Computer Code of Ethics

Updated

May 15, 2025

Introduction

Freedom of expression and an open environment to pursue scholarly inquiry and for sharing of information are encouraged, supported, and protected at South College. These values lie at the core of our academic community. Moreover, the College is committed to the fair allocation of its resources and the provision of a learning environment free of needless disruption. To advance these goals, South College has adopted the following policies on computer usage. Most of these policies follow pre-existing regulations, agreements, and/or Federal, State, and local laws.

Concomitant with free expression are the personal obligations of each member of our community to use computing resources responsibly, ethically, and in a manner which accords both with the law and, the rights of others. The College depends first upon a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation to create and maintain an open community of responsible users.

Access to South College technology resources **is a privilege, not a right.** This privilege is extended to all users including faculty, staff, and students. Never abuse this privilege or others through the electronic systems. *Computer/Network/Internet and other electronic media abuses not listed under this policy that South College considers inappropriate or that is destructive to the mission of this college shall be considered a violation.*

Overview

This document outlines the acceptable use of computers, networks, and related services at South College. This code has been developed to ensure a quality computing environment that furthers the mission of the college, specifically related to enhancing the educational and administrative services of the college. It provides educational information, but its primary purpose is as a regulatory policy.

The Policy for Responsible Computing and Use of College Resources regulates the use of the College's computing resources at South College. Computing resources include all college owned, licensed, or managed hardware and software, and use of the South College network via a physical or wireless connection, regardless of the ownership of the computer or device connected to the network. All network users must comply with local, state, and federal laws relating to copyright, security, and electronic media.

Network users at South College have access to several accounts which include the following:
- Academic Computing
- Administrative Computing
- SC Wireless Network
- Computers located in college offices, Library/Resource Centers, or Computer labs
- College servers
- These resources are available to currently enrolled students for the completion of their coursework and to employees of the College. SC network accounts are created for students when they start their education at South College. They are available for use throughout the student's entire college career at South College.
- Unauthorized distribution of copyrighted material and unauthorized peer-to-peer sharing may be subject to civil and criminal liabilities. Downloading or sharing copyrighted materials may result in the loss of network access privileges and will be handled as a violation of the South College Student Conduct Standards and Regulations and/or South College Honor Code. Please see the Copyright Infringement Policy in Section F below and also see the South College Student Handbook.

NOTE: South College does not provide technical support for personally owned computers.

A. Use of Computing Labs

- Users are expected to obey Copyright and Intellectual Property rules and regulations.
- These areas are intended to be a workplace, and the following rules are designed to safeguard the equipment and environment:
- Food, drinks, and candy are not permitted in the labs.
- Only current SC students and employees are permitted network access in these areas.
- Students are permitted to logon to only one lab PCs at a time.
- Computer Lab computers are for completing schoolwork. Gaming is prohibited.
- Illegally copying software is prohibited and violators may be prosecuted.
- Users should use a removable storage device to save their data. Any data saved on the hard drive will be deleted periodically.
- Users are expected to clean up their workstations upon leaving, i.e., dispose of trash, pick up printed documents and push in chairs.
- Any logged on/locked computer located in a lab left unattended for more than fifteen minutes will be rebooted.

South College is not responsible for any offensive or inappropriate material that is found on the Internet. The use of the Internet for non-class assignments is permitted providing a workstation is not needed by a student with a class assignment.

B. Use of SC Student Email Account

South College issues an email account for every student enrolled. Email serves as the official means of sending information to students by faculty and staff. These messages are sent to the South College email address only.

- Students and employees are responsible for maintaining their official South College email address and are expected to check it on a frequent and consistent basis.
- Students and employees have the responsibility to recognize that certain communication may be time critical.
- Inappropriate language should not be used in email messages.
- Broadcast/Mass email should not be sent to the entire student population.
- Sending junk email, chain letters, unsolicited or offensive email is not permitted and will not be tolerated.
- Students are responsible for maintaining their mailbox size. Empty deleted items folder and delete old and junk email messages. File attachments increase the mailbox size; therefore, students and employees are advised to save attachments to a removable storage device and delete the email message.

