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## BGSU Honors College Social Media Policy and Plan

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## **BGSU Honors College Social Media Guidelines and Policy: One Mission. Many Voices.**

### **Three goals:**

- 1) Promote the Honors College in a positive manner
  - Promote awareness of the Honors College as part of BGSU
  - Advertise our academics as a competitive Honors College of the Midwest, but do not criticize other universities or colleges
  - Keep in mind we are part of a large university that has to keep its image positive
- 2) Make sure the posts on any social media website are in line with the mission of the Honors College
  - “Create a community of scholars through an emphasis on personal and intellectual development and preparation for global citizenship”
  - Advertise to prospective students and give them the full image of the Honors College and its purpose
- 3) Communicate with others, build relationships, and promote community
  - Show that the Honors College is a small community within BGSU
  - Converse with people on the social media accounts and strengthen the relationships we already have
  - To see the full mission of the BGSU Honors College, follow the link:  
<https://www.bgsu.edu/honors-college/about-the-college.html>.

### **General Tips for Social Media:**

- 1) Share good news. Use social media to promote the successes of the Honors College, its students, and BGSU. Negative posts and comments are hurtful and can drive people away.
- 2) Honesty is the best policy. It's true. Don't speculate about something or someone. It could start rumors. Write what you know with facts.
- 3) Be selective. What you write is online for anyone to see. Search engines can find it. Write about what you are familiar with to avoid someone becoming offended by a statement.
- 4) Use a personal style. Everyone is different in reality. The same is true online. Add your own touches to the posts and feel free to identify yourself as the writer.
- 5) Correct mistakes as soon as possible.
- 6) Be proactive. Reactive posts try to put out fires. Proactive posts never start them. Communication is great, but always be careful. Social media impact is immediate.

### **Prohibited Items on Social Media:**

- Profanity of any kind
- Discriminatory words: Any words or phrases indicating race, sex, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, handicap, politics, or geographic origin
- Academic dishonesty: It can get you expelled or suspended. It will not be tolerated.
- Sexually explicit items: Photos, language, or links to inappropriate websites
- Promotion of non-BGSU products or causes: Do not endorse political ideals or promote sponsored products. Promote the Honors College and events related to the Honors College.
- Copyrighted material: This is a serious issue and can turn into fines.
- Personal information of anyone

### **There are three accounts for the Honors College: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram**

#### **Facebook:** BGSU Honors

- It can be used to post status updates about important dates, relevant information, and answer questions-Usually one to two posts a day maximum is best
- People will like and comment on status updates
- Photos can be posted in our status updates so people can see the events and activities occurring
- People have the chance to write on the wall with whatever they want. Be sure to address any concerns with posts, but delete inappropriate posts or spam posts.
- Private messages are a good tool if needed, but for the most part, status updates and wall posts should be bigger sources of answers and information

**When to post:** Studies show that Fridays will receive the most likes, shares, and comments on posts. Posts that have images, links, and videos receive the greatest amount of engagement while text-based posts receive engagement less than 1% of the time (Kapko, 2014).

Facebook engagements are highest on weekdays, especially from 2-5PM as the workday winds down and people look at their phones (Bennett, 2014).

Although people will look at social media on the weekends, the worst times to post on Facebook are before 8AM and after 8PM on Saturday and Sunday. People tend to sleep in and go out at night so these posts will get lost on their news feeds (Eridon, 2014).

**Twitter:** @BGSU\_Honors

- Tweets are 140 characters long- **It is better for retweets if you do not use all 140**
- They are microblogs and updated often-5 to 6 times per day should work fine
- People will retweet, reply, and favorite Tweets
- Hashtags are commonly used to refer to a certain event or person
- Hashtags let people seek out a certain topic and view tweets with that specific hashtag
- Tweeting at someone will likely lead to a reply
- Direct messages are only available if that person follows your account

**When to Post:** The best time to post on Twitter is from Monday to Thursday from 10AM-3PM (Eridon, 2014 & Kara, 2014). With more mobile users, Twitter traffic will be high around 12PM during the week (Kapko, 2014).

The worst time to post is on a Friday after 3PM (Eridon, 2014).

Tweets with images receive about 40% more engagement and page visits than text-based tweets (Eridon, 2014).

The most shares of a tweet or information from a tweet will occur between 10AM and 12PM on weekdays (Kara, 2014).

**Instagram: bgsuhonors (Student Takeover Tuesdays)**

- Allows photos to be posted several times each day
- Hashtags can relate to certain topics or events (#TakeoverTuesday, #BGSU)
- You can follow people and they can follow you
- Taking pictures must follow the privacy guidelines of BGSU
- Photos offer a visual representation of BGSU that let people see instead of using words to describe BGSU
- Instagram is a mobile app. People can view the photos online, but the photos must be taken on a mobile device and uploaded via the mobile app

-Instagram can be hooked up to Facebook and Twitter to allow all followers or likers to see the photos. On the app, the “Settings” page will allow you to post directly on your Twitter and Facebook accounts.

**When to post:** The best times to post are from 7AM-10AM and 11AM-1PM because students check their phones when they wake up and when they eat lunch (Moreau). Since high school students have to wake up early, posting in the 7AM-8AM time slot might help reach them.

Also, Instagram is popular in the evenings between 5PM and 8PM because people check it at dinner or while they sit on their phone to relax (Moreau).

Friday, Saturday, and Sunday are the most effective days to post with slight edges over the rest of the week because people have more free time (Harris, 2013).

