

**All new social media accounts at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health must be reviewed by the Office of Communications prior to launch.**

### SHOULD YOU START A SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT? A FEW QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT FIRST:

- To be effective on social media, regular, sustained posting is necessary. Can you dedicate the time to sharing content regularly and engaging with other users? We recommend posting to Twitter at least one to two times per day; two to three times per week on Facebook and Instagram; and once every two weeks on LinkedIn, if applicable.
- Will you have compelling content to share on a regular basis? We recommend that you include a 70/30 mix of your own content and shared content from other organizations and news outlets that mirror your values and areas of interest.
- Consider your audience: Who are you trying to reach? Are they on social media? Where are they on social? A general principle of digital communications is to speak to your audience on the platforms they're on.
- Building a healthy social media audience takes time. How long do you plan on regularly maintaining your account? If it's less than six months, consider using alternate channels to promote content.
- If you decide that you do not have the resources and capacity to maintain your own social media account, the Communications department will be happy to incorporate your content into the School's main social feeds.
- The Communications Department at the Mailman School can help you decide what's right for your communications strategy. If you have questions or would like help determining if a new social media account fits your needs, contact the department for a consultation:
  - John LaDuca, [jl4501@cumc.columbia.edu](mailto:jl4501@cumc.columbia.edu)
  - Maggie Gelwix, [mg3937@cumc.columbia.edu](mailto:mg3937@cumc.columbia.edu)

### CONTENT

- All content should be factual, relevant, and timely.
- The tone of your posts will vary from one platform to another, but the tone on all platforms should be conversational and easy to understand, even for someone who does not work in the field of public health.
- Avoid using jargon to explain complex topics/terms.
- Share links to research papers, press releases, and when Mailman faculty are quoted in the news.
- Vary the types of content that you post online.
- Curate and share relevant content from your peers, including Columbia Mailman departments, Columbia Schools and centers, and sources outside of Columbia whose work is relevant and relatable to your work.
- School accounts should never provide medical advice or express personal and political opinions or judgments.
- Take your time. Twitter posts cannot be edited once published. Be sure to review your language carefully, and always check copy before posting.

- Always include your source, via tagging (in Facebook) or adding their handle on Twitter and Instagram.
- For social posts that revolve around an event such as a lecture, try to post in the moment instead of after the event has concluded. Retrospective posts are not as captivating as ones that are posted live.
- Consider creating a content strategy for your particular group's voice/tone, publishing schedule, type of content, frequency, and include regular updates on the status of projects and research for potential funders.
- Update your feed frequently, but do not post just for the sake of it. Have a purpose in your posting.
- Posting frequency will vary according to your audience on each channel. For example, if your audience on LinkedIn is primarily School alumni, you will likely only post content that is about alumni, current students and, perhaps, some research articles published by Mailman faculty.
- Aim for one Instagram post daily; three or four Facebook posts a week; two to three tweets or re-tweets daily and two to three LinkedIn post per week. Take stock of the content that your audience likes to see and what they react positively and negatively towards.

### DO'S AND DON'TS:

#### Maintain Privacy and Columbia University Confidentiality

Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Columbia University or Columbia University Medical Center, its students, alumni, or employees. Use good ethical judgment and follow the College's policies and federal requirements, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) before posting.

*As a guideline, do not post anything on social media that you would not present in any public forum.*

#### Avoid Political Campaigning or Partisanship

Columbia University, as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, cannot lobby with regards to specific legislation or proposals or participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. On School social/digital outreach and written and oral communications, this includes:

- The School, its departments, or units cannot call for specific action with regards to legislation, officials and staff, candidates and staff. For example, the School's channels cannot call for readers/followers to support specific candidates or ballot measures by voting, volunteering, or donating money. For example:
  - "Vote this Nov. 6" is fine; "Vote for Mike Smith" is not.
  - "Get involved and make your voice heard" is fine; "Call your Congressman and ask them vote against Proposition 101" is not.
- No campaign rallies, campaign banners, campaign literature or button distribution, or fund-raising are allowed on campus.
  - "Join us for the March Against Gun Violence" is fine;" "Join us for the Rally to Re-Elect Mike Smith" is not.
- Funds or other contributions may not be solicited on campus or in the name of Columbia University for political support or to carry on a political campaign.

As individuals, faculty, staff, and students, may participate fully in the political process, including volunteering for campaigns, donating money, or otherwise supporting candidates for public office but their activities cannot overtly or

implicitly involve the University. In School social/digital outreach and written and oral communications, this includes:

- When endorsing or opposing a candidate for political office or taking a position on a specific legislative issue, individuals and groups within Columbia University should be clear that they are speaking for themselves and not taking a ‘University’ or ‘School’ position. For example, they can include “Tweets are my own” on their Twitter bios. This is particularly important for those who in their official capacity frequently speak for the University.
- When writing an op-ed or similar piece, members of the School community may use your title in your author’s note or byline but, for example, they cannot say “On behalf of Columbia University, we believe that...”
- When participating in advocacy campaigns, such as signing petitions or open letters, members of the School community should be clear they are doing so as an individual, and do not imply endorsement by the School.
- When sharing an opinion piece by a Community member online, make clear that are you posting “an op-ed” or “opinion piece.”

