Friends and colleagues,

Social media are powerful, rapidly evolving tools for communication, information gathering, teaching, and learning. Like other media, robust use of social media has become integral to democratic processes in modern societies. Use of social media are generally protected from government interference by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

At the same time, use of these tools sometimes raises complex issues concerning ownership and fair use of intellectual property; personal privacy and legal protections for privacy in learning environments; and access to learning services. Social media may in some situations also pose significant challenges to academic integrity and social responsibility.

The guidelines offered below for social media use are intended for discussion throughout American University as practical measures for coping with the impact of these media on learning, teaching, and research. The proposed guidelines should be viewed as part of the overall AU umbrella of policies and guidelines for faculty, staff, and students. They are one part of the ongoing training, learning, and conversation needed across AU to keep pace with technological change and challenges.

Key concepts include:

- Separate your professional use of social media from your personal uses to the greatest extent possible, including by maintaining separate accounts.
- Establish clear policies for student use of social media in your courses that are consistent with the learning needs and opportunities of your subject, and ensure that students understand your policies.
- Establish terms of permitted uses of intellectual property created by the professor or by other students, including uses via social media.
- Ensure fair access for all students to all learning tools available at American University, including social media.
- Strengthen respect for the personal privacy of students and compliance with relevant federal, state, and local laws such as FERPA.

Sincerely,

The Faculty Senate Adhoc Social Media Committee

Co-chairs: Ayman Omar & Jenise Overmier

Authors: Zoe Charlton, Barbara Emshwiller, Ayman Omar, Jenise Overmier, Jane Palmer, Chris Simpson, Scott Talan, and Brian Yates.

<div align="center">**Social Media Guidelines and Tips for Faculty, Staff and Students**</div>

Authors: Scott Talan and Max Faye

For Faculty:
- Set clear boundaries with current students about what an acceptable social media relationship is between you (the faculty member) and them (the students). Respect student's boundaries as well.
- Be mindful of the fact that your activities on social media platforms, along with anything posted by you, do represent American University. On personal sites: Identify your views as your own.
- We suggest faculty respond to requests initiated by current students on personal social media accounts and do not initiate them, as this may create an uncomfortable situation. This includes Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and any other social media outlet.
- If you have concerns, consider creating separate social media accounts for personal use and school/class use.

For Staff:
- Be mindful of the fact that your activities on social media platforms, along with anything posted by you do represent American University. When you post on non-AU sites identify your views as your own.
- We suggest staff respond to requests initiated by current students on social media and do not initiate them as this may create an uncomfortable situation. This includes Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and any other social media outlet.
- Keep in mind that a student may view staff has being in a superior position in terms of the dynamics of the relationship. This is true also for staff members who are of the same generation as current students.

For Students:
- Please realize that while some faculty use social media in class and their lives, not all do. Be respectful of this when requesting or contacting a specific faculty or staff member on social media.
- Before initiating any contact on social media platforms, be sure to consider that the faculty/staff member may have work/personal life boundaries, and they may not consider social media relationships to be appropriate. Just ask them. (The reverse is true with any faculty who may reach out to you).
- When posting content on social media keep in mind that anyone (from fellow students, to professors to future employers) can see these materials now and after you graduate. Even the best privacy settings do not prevent someone from taking a screen shot of something you post.

The provided guidelines and tips follow the current existing AU guidelines. For more information on American University's Social Media Policies and policies on Student/Staff/Faculty Interaction please refer to:

American University Faculty Manual

American University Student Conduct Code

American University Social Media Guidelines (new guidelines in development)