

Virginia Western Community College
(VWCC) Social Media Guidelines

For administrators of Virginia Western-affiliated social media accounts

Effective Date: 9/1/22

Last Reviewed Date: 2/1/2025

Overview

Social media platforms are important methods of communication. While these tools can be great resources for communicating stories, news, events and more with our stakeholders, it is important that they are used strategically and consistently. Virginia Western's Office of Marketing and Strategic Communications has established guidelines for social media accounts intended to officially represent the College.

These guidelines are for anyone who administers an official Virginia Western social media account, whether as a student or employee. (See Appendix A for list of official accounts.) This applies to any social media account, including blogs, that are intended to communicate with the College's external constituents.

Student clubs, closed groups, internal pages and personal accounts are not considered official Virginia Western social media accounts and do not fall under the purview of these guidelines. That said, account creators are encouraged to contact the College's Public Relations & Marketing Specialist with any questions.

Purpose

To promote accuracy, consistency, integrity and protection of Virginia Western's reputation, wellbeing, identity and image.

a. Procedure

Departments and organizations may want to consider creating a social media account for the purpose of communicating with a public, external audience. However, a clear strategy must be established before creating the account. If unsure whether a Virginia Western social media account should be created, contact the Office of Marketing and Strategic Communications. To be recognized as an official Virginia Western-affiliated social media account, approval must be obtained as outlined in this procedure and account administrators must adhere to the guidelines and best practices outlined below.

b. Account registration

i. Use of Virginia Western's logos and other branded content will be granted to registered accounts only.

ii. All existing or future social media accounts created by or on behalf of an official campus entity (i.e. college, department, etc.) must be documented and submitted to the Office of Marketing and Strategic Communications to be officially recognized as a Virginia Western-affiliated account.

iii. Only registered accounts will be recognized by the official Virginia Western main accounts (@Virginiawestern). We will only interact with content from registered accounts.

iv. Administrators of registered accounts will be invited to participate in the Virginia Western Social Media Team for the exchange of ideas and best practices. For more information about the Virginia Western's Social Media Team, please contact Jamie Dillard at JDillard@virginiawestern.edu

Best practices

Before creating an account, ask:

- What is the purpose of this account?
- Will enough people realistically follow this account to make it a worthwhile time investment?
- Who is the audience? How will they be reached?
- Who will be responsible for posting?
- Is there enough content to create a minimum of 3-5 quality posts per week?
- What do you hope to accomplish by creating this account?

What to post

- News and stories related to your department/college/organization
- Photos/videos of activities related to your department/college/organization
- Promotion of upcoming events
- Remember, it's quality over quantity – not just the number of followers and number of posts; focus on user engagement.
- Be interactive – ask questions, invite feedback, responds to comments.
- Maintain a consistent tone that is both conversational and professional.
- Whenever possible, tag people or organizations in the text of your posts.

When to post

- Use analytics to determine when your users are most active on the platform and schedule your posts accordingly.
- Goal: Minimum of 3-5 quality posts per week, year-round.
- Schedule posts using the platform or a third-party resource. This will ensure there is a regular flow of content publishing at a strategic time.
- Use built-in features of the platform to regularly monitor and analyze the effectiveness of your social media account.
- Pay attention to who the audience is, what posts were effective/ineffective, what prompted audience growth, what posting times gained most engagement, etc. Use this data to guide your social media strategy.

What to avoid

- Avoid text-only posts; look for quality images to include with posts.
- Do not publish a post unless it has been carefully proofread, checking for spelling and grammar; consider having colleagues review posts beforehand, especially if the post contains sensitive content.
- Avoid flooding user feeds with useless content; make sure content is relevant and purposeful.
- Avoid inappropriate language, including slang or “texting style” abbreviations. Remember that we represent an institution of higher education.
- Never plagiarize. If sharing online material, quotes, ideas, photos, etc., make sure to include citations and give credit and identify the source.
- Do not post confidential information about Virginia Western, its students, its employees, alumni or its affiliates.
- Get permission before posting an individual's photo or story.
- Do not share breaking news topics or information about College emergencies before the information is first shared on the official Virginia Western social media account.
- Do not use your account to make statements on behalf of the College regarding political or controversial issues. Make sure content is in alignment with Virginia Western's mission and values.

General tips

- Consult the platform's policies before hosting a contest, promotion or giveaway.
- Recruit social media “champions” for your account who are willing to interact with and share your content. An active audience is key to social media success.

- Respond to comments, messages, etc. in a timely manner. Users expect quick responses. If you're unable to handle the time requirements of social media, you should probably refrain from creating the account.
- If a specific piece of news or other content needs to be shared on the official Virginia Western account (@VirginiaWestern), send a marketing request by filling out the social media request form: [Marketing & Strategic Communications - Virginia Western Marketing & Communications](#)

How to handle mistakes or negative comments

- Mistakes or typos – If a post is published containing an error, delete or edit the post as quickly as possible. Carefully proofread before posting.
- Negative comments or spam – If users post content that is clearly spam, profane, etc., it is appropriate to “hide” or delete it. However, do not delete or censor posts that merely offer negative opinions or disagreements. In this case, it is best to respond in a way that can continue the conversation in a private sphere. (Example: “We are sorry to hear you have had a negative experience with our organization. Please send us a private message with the details of your situation so we can work to make it right.”)
- Emergencies – If a collegewide emergency occurs, closely monitor Virginia Western’s official main accounts, particularly Facebook and Twitter. Feel free to share official college communication, but do not share information that has not already been shared by the official Virginia Western accounts.
- Other situations – If there is a social media situation you are unsure how to handle, please reach out to the Marketing and Strategic Communications staff for advice.

Shared account administration

Are you the only one with account log-in information? Employee turnover occurs, which is why shared administration of accounts is vital. A best practice is to ensure the College’s Social Media Coordinator shares admin privileges on any official accounts and a record of log-in information is maintained in the Office of Marketing and Strategic Communications. The Social Media Coordinator will do an annual audit of official accounts to ensure the accounts are active, follow guidelines and accessible.

Protecting Virginia Western’s brand

Logo use

- Contact the Office of Marketing and Strategic Communications if you need a Virginia Western logo. (These logos are also available in a folder labeled “Official VWCC Logos” on your thin-client desktop.)
- Ensure all use of the Virginia Western logo is in accordance with the Style Guide available in the Marketing and Strategic Communications section VWCC Official Logos, VWCC Colors and Fonts
- Only officially recognized Virginia Western-affiliated social media accounts registered with the Office of Marketing and Strategic Communications have permission to use Virginia Western logos.

Contact:

Please direct all social media inquiries to:

Jamie Dillard

Public Relations & Marketing Specialist

JDillard@virginiawestern.edu

Appendix A

Virginia Western Community College Official Social Media Accounts:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/VirginiaWestern>

X: <https://twitter.com/VirginiaWestern>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/viriniawestern/>

Linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/school/virginia-western-community-college/>

Educational Foundation: <https://www.facebook.com/viriniawesternfoundation>

Community Arboretum: <https://www.facebook.com/TheCommunityArboretumAtVWCC>

Culinary Institute at Virginia Western: <https://www.facebook.com/cmecroa>

BlueSky: <https://bsky.app/profile/viriniawestern.bsky.social>

Reddit: <https://www.reddit.com/r/viriniawesterncc/s/xz5P0T0yrl>