

Union Presbyterian Seminary

Digital Communication Policy

Union Presbyterian Seminary is a Christian community, located within the larger body of Christ, which seeks to be in right relationship with the entire world. We recognize that what is done in physical and digital contexts has an impact on the mission of God in the world and at the seminary. As we strive to pursue God’s mission with excellence, we abide by this policy for digital communication, defined here as emailing, texting, and interacting on social media platforms.

Digital communication is a tool for ministry and an element of our personal lives. All members of the Union Presbyterian Seminary community have the ethical responsibility to engage in digital communication in a way that enhances and protects the reputation of the seminary as well as their own personal and professional reputations. Those known to be affiliated with the seminary may be perceived as acting as agents of the seminary, regardless of intent.

This policy exists to inform the seminary community about appropriate behavior in digital contexts. This policy is not about limiting what we can do through digital communication, but rather about using these tools responsibly in service of God’s mission in the world.

For guidance on addressing violations of this policy, consult the “Personal Behavior” section of the Community Grievance and Discipline Policy, located in the [Policies and Procedures Booklet](#).

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION SAFETY AND CONFIDENTIALITY FOR ALL FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS

- Upon discovery of any threats, harassment, or personal information trolling, please report it quickly to a page administrator.
- If an imminent threat is made via digital communication or you suspect that there is an emergency, call the police immediately.
- If a credible threat is made or suspected against an individual or group, it should be documented, removed, and reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- Digital harassment involving Union employees or students should be reported to the Communications Office and the Title IX Committee Chair.
- All members of the Union community must adhere to the seminary’s applicable privacy and confidentiality policies. Employees must follow applicable federal requirements, such as FERPA. Sharing confidential information about Union students, employees, or alumni—including but not limited to Social Security numbers, phone numbers, student ID numbers, and payroll information—can result in disciplinary action, termination, and/or administrative withdrawal.

- The seminary chaplain will obtain permission from involved person(s) before sharing any pastoral concerns and joys with the greater seminary community via digital communication. No one else should discuss such matters without the permission of the involved person(s).
- Conversations that take place in contexts in which there is the assumption of confidentiality (e.g., the classroom, faculty meetings, private conversations) should not be shared via digital communication without the permission of all involved parties.
- Due to security risks, be cautious when installing external applications that require access to your social media accounts or digital communication outlets.
- Never open any attachment that comes from someone you do not know or seems suspicious in any way.
- Never provide login credential or personal information unless you are certain that it is a secure connection and a trusted site.
- When available, be mindful of privacy settings that enable you to differentiate between posts visible to the public and posts visible only to your personal network of connections. Keep in mind that some privacy settings will make your content visible to unintended audiences and may put you and others—especially family and friends—at risk.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES FOR ALL FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS

- Official seminary communication on digital platforms shall only contain content that applies to and benefits the mission of the seminary. Personal information should not be included.
- Do not use the seminary’s name, website, or social media presence to promote or endorse any product, political party, or candidate. Doing so can potentially jeopardize the institution’s tax exempt status.
- Do not use the seminary logo without permission of the Union communications office.
- In personal posts, claim responsibility for your own views. If you identify yourself as a member of the Union community, make it clear that you are not representing the views or positions of the seminary.
- Think before you post something, keeping in mind that social media is a public forum. What you post could put your effectiveness in your role at the seminary at risk.
- Remember that all forms of digital communication can be saved and shared with others.
- Post only what you want the world to see. Once you post something it may be accessible forever, even if you delete it.
- Do not use commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libelous.
- Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colorful language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterizations.
- Ensure that your digital communication profiles and related content are consistent with how you wish to present yourself as a member of the Christian community.

- Have all the facts before you email, text, or post. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible to build credibility.
- You are more likely to achieve your goals and draw others into meaningful dialog if you are constructive and respectful.
- If you join a social network or comment on a blog, make sure you are contributing insights that are of interest to others. Self-promoting behavior is viewed negatively and can lead to being banned from websites or groups.
- If you feel angry or passionate, consider delaying your communication until you are calm and clear-headed.
- Communicate as you would speak in person in professional situations. Bring in your personality, but consider content that is open-ended and invites response.
- If you make a mistake, admit it and quickly correct it.
- You don't need to respond to every comment or criticism. Invite differing points of view but be willing to stand above the fray.

UNION PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY DIGITAL COMMUNICATION OUTLETS

The Communications Office maintains a list of existing digital communication outlets and their assigned administrators. If faculty, staff, and/or students desire to create a new outlet (such as a blog or Facebook page), it must provide a unique and valuable form of communication with Union constituents that is not already in existence. A responsible and competent faculty or staff member must serve as the administrator of digital communication outlets. Should the administrator choose to delegate these duties, the delegatee(s) will assume the responsibilities of administration. All proposals for new outlets must be approved by a supervisor (for faculty and staff) and the Communications Office.

The Communications Office will consider suspending or discontinuing an outlet if any of the following conditions exist:

- The outlet no longer fits with the seminary's plan and vision for reaching constituencies.
- No one is available for or has interest in administering the outlet.
- The outlet is too difficult to maintain.
- The outlet's content and activity are no longer useful or effective.

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR UNION DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS OUTLETS

- All of the general guidelines listed above apply.
- Provide the names of those with administrative responsibilities and all user names and passwords for your outlet to the Director of Communications.
- Update and moderate the content of your outlet on a regular basis.
- Be sensitive to the volume or duplication of content that constituencies may receive from various Union outlets. Consult with other administrators as needed.
- Make sure any links in your content are working.

- If a post on your outlet is best addressed by another faculty or staff member, pass the information along to the appropriate person. If the post would benefit from an official seminary response, contact the Director of Communications.
- Consider joining and regularly viewing other seminary outlets to identify information that would be of interest to those who participate in your outlet and to share information with those who administer other outlets.
- Regularly monitor your use of social media to ensure that an inordinate amount of time and energy is not spent interacting on social media to the detriment of your overall job effectiveness.
- Do not tag students in posts without their permission. They may tag themselves.
- Regularly assess your outlet with respect to its alignment with the mission and vision of the seminary, its volume and frequency of activity, and the relevance of its content.
- Address threats and harassment as outlined in the security and confidentiality section above.
- If a conflict does not constitute a threat or harassment, consult with a supervisor to determine whether to remove the content or to invite community members to discuss the matter in person.

Union Presbyterian Seminary Digital Communication Policy has been approved by: Faculty on October 19, 2017, and by the Executive Staff of the President on October 31, 2017.