

The University of New Orleans
Division of Student Affairs
Statement on Online Social Networking Websites
(commonly referred to as Facebook and MySpace)

Social networking web sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and others have become a fixture on college campuses. The Division of Student Affairs recognizes the functionality of these sites for students who want to communicate with one another and publicize events. Nonetheless, students should be aware of the potential risks associated with using the sites.

Some students assume that these sites are inherently safe -- especially Facebook because users are members of its UNO "community," which they may not join without a university email account. However, students need to understand that Facebook and MySpace are maintained and managed by privately-held companies that have no affiliation with the University of New Orleans. Therefore the University has no control and limited jurisdiction over what our students post on these and other web sites.

Students should be mindful of the possible consequences of their online activities. In the interest of creating and maintaining a safe campus environment, the Division of Student Affairs encourages students to consider the nature of the statements they make in their online profiles and of the online "groups" they create and join. Groups that may seem satirical, i.e. those that criticize particular racial or ethnic groups or threaten or encourage physical harm against certain segments of the campus population, may be hurtful to others. Patterns of harassment and/or violent against a certain group (identified by race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, political views, etc.) could be traced back to statements suggesting the possibility of such harm made on social networking sites.

Recommendations for individuals:

- Be careful not to post personal information on profiles. Access to cell phone numbers, class schedules, addresses (home and campus), and regular hang-outs should be restricted via the privacy settings.
- Check pictures of you posted and tagged by others on Facebook. Be certain that photos represent you in a positive light, and know how to untag those that don't.
- Monitor and edit your Facebook wall postings regularly.
- Change passwords regularly and maintain their confidentiality.
- Many companies and organizations are now reviewing the online profiles of job candidates. If these reviews uncover evidence of lapses in a candidate's judgment -- even if such lapses would seemingly have no bearing on the person's ability to do the job -- a human resources professional may determine that the candidate's extracurricular activities could impact his or her job performance.
- Treat your online accounts as online resumes and not a private diary.
- Review and monitor your Facebook group memberships. Be sure to read the purpose of groups that you join and think about how membership in them might reflect on you.

Recommendations for student organizations:

- Review the national policies of your organization regarding electronic postings and the treatment of others. Have members sign a statement indicating that they have reviewed the policies and understand them.
- Create a committee within the organization that will regularly review the Facebook and MySpace pages of other members.
- Monitor Facebook groups that use your organization's name. Make sure these groups do not violate your standards and policies. Only allow group administrators to advertise officially sanctioned organization events.

Adapted from the Office of the Dean of Students at Auburn University