

NSCC's Guidelines for Facebook Groups

What are Facebook Groups?

Facebook Groups are one of the very best vehicles currently available online for smaller groups of people to be able to use multiple formats to communicate and share information with one another. The Groups provide a virtual way for a small group of people with a shared interest to connect with each other via social media. Creating a Group on Facebook is a great way to organize those who have common, specific interests.

For example, people affiliated with North Seattle Community College (NSCC) who are members of a specific subgroup—such as a student club, a degree or certificate program, a division, department, graduating class or group of alumni— may want to have a Facebook Group. This is an excellent way for those who share a common interest in a topic, program, event, cause, or graduating year at NSCC to connect via the Web around their specific, shared interest.

How does a Group differ from a Page?

Facebook Pages are set up by businesses, organizations, celebrities and brands to communicate with a broad number of people who like them. Pages can only be created and managed by official representatives. For example, NSCC has an official Facebook Page at www.facebook.com/northseattle.

The Group application is designed for smaller groups of people – such as those from a specific department or club. Groups can be created by anyone.

Throughout these guidelines, references to an NSCC-affiliated Facebook Group's "page" (with a small p) may be made. A Group is a specific type of Facebook page, just as an individual's profile on Facebook is another type of Facebook page.

Why is a Facebook Group the best vehicle to use for smaller groups?

Groups, as opposed to Pages, provide a space to communicate specific information on a more personalized level. Groups also provide enhanced features for smaller scale interactions. Groups have access to many of the same applications that Pages have – such as photos, wall posts, and the like.

However, only Groups have additional applications, which enable members to easily:

- Create shared documents for the group to access and edit
- Chat simultaneously with multiple group members via Facebook's instant messaging "chat" tool
- Schedule group events
- Have a Group email address for ease of communicating

Why can't a group/department/class at NSCC have its own Facebook Page?

NSCC-affiliated groups, departments, clubs, divisions, programs, etc should not create or use a Page to communicate on Facebook. Instead, please engage with your audience by creating a Group on Facebook. As explained above, Pages can only be created and managed by official representatives of the College – in this case, that is NSCC's Department of Marketing and Public Relations.

In addition, NSCC has only one official page. The reason is purposeful: having multiple Pages associated with the College creates confusion for Facebook users. Users would not be certain which Page to use for posting or obtaining accurate, official information about NSCC. In fact, they might get frustrated and navigate away from Facebook without engaging with NSCC at all. The result of this would be a decrease in the number of members of your Group, as well a reduction in the number of users of the College's official Facebook Page.

By creating a Group that has a connection to the official NSCC Page, you will gain increased visibility. This should not only help Facebook users more quickly and easily locate your Group, but should lead to your Group having more members and result in higher traffic to your Group. One way to ensure this happens is to include NSCC in the name of your Group.

How can people tell my Group is connected to the College?

Groups can be associated with the official NSCC Facebook Page, which represents the entire College. Making connections between Groups and the official NSCC Page can be accomplished in three ways. First, Groups should "like" the NSCC's Facebook Page; this is done by visiting the Page and clicking on "Like". Secondly, a link to all NSCC-affiliated Groups is listed on the official NSCC Page. By clicking on this link in the left navigation bar, a visitor can access all Groups on Facebook that are affiliated with the College.

Take a look at these Group pages to see how they are using various applications on Facebook, as you consider the elements you want to include when setting up your own Group. You can access this list directly at https://www.facebook.com/northseattle#!/northseattle?sk=app_4949752878. Third, Groups should include NSCC in the name of their Group.

Who creates and is responsible for a Facebook Group?

A Facebook Group is run by one or more administrators who create and organize the Group. If you're reading this, most likely that's you! Once the Group is created, you are responsible for controlling Group membership, adding content to your Group's page, maintaining your Group and monitoring activity on your Group's page.

Due to the nature of Facebook and the expectations of users, it's a good idea to have more than one administrator for each Group. This helps ensure there is always someone available to communicate with the Group and helps prevent the Group from languishing. However, having more than one administrator requires that you establish and engage in open, frequent and clear communication to maintain communication with the Group.

What needs to be considered when choosing an administrator?

