HINTON LABORATORY SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Purpose: The Hinton Laboratory highly encourages the creation and active usage of social media and professional social media accounts on platforms that includes, but is not limited to, LinkedIn, Facebook, and X (formerly known as Twitter). As we have previously discussed, social media should be utilized for networking and maintaining a diverse network not limited to our institution.[[1]](#footnote-1) By fostering open dialogue, exchanging ideas, and addressing societal challenges, the Hinton laboratory encourages harnessing the collective wisdom and expertise of diverse perspectives to drive meaningful change and innovation through engaging with diverse communities via social media.

General Usage: All Hinton laboratory members are encouraged to have thoughtful and proper usage of social media. With proper engagement, new life-long connections and publicity can be reached through social media. However, to maximize effectiveness of social media, the following guides on social media and networking in the context of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM) should be consulted:

1. Beasley, H. K., Actkins, K. V., Marshall, A. G., Garza-Lopez, E., Wanjalla, C., Scudese, E., Kirabo, A., Liu, K., & Hinton, A., Jr (2024). A quick guide to networking for scientists. Trends in pharmacological sciences, 45(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tips.2023.10.004>
2. Heemstra J. M. (2020). A Scientist's Guide to Social Media. ACS central science, 6(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acscentsci.9b01273>
3. Dong, J. K., Saunders, C., Wachira, B. W., Thoma, B., & Chan, T. M. (2020). Social media and the modern scientist: a research primer for low- and middle-income countries. African journal of emergency medicine : Revue africaine de la medecine d'urgence, 10(Suppl 2), S120–S124. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.afjem.2020.04.005>
4. Bowman, S. R., Biermans, G., Hicks, A., Jevtić, D. M., Rodriguez-Gil, J. L., & Brockmeier, E. K. (2015). A guide for using social media in environmental science and a case study by the Students of SETAC. Environmental sciences Europe, 27(1), 32. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-015-0062-5>
5. Power B. J. (2022). How to use Twitter at a Scientific Conference. mSphere, 7(3), e0012122. <https://doi.org/10.1128/msphere.00121-22>
6. Cowley, E. S., McNulty, K., Fairman, C. M., & Stoner, L. (2023). "Post or Perish"? An Early Career Researcher's Guide to Using Social Media. *Journal of physical activity & health*, *21*(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2023-0533>
7. Traboco, L., Pandian, H., Nikiphorou, E., & Gupta, L. (2022). Designing Infographics: Visual Representations for Enhancing Education, Communication, and Scientific Research. Journal of Korean medical science, 37(27), e214. <https://doi.org/10.3346/jkms.2022.37.e214>
8. Borowiec B. G. (2023). Science communication in experimental biology: experiences and recommendations. The Journal of experimental biology, 226(16), jeb245780. <https://doi.org/10.1242/jeb.245780>
9. Yang, S., Brossard, D., Scheufele, D. A., & Xenos, M. A. (2022). The science of YouTube: What factors influence user engagement with online science videos?. PloS one, 17(5), e0267697. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0267697>

Personal Accounts: While individuals can have a separate personal social account, this personal account should clearly delineate that it is a personal account. The postings on the personal account do not represent the views of the laboratory, and it is encouraged that any such personal accounts refrain from any postings which may be discriminatory or hateful in any way. While the Hinton laboratory takes no ownership over such personal accounts and does not dictate what is posted on them, common sense in accordance with the “General Usage” guides provided above is strongly recommended.

Professional/Career Related Accounts Guidelines: For any account that regularly posts details related to science or one’s career, especially an account used specifically for professional purposes and/or is dedicated to one’s career, the guidelines below apply during one's tenure within the Hinton laboratory.

Professionalism: Social media serves as an effective medium for sharing scientific discoveries, research findings, and scholarly publications with a global audience. By disseminating their work on platforms like X and Facebook, researchers can enhance the visibility and accessibility of their research outputs, thereby contributing to the advancement of scientific knowledge and promoting public engagement with science. However, utmost professionalism is expected in all posts and creation of profiles. For example, the profile image should clearly show one’s face and preferably be a professional headshot. One’s name should follow the name they publish under, and social media should have links to other relevant social media. While posts must not always concern science, posting “memes,” jokes at the expense of others, or direct attacks on individuals within or outside of the laboratory is highly discouraged~~.~~ All content should not show individuals engaging in inappropriate or unethical behavior, as such content may reflect poorly on the reputation and integrity of the laboratory. Notably, messages on social media should strictly concern science. While personal friends may be made through social media, all personal communications should not be performed on social media (See Safety section below for details).