The School cannot promote or reshare these individual activities through its official social channels or on the main website home page or news feed.

Additional information on Columbia policies can be found here: [www.essential-policies.columbia.edu/policy-partisan-political-activity](http://www.essential-policies.columbia.edu/policy-partisan-political-activity).

### Do Not Engage in Commercial Activity

The School and members of the community are prohibited from making commercial endorsements in advertisements, promotional materials, social media, and more. (for example: “Salesforce is a wonderful product, I encourage all Universities to use it,” says Suzy Smith, epidemiology professor at Columbia.) It is prohibited to promote commercial sales or fundraising efforts for entities other than the School (and its departments and centers), other Schools, CUIMC, or the University.

### Focus on School Efforts and Mission

Posts should not promote faculty personal projects outside of the School, such as volunteer efforts, Board memberships, etc.

### Be Thoughtful

Before composing a message that might serve as the “voice” of a department or center, please discuss the content with your supervisor; the dean/chair of the school/department or his or her delegate; or the School Communications department. If you have any questions about whether a message you crafted is appropriate to post, speak with your supervisor before you post.

Use of vulgarities that convey generalizations, derogatory comments, hate speech, and microaggressions on social media is never acceptable.

### Be Responsible

What you write and the photos that you post are ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social media on behalf of your department or center is an opportunity, so please treat it seriously and with respect. Keep in mind that if you are posting with a department or center handle/username, other users do not know you personally. The larger audience views what you post as coming from and speaking for a School department or center, so please use good judgement.

Advertising, solicitation or overtly favorable acknowledgements or endorsements of third-party products and services is not permitted on any social media platform.

### Be Accurate

Make sure that you have all the facts before you post. It’s better to verify information with a source first than to have to post a correction or retraction later.

## Moderate Comments Appropriately

Comments in the form of tweets, and reactions to posts are an important part of social media networking. Do engage with comments that are positive in nature and/or upbeat. Do not delete comments because you disagree with the point of view being expressed or because the commenter has reacted negatively. Instead, monitor social accounts or profiles for which you are responsible and delete comments that expose the private data of others, contain commercial solicitations, are factually inaccurate or erroneous, are off-topic, are threatening or abusive, or are obscene.

## Be Responsive

In addition to the content you post on social media, feedback and comments are an important and highly visible element of your social media presence. Social media is not static. When you post content on behalf of a department or center, you open yourself (and, by extension, Columbia Public Health) up to comments and discussion. As an administrator, you are expected to monitor your social media presence and respond appropriately to the best of your ability.

## Represent the School with Public Health in Mind First

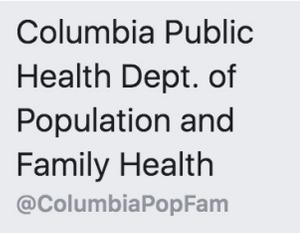
When posting on any social media network about a School event (assembly, panel discussion, orientation etc.), content should reflect the intended purpose of the event and how it relates to public health and/or the School. Posts should not include photos or details of alcohol or food offered at events, unless it directly relates to the event programming.

## Naming Your Account

On social media, it is permitted to use “Columbia Public Health” when referring to the School, given space and word count considerations.

When naming your group/center/department, use your group’s name + “at Columbia Public Health”. This will look different for all social media channels. Below are examples of how your bio and description should look on Facebook, and X/Twitter:

In the bio or the short description, tag your social media account name. For example, on Facebook:



Columbia Public  
Health Dept. of  
Population and  
Family Health  
@ColumbiaPopFam

On Twitter, your display name should be the name of your department or center, followed by “at ColumbiaPublicHealth”. Your handle or username should be Columbia + the name of your department. Examples:

Display: [PopFam at ColumbiaPublicHealth](#) Handle/Username:  
[ColumbiaPopFam](#)

Student-run social media accounts must include “student-run” in the description on all social media accounts. Example:



Social media accounts of individuals such as Mailman faculty members and professors should state in the bio that the views and posts express their own opinions. Example:

Dr. John Smith  
Professor @ColumbiaMSPH, medical journalist and book/film/TV reviewer, Chief Medical Officer. TWEETS ARE MY OWN.

### Visual Styles

Refer to the Mailman School's visual identity style guide when using photography or creating other visual assets.

- For icons and avatars, use the CUIMC crown. For the file and/or feedback on other graphic elements, contact Diana Gazzia at [dg2857@columbia.edu](mailto:dg2857@columbia.edu).
- When posting photos, remember to only publish photos for which you have the appropriate permission, credit the photographer accordingly, and do not tag users without prior approval.

### Links

- When posting links on social media, use a tool such as Bit.ly to make links shorter.
- Attach links to posts whenever possible.

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT THE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE FOR GUIDANCE:**

John LaDuca, [jl4501@cumc.columbia.edu](mailto:jl4501@cumc.columbia.edu)  
Maggie Gelwix, [mg3937@cumc.columbia.edu](mailto:mg3937@cumc.columbia.edu)