



WHEATON
COLLEGE
For Christ & His Kingdom

Marketing Communications

Billy Graham Hall
501 College Avenue
Wheaton, IL 60187

wheaton.edu/marketing

Wheaton College Social Media Guidelines

When used well, social media helps build relationships and extend our brand to important constituencies like prospective and current students, donors, alumni and our local community. When used unwisely or ineffectively, social media can put the College in awkward and even potentially damaging situations. These expectations and guidelines are designed to help you avoid pitfalls and have a successful experience using social media.

Any social media account with Wheaton College's name associated with it should be considered as officially representing the brand and voice of Wheaton College and as such is subject to the same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines as would be expected for in-person communication with students, parents, alumni, donors, and the media. And, of course, as members of the Wheaton College community, we endeavor to live "For Christ and Kingdom" as outlined in the Statement of Faith and the Community Covenant in all our interactions, online or otherwise.

Best Practices

Regardless what platforms you choose to utilize, the following practices apply. Follow these guidelines to ensure the best experience for your team and your audience.

Follow the rules.

Make sure you understand the policies of the social media outlet you are using. Read the terms of services before beginning so you know the rules.

All Wheaton College policies apply to social media outlets. Follow copyright laws as well as College policies outlined in the [Employee Handbook](#). Be aware of [FERPA laws](#) and other laws regarding confidential information about students, alumni or employees.

Make it easy for people to find you.

Use "Wheaton College" and avoid acronyms in the name of your account to help people find you through search. In the "About" section of your profile, include a statement that acknowledges your affiliation with Wheaton College. Protect the College's brand by using official logos and graphics. Contact MarCom if you would like us to provide you with graphics designed to fit the profile images and cover spaces of a particular social media platform.

Have a plan for content management.

Designate at least two content managers for each social media account to balance the responsibilities. Create a flexible editorial calendar for posting timely content that is relevant to your organization. Reuse existing content. You're already creating great content in print, newsletters and other collateral. Pull from those sources whenever possible. Post 3-4 times a week on Facebook; 1-2 times a day for Twitter; post a new video to YouTube or Vimeo once every 1-2 months. Refer to the MarCom Video Guidelines (found at www.wheaton.edu/marketing) before creating video content.

Mind Your Manners

Remember, everything you post is public. The content that you post reflects on Wheaton, so always post respectfully and responsibly. If you are ever unsure about the appropriateness of material to share on social media, check with your supervisor or Media Relations. *When in doubt, leave it out.*

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Use correct grammar and write in complete sentences when possible. Never use all capital letters because IT FEELS LIKE YOU ARE SHOUTING AT PEOPLE. Avoid jargon and institutional language. (People outside the Wheaton community won't understand if you promote your event as happening in the BGC and sponsored by SAO.) Abbreviations are sometimes necessary to meet word limits, but don't overdo it. Do not use unprofessional abbreviations, such as "u" or "r."

Post content that is meaningful and relevant to your group.

Think about how the content might advance your initiatives and goals and those of the College. Write in a manner that represents your whole organization. Use "we," "our" and other inclusive words. Keep content fresh. Provide regular and timely updates, but don't oversaturate your audience. Keep in mind what is appropriate for the specific social media outlet that you are using. Use analytics to keep tabs on how many people are joining or leaving your account. If many people are leaving, you might be posting too often or posting content that is not useful/interesting.

Interact with users. Post content that encourages feedback and positive interaction. When possible and appropriate, include visual content — such as photos and videos — to increase engagement. Be friendly, helpful and informative. Respond to questions or comments within 24 – 48 hours if possible. Connect users with resources. Link back to content throughout the wheaton.edu website to drive traffic back to the College. When sharing news, provide a link to the College's news release or official announcement rather than providing a link directly to a media outlet.

Be accurate and legal.

Double-check your facts for accuracy before you post. When in doubt, contact Media Relations (media.relations@wheaton.edu) to verify information. Link to your sources when you can, and give credit to others when you include their updates on your site. Correct errors quickly and visibly. Posts often include timestamps and users will be able to see how quickly you respond. Use only legally obtained images. Don't pull images off the web without confirming if they are subject to image royalties. If you need campus images, contact MarCom to request access to our 30,000+ image database of professional photos.

Focus on Wheaton College.

Do not comment on other institutions or legal matters. It is possible that people will post negative comments. Respond professionally, be respectful of others' opinions and do not suppress disagreement. Use it as an opportunity to correct misinformation and turn a negative into a positive. Delete profanity and other offensive content. Remove any spam posts (within 24 hours is best; within 3 days is acceptable). When in doubt, contact Marketing Communications (marketing.communications@wheaton.edu).

Customize posts for the social media outlet you are using.

It is OK to post about the same topic on multiple outlets, but tailor the text for the audience. Make the posts different to avoid repetition. Do not link status updates to post automatically from one social media account to another.

Track your success.

Analyze and organize your content to gauge the success of your posts. Use analytic tools to assess your progress and keep track of posts that users respond to positively. Ask MarCom for help in identifying analytics tools that may be helpful for you.

Ask for help.

We're here to help. For further questions about social media at Wheaton College, please contact Marketing Communications (marketing.communications@wheaton.edu).