

	Policy on Social Media	Effective Date:	February 14, 2017
		Current Date:	April 16, 2019
		Contact:	Office of Admissions and Student Affairs
Approved By: Honor Board - February 13, 2017 Executive Faculty - February 14, 2017		Date Approved:	February 14, 2017

1) GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

This policy is based upon the following fundamental principles:

1. Patient confidentiality is of primary importance, as outlined in The Health Information Portability and Accountability Act [HIPAA].
 2. Tulane University School of Medicine, as an institution, values the importance of free speech and open discourse. As such, the School, being respectful of free speech and expression of ideas, does not prohibit students from engaging in social media and voicing opinion outside of the workplace.
 3. Maintaining respect for colleagues and co-workers is requisite for establishing a professional environment in the workplace to ensure optimal team-based patient care, and in the classroom to ensure an optimal learning environment.
 4. Enrollment in the Tulane University School of Medicine bestows upon the student the reputation of Tulane University. In exchange, it is the responsibility of each student to uphold and protect the reputation of Tulane University.
- a) **Scope:** All students admitted to the Tulane University School of Medicine.
- b) **Responsible Department/Party/Parties:**
- i. **Policy Owner:** Office of Admissions and Student Affairs
 - ii. **Procedure:** Office of Admissions and Student Affairs
 - iii. **Supervision:** Dean's Office

2) DEFINITIONS

N/A

3) POLICY GUIDELINES

A. Policy on Social, Electronic and Print Media:

1. Patients

- a. Any and all depictions or descriptions of patients must comply with The Health Information Portability and Accountability Act [HIPAA].
- b. At no time shall patient information be shared without the signed consent of the patient.
- c. Anonymous descriptions must not contain information that will enable any person, including people who have access to other sources of information about a patient, to identify the individuals described.

- d. At no time shall patients, or patient stories, be depicted in a disparaging, demeaning, or insulting manner. Any description of patient care should be professional and respectful of the patient.

2. Description of the Patient Care/Work Environment

- a. All descriptions of the workplace shall respect the privacy rights of colleagues and co-workers. Individuals shall not be identified without explicit consent of that individual.
- b. The tone and content of all conversations on social media shall remain professional and respectful of all healthcare and University colleagues. Posts should abide by the Tulane University Code of Conduct and policies related to harassment.

3. Description of Self and Self-Opinions

- a. The student retains the right to express their individuality via pictures, opinions and posts on social, electronic and print media. Unprofessional statements and images evoking, but not limited to, racism, sexism, and discrimination are grounds for review according to the Honor Code with respect to the professionalism core competency.
- b. In engaging in social, electronic or print media communications, students are reminded of the following:
 - i. The student has full responsibility for the content of individual online postings (for example: blogs, social networking sites, and other digital media). Students are advised to be cognizant of the content and photographs being portrayed and how that would be viewed as being consistent with the professional physician.
 - ii. The permanency of published material on the internet. Most electronic media becomes cached. This means that even if the information is subsequently “taken down,” it likely still endures as accessible to the rest of the world on the internet.
 - iii. The importance of your individual safety when posting personal materials, such as phone/pager numbers or daily schedules online.
 - iv. Students are entitled to express their own opinions, but should not represent their opinion as that of Tulane University.

B. Offering Medical Advice

- 1. Students are not restricted from voicing opinions on medical topics via electronic or print media. Students are advised, however, to exercise caution in such statements and to utilize the following guidelines in making these statements:
 - a. Students should not misrepresent their qualifications.
 - b. The discussion or opinion should be evidenced-based where possible.
 - c. The discussion or opinion should be generic to the topic, and not designed to diagnose or treat an individual patient via electronic means.
 - d. Advice should not be offered; where the discussion or opinion could be interpreted as offering advice, the communication should include a disclaimer that the reader should consult with a physician prior to making any decision.

C. The University’s Role in Monitoring and Enforcement:

- 1. Tulane University will not investigate students’ social, electronic, or print communications without cause to do so. Tulane University assumes no liability or responsibility for student’s social, electronic, or print communications of which it is not aware.

2. All professionals have a collective professional duty to assure appropriate behavior, particularly in matters of privacy and confidentiality. Tulane University students should self-monitor this policy and report violations to the Dean's office and/or Honor Board.

3. Penalties

- a. If a social, electronic, or print media posts/communication is deemed to be inappropriate by the Office of Student Affairs or the Honor Board, the student will be asked to redact or take down the communication. The student has a right to appeal this decision to the Professionalism and Promotions Committee, who will make a final recommendation to the Executive Faculty, who shall have the final decision regarding redacting or taking down the communication
- b. The Office of Student Affairs is entitled to integrate violations of this policy into their decisions regarding probation, suspension, or other disciplinary action, particularly with respect to the professionalism core competency.
- c. Students in violation of this policy may also be subject to discipline from the respective hospital, clinic or healthcare network. Students in violation of this policy may also be subject to prosecution or a lawsuit for damages for a violation of HIPAA.

4) REVIEW/REVISION/IMPLEMENTATION

- a) Review Cycle: This policy shall be reviewed by the Office of Admissions and Student Affairs annually from the effective date.
- b) Office of Record: After authorization, the Dean's Office (Office of Admissions and Student Affairs) shall be the office of record for this policy.

5) RELATED POLICIES

- Tulane University Code of Student Conduct
- School of Medicine Honor Code
- Appropriate Treatment of Learners Policy

6) GOVERNING LAW OR REGULATIONS

The Health Information Portability and Accountability Act [HIPAA]

7) ATTACHMENTS

Not applicable