

# VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

## SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES



## **PURPOSE**

To outline style guidelines, policies, and recommended practices for Virginia Military Institute's authorized social media accounts. These policies and guidelines apply to anyone representing VMI on social media. This document is updated frequently. If you have questions about developing a social media strategy, contact Maj. Kelcey Leach, Marketing Director at [marketing@vmi.edu](mailto:marketing@vmi.edu).

## **POLICIES**

Any VMI department, club, or other unit needing to register or update a social media account must fill out the [Social Media Directory Registration Form](#). When submitting a newly created social media account, please be sure to provide any URLs for existing accounts so that they can all be added to our Social Media Directory.

Remember, you must receive permission from the supervisor as appointed by your department head (or unit) before establishing any new accounts.

Upon reviewing the social media policies and guidelines, if you have any questions or need help with your account(s), contact Maj. Kelcey Leach, Marketing Director at [marketing@vmi.edu](mailto:marketing@vmi.edu). You may also request official branding from Maj. Leach for use on your account.

We encourage departments to have at least two account administrators in the event one of the administrators cannot be reached.

When using an officially recognized social media channel, assume at all times that you are representing Virginia Military Institute.

Confidential or proprietary college information or similar information of third parties who have shared such information with you should not be shared publicly on social media.

Exercise discretion, thoughtfulness and respect for your colleagues, associates and the Institute's supporters/community (social media fans). Remember that when you post on social media you are sharing that information with the world.

Do not discuss or speculate on internal policies or operations.

Refrain from engaging in dialogue that could disparage colleagues, competitors, or critics.

Be mindful that all posted content is subject to review in accordance with Virginia Military Institute's employee policies and editorial guidelines.

It is recommended that mini-campaigns be reviewed with the social media council for advice, input, and integration with the content strategy before implementation.

Virginia Military Institute logos may not be used for personal social media.

Wherever possible, the VMI disclaimer must appear somewhere within the site: "This social media platform is an unofficial publication of VMI. The views and opinions expressed on this site by visitors are not representative or endorsed by Virginia Military Institute. We adhere to the terms of use and code of conduct on this site, and we reserve the right to remove any content that is abusive and/or profane, as well as advertisements for services, activities, and events not sponsored by Virginia Military Institute."

VMI Communications and Marketing will monitor official VMI social media accounts and will contact individual account managers regarding content not in accordance with these guidelines.

Cadet-developed content must be reviewed by appropriate staff before being posted to any Institute social media platform.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

**Be authentic:** Identify yourself when appropriate to provide authenticity

**Be Smart:** Social media is "real life." Behavior in social media is no different than in e-mail, public speech, classroom lecture, conversation with friends, or a poster on a wall. Anything considered inappropriate offline is also inappropriate online. When in doubt about whether to share or not, it's better to be safe than sorry. Additionally, the process of sharing will help you strengthen your social community. You should, however, understand what you're sharing and ensure the values expressed do not conflict with VMI values.

**Be respectful:** Carry the professional norms of your Virginia Military Institute office or function onto the social media platforms. Encourage feedback and two-way communication. Know your audience and think before you post.

**Add value:** Contribute your observations, experiences, and opinions related to topics you understand well as appropriate to your position at VMI; cite your sources and separate

opinions from facts. If you decide to engage in social media, do so with a commitment to post regularly and with professional conduct.

**Aim for quality:** Think about what you want to say; understand the context and the rules of engagement before you post your comments. Make your content rich and interesting for others to read and share.

**Be mindful of copyright laws:** Show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others. Credit sources where appropriate. Though crediting the source is not the same as having permission to use copyrighted material. Use disclaimers when appropriate: What you write is ultimately your responsibility. If you choose to identify yourself as a VMI employee or discuss topics related to VMI on any social media channels, many readers will assume you are speaking on behalf of VMI.

**Be VMI:** Remember you represent VMI; read the VMI Style Guide and Brand Identity Guidelines when creating profile/avatar images, graphics, or written content. Speak in accordance with your role at the Institute.

**Monitor your sites.** Watch your platforms for activity both good and bad. Before responding to any negative or inaccurate comments about VMI, contact Maj. Kelcey Leach, Marketing Director at [leachka@vmi.edu](mailto:leachka@vmi.edu)

**Be Successful:** Create a social media strategy: identify your audience and the platform's personality, establish goals, examine staffing, develop a content calendar, and build an editorial review process to protect yourself and VMI.

