Policy # C1960: Social Media and Electronic Communication

Description: To describe the appropriate use of social media and define inappropriate use and associated reporting requirements. Consequences for misuse of social media are provided.

A. Appropriate Use of Social Media
1. Nursing students have ethical and legal obligations to maintain privacy and confidentiality at all times. Students must not post any identifiable student, faculty or patient information. Removing the individual’s name does not necessarily protect the person or patient’s identity, and sharing information, even with names removed, may be enough to constitute a violation of The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and/or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and may have academic, employment and legal consequences (American Nurses Association, 2011).
2. Similar to face to face communications and in-person relationships, nursing students must maintain professional boundaries with patients or former patients. The following statements from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (2011) apply to nursing students as well as nurses: “Online contact with patients or former patients blurs the distinction between a professional and personal relationship. The fact that a patient may initiate contact with the nurse does not permit the nurse to engage in a personal relationship with the patient” (p. 3).
3. When using social media, students should only post content that reflects positively on them, the College of Nursing, and SDSU. If students post content regarding the College of Nursing or SDSU, it should be clear that it does not represent the College of Nursing or SDSU and that the content posted represents only the views of the student. Nursing students must promptly report any identified breach of confidentiality or privacy.
4. Nursing students must be aware of and comply with employer policies regarding use of employer-owned computers, cameras, and other electronic devices and use of personal devices in the workplace.
5. Future employers and educational institutions conduct web searches on prospective employees including online information and postings and may use that information to make hiring decisions. Remember that inappropriate online postings may impact future career options and the nursing profession.
6. When using social media and electronic communication, students should follow the Netiquette guidelines ([http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html](http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html)) and adhere to SDSU policies. South Dakota State University Social Networking Guidelines can be located at: [https://www.sdstate.edu/digital](https://www.sdstate.edu/digital)

B. Inappropriate Use of Social Media

1. Students must not post any personal or health related information associated with patients or others such as name, diagnoses, age, room numbers, photographs or other images, injuries or treatments of patients, or other information in regard to: procedures, surgeries, births, deaths, or any incidents on any social media.

2. Nursing students must not transmit, by way of any electronic media, any patient-related information or image that is reasonably anticipated to violate patient rights to confidentiality or privacy or to otherwise degrade or embarrass the patient.

3. Nursing students must not refer to patients, faculty, peers or clinical agencies in a disparaging manner, even if they are not identified.

4. Nursing students must not take photos or videos of patients on personal devices, including mobile devices.

5. Nursing students must not make disparaging remarks about peers, faculty, employers or coworkers.

C. Reporting of Inappropriate Use of Social media

1. Report any breach of confidentiality or privacy in social media committed by SDSU nursing students, other SDSU students, other nurses, or other health care professionals to a faculty member, advisor, or supervisor.

2. Nursing students who view content that violates ethical or legal standards should first bring the content in question to the attention of the individual who posted it so that this individual can take appropriate action. Just as nurses are required to report posts that could threaten patient privacy regarding health information or patients’ health or welfare (American Nurses Association, 2011), nursing students are obligated to report posting violations.
D. Consequences

1. Any student failing to adhere to the standards set forth in this policy is subject to administrative action, including any and all of the following: written reprimand, course failure, administrative withdrawal from the nursing major, and administrative withdrawal from the university.

2. Any post that could be harmful or reflect negatively on other students, the College of Nursing, SDSU, or any other persons, may result in liability for the individual sending the message. Posting photographs without permission from the individuals in the photographs may also result in legal consequences.

E. References
