

Policies and Practices Related to Posting Student Work in Public Online Environments

The School of Communication and Information values freedom of speech and press and is an advocate for the First Amendment. The school is also mindful of our responsibilities for protecting the educational records of our students and the private personal information of all people. This policy provides a framework for protecting and promoting these freedoms and responsibilities at SC&I.

The School of Communication and Information sponsors curricular, co-curricular, and social activities for which content and coding created by students is posted in open online environments, including on public websites and publicly-available programs and mobile applications. Work created by students as part of their Rutgers curricular and co-curricular activities that is currently available to the public includes: complete websites created by students on both Rutgers and non-Rutgers servers; blog postings to both Rutgers and non-Rutgers sponsored blogs; postings on a variety of social media platforms; projects on sites such as Storify; apps available through a variety of open “stores.”

The school may encourage student work to be publicly available in electronic environments for a variety of reasons.

- We have classes whose objectives include students learning to create content, manage and publish websites and applications, and manage social media content and presence.
- We have academic programs designed to prepare students for careers that involve working in existing and emerging media.
- We want prospective and current students to see examples of types of work they will complete.
- We wish to showcase student accomplishments to prospective and current students, parents, employers, donors, and others.
- We want to enable students to showcase their own work for future employment and/or graduate studies.
- We believe that teaching students how to effectively participate online is part of our mission to support the development of engaged citizens.

Digital student work created for courses or co-curricular activities can sometimes be hosted within an approved course management system or school-hosted site that is password-protected to achieve the educational objectives of the project. Faculty, instructors, and staff who feel that posting student work outside these systems in public environments is important should provide students (on the syllabus or other document) with an explanation of why it makes educational sense for the work to be publicly available. Students should also be informed whether all work submitted will be made publicly available, or just selected projects.

Students should be informed as to how long the work will remain publicly available on school-sponsored websites. Each faculty member posting material can determine how long that should be based upon the educational objectives and shelf-life of the material. Where no information is provided to the school about how long the material should remain available, the school will take down material after seven years and archive it on an internal-facing server or system. Where students control the site, such as on a Google documents site, they determine when to take it down.

Students whose work will be made publicly available should be provided with this policy and other guidelines including:

- Whether to use their actual name or an alias in the particular product,
- The need to maintain a personal copy of their work,
- Their own responsibility for the accuracy and legality of their work,
- Rutgers Code of Student Conduct and other codes of conduct related to online behavior,
- How easily publicly displayed material may be stolen,
- The fact that they retain ownership of their own intellectual property and copyright for their work, and to fully understand and apply Creative Commons categories and symbols.

Students along with the faculty and staff mentors who work with them may not post material that:

- Is false and defamatory,
- Includes legally protected non-public personal information of others or which violates federal law related to the privacy of information such as FERPA and HIPAA,
- Is plagiarized,
- For which they do not hold the copyright (except where the posting would be covered by copyright law's fair use provisions).

Faculty and instructors who ask students to post on social media for assignments should NOT require the students to identify themselves by name as Rutgers students in the posting or identify the posting as a class assignment.

Any school-sponsored site or application made available online/publicly that displays student work must include the following informational elements:

- The site/app/material must be identified as being sponsored by the School of Communication and Information at Rutgers University.
- The material must identify the name of the sponsoring program or group within SC&I.
- If the material is part of a course, it should identify the course number, course name, and the name of the instructor.
- The material should state the year it was originally posted, and last updated.
- There must be a statement about who to contact with questions or concerns about the material, using the generic email info@comminfo.rutgers.edu. This email address comes to a group of staff who will be able to channel the question or comment to the appropriate person; this means that when individuals leave SC&I, the school would continue to receive inquiries about its publicly-available material.
- University or school branding elements may or may not be appropriate for a given site or app. Where the material is sponsored by an academic program – e.g., the ITI Showcase is meant as an official site of the program – it should have school branding. For a particular course assignment, it may or may not be appropriate to use branding.

Every faculty member, instructor, or staff member who makes student work available publicly is asked to register that site with the school on a form provided for this purpose.

Faculty, instructors, and staff who require student creation of websites and databases are encouraged to make use of the school's account with Amazon Web Services. A significant benefit of using this service is that if a site is developed by an instructor who leaves Rutgers, the school has control of the site if there are any problems later on.

In the event that the school receives a request from any individual, whether associated with the school or not, to take down publicly accessible student material, the school will convene a committee to consider the request. The committee will be chaired and convened by the Associate Dean for Programs or other Dean's designee; other members of the committee will include the chair of the department most closely associated with the material, and one faculty member who has expertise with free speech issues. The committee will first assess if there is something false, illegal, or defamatory with the material; if a determination is made that such problematic material is part of the work, the site will be taken down and then a decision will be made as to whether it should go back up with corrections or not. If there is no illegal material in the work, the work will remain publicly available until the committee evaluates the request and decides on the appropriate action.

If a student or alumnus/a requests to have that work taken down that was made public during the individual's enrollment at Rutgers, the committee named above will vet the request. Such requests should be honored when at all possible.