

Social Media Best Practices

Hampden-Sydney recognizes the value that dedicated social media pages offer to different users based on targeted interests. Before creating a page for your department or club a few factors should be considered.

- Who is your intended audience? Is this the right channel to reach them?
- How much time can you dedicate to the management of this channel?
- Do you have content regularly or a few times a year?
- What are your goals, and how will you measure success?

Once you have answered these questions and are ready to create an account, you must submit a request to the Office of Communications and Marketing and agree to the social media policy.

PLAN

Consider creating a content calendar. This ensures your account remains active while assisting with time management. A good guideline is to post high quality content at least weekly, year-round. If you are unable to make that commitment, consider sending content to communications@hsc.edu for posting on the institutional accounts instead of creating your own account.

Content should be:

Balanced: Keep content balanced between promotions and personality.

Thoughtful: Consider messages, audiences, goals and your strategy when creating content and remember that your followers should feel like they are getting value and more insight into your mission from every post you make.

Accurate: Make sure that your posts are accurate and factual. It's better to verify information with a source first than to have to post a correction or retraction later. If you make an error, correct it quickly and visibly. Hampden-Sydney prides itself on the Rhetoric Program so spelling and grammar are extremely important.

Visual: Use photos, video, and graphic elements to make your content stand out. Photos of nonenrolled minors should not be posted without written parent or guardian consent. Photos should not feature logos from other competitor institutions.

MONITOR

Comments: for accuracy and provide any additional information that may help. Negative comments should not be censored just because an administrator does not agree with it; however, should comments turn libelous or offensive, administrators have the right to remove them (see Respect below).

Trends: to ensure content, style, and tools are relevant.

Analytics: to evaluate performance (see Measure below).

INTERACT

Social media is meant for two-way communication. Engaging with your audience makes your site more valuable. Seek opportunities to clarify, answer questions, or boost the community well-being. Due to the 24-hour nature of social media, timeliness is essential, and administrators should be prepared to move quickly in response to new developments and announcements with relevant information on your channel/page.

Follow or connect with relevant pages or individuals that help build the community. Tag mentioned pages and use hashtags but be sure to research them first. There may be unexpected or undesirable associations that you are unaware of.

Consider how responses may reflect on you, your department, and the College and consider any possible unintended impressions from your interactions. Avoid criticizing other people and institutions or offering your personal opinion on matters. Doing so may alienate you from your audience and reflect poorly on the College.

Help the H-SC community stay connected by linking back to the H-SC homepage and other H-SC social media sites. When possible, link to a H-SC news source instead of an outside source.

RESPECT

Confidentiality: Be careful not to reveal confidential or proprietary information about Hampden-Sydney students, employees or alumni. Follow all laws and policies laid out by the local, state, and federal government as well as the policies of the College.

Copyright: Follow copyright, fair use and intellectual property rights. The College logos and wordmarks are trademarked and cannot be modified or used for personal endorsements, and the trademarked Hampden-Sydney name cannot be used to promote a product, cause, political party or candidate.

College: Follow brand guidelines. Consider the College's mission and voice, as opposed to your own, when you interact with the community.

Each other: Hampden-Sydney College encourages civil discourse and therefore allows both positive and negative comments given they are civil, respectful, and appropriate for the given audience. If comments are lewd, libelous, incite violence or are otherwise hurtful or hateful speech directed at either individuals or groups, H-SC employees who serve as account administrators reserve the right to remove such comments.

MEASURE

Make sure to have goals set in place and standards that will measure those goals. Use the built-in platform analytics to track your followers, engagement, and reach. Analytics can tell a lot about what content performs well, when your followers are online, and who your audience is.

ADJUST

Social media is constantly evolving. Keep up with changing trends, algorithms, and platform capabilities. Use the measurements from analytics to adjust your strategy as needed.

If you start a social media account and then realize that it is neither meeting your needs nor the needs of your audience, it is best to close the account rather than leave it inactive.