Integrity: Researchers should accurately represent their findings and avoid misinterpretation or sensationalization of scientific data on social media platforms. Clear attribution of sources—including citations to relevant literature—should be provided to uphold academic integrity and facilitate further exploration of the referenced research by interested audiences. In particular, researchers should be mindful of cultural sensitivities, language barriers, and power dynamics when interacting with individuals from different backgrounds or marginalized groups. Social media can be a powerful tool to gain a voice for individuals from underrepresented backgrounds, but it should not be used to silence these voices. If at a conference, live posting should be carefully performed to ensure that no novel data is reported or data should not be unfairly criticized. Low-credibility sources are heavily supported by social bots,[[2]](#footnote-2) so individuals should be thoughtful with their reposts and ensure they are not supporting low-credibility scientific posts. While stating methodological errors through social media posts may be common, this should be done with caution to ensure one maintains integrity in pointing out errors in conclusions drawn and ensure they are not unnecessarily hostile. If one wonders whether a social media post may be considered offensive or cause an argument, often it may be better not posted or they should consult with senior faculty within the laboratory.

Effectiveness: Through the guides provided above, social media should be utilized thoughtfully to maximize the impact of all posts. For example, relevant hashtags should be included, and one should consider their audience: if they are mostly followed by experts within the field, such as on LinkedIn, a detailed post discussing the methods and avoiding oversimplification is important. If a general audience is the target, such as on TikTok, a high-concept summary of the findings as well as a relevance statement should be focused on. Associated funding should be stated and tagged, if possible. Co-first or co-senior authors should also be mentioned. As a common courtesy, if one is a co-author on a paper, they should not post about it until co-first or co-senior authors have the chance to publicize it first, if they desire to do so. Assessing the impact and effectiveness of social media engagement in advancing scientific objectives requires the systematic evaluation of key performance metrics and indicators, so individuals should compare their social media strategies and the performance of posts to understand how they can have the most effectiveness.

Confidentiality: Different journals have different copyright policies. Platforms like ResearchGate can allow individuals to upload full-text articles. Yet, depending on the manuscript’s journal copyright standards, sharing a full-text version for download on ResearchGate or X may be impermissible. Similarly, if someone desires to make TikTok or Youtube videos in the laboratory, they must work with the PI and other laboratory leaders to ensure no confidential information is shown, whether identifying information about the Hinton laboratory may be shown, and all people being recorded have consented /are permitted to be posted online. Thus, before posting any full-text article online, or photos/videos of other laboratory members and of the Hinton laboratory, work with senior faculty to ensure that all privacy and confidentiality permissions are obtained.

Safety: Social media platforms are susceptible to cybersecurity threats such as data breaches, phishing attacks, and account hijacking, which can compromise the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of sensitive information. Thus, no compromising information should be stored on social media. Beyond this, STEMM discussions on social media may be vulnerable to online harassment, trolling, or targeted attacks based on factors such as gender, race, or academic affiliation, especially articles focused on inclusion. Thus, individuals in the Hinton laboratory should ensure their social media does not include any personal information such as home address that can be targeted. If brigaded by bots or other mechanisms of non-constructive harassment, blocking aggressors and/or temporarily disabling social media accounts is encouraged.

1. Termini, C. M., Hinton, A. O., Jr, Garza-López, E., Koomoa, D. L., Davis, J. S., & Martínez-Montemayor, M. M. (2021). Building Diverse Mentoring Networks that Transcend Boundaries in Cancer Research. Trends in cancer, 7(5), 385–388. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trecan.2021.01.001. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Shao, C., Ciampaglia, G. L., Varol, O., Yang, K. C., Flammini, A., & Menczer, F. (2018). The spread of low-credibility content by social bots. Nature communications, 9(1), 4787. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-018-06930-7>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)