TITLE: **Social Media Procedure and Guidelines**
NUMBER: 715 (formerly 490)
AUTHORIZED BY PRESIDENT: 08/03/10

Social Media Procedure and Guidelines

Social media are powerful communications tools that have significant impact on organization and professional reputations. Because they blur the lines between personal voice and institutional voice, Whatcom Community College has implemented the following policy to help clarify how best to enhance and protect personal and professional reputations when participating in social media.

Social media are defined as media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Examples include but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and MySpace.

Both in professional and institutional roles, employees need to follow the same behavioral standards online as they would in real life. The same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, alumni, donors, media and other college constituents apply online as in the real world. Employees are liable for anything they post to social media sites.

Section 1: Guidelines for All Social Media Sites, Including Personal Sites

- **Protect confidential and proprietary information.** Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Whatcom Community College, students, employees or alumni. Employees must follow the applicable federal requirements such as FERPA and HIPA, as well as NWAACC regulations. Adhere to all applicable college privacy and confidentiality policies. Employees who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination.

- **Respect copyright and fair use.** When posting, be mindful of copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the College. For guidance or direct questions about fair use or copyrighted material, contact Library Services at 360.383.3285 or the Public Information Office at 360.383.3310.

- **Don't use Whatcom Community College logos for endorsements.** Do not use any version of the WCC logos or any other college images or iconography on personal social media sites. Do not use the College's name to promote a product, cause or political party/candidate.

- **Comply with the terms of service.** Understand and follow the Terms of Service of any social media platform you choose to utilize.

- **Use the appropriate email address.** Use your work email address for institutional social media sites only. Do not use your work email address to set up a personal social media site. Doing so makes the site property of the state.

Section 2: Institutional Social Media

- **Notify the College's Public Information Office.** Divisions, departments or other college units that have a social media page/site or would like to start one must contact the Public Information Officer at 360.383.3310. This promotes consistency between all institutional social media sites and coordination with other WCC sites and their content.

- **Take responsibility for your social media page.** All institutional pages must have a full-time appointed employee who is identified as being responsible for content. Ideally, this should be the unit head or department leader.

- **Add the the College's Public Information Officer as an administrator** to all social media pages/sites. The College must retain institutional access. After notifying the Public Information Officer of your department's or unit's site, add the PIO as an administrator to the page using the pio@whatcom.ctc.edu email address.

- **Acknowledge who you are representing.** If you are representing Whatcom Community College when posting on a social media platform, acknowledge this.

- **Have a plan.** Departments should consider their messages, audiences and goals through the development of a social media strategy. This strategy should also identify how the content will be kept up-to-date, current and relevant. The Public Information Office can assist and advise you with your social media planning.

- **Link back to the College.** Whenever possible, link back to the official Whatcom Community College website. Ideally, posts should be very brief, redirecting a visitor to content that resides within the WCC web environment. When linking to news articles about Whatcom, check first to see whether a news release is available on the Whatcom Community College "NEWS" section of the public website (www.whatcom.ctc.edu/news) instead of linking to an external publication or other media outlet.

- **Protect the institutional voice.** Posts on social media sites should protect the College's institutional voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste. No individual Whatcom division, department or employee should construe its social media site as representing the College as a whole. Consider this when naming pages or accounts, uploading content, sharing images, etc. Posts should all be clearly linked to the particular department or unit.

- **Use a profile image that has been approved by the Public Information Office.** Work with the Public Information Office to ensure the profile image used on your page or site is a good representation of not only your department or work unit, but of the College as a whole.

Section 3: Best Practices

This section applies to those posting on behalf of an official college division, department, program or other unit, although the guidelines may be useful for anyone participating in social media activities.

- **Think twice before posting.** Privacy does not exist in the world of social media. If you wouldn't say it at a conference or share it with the media, reconsider posting it online. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, please contact the Public Information Office at 360.383.3310.

- **Be accurate.** Get the facts straight before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors. (Consider using Microsoft Word to draft your post in order to use grammar and spell checking; then paste it into your social media post.)

- **Be respectful.** Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of ideas. Responses should be considered and reviewed carefully in light of how they would reflect on the one who is posting, as well as the College.

- **Remember your audience.** Understand that content contributed to the social media world is or easily can be made available to the public at large. This includes prospective students, current students, employers, colleagues, donors, community partners and others. Consider your audiences, all of them, before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm or provoke any of these groups.

- **On personal sites, identify your views and opinions as your own.** If you identify yourself as a Whatcom faculty or staff, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the College.

- **Respect copyrights and fair use.** Always give others proper credit for their work and make sure you have the right to use something with attribution before you publish. If you have questions, please contact Library Services at 360.383.3285. Remember, photographs posted on social media sites can easily be appropriated by visitors. Individuals featured in posted photos should have completed the appropriate release forms for use on institutional social media sites. For more information, please contact the Public Information Office at 360.383.3310.

The Social Media Procedure and Guidelines were adopted by the President's Cabinet at Whatcom Community College on August 3, 2010. For any questions regarding this procedure, please contact the Public Information Office at 360.383.3310.