An administrator should be able to easily maintain a commitment to the group for at least a year, if not longer. In most cases, this means an employee of the College. There are cases where the most appropriate main Group administrator is a student or volunteer. However, if you are a student or volunteer administrator, it's essential that you have a backup administrator who works at the College. The goal is to ensure continuity and access to the page once you graduate or discontinue your volunteer work

In addition, because a Facebook Group is a long-term endeavor, it's recommended that you are not a short-term or temporary member of your Group, class, division or club. In other words, you must make an ongoing commitment if Facebook is going to be a successful medium for communicating with and about your Group.

How often should the administrator engage with the Group?

There is no point in having a Facebook Group that stagnates. It must be vibrant and engaging – or it should not be set up. If it is not active, and cannot be revitalized, the group should be archived. In fact, Facebook might choose to do this for you, in the event that there is no recent activity.

Therefore, you must have the time, desire and ability to post information for your Group on a regular, frequent and recurring basis. This is an almost daily task and certainly is performed at least three to four times per week.

In addition, you need to monitor your Group regularly – at least several times per week as well. Facebook users, like most people on the internet, expect prompt attention and quick replies to the questions and comments they post. You are responsible for providing responses to questions, commenting on Group member postings where appropriate and – when necessary – removing posts that are offensive or inappropriate in a timely manner.

How can I engage my Group on Facebook?

Anyone, not just administrators, can use the special features described earlier that are available to Facebook Groups. However, as administrator, you are responsible for ensuring your Group is of value to members with frequently updated and pertinent information.

In many cases, you will be the main person utilizing special features such as creating group events and issuing invitations via Facebook. For specific information about how to use Facebook Group features, please refer to the links at the end of this document.

How do new members join my Facebook Group?

Any Group member can issue invitations to their friends to join. Also, anyone can request to join a Group, whether it's open or closed. However, all Groups require administrator approval/confirmation for new membership. This is another reason you need to frequently monitor your Group – to ensure new members don't have to wait too long to be confirmed as a member.

Why should I select the "Open" privacy setting for my Group?

Most Facebook Groups are open to all, which means they are visible to anyone on Facebook and can be joined by simply by clicking "join" on the Group's main page. People can also easily be invited to join, via a messaged invitation or by sharing a link to the Group elsewhere on the Web.

Having an "open" Group is suggested and preferred for any Groups officially connected to NSCC. One of the main reasons for having a Facebook Group is to either grow the size of your Group and/or spread the word about your activities in order to interest others. Therefore, ensuring that you have an "open" Group in the virtual world can be important to the success of your Group in the real world.

What if I have special privacy concerns surrounding my Group?

Almost nothing on the Web is truly private. However, if you determine there is a real and legitimate concern about displaying content and member information in a way that can be easily accessed by a wider audience, you can set up your Group with some privacy limitations. There are two choices when creating a Group with more limited access.

In Closed Groups, while everyone on Facebook can see the names and members of a Group, only the Group's members can view the content – including wall posts, events, photos and the like. Visibility – of both the content posted on the Group's page as well as who belongs to the Group – is, for the most part, limited to individuals who have been approved to join the Group. In order to join a "closed" Group, a new member must either submit a request to join (by clicking on "request to join" on the Group's page) or be invited by a Group member (via a click to "invite someone to join this Group").

Secret Groups on Facebook have never been used for any Group officially affiliated with NSCC. In fact, they are rarely used in general. Unless there is an extreme and unusual need for intense privacy of both content and members of a Group, you should not set up a College-related Group with Secret privacy settings on Facebook.

However, Secret Groups do exist, so you might want to be aware of them. What makes Secret Groups different from both Closed and Open Groups is a much higher level of privacy. Secret Groups are basically invisible to anyone searching Facebook for the Group. Searching for a Group with a similar name will not even reveal the possibility that your Group exists. Non-members can't see anything about the Group, including its name and membership list. The name of the Group will not display on the profiles of members. Furthermore, no one can ever request to join a Secret Group. They must be invited to join.

For these reasons, setting up a Secret Group is not advisable for NSCC-related Groups.

Why is the name of a Group important? Do you have tips on naming?

Choosing your group's name is among the most important things you will do when establishing your presence on Facebook. Choose a name that makes it easy for people to find you on the site.