### **What We Should Be Doing On Our Pages**

On Twitter, we should be following the class pages (i.e. BGSU 2016), the main university page, any college pages (i.e. Business Administration), and admissions. This way we can respond to them and get our name visible to students. As the Honors College, we can recruit within BGSU to have more students join. Students can join from BGSU or transfer from outside colleges/universities into the Honors College after their first semester if they apply. It is a little difficult to get our name out there on Twitter unless people want to follow us. We have to find ways to use hashtags or the bigger BGSU pages to promote us. If a parent or a student follows us, we should follow them back so that we can respond to questions or concerns they may have.

On Facebook, people "Like" our page in order to see our posts on their newsfeeds. We post information on our wall and people will be able to respond to it or learn from it. Plus, we can schedule posts for people to see at the busiest time of day. Facebook attracts more parents, but students still use it. The demographics are changing rapidly. Twitter is the main social media site for students now.

On Instagram, we should be posting photos of places and events around campus. There are plenty of cool things to do and see, but photos can capture it better than words. BGSU already has these accounts so it could benefit us to incorporate photos of the university and Honors College academic events into our page. Students, faculty, and staff can post photos from around BGSU or from Honors specific events. It is a way to show off our classrooms, our Honors social spaces, and our events.

### **Things to Keep in Mind about our Audience**

In 2014, Instagram and Twitter surpassed Facebook as the most preferred social media sites of US teenagers. Instagram was preferred by 30% and Twitter by 27% (Jaffray, 2014). High school

students are migrating to these sites more than Facebook so we must keep how much we post on which account in mind. Instagram popularity is skewed towards females and Twitter popularity is skewed towards males (Melin, 2013). As smartphone usage increases, so does mobile app usage. About 67% of 18-29 year olds use social media apps on their smartphones or mobile device and 90% of 18-29 year olds use social media sites in general (Pew Research, 2013). They have access to social media especially before and after school hours through their cell phones. Also, we have students in other time zones (i.e. Central) so they may not be reached as much by our posts according to Eastern time zone times. Posting items at different times throughout the week can work to our benefit because the audience that we reach may change. For example, if we are going to have a live tweeting event from a class for high school students to watch, then we must pick a time when they are not in school. We want those students to see what the Honors College is really like and we want reach as many of them as we can.

### **Social Media User Guidelines**

Be neutral and inclusive-Inclusive language and words such as “they” or “everyone” do not specify one sex or gender. It is meant to reach the whole audience. We do not want to single out a group of individuals based on sex, religion, ethnicity, or race.

Use casual language-Casual language is expected on social media. Formal tones sound too boring and may drive people away from the posts. Informal and casual tones are inviting to people. Posts should be conversational. We want people to comment on our posts or reply to them and even retweet/share them. The goal is to promote ourselves on social media.

Use customer service effectively-If someone has a general question, such as an application deadline, then you can answer that question directly to them. These questions typically will be good information for everyone to see so responding on our posts should not be an issue. However, if someone has a more specific question about the Honors College, like making a visit to the Honors College, then send them a link to the page on our website or have them send us an email to [honors@bgsu.edu](mailto:honors@bgsu.edu). We can direct them to the right place. The point of this is to not clog up space on people’s social media so they do not get annoyed by it.

Represent BGSU- Always remember that the Honors College is part of BGSU. We want to represent ourselves and the university in a positive light. Social media is a digital ambassador for future and current students and parents. Before you post, ask yourself: Does this contribute to our mission? Does this show us in a positive manner? Is this informational, factual, and conversational? Don’t just post to post. Be sure to post the right things at the right times.

## **Benefits of Social Media**

Branding-The BGSU Honors College will benefit from having its name out on the internet among the vast selections of colleges and universities. Since there are so many institutions of higher education, getting involved in the lives of current and future students can promote our name and our community.

Exposure-This goes well with branding. Social media is all about promoting the college, the university, and the student population. Recruitment is expanding across state lines thanks to the internet. We want to find students that want to come here. We want to retain those who are already here and keep them involved.

Influence-The posts we write have influence on the reader. If the reader is offended, then they may not want to read any more of our posts. If the reader is intrigued, invited, or interested in our posts, then they may come back to read more about us. They could give us positive responses on social media sites as well.

Community-The Honors College wants to build a community within a medium sized state university. From the Honors Learning Community (HLC) to smaller classes, the Honors College can keep many students connected in a community. Plus we offer special housing students in Founders who join the HLC. This can help students cope with being away from home and help their social lives and academic careers flourish at BGSU.

Audience-We will be posting for the sake of future students, current students, parents, and faculty. Keep these people in mind when making posts and be sure to post the right things at the right times for these audiences. There are many campus events for current students and faculty to attend, including many through the Honors College. The Honors College offers events and days for future students and parents to visit, like Preview Days and Family Weekend. To maximize our potential, we should put out a variety of the events we offer to reach everyone.

Quick and Convenient-Social media is available on the go with smartphones, tablets, and laptops. The great part is that your phone can post from almost anywhere or take a picture to post. Plus, you just have to log on for under 5 minutes to check on the posts.

Engagement and Information-The information that is posted will be useful to people and hopefully invite them to engage with our posts. Engagement is the key when it comes to successful posts. We want people to interact with us so we can build those relationships. By engaging with our audience, we can provide personal attention and we can ensure people will not go unnoticed.

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