

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

DEPARTMENT OF ATHLETICS

POLICY ON STUDENT-ATHLETE SOCIAL NETWORKING AND MEDIA USE

The UNC Department of Athletics recognizes and supports its student-athletes' rights to freedom of speech, expression, and association, including the use of online social networks. In this context, however, each student-athlete must remember that playing and competing for The University of North Carolina is a privilege, not a right. As a student-athlete, you represent the University and you are expected to portray yourself, your team, and the University in a positive manner at all times. Any online postings must therefore be consistent with federal and State laws, and team, Department, University, and NCAA rules, regulations and policies (including the Guidelines listed below).

Guidelines

If you participate on a social networking site or use social media, you must keep the following guidance in mind:

- Everything you post is public information – any text or photo placed online is completely out of your control the moment it is placed online – even if you limit access to your site. Information (including pictures, videos, comments, and posts) may be accessible even after you remove it.
- Use caution when adding someone or inviting someone to be a friend. Many individuals are looking to take advantage of students-athletes, to get close to student-athletes to give themselves a sense of membership, or to gain information about you, your teammates, or your team for the purposes of sports gambling or negative publicity.
- Limit information about your whereabouts or plans to minimize the potential of being stalked, assaulted, or the victim of other criminal activity.
- What you post may affect your future. Many employers and graduate school admissions officers review social networking sites as part of their overall evaluation of an applicant. Carefully consider how you want people to perceive you before you give them a chance to misinterpret your information (including pictures, videos, comments, and posts). Similarly, content may be separately monitored by the NCAA, and violations of NCAA bylaws may result in the forfeiture of your eligibility to compete.
- Similar to comments made in person, the Department of Athletics will not tolerate disrespectful comments and behavior online, such as:

- Derogatory or defamatory language;
- Comments that create a serious danger to the safety of another person or that constitute a credible threat of serious physical or emotional injury to another person;
- Comments or photos that describe or depict unlawful assault, abuse, hazing, harassment, or discrimination; selling, possessing, or using controlled substances; or any other illegal or prohibited conduct, including violating the University's Policy on Prohibited Harassment and Discrimination.

Monitoring and Consequences

Each team must identify at least one coach or administrator who is responsible for having access to, regularly monitoring the content of, and/or receiving reports about team members' social networking sites and postings ("Team Monitor"). The Department of Athletics also reserves the right to have other staff members access, monitor, and/or receive reports about student-athletes' social networking sites and postings, or to contract with an outside vendor or vendors to do so. An outside vendor may assume the Team Monitor responsibilities to access and monitor content. In performing these functions, the Department of Athletics will not require student-athletes to provide their passwords to the Team Monitor or outside vendor(s) or to allow the Team Monitor or outside vendor(s) to otherwise access their accounts as an account owner.

In addition to reviewing postings according to the Guidelines identified above, Team Monitors and/or outside vendor(s) will also evaluate postings for information that could indicate a potential violation of NCAA regulations related to amateurism, including specifically evaluating postings that identify possible improper extra benefits and/or agent-related activities. Any concerns about a student-athlete's posting or other online activity related to potential NCAA violations should be reported immediately to the Compliance Office at compliance@unca.unc.edu or 919-962-6000.

Any violation of law or of NCAA, University, or Department of Athletics' rules, regulations, or policies (e.g., the University's Policy on Prohibited Harassment and Discrimination, Instrument of Student Governance [Honor Code], Student-Athlete Code of Conduct, or Hazing and Initiation Policy), or evidence of such violation in your online content, is subject to investigation and possible immediate sanction by the Department of Athletics, the University, the NCAA, and/or law enforcement agencies. Internal sanctions may include, but not be limited to, notice to remove the posting or photo, dismissal from the team, and/or reduction, cancellation, or non-renewal of athletics grant-in-aid.

(Adopted: August 2010
Revised: September 2011; April 2012)