Try to retain the exact same name you are using offline when your group meets in person. In other words, make sure to use the name that people already associate with your group, club, division, program, etc.

If you are starting a Facebook Group and don't already have a group on Campus, or if you are starting them at around the same time, be sure that the Group's name is clearly identifiable by including what the Group members have in common.

To make your link with the College clear and to aid people who might be interested in finding you online but don't even know about you, it's recommended that you add NSCC or North Seattle CC to your Facebook Group name.

For example, don't name your Group, "Student Leaders" or "Humanities." Also, don't just try to name your Group "North Seattle Community College" since this will easily be confused with NSCC's official Facebook Page.

Instead, try ideas like "North Seattle CC – Class of 2011" or "International Students at NSCC" or "NSCC Student Administrative Council."

Groups have grown incredibly quickly since Facebook first introduced them. Therefore, it's important to do a search for the name of your Group before setting it up, to ensure another Group with the same name doesn't already exist. If it does, it's likely that someone else at the College set up a Group page previously for the same group of people. If this occurs, try to find out who "owns" that Group so you can

take it over. It may not be an active Group and may be set to be archived. You will need to do some investigating in order to avoid duplication and take control of the Group.

Okay, I'm ready to set up my Group on Facebook. How do I do that?

To create a Group, visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups>. Read over the tips on the homepage of the Groups application and when you are sure of the name of your Group and the privacy setting you want to select, click on the "Create Group" button.

Fill in the Group name, choose some friends to invite to the group, and select the privacy setting you want to use. You will now be on the Group's page. Look in the right-hand navigation bar and select "edit Group."

From here, complete the additional information fields including a description of your Group and whether you want to set up a Group email for members. Finally determine if you want to control membership. If so, be sure to click the box indicating that only administrators can approve requests to join.

Save your changes and return to your page. Go to the top of the left navigational bar and click on "add a profile picture." Please do not use the NSCC logo for your profile picture as it will cause confusion with the official NSCC Page among Facebook users.

Now that my Group is set up, what do I need to do next?

Return to your page and create your first post, welcoming members to your Group's page on Facebook. You might want to send out an introductory email to your Group's members.

Once you've created your Group, please send an email to Lee Tucker Therriault at lee.therriault@seattlecolleges.edu and she will add you to the NSCC Groups link on the College's official Facebook page. She can also help promote your Group on the Page's wall and encourage students to become members.

How do I engage members and maintain my Group?

Consider adding your Group's URL on your written materials. Mention that you are on Facebook as a Group whenever you can.

Also, please also post a link to NSCC's Facebook page and encourage students to "Like" the Page. Since students can be both members of your Group and fans of the NSCC page, neither competes with, nor detracts from the other. It's generally best to limit your wall posts to one a day. Otherwise, members

can think that you're spamming them and will leave the Group. However, posting too infrequently can also cause you to lose members if they lose interest.

Once the Group is set up, fill it with content about your topic of interest, such as posts about planning the upcoming event, final scores from recent sports games, or new books or DVDs available at the library.

Be sure to add multimedia content as well, such as pictures of the campus or students, or YouTube trailers for new DVDs available at the library. Encourage students to interact with the Group through posts on the wall or discussion topics. If you want students to do something, like promote the Group to their friends, attend an event, donate, or participate, simply ask with a wall post. Overall, try to keep the tone lighthearted and positive.

Also, with Groups, you can send out messages to all your members. These will show up in everyone's Facebook inbox. Again, be careful about sending out too many, as people tend to get annoyed. Use these incredibly sparingly, usually only once every few days before a crucial time, such as a deadline or an event you'd like them to attend.

Are any additional resources available for getting help with Groups?

There are a number of helpful sites on the Internet related to Facebook Groups. However, the best place to start is right on Facebook by going to "Getting help with Groups on Facebook" at <https://www.facebook.com/help/?topic=groups>

For more information about new updates to the Facebook Groups feature, this is a great article: <http://www.ravepubs.com/ravesmb/socialmediablog/using-facebook%E2%80%99s-group-feature-we-have-updates/>

If you have any questions about NSCC-affiliated Facebook Groups, please don't hesitate to email Lee at lee.therriault@seattlecolleges.edu.