



# STUDENT CONDUCT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

## FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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## Online Social Networking and Cyber communities

Back in a time before identity theft, on-line stalkers, and Bret Michaels had a dating show, society lived without the internet. College students did not have the luxury to instant message friends during a boring class and never once had the chance to log into Facebook to see if they had received a new friend request from that person they met in South Beach . Online social networks give you an opportunity to meet hundreds of different people instantly from the comfort of your residence hall room.

### To Facebook or Not to Facebook

Facebook, MySpace, and the countless other online social networks are useful and fun. They allow you to say hello to friends, remind people about birthdays, and assist you in procrastinating on that research paper that you have been dreading to write. Online social networks also have a downside. Stories have been reported of individuals losing their jobs for information or pictures they posted. Seriously, when you are interviewing for a job two years from now, do you really want your perspective employer to know that you can do a two minute keg stand? Probably not. Danger to your career and occupational future is scary!

A freshman at a large state school tragically learned about the dangers of online social networks. The student came from a small town and didn't know many people who would be attending the same university as she would. She joined MySpace in hopes of meeting fellow classmates prior to her arrival at college. Less than one month after her arrival, she was sexually assaulted and murdered by a person she met on MySpace. You can read profiles and make online "friends", but this does not mean that you truly know that person.

### Safety First

Be proactive in protecting yourself against stalkers, assault, and identity theft. Here are a few simple tips to help you reduce the risks:

- Never post your personal information. This includes your class schedule, address, or telephone number.
- Use the privacy settings on your MySpace/Facebook; this feature is available to give you more control on who sees your profile.
- If you make a friend online and want to meet them, do it in a populated place and tell someone where you are going.
- Block users who make you uncomfortable. If someone gives you a bad vibe- it is absolutely okay to prevent them from communicating with you. This is not rude—it's your right!

### Think! If you wouldn't want your hometown paper to write an article about it, don't post it.

Search engines such as Google cache websites on a daily basis. Thanks to this service, every time your name gets entered into a search engine the information from your MySpace that you deleted could reappear in the search results. Keep this in mind, a picture of you taking vodka shots now may not look as fun in three years. Think before you post!

### Play Nice

No one likes a bully, even in online communities! Although this is America and freedom of speech is a right, sexual harassment, personal abuse and threats are not protected speech. **Remember: You can be in violation of the FIU Student Code of Conduct for your online behavior.** Have fun online, but remember the "Golden Rule" still applies.

### Questions?

If you have any questions or comments regarding social networking, please call the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution at (305) 348-3939. You can also stop by our office, located in GC 311 OR e-mail the Assistant Director, Katie McGee at mcgeek@fiu.edu.

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### Incident Report Form


[Download the incident report form.](#)

### Standards of Conduct


[Read the Student Code of Conduct](#)

### Appeal Form


[Download the appeal form](#)

### Student Conduct Committee


[Download the application form.](#)

### Contact Information

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