



## **Guidelines for faculty and staff experiencing online harassment**

### **Definitions:**

**Doxing:** to publicly identify or publish private information (about someone) especially as a form of punishment or revenge.

**Harassment:** to annoy or bother (someone) in a constant or repeated way.

**Trolling:** to antagonize (others) online by deliberately posting inflammatory, irrelevant, or offensive comments or other disruptive content.

*Definitions via Merriam-Webster*

### **Community standards/online abuse standards by social media platform:**

[Facebook/Instagram](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[SnapChat](#)

[TikTok](#)

[Twitter](#)

(Because each channel's policy changes from time to time, we are providing links to the most recent locations for each platform's policy on abusive behavior and community standards.)

### **Free expression at GVSU:**

As a public institution, GVSU cannot limit expressive activity based on content. We may not agree with what is being said or expressed, but given our commitment to free speech, a speaker or group has a constitutional right to freedom of expression, unless the speech threatens violence or is in violation of university policy.

### **Social media and webpage policies:**

Grand Valley encourages freedom of expression and recognizes the value of diverse opinions. However, webpage and social media administrators have a responsibility to remove comments, images, or other material deemed inflammatory, vulgar, or otherwise inappropriate, especially when they appear to threaten the welfare or safety of the poster or others on university-run websites and social media channels.

*If a situation arises where a department/individual would like an official statement from the university on a situation, please contact [University Communications](#).*

### **What you can do to prevent issues online:**

- Review [GVSU's Computing Conditions of Use](#) from Information Technology
- Indicate in social media bios that you are not an institutional spokesperson (Example: Opinions expressed are my own.)



- Consider setting social media accounts to “private” so members of the public cannot view these profiles or your postings without your consent.
- Do not upload documents with private information (personal phone numbers, home addresses, etc.) onto the GVSU CMS.
- Note: As a public institution GVSU-associated email addresses, office phone numbers, etc. are considered public information. Some communications may also be subject to public review under the Michigan Freedom of Information Act.

**Guidelines for an online harassment, trolling or doxing situation:**

- Step 1: Remain calm as the university navigates this situation with you. Your safety is a top priority. If you believe you are in imminent physical danger, call 911.

If you are concerned for your safety and want non-emergency assistance, contact the GVSU Department of Public Safety at 616-331-3255.

- Step 2: Immediately contact your department chair or supervisor to explain the situation. Share all relevant information so the severity of the issues can be properly assessed.

In the event of a trolling or doxing situation, save all documentation associated with the event. This can include taking screenshots of comments and text messages, saving emails, URLs, photos and other data.

- Step 3: Contact University Communications to assist in determining if a customized response to the situation is necessary. UComm will help determine next steps for communication on the issue, and will escalate to other departments if needed.

Please contact [Chris Knape](#), Director of University Communications, in this event. If the situation is occurring on social media, please also contact [Sarah Dudinetz](#), social media specialist.

- Step 4: Forward all media and other inquiries to University Communications, as noted above.
- Step 5: Keep a low profile. Suspend activity on social media until the situation has been resolved.

Do not respond in any way to those who are trolling, harassing or doxing. It can be difficult to keep silent when attacked, but engagement with attackers can exacerbate issues.



## **Key Contacts**

### **Public Safety contact:**

- GVSU Department of Public Safety: 616-331-3255

### **University Communications contacts:**

- Chris Knape, director of University Communications  
[knapech@gvsu.edu](mailto:knapech@gvsu.edu)  
616-331-2222
- Sarah Dudinetz, social media specialist  
[dudinesa@gvsu.edu](mailto:dudinesa@gvsu.edu)  
616-331-2228