



## On Institutional Social Media Policies

The American Association of University Professors has long held that academic freedom includes the freedom to address the larger community with regard to any matter of social, political, economic, or other interest, without institutional discipline or restraint, save in response to fundamental violations of professional ethics or statements that suggest disciplinary incompetence. Administrative responses to several recent cases of targeted harassment of faculty members over their postings on social media raise concern that the freedom of faculty members to speak as citizens is insufficiently defended at those affected institutions. Some of the recent cases were reportedly followed by efforts to develop policies on social media use. While details of these efforts have yet to emerge, there is reason to be concerned that such policies could limit academic freedom.

Given that faculty may make social media posts on behalf of their institution, such as on departmental sites, social media policies can reasonably provide guidance to faculty members who post in an official capacity, and the Association's *Academic Freedom and Electronic Communication* recommends that each institution work with its faculty to develop applicable policies. However, any such policies must recognize that social media can be used to address matters of public concern and thus that their use by faculty members speaking as citizens is subject to Association-supported principles of academic freedom. Institutional commitments to academic freedom, without which there can be no higher education, require institutional commitments to the freedom of faculty members to speak and write as citizens.