email address of the approving supervisor
- name of NOVA division, office, organization or initiative to use the social media
- type(s) of social media to be developed
- purpose of the site
- name, phone number and email address of the person(s) who will be posting the information and maintaining the social media page/websites

Once the use of the social media is approved by the Vice President of Institutional Advancement, then it is the responsibility of the unit who requested the use of the social media to develop and maintain the site. WSDM will keep a record of all official NOVA-approved social media. WSDM will work with the unit to provide NOVA branding for use on the official social media. Links to the approved specific social media sites will be added to the official NOVA social media that is maintained by WSDM and listed earlier in this document. When the approved specific social media is no longer being used, WSDM will be notified.

Social Media Used for NOVA Courses

Social media used as part of a NOVA course is the responsibility of the faculty member teaching the course to develop and maintain. Classroom use of social media is not considered an official NOVA social media site. Your Internet postings should not include NOVA's logos or wordmarks. The faculty member is legally responsible for his or her postings.

Official Social Media Use

- You are personally responsible for the content you publish on blogs, wikis or any other form of user-generated media. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time; protect your privacy.
- Identify yourself by name and, when relevant, by your role at NOVA—when you discuss NOVA and NOVA-related matters. Write in the first person.
- If you publish content to any website outside of NOVA and it has something to do with work you do or subjects associated with NOVA, use a disclaimer such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent NOVA's positions, strategies or opinions."
- Respect copyright, fair use and financial disclosure laws.
- Do not provide NOVA's or other's confidential or proprietary information. Ask permission to publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal to NOVA.
- Do not cite or reference students, faculty, staff, administrators, partners or suppliers without their approval. When you do make a reference, if possible, link back to the source.
- Respect your audience. Do not use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in a workplace. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory.
- Post meaningful, respectful comments and when disagreeing with others' opinions, keep it appropriate and polite.

- Find out who else is blogging or publishing on the topic, and cite them.
- Be the first to correct your own mistakes, and don't alter previous posts without indicating that you have done so.
- Try to add value. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. NOVA's brand is best represented by its people and what you publish reflects on NOVA's brand.

Unofficial Social Media Use

Common sense is the best guide if you decide to post information relating to NOVA on unofficial NOVA social media sites.

- Your postings should not disclose any information that is confidential or proprietary to NOVA or to any third party that has disclosed information to NOVA.
- If you comment on any aspect of NOVA's business or any policy issue in which NOVA is involved and in which you have responsibility, you must clearly identify yourself in your postings, use your real name, be clear about your role and include a disclaimer that the views are your own and not those of NOVA.
- If you identify yourself as a NOVA employee on any Internet posting, refer to the work done by NOVA or provide a link to the NOVA website, you are required to include the following disclaimer in a reasonably prominent place: "The views expressed on this post are mine and do not necessarily reflect the views of NOVA."
- You are legally responsible for your postings -- you may be subject to liability if your posts are found to be defamatory, harassing, or in violation of any other applicable law. You may also be liable if you post material that includes confidential or copyrighted information (music, videos, text, etc.) belonging to third parties. All of the above mentioned postings are prohibited under these guidelines.
- When posting your point of view, you should neither claim nor imply you are speaking on NOVA's behalf, unless you are authorized to do so in writing.
- Your Internet postings should not include NOVA's logos or wordmarks if the social media site is not an official NOVA social media site.
- Your posting should respect copyright, privacy, fair use, financial disclosure, and other applicable federal and state laws, as well as Virginia Community College System (VCCS) and NOVA policies.

Protect yourself and your privacy. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully.

Official NOVA Blog Use

NOVA blogs (located at <http://www.nvcc.edu/about-nova/blogs/index.html>) are blogs that require College approval in which campuses, divisions, offices, organizations and clubs may blog about NOVA. Requests to host an official College blog are emailed to wsdm@nvcc.edu. Web Services and Digital Media is the office that maintains the NOVA blog site on the NOVA website. Only official NOVA blogs may include the College's logo. All official NOVA blogs must include a legal disclaimer, stating that all posts by the author, guest author and visitors reflect personal thoughts and...