C. Use of the College's Network

Services provided by the College in connecting to the Internet are for educational purposes and for communicating with family and friends. The College does not provide this service for other personal or commercial use.

All activities of the College network accounts are governed by having the logon password, so it is important that usernames and/or passwords are not given to anyone (including family members). It is important that all network users protect username and password information as private data. Do not place them in an easily accessible place.

- The student/employee will be held accountable for any abuse of computing resources under the use of his/her account (username).
- Do not log into South College's network using anyone else's username and password.
- Do not log into South College's network and then allow someone else to use your account.
- Appropriate language should be used in all computing activities (i.e. email messages, discussion areas, etc.).
- Server processes, including chat rooms, shall not to be installed or run from the user's directory, lab computers, or on personal computers connecting to the College network.
- Malicious Software: Do not create, distribute, or use malicious software, including viruses, worms, Trojans, or any other form of malware that can harm computer systems or compromise data.

Users should be aware that the computer systems are the property of the College and email messages, Internet usage, and other computer files are subject to review at the discretion of the College without notice. In the case of harassment complaints, illegal violations, or a system problem—hardware, software, or attacks by hackers—the Information Technology staff are authorized to review and remove any information or files necessary to investigate complaints or solve the systems' problems to protect the systems and the information they contain. In this situation, the staff is obligated to treat any information viewed that is not related to the problem as strictly confidential. In addition, email messages are subject to subpoena or otherwise discoverable in litigation.

Users must follow local, state, and federal laws and regulations pertaining to computing activities. In cases involving fraud, forgery, extortion, copyright violations, intimidation, humiliation, etc., violators may be legally prosecuted and may be subject to immediate loss of all computing privileges at South College.

Users are responsible for reporting any activities which they believe to be in violation of these policies. To report such incidents, contact the Office of Information Technology.

D. Use of the Internet

South College places the highest priority on quality instruction. In many instances technology can enhance and strengthen this process. Faculty and students are encouraged to make full use of all available computing resources in the classroom, library, and during scheduled lab times, keeping in mind that others share in these resources. Administrative use of computing resources enhances the college's ability to provide timely and accurate services to students, graduates, and outside agencies associated with the college. The college places emphasis on the utilization of the administrative system to its fullest capacity. This emphasis includes extensive training provided to users and a full-time System Administrator to provide necessary assistance.

The Internet is an open forum for many subjects, opinions, and ideas, both appropriate and inappropriate to the educational values and/or goals of South College. Therefore, it is up to the users of the Internet to be responsible, selective, and wise when dealing with people, topics, opinions, and/or ideas found on the Internet that do not serve the educational purposes of this College. Offensive materials on the Internet, including but not limited to adult sites and pornography, are not to be accessed through the College's network using the lab or any personal computer located at the College or connected to the College network. Anyone accessing these pages may be asked to discontinue doing so, may be asked to leave, and may be subject to disciplinary actions.

South College retains the right to block any sites at the discretion of leadership without notification.

E. Use of the College's Wireless Network

- The wireless network is provided for currently enrolled students and employees.
- The use of bridges, hubs, routers, switches or other network equipment which could interfere with the College's wireless network is not permitted on campus.
- Users are not permitted to share their wireless connection to another device which access has not been requested.
- Users are required to follow the guidelines on the usage of the College's network and the Internet when using the SC wireless network.
- Misuse of the SC wireless network or not following the approved policies may result in losing complete access to the SC network.
- All network users are responsible for the integrity of their own individual computers. It is each person's responsibility to make certain that his or her computer is secured against viruses, worms, hacker attacks, and other intrusions. Further, they are responsible for all uses of their computer and will be held accountable for network traffic originating from their computer or traced back to their computer's IP address.

Users should be aware that connecting to the SC wireless network gives the College the right to investigate cases of harassment complaints, illegal violations, copyright infringement, or network problems in which the IT Tech staff may need to review email messages, Internet usage, and other computer files on any computer which has been configured for use on the South College wireless network.

