



**Social Media Policy**  
**Office of Communications and Marketing**  
**Thiel College**  
(Revised: August 2020)

**Purpose**

One of the many important ways Thiel College can advance our mission—to educate students to think deeply, live honorably and engage the intellectual and social challenges of their times—is through the smart use of social media.

Today’s emerging communications technologies afford us unprecedented opportunities to learn about what is going on in the world, share our ideas on important issues and promote our events and accomplishments. Along with these opportunities comes a responsibility to engage social media in ways that not only support our institutional values but also enhance and protect our institutional brand.

This policy applies to anyone (faculty, staff and students) who participates in social media on behalf of Thiel College on college-affiliated social media sites or sites using the name, likeness or logos of the College. Misuse of social media accounts or sites that are not college-affiliated is governed by other College policies. Individuals who participate in college-affiliated sites are responsible for understanding and following these guidelines. The College respects your use of social media, however this use can greatly impact you, your colleagues and our students. Therefore, the College encourages you to use social media responsibly to maintain the integrity of the institution.

**Creating a Social Media Account**

To create a Thiel College social media account, contact the Office of Communications and Marketing and provide them with the following information:

- name of the unit or individual making the request
- social media platform(s) you want to use (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
- purpose for creating the account
- name and contact information of the account administrator (a faculty or staff member, ideally the head of the department) who will be responsible for the account.

The Office of Communications and Marketing will use this information to ensure duplicate accounts are not created and that all pages associated with the College are similarly branded and consistently maintained. This includes following the guidelines for naming your account and using institutional logos and graphics.

All social media pages created for Thiel College are the property of the College and should not be deleted or altered without first contacting the Office of Communications and Marketing.

### **Social Media Platforms**

Social media platforms include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Snapchat, TikTok, blogs and chat rooms. At Thiel, these platforms can be created and maintained by official College entities (division, department and program pages), student organizations (organization pages), and faculty, staff and administrators (public figure pages).

### **Social Media Branding**

Thiel-affiliated social media pages must reflect the College's image distinctively and consistently. They should list the College's name first, for example:

- Thiel Athletics (social media account's name)
- @ThielCollege (social media account's handle)

Social media accounts should include the College's official sub-brand logo, other institutional graphics and images that comply with our visual identity policy. Please contact the Office of Communications and Marketing to discuss the necessary brand assets.

### **Social Media Activity**

All activity on Thiel social media is governed by other College policies, including, but not limited, to copyright, confidential and proprietary information, FERPA, HIPAA, Title IX, acceptable use of electronic resources, anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies. These College policies also govern staff, faculty and students who participate as members of the Thiel community on sites not managed by the College. Simply put, the College's policies should not be violated in any forum, which includes online forums like social media. All members of the Thiel community are responsible for staying informed and updated about these policies by periodically reviewing them in the Employee Handbook and Faculty Handbook. If a student-employee is assisting with a Thiel-affiliated social media platform, the student must be aware of and follow the College's policies.

The College is committed to academic freedom as stated in the Faculty Handbook (see Policy Statement on Academic Freedom and Responsibility) and any violation of this policy will be evaluated consistently with the College's policy on academic freedom.

Take care not to position yourself as speaking on behalf of the College, and do not use official Thiel-affiliated social media accounts to endorse products, services, beliefs or individuals. On

your personal social media sites, you may not use Thiel logos, images or the College's name to promote or endorse any product, cause or political party or candidate.

### **Share Appropriate Content**

The content you share on a Thiel-affiliated social media platform should support the purpose for the site—in other words, be appropriate and relevant to its educational goals and interests, as well as the mission of the College. All content you post (language and graphics) should be suitable for the general public.

Do not share confidential or proprietary information about Thiel and/or its students, faculty, staff and alumni. This includes, but is not limited to, financial, recruitment, student conduct and/or human resources data; internal strategies, reports and conversations; personal contact information, as well as College news and announcements that are managed by the Office of Communications and Marketing.

### **Cease Activity During Crisis**

In the event of a crisis or emergency, immediately cease all activity on Thiel-affiliated social media platforms. The Office of Communications and Marketing will identify the message and distribution strategy for Thiel's social media sites and inform account administrators when and how to resume social media communications. To learn more, see the Thiel College Crisis Communication Plan at <https://www.thiel.edu/offices/communications-marketing>.

### **Violation of the Social Media Policy**

Thiel College's existing disciplinary processes will apply in the event of a violation.

Thiel College prohibits taking negative action against any staff member, faculty or student for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation. Any staff member, faculty or student who retaliates against another staff member, faculty or student for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action.

For more information about the Thiel College Social Media Policy, contact [pr@thiel.edu](mailto:pr@thiel.edu).

### **Guidelines for Social Media**

As a member of the Thiel community, your social media interactions reflect on you as well as the College. Here are some suggestions to help navigate social media spaces with the highest level of professionalism and ethics befitting you and the College:

- **Obtain permission** when posting videos or photos of others on your social platform, especially from individuals not affiliated with Thiel College.

- **Take out the trash.** Delete anything that is irrelevant, disrespectful or could be perceived as a negative message about Thiel College or its constituents.
- **Move conversations** to private DM's if necessary. If a user comments or replies to your post in a negative way, it is the policy of Thiel College to move that conversation to private DM's in order to resolve the issue away from public view.
- **Reflect** on what you post *before* you post it. If you wouldn't want to see it on the front page of the newspaper, or you don't want your family to see it, don't post it.
- **Update passwords** and communicate new passwords to the proper account administrators. Keep an eye out for dormant accounts similar to yours. Inactive accounts are prone to hackers.
- **Share uplifting and positive messages** about Thiel College and its students, faculty and staff!

### **Demonstrate Integrity**

Whether you are sharing information, advancing an idea or responding to someone's comment or question, communicate with integrity. Be transparent and allow others to gain some insight into the person behind the post by clearly indicating your role at Thiel—student, faculty or staff—and the department or organization you are affiliated with.

When you publish on a social media site that is not sponsored by the College, but the content relates to the College, keep in mind that others still see you as the "voice" of Thiel College. Make it clear that you are speaking for yourself by using a disclaimer, such as: "The postings on this site reflect my personal opinions and not those of Thiel College."

If you have a work-related complaint, it is encouraged that you resolve the issue by speaking directly with your co-worker, supervisor or the Office of Human Resources. Guard against using statements, photographs, video or audio that reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating, that disparages any member of the College community, or that might constitute harassment, bullying or accusation. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion or any other status protected by law or College policy. (Source: National Labor Relations Board)

Avoid posting detailed policy or procedural information, such as admission guidelines or program requirements. Instead, post links to that information on the College's official website for those topics. This decreases discrepancies in the information being distributed and minimizes the need to update changes on multiple platforms.

If you are posting information about a controversial topic or research study, include disclaimers and package the information so the post cannot be shared without them. Also, do not use intellectual materials or content produced and legally owned by others without express written consent. Any photos, graphics and written content produced and owned by others must be credited appropriately.

Similarly, call-out culture has become more prevalent in recent months. The contemporary idea of a “call-out” generally refers to interpersonal confrontations occurring between individuals on social media. In theory, call-outs should be very simple – someone does something wrong, people tell them, and they avoid doing it again in the future. Unfortunately, call-out culture can be extremely divisive, spark discomfort and offense. Thiel’s social media accounts are not to reflect the personal agenda of the poster. Posts from accounts affiliated with Thiel with a negative message, unintentionally or not, can have a negative impact on the institution.