

## **Sample Electronic Social Networking Guidelines for Departments of Athletics**

The National Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) has developed the following guidelines to help your institution prevent problems that might emerge with improper usage of social networking websites.

### **Guidelines for an Institutional Agreement**

As a student-athlete, I realize that because I am an ambassador to my institution, I am subject to a higher code of conduct than my student counterparts. Therefore, in order to preserve my electronic presence\*, I am committed to:

1. Posting only appropriate personal information to my profile
  - a. I will omit my phone number or address in my profile
  - b. I will only list appropriate e-mail addresses and nicknames
  - c. I will not include my schedule, spring break plans, or any other information that will allow potential stalkers to know my whereabouts
2. Monitoring electronic photo albums.
  - a. I will not take photos that would be considered inappropriate\*\*.
  - b. If an inappropriate photo is taken, I will ask the photographer to refrain from posting the picture on the internet or, at the very least, to exclude me when tagging pictured individuals.
  - c. I will frequently check my tagged photos. If I find an inappropriate photo tagged to my name, then I will un-tag it and ask the photographer to delete the picture from their album.
  - d. I will set all personal photo albums to “visible to friends only.” This will help protect me from potential stalkers and will limit the exposure of any inappropriate photos that I may have unintentionally included in the posting process.
3. Monitoring postings
  - a. I will ensure that the postings on my “wall” are appropriate
  - b. I will not post any message that is considered inappropriate
4. Allowing only friends and acquaintances to join my group of friends.
5. Setting parameters so that only people I accept as friends may view my profile.
6. Monitoring social network usage among my teammates.
  - a. I realize that a team is only as successful as its weakest link and therefore I am committed to ensuring that my team does not make choices that could result in team-affecting consequences, due to improper social networking website usage.
  - b. If I do not feel comfortable with confrontation, then I will discuss the issue with my coach or another teammate and have him or her resolve the issue.
7. Joining only appropriate groups.
  - a. After joining an appropriate group, I will continually monitor it to ensure that the group name or focus does not become inappropriate.
  - b. I will not create a group that is inappropriate
8. Using social networking sites in a way that is non-malicious.

- a. I will not use social networking sites in a way that will harm others, especially coaches or teammates.
  - b. I will not use social networking sites to disrespect my opponents.
9. Staying up to date on new website features and making a consistent effort to ensure that these new evolutions do not compromise me or my institution.
10. Representing myself in a professional manner while using social networking sites.
- a. As a student-athlete, I realize that I am an ambassador to my institution, and because of this great responsibility, I must conduct myself in a proper manner while on these websites.
  - b. I realize that potential employers, graduate school program administrators, and others outside of my peer group may view my profile, and that what I post may have an effect on my future employment or professional reputation.

\*Electronic presence refers to a student-athlete's involvement in an electronic community.

\*\*Inappropriate content is anything that is illegal, or that your institution and or athletic department may deem as inappropriate. This list may include but is not limited to: partial or total nudity, underage consumption of alcohol, hazing activities, tobacco use, obscene gestures, derogatory statements or vulgar language.

### **Guidelines for Institutional Action**

The intent of this document is not to restrict the civil liberties of student-athletes. It is intended to preserve the use of social networking sites for student-athletes across the nation so that they may continue to utilize their communication and networking possibilities.

Student-athletes believe that there should be a division-wide guideline for institutional action. They want a statement that clearly delineates the consequences for improper use of social networking sites. Such a statement should include the following criteria.

1. We believe that there should be a designated clean-up period after the first infraction before a suspension from athletic competition is invoked. If the student-athlete in violation corrects the mistake in judgment during this clean-up period, then we believe that their suspension should be eliminated or shortened to reflect such action. A twenty-four hour window is acceptable. This exclusion may not apply to severe offenses.
2. Upon a second infraction, a student-athlete's electronic social networking privilege should be suspended for a year and the student-athlete should serve the full suspension from athletic competition (designated by the athletics department) without exception, as long as he or she is a student-athlete representing that institution.
3. If the student-athlete continues to use social networking websites during their one year suspension, then the institution should consider a one year suspension of the student-athlete from athletic competition along with the permanent loss of social networking site privileges. Façade