



**One University. One World. Yours.**

**Policy Name:** Social Media and Personal Privacy  
**Policy Number:**  
**Origin:** Web Steering Committee  
**Approved:** May 2011  
**Issuing Authority:** Executive Management Group  
**Responsibility:** VP Administration  
**Revision Date(s):** Bi-Annually  
**Effective Date:**

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**1 Purpose:**

To provide members of the University community with policy and procedures for the use of social media applications in relation to the protection of personal privacy.

In this Policy, the term "University Community" refers to faculty and staff of Saint Mary's University, as well as associated organizations, such as those concerned with alumni affairs and student affairs.

This Policy does not apply to students when acting in their individual capacities. Questions regarding associated organizations should be directed to Public Affairs.

This policy is developed and recommended by the Web Steering Committee of Saint Mary's University.

This policy is administered and enforced by the University Librarian.

**2 Definitions:**

**For the purpose of this policy:**

**2.1** The term *social media* refers to a broad category of internet-based software tools, the primary purpose of which is the sharing of information and content. Social media (also known as social networking) consists of a growing body of technologies, software, tools, platforms and practices that enable people to shift between the role of audience and author for the purposes of communicating and networking via the internet, wireless networks or other electronic means in order to create, share, post or consume content, profiles, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives, and other information and resources. These communications typically involve online groups or communities of users with shared or common interests who participate in electronic conversations or information sharing. Social media can take many different forms, including text, images, audio, video and other

multimedia communications. More specifically, social media encompasses, but is not limited, to:

- social networking Web sites such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and Ning;
- forums, chat rooms and online message boards such as stock message boards, Yahoo! Groups and Google Groups;
- personal or company sponsored weblogs ("Blogs") such as Women on Their Way;
- micro-blogging services such as Twitter;
- photo and video-sharing Web sites such as PhotoBucket, Flickr and YouTube;
- podcasts such as iTunes and Zune;
- collaborative sites and wikis such as Wikipedia; and
- video blogs ("vlogs") such as those used by television stations and news outlets.

Social media allows people to connect in the online world to form relationships for a wide range of purposes. Members of the University community need to be mindful of their legal and other obligations when using social media. In particular, University personnel need to be aware that information posted to and shared through social media channels can pose significant business, legal and privacy risks and concerns for the university, its students and personnel. Social media is inherently public and the University has an obligation to protect student privacy and to maintain the confidentiality of certain information.

**2.2** The term **associated organization** refers to one that wants to use elements of Saint Mary's University identity, including the name "Saint Mary's University", its trade-marks, logos, brands and other signifiers that are used to distinguish the University.

### **3 Policy:**

**3.1 Issue of Privacy/Protection of Personal Identity:** In accordance with Nova Scotia's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPOP), personal information about University faculty, students and staff cannot be collected unless it "relates directly to and is necessary for an operating program or activity of" Saint Mary's University. Furthermore, personal information can only be disclosed *with* student consent or where the disclosure is "for the purpose for which [the personal information] was obtained or compiled, or a use compatible with that purpose."

Personal information is defined as any recorded information about an identifiable individual, including but not restricted to:

- the individual's name, home or business address or home or business telephone number,
- the individual's race, national or ethnic origin, colour or religious or political beliefs or associations,
- the individual's age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status or family status,
- an identifying number, symbol or other particular assigned to the individual,
- the individual's fingerprints, blood-type, or inheritable characteristics,
- information about the individual's health, and health care history, including information about a physical or mental disability,
- information about the individual's educational, financial, employment, or criminal history,
- anyone else's opinions about the individual and,
- the individual's personal views or opinions, except if they are about someone else,

In addition to FOIPOP, under the Nova Scotia *Personal Information International Disclosure Protection Act* (PIIDPA) storage of or access to personal information outside of Canada is prohibited except under strict requirements. The vast majority of social media services are based outside of Canada and involve the storage of account and personal information outside of Canada.

It is the policy of Saint Mary's University that course requirements or access to course materials or obtaining any portion of course credit must not be conditional upon the student's participation in or use of social media. Any use of social media by students at the suggestion of instructors must not be coerced and must not be a condition of course credit. Course instructors who incorporate the use of social media in their courses must ensure that students who do not participate in the course's social media discussions are not penalized in any way and suffer no negative consequences as a result of their choice not to partake in these electronic exchanges. The use of social media for instruction may compromise a student's privacy rights or violate PIIDPA.

The University may sanction official Learning Management Tools, the use of which as intended will not result in a violation of this policy. At the time of this Policy, the official Learning Management Systems at Saint Mary's University include the Blackboard Learning System and SMUport Course Tools. These tools are approved by the University and provide secure media for student communication and meet the requirements of FOIPOP and PIIDPA, whereas, in general, social media such as Facebook do not. The use of such approved University resources that have similar features or tools as those offered by other social media resources will not be considered to be a violation of this policy.

University faculty and staff shall not disclose any personal information about any students by use of social media except with the express written consent of the individual student(s). The form of the consent must be approved by the University.

This policy should not be interpreted to prevent a student from voluntarily using social media in connection with learning at the University, such as a student who chooses to write a paper on the use of social media. Nor should it be interpreted to prevent a faculty member or a student from doing research on social media.

#### **4 General:**

General principles and policies of the University, such as those related to confidential information, personal information, and conduct apply to the use of social media.