## **STYLE GUIDE**

**Voice** - All VMI social media channels represent the voice of VMI and should preserve a professional tone. VMI is an institution but should not feel "institutional". Because of the informal nature of social media and opportunity to engage with our audiences, the VMI voice should also be friendly and approachable. Social media provides a platform for showing the humanity of VMI.

**Tone** - On social media it's appropriate to convey our enthusiasm about VMI and VMI programming as well as the cadets, faculty, and staff, even as we preserve our institutional voice. The tone and level of formality of each post should match both its subject matter and the medium, whether Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or other.

Ownership of Posts - All messages on all central media platforms are posted in the character voice described above. We do not attach names or initials to posts.

Positivity and Transparency - We present our messages with a positive attitude, but are honest and transparent in the information we share.

Other Accounts/Sources - We always do our best to reference another account (when appropriate or available) in any message we share.

Imagery - All photos used on social media should align with the VMI Identity Standards Manual. Images should reflect the mission of VMI: subject matter should be appropriate, uniforms should be correct, activities should be sanctioned, and VMI programs, faculty, and cadets should be presented in a positive way.

## **NETWORK SPECIFIC GUIDELINES**

### **Twitter**

- Replace “and” with ampersand (&), NOT plus (+) to save characters when necessary
- Include any relevant mentions.
- Try to include at least one hashtag per post.
- Cite the source of an article or news item by tagging the relevant account within your tweet.
- Feel free to retweet relevant content as often as you’d like.

### **Facebook**

- Include any relevant mentions.
- Delete the text URL from your post if displaying the link preview.
- For a post where you don’t want the preview to show, use a shortened link (ex. bit.ly) in the message itself.

## **YouTube / Vimeo**

- Give videos descriptive names to support SEO.
- Include relevant hyperlinks in description.

## **Instagram**

- Images may be professional or artsy but not unnatural—effects should never compromise image quality (i.e. avoid effects that create intense sharpening, contrast, strange color casts, or overexposure.)
- Before reposting, secure permission from the original poster to share their content. Ensure the original content owner is cited on the shared post. Mobile applications such as “Repost” are helpful for reposting content on Instagram.
- Avoid over-posting. Try not to post more than one or two times a day. Keep in mind that you can post multiple photos in one Instagram post.
- Keep captions short and let your images/videos tell the story.
- Keep in mind that Instagram limits video length to 1 minute.

## **ROLES**

### **Social Media Administrator**

The Director of Online Communications and Branding maintains oversight of official VMI social media initiatives for VMI. The Marketing Director serves as the Social Media Administrator and is responsible for developing and overseeing the execution of strategic social media and digital initiatives and social media campaigns. as well as being responsible for creation and oversight of high-profile channel accounts at Virginia Military Institute.

Other responsibilities include:

Serves in a leadership/advisory role, providing guidance, support, and recommendations regarding social media campaigns, content strategy, and best practices. Provides counsel across VMI to ensure the proper use of protocols.

Heads the Social Media Council.

Develops emergency plans and protocols for crisis communications management through Web and social media properties.

Develops and formalizes digital and social media standards and policies for the Institute.

### **Platform Managers**

Platform Managers are accountable for the life and health of their respective communities.

They reply to questions and comments, create or supervise creation of compelling posts, and understand that each social media channel's unique culture and tone must resonate with the voice of the Institute. Platform managers ensure items posted on behalf of the Institute are in conformance with Institute policies and guidelines. They also monitor posts made to their platforms for propriety, appropriateness, and civility and determine when to remove offensive posts or take other administrative action.

### **Content Managers**

Content managers create and post new content. They share content that tells a cohesive, positive, compelling story about VMI.

### **Cadet Assistants**

The council will approve Cadet Assistants for access to official VMI social media accounts based on recommendations by the platform manager after a review of their applications and an interview with the council. The role of cadet assistants will vary based on qualifications and interests of the cadet and the needs of VMI.

Due to the evolving nature of social media, the policies and guidelines are subject to revision by the VMI Communications and Marketing office.