



# Social Networking/Media Policy

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For the purposes of this document, social media means any facility for online publication and commentary, including without limitation blogs, wiki's, discussion forums, and social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Tumblr, Google+, Flickr, Foursquare and YouTube. These guidelines complement-but do not replace-any existing policies regarding the use of technology, computers, e-mail and the Internet in place at the University of Texas at Austin. The University of Texas at Austin guidelines can be found at: <http://www.utexas.edu/now/directory.guidelines/>.

## Staff Use of Social Networking Sites

The Career Design Center in the College of Natural Sciences at UT-Austin recognizes the value of staff/student interaction on educational networking sites (i.e. social networking sites dedicated to professional activity/collaboration/networking). Collaboration, resource sharing, and student/staff interactions can be facilitated by the use of networking tools. Such interactivity outside of the school walls can greatly enhance face-to-face coaching. Since social networking is relatively new, the following are guidelines for maintaining a clear line between personal social networking and professional/educational social networking. Both have a valued place in our increasingly digital lives.

## Your Online Identity

As educators, mentors, and staff of UT-Austin, we have a professional image to uphold, and how we conduct ourselves online impacts this image. As reported by the media, there have been instances of educators demonstrating unprofessional conduct while engaging in inappropriate dialogue about their University and/or students, or posting pictures and videos of themselves engaged in inappropriate activity online. Mistakenly, some educators assume that being online shields them from having their personal lives examined. Online identities are public and can cause serious repercussions if behavior is careless.

## Friending/Following

One of the hallmarks of online networks, whether personal or professional, is the ability to "friend" or "follow" others and thus create an online group that shares interests and personal news. The Career Design Center discourages staff members from accepting invitations to "friend" students within personal social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Blogging Sites, Wiki Sites, etc). When students gain access into a staff member's network of friends and are able to view personal photos and communications, the student-staff/student-coach dynamic is altered. By "friending" current students, staff members provide more information than one should share in a University setting. It is important to maintain a professional relationship with students to avoid relationships that could cause bias in the classroom. Social networking can be a way to stay connected with students after they have graduated, but even then staff members should use their best judgment when "friending" students who have graduated.

The Career Design Center does have a center Facebook page. Students should be directed towards and encouraged to connect to those resources online to enhance their exposure to our services and other career related events.

## Connecting with LinkedIn

As employees of the Career Design Center, it is our responsibility to connect students to career resources and networking opportunities internal and external to the University. Staff members are encouraged to connect to students via LinkedIn, as this is a professional site with a clear line between professional and personal lives. A staff member, however, can offer this to students but should not initiate contact. Students should have the ability to determine whether this is a resource they would like to use by linking their account to yours.

## Recommendations for Professional/Education Social Networking by Staff

- Do not say or do anything using a site attached to the Career Design Center social networking pages that you wouldn't say in the professional realm
- Have a clear purpose and outcomes for the use of the networking tool, and establish a code of conduct for all network participants
- Adhere to the University guidelines when posting pictures and using student names
- Pay close attention to the site's security settings and allow only approved participants access to the site
- Keep in mind that everyone has different levels of comfort online. Before "checking-in" someone at a location using a social networking site, be sure to consult with your colleague beforehand

## Recommendations for Social Networking by Staff

- Do not accept students as friends on personal social networking sites. Decline any student-initiated friend requests and do not initiate social networking friendships with students. Connecting via LinkedIn (due to the professional nature of the site) is only appropriate when the student initiates it.
- Use your best judgment when "friending" former students AFTER they have graduated
- Use your best judgment when "friending" the parent or guardian of a student
- Remember that people classified as "friends" have the ability to download and share your information with other people. You don't have control over others with whom they share your information.
- For all staff member's personal social networking pages, the Career Design Center encourages checking your profile's security and privacy settings. At a minimum, the staff is recommended to have all privacy settings set to "only friends." "Friends of friends" and "Networks and Friends" open your content to a large group of unknown people. Your privacy and that of your family may be at risk.