

Section: Combined Clinical/Counseling Student Policies

Policy Number: 713.2

Subject: Combined Clinical/Counseling Policy on Electronic Information

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Managing electronic sources of information has become increasingly relevant to training programs. Negative incidents have been reported in training programs and at universities, in which graduate students have been adversely impacted by material on websites, emails, and voicemail messages. The Council of University Directors of Clinical Psychology (CUDCP) has outlined the range of potential implications when trainees post sensitive, personal, or unprofessional information on websites, email signatures, and voicemail messages:

1. Internship programs conduct web searches on applicants' names before inviting applicants for interviews and before deciding to rank applicants in the match.
2. Clients conduct web-based searches on trainees' names and finding information about therapists (and declining to come to clinics based on what they find).
3. Potential employers conduct on-line searches of applicants prior to interviews and job offers.
4. Legal authorities look at websites for evidence of illegal activities. Some prima facie evidence, such as photographs, may be gained from websites, but text may also alert authorities to investigate further.
5. Postings to some listservs might reflect poorly on students and the program.
6. Although signature lines are ways of indicating an individual's uniqueness and philosophy, these messages are out of your control once they have been sent and they may affect how others view you as a professional. Quotations on personal philosophy, religious beliefs, and political attitudes might elicit adverse reactions from other people.
7. Although voicemail messages might be entertaining to your peers, express your individuality, and characterize your sense of humor, greetings on voicemail should be thoughtfully constructed. If you ever use your personal telephone for professional purposes (research, teaching, or clinical activities), be sure your greeting is appropriate and professional in demeanor and content.

Trainees are reminded that, if you identify yourself as a graduate student in our program, we have some interest in how you portray yourself. Information that is meant to be fun, informative, and candid might reflect poorly on the program and the student. Social media postings, emails, or voicemail messages that are viewed as "private" self-disclosure among friends may actually be very public. If you report engaging in unethical or illegal behavior, the website may be used by the program to make decisions about probation or dismissal from the program. As a preventive measure, the Program advises that students (and faculty) approach online blogs and websites, including personal information, carefully. Students are advised to engage in "safe" web practices and be concerned now about professional demeanor and presentations. This applies to blogs, social media or any type of internet activity.