F. Prohibited Activities

- A student/employee shall not damage, destroy, misuse, or otherwise endanger the College's computing and information resources. This section is intended to aid in interpreting the policies stated above and should not be interpreted as complete. Examples of conduct in violation of the approved policies include:
- Using software or material known to have been obtained in violation of the Copyright Law or a valid license provision.
- Copying and providing to others any copyrighted material or licensed program contents, unless allowed under the fair-use doctrine or explicitly permitted by the copyright owner.

COPYRIGHT COMPLIANCE POLICY

No member of the South College community shall share files with peers without authorization, and/or illegally download and/or distribute copyrighted materials using the institution's technology systems without authorization. Under certain circumstances, applicable laws allow the use of copyright materials, such as for the purpose of private study, scholarship, teaching, or research, without permission. However, there is no blanket exception from liability for students or faculty/staff of educational institution. If reproduction of copyrighted material is used for purposes in excess of what constitutes "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. Infringement of another individual's copyright is a violation of federal law (U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17, U.S. Code) and may include fines and other penalties. Most text, music, movies, television shows, software, games and images found on the Internet are protected by federal copyright law. The owner of the copyright in these works has the right to control their distribution, modification, reproduction, public display, and public performance. Therefore, it is generally illegal to use file sharing networks to download and share copyrighted works without the copyright owner's permission unless "fair use" or another exemption under copyright law applies. If a violation of this policy is observed or reported, South College will respond by investigating pursuant to procedures outlined in the *Student Handbook* or *Employee Handbook*, whichever is appropriate. During such an investigation, the user's privileges may or may not be suspended. Once the investigation is complete, if the user is determined to have violated this policy, appropriate discipline and/or corrective action will be taken. Users may be held responsible for any liability damages or expenses resulting from misuse of South College computing resources.

Penalties for copyright infringement include civil and criminal penalties. In general, anyone found liable for civil copyright infringement may be ordered to pay either actual damages or "statutory" damages affixed at not less than $750 and not more than $30,000 per work infringed. For "willful" infringement, a court may award up to $150,000 per work infringed. A court can, in its discretion, also assess costs and attorneys' fees. For details, see Title 17, United States Code, Sections 504, 505. Willful copyright infringement can also result in criminal penalties, including imprisonment of up to five years and fines of up to $250,000 per offense. or more information, please see the Web site of the U.S. Copyright Office at www.copyright.gov, especially their FAQ's at www.copyright.gov/help/faq.

- Disrupting, hindering, or damaging the service, use, or ability of others to access or use any College computer, facility, equipment, software, network, other resource, including email.
- Accessing resources on the College's network using a different username and password other than the one assigned.
- Providing any person with access to the assigned account, or in any way allowing others access to a machine/network under one's account.
- Creating, modifying, reading or copying files (including email) in any area to which the user has not been granted access.
- Disguising one's identity in any way, including the sending of fraudulent email messages, removal of data from system files, and the masking of process names.
- Sending harassing or abusive messages via any digital means.
- Using College facilities to gain unauthorized access to computer systems on or off-campus.
- Use of campus computer facilities for commercial purposes.
- Attempting to interfere with the normal operation of computing systems in any way or attempting to circumvent the restrictions associated with such facilities.
- Using any College computer, facility, equipment, software, network, or other resource, including email, to commit or attempt to commit acts prohibited under applicable federal, state, or local laws.

G. Social Networking Sites

- Running personal Web Pages, Blogs, or other Social Networks that support commercial activities or running server systems under the registered domain name SOUTH.EDU or variation thereof, without authorization.
- The use of the South College name, seals, images, and text are the property of South College and shall not be used without written permission.
- Faculty, staff, and students using social media sites should do so with consideration and care. Posting defamatory comments about faculty members, staff, or students of South College as a whole on social networking sites will be considered a violation of the Code.
- The taking of unauthorized photographs or videos of faculty members, staff, or students is not allowed.
- Posting information that is of a negative nature of South College, or anyone associated with the College, on the internet is a violation of the Code.