- Identify yourself by your name and role at NOVA when you discuss NOVA or NOVA-related matters.
- Comply with all state and federal laws and regulations regarding disclosure of identity. NOVA may request that you withdraw certain posts from an official NOVA blog if it does not comply with applicable state and federal laws.
- Respect your audience. NOVA reserves the right to remove any posted comment on an official NOVA blog site(s) that uses inappropriate language.
- Always be truthful and post meaningful messages.
- Respect copyright, fair use and financial disclosure laws. NOVA reserves the right to remove any posted comment on an official NOVA blog site(s) that violates these laws.
- Internet postings should not violate any applicable policy of the state, Virginia Community College System or NOVA. NOVA reserves the right to remove any posted comment on an official NOVA blog site(s) that violates these laws.
- You agree that NOVA shall not be liable, under any circumstances, for any errors, omissions, loss or damages claimed or incurred due to any of your Internet postings.
- If a member of the news media or blogger contacts you about an Internet posting that concerns the business of the College, please refer the person to NOVA's Vice President of Institutional Advancement.

You are responsible for regularly reviewing the terms of these blog posting guidelines.

Personal Blogs or Website Discussions That Reference NOVA

If you are a NOVA employee and you reference anything about NOVA in your personal blog or in social media interactions, please follow these guidelines:

- Clearly identify your NOVA affiliation. Your disclosure should be clear to the average reader, directly connected to the relevant post, or provide a means of communicating further (Example: "I work for NOVA and this is my personal opinion.")
- Specifically clarify which posts/comments are your own opinions vs. official College statements.
- If you blog anonymously, you should not discuss matters related to NOVA.
- If you participate in discussions that mention NOVA, you should disclose your affiliation with the College.

Detailed Engagement Guidelines for Any Social Media

Be mindful of self expression. NOVA supports open dialogue and the exchange of ideas. NOVA considers blogs and other forms of online discussion and social networking as a form of communication among individuals. Do not post content that is threatening, abusive, obscene, indecent, objectionable, deceptive, false or misleading, illegal, inappropriate, offensive or hateful, violates the intellectual property rights of other people, references a third-party website or is self-promoting spam.

NOTE: NOVA reserves the right to remove any content that we determine violates copyright, fair use, federal or state laws, Virginia Community College System or NOVA's policies or is offensive to the NOVA community. In addition, NOVA has the right to remove posting privileges of those who violate any of the laws, policies or guidelines.

Be thoughtful about how you present yourself online. Use your own voice; speak in the first person. Your honesty will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. Use your real name, identify that you work for NOVA, and be clear about your role. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. Remember, what you publish online will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and be judicious in disclosing personal details.

Use your best judgment. Remember that there are always consequences to what you publish. If you are about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncertain, review the suggestions in these guidelines.

Ultimately, you have sole responsibility for what you post to your blog or publish in any form of online social media. What you publish is widely accessible, so consider the content carefully.

Protect confidential and proprietary information. Social computing blurs many of the traditional boundaries between internal and external communications. Be thoughtful about what you publish—particularly on external platforms. You must make sure you do not disclose or use confidential or proprietary information in any online social computing platform. For example, ask permission before posting someone's picture or publishing in a blog a conversation that was meant to be private or internal to NOVA. All statements must be true and not misleading and all claims must be substantiated and approved. Be smart about protecting yourself, your privacy and NOVA confidential information.

Respect your audience and your coworkers. Be yourself respectfully. This includes not only the obvious, such as no ethnic slurs, personal insults or obscenity, but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory. Stick to the facts and avoid unnecessary or unproductive arguments. Do not try to settle scores or provoke others into inflammatory debates.

Respect copyright and fair use laws. For your own protection, it is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others.

Add value and create excitement. There are many blog options for people to choose to read/follow. The best way to get yours read is to write things that people will value and find interesting. Social communication from NOVA should be thought-provoking and build a sense of community. If it helps people improve knowledge or skills, build their businesses, do their jobs, solve problems, or understand NOVA better, then it is adding value.

Be a leader. There can be a fine line between healthy debate and inflammatory reaction. Do not defame NOVA or our competitors. Do not respond to every criticism or barb. Try to frame what you write to invite differing points of view without inflaming others. Be careful and considerate.

Be the first to respond to your own mistakes. If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. In a blog, if you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so.

Carry out your responsibility. What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social networking on behalf of NOVA is not a right, but an opportunity. Please treat it seriously and with respect.