

DEALING WITH INCIVILITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Mary Anne Fitzpatrick

Educational Foundation Distinguish Professor

Vice Provost & Dean of the Faculty



UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina

BACKGROUND

- With growing frequency, university faculty across the ideological spectrum find themselves targeted online for their thoughts, scholarship, teaching, inquiries or expressions.



THREE CORE USC COMMITMENTS

- Academic Freedom
- Freedom of Expression
- Health, Safety and Well-Being of the Campus Community



COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM

- The faculty's right to academic freedom in teaching and research and service is protected as essential to the university's educational mission, even regarding controversial issues or ideas that may provoke disagreement in the public.



COMMITMENT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

- Freedom of expression is not only mandated by our Constitution and other laws but is also necessary for robust intellectual exchange on which the university's teaching and research missions depend.



COMMITMENT TO HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Attacks on social media critical of someone's scholarship can sometimes veer into communication that constitutes a physical threat or an attack or is part of a targeted harassment campaign.



DEALING WITH INCIVILITY: FACULTY SUPPORT & GUIDANCE

- National Picture
- Support of the President and Provost
- Cooperation across major USC Offices



ACTION (1) ASSESS PHYSICAL DANGER

- If you feel your safety has been threatened, consult directly USC Threat Management and Victim Service in the Division of Law Enforcement and Safety. The division is dedicated to the early identification, assessment, and management of incidents and behaviors that threaten the safety and well-being of the university community.



ACTION (2) PROTECT YOUR IDENTITY

- Protect your cyber-identity (e.g., cell phone, network access, social media).



ACTION(3): DEVELOP A PLAN TO DOCUMENT THE MESSAGES

- Create a log and retain a screenshot to document and archive all threatening emails, tweets, Facebook posts, and phone messages.
- Consider asking a friend to monitor social and other media on your behalf and to keep you apprised of any developments or threats.
- Remember that all email communication you send and receive may be subject to a public records request under South Carolina's Freedom of Information Act.



ACTION(4): DO NOT RESPOND IN THE MOMENT

- Be cautious about responding to threatening emails, tweets, blog comments, etc.
- Although responding may seem like the right thing to do, it may only provide harassers with additional material and serve to prolong social media harassment.
- If you choose not to respond, you may also want to encourage your friends and colleagues to do the same.



ACTION(5): ENGAGE UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

- Chair, Dean and/or Office of the Provost
- University Offices Listed on Guide
- Colleagues



ACTION(6): SEEK COMMUNICATION HELP

- Consult with your college communication specialists or the Office of Communications and Marketing. These professionals can be an assistance in responding to the situation.
- You may want to consider preparing a concise message to articulate your position in your own words and distribute it to colleagues as a form of reputation management.
- Communications staff can also be of assistance in deciding whether/how to respond to media requests that may arise.



ACTION(7): CONSIDER IMPACT ON OTHERS

- 1. Front-line staff
- 2. Students
- 3. Co-authors or collaborators



FACULTY SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

- The guide can be found on the Provost's website: under the Office of Faculty Affairs
- https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/provost/academicpriorities/faculty/



QUESTIONS

- Please reach out to Dean Fitzpatrick (fitzpatm@mailbox.sc.edu)



THANKS!

Name: Mary Anne Fitzpatrick

Title: Educational Foundation Distinguish Professor

Vice Provost & Dean of Faculty

Email: fitzpatm@mailbox.sc.edu



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