

## **V-1.20 – UMCES POLICY ON STUDENT SOCIAL MEDIA PRIVACY**

Approved by the President on February 21, 2014

Amended and approved November 4, 2014 by the President; Revised and approved November 9, 2023.

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES or “University”) Policy is to adopt the University System of Maryland (USM) Policy V-1.20, as amended by the Board of Regents on September 19, 2014, which sets forth the appropriate rules to protect student privacy interests while permitting the use of social media for academic and career-based activities.

### **II. DEFINITIONS**

- A. “Non-Public Access Information” refers to the security information required to access a student’s Personal Social Media Account. Examples include: passwords, log-in information or other private and confidential information required to gain access to a social media account.
- B. “Personal Social Media Account” refers to a social media account that allows social interaction and dissemination of information to others, created and maintained by a student or prospective student in whole or in part for private use. It does not include:
  - 1. an account on a social media platform owned or provided by an educational institution;
  - 2. an account on a social media platform created by a student or prospective student specifically for academic or University-assisted career-based activities; or
- C. “Social Media” are internet-based applications that enable users to participate in social networking by exchanging content with other users. Examples of “social media” include but are not limited to Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, X, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, Tumblr, and Snapchat.
- D. “Authorized UMCES Employee” is someone who under appropriate circumstances may gain access to a student or prospective student’s social media account, including Unit Directors, the President, or other UMCES staff given authorization by the Unit Director or President.

### **III. SOCIAL MEDIA PRIVACY POLICIES**

In compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) this policy prohibits the following conduct:

- A. UMCES employees shall not require, request, suggest, or cause a student or prospective student to disclose, grant access to, or allow observation of Non-Public Access Information pertaining to any Social Media Accounts.
- B. UMCES employees shall not require that a student or prospective student change the privacy settings on a Personal Social Media Account.
- C. UMCES employees shall not require a student or a prospective student to designate an UMCES employee or agent of UMCES as a “friend” a “follower” or any other designation that would afford the employee or agent access to a student’s Personal Social Media Account.
- D. UMCES employees shall not require a student or a prospective student to log onto a Personal Social Media Account in the presence of an UMCES employee or agent of the institution.
- E. UMCES employees shall not require that a student provide names of the social media platforms that they employ.

### **IV. DISCIPLINE**

UMCES employees shall not suspend, expel, discipline, penalize, or threaten to take any of the aforementioned actions against any student or prospective student for refusing to provide information in response to a request that is prohibited under Section III of this Policy.

### **V. LIMITATIONS**

This Policy does not prohibit any of the following activities:

- A. An authorized UMCES employee may require a student to access a social media account provided that:
  - 1. the student has the option, at their own election, to complete the assignment or activity by using an existing Personal Social Media Account or by creating a generic

social media account;

2. access is limited to the academic or career-based activity;
3. the student is not required to provide Non-Public Access Information;
4. the academic or career-based activity is designed and administered in a manner that is consistent with the institution's FERPA obligations.

UMCES employees are required to obtain approval by the Vice President for Education or the student's Unit Director before instituting academic or career-based activities involving access to such accounts. In addition, UMCES employees are encouraged to provide notice to students, in syllabi or other relevant written publications, when use of such accounts is required.

- B. UMCES employees may access Personal Social Media Account information that has been voluntarily provided to them by the student, prospective student or an authorized third party.
- C. UMCES employees may access publicly accessible information relating to a student or prospective student's Personal Social Media account.