H. Course Participation

All students enrolled in a course through the learning management system (LMS) must agree to abide by the following code of conduct:

- Only students who are officially enrolled in the course are allowed to participate in the course.
- All work completed in the course must be your own work (except for assignments that explicitly permit collaboration).
- Respect must be shown at all times to others. Harassment, insults (either direct or indirect), bickering, personal attacks, denigration, and flaming will not be tolerated.

- Do not post profane, abusive, offensive, sexist, racist, or impolite/strong language and/or materials.
- Do not make solutions to homework, quizzes or exams available to anyone else. This includes both solutions written by the student, as well as any official solutions provided by the faculty member.
- Do not engage in any activities that will dishonestly improve your results or dishonestly improve/hurt the results of others.

I. Computer Settings

South College computers are set up uniformly for a reason. When instructing students on computer concepts, uniformity of screen colors, icon locations, toolbars, printer settings, etc. promotes the learning of new concepts. When computers are different, students must search for the information being referred to, causing confusion and additional unnecessary time. In certain classes, students may be asked to change several of these settings in order to learn about them; however, the computer should always be restored to its original settings prior to logging off.

J. Disciplinary Actions

South College's computing resources must not be used in a manner that violates any local, state, or federal laws. There are currently many laws that govern certain aspects of computer use. Supervisors and System Administrators may be bound to report any violations of such laws if they do occur, and the College may be required to cooperate in certain investigations related to criminal or civil violations.

If a violation of this code is observed or reported, South College will respond by investigating pursuant to procedures outlined in the *Student Handbook* or *Employee Handbook*, whichever is appropriate. During such an investigation, the user's privileges may or may not be suspended. Once the investigation is complete, if the user is determined to have violated this code, appropriate discipline and/or corrective action will be taken. Users may be held responsible for any liability damages or expenses resulting from misuse of South College computing resources.

Undergraduate Students
For alleged violations, to the Student Affairs Coordinator/Director. The Director may convene a preliminary conference with the appropriate academic Dean/Department Chairperson and the student involved to consider the complaint.

The conference members may take any of the following actions:
1. Determine that no action is warranted;
2. Render an administrative reprimand which may be recorded on the student's permanent record;
3. Confer disciplinary probation which may be recorded on the student's permanent record;
4. Implement other actions or penalties deemed appropriate by the Student Affairs/Services Director and the Dean/Department Chairperson; or
5. Dismiss the student from the college. In cases of dismissal, the designated official may recommend to the Dean of Academic and Student Services/Dean of Academics (Online) and the Chief Academic Officer that the student be dismissed. Approval must be granted prior to communicating the dismissal decision.

The student will be informed in writing by email of the decision within three business days of the conference.

Graduate Students
If an alleged violation is committed by a graduate student, the Student Affairs Coordinator/Director, Associate Dean of Academic and Student Services, or Dean of Academic and Student Services will meet with the graduate student's Dean and/or Associate/Assistant Dean to determine how the matter should be handled. If the alleged violation is a breach of the college's Conduct Standards and Regulations, the Student Affairs Coordinator/Director, Associate Dean of Academic and Student Services, or the Dean of Academic and Student Services will convene a preliminary

conference with the program representative and the student. The actions that can be taken are the same as those for undergraduates (listed above). If the alleged violation goes beyond the college's standards and is a breach of the program's professional conduct regulations, the incident will be dealt with by the specific program process.

If the student is not satisfied with the decision, and an appeal is desired for disciplinary actions, academic situations, and/or penalties imposed for a violation of the South College Academic Honor Code, the student will follow the *Dismissal and Disciplinary Action Appeal* procedures outlined in the *Appeals Process* section of the South College Catalog, which can be accessed at www.south.edu. Please note, a dismissal decision made by the Chief Academic Officer for violation of the South College Academic Honor Code and/or Student Conduct Standards and Regulations is final so far as dismissal are concerned and cannot be appealed at the institutional level.

K. Changes to This Policy

The Office of Information Technology may update or amend this policy. When changes are made, they will be communicated via posting on the Student/Faculty Portal and updated on the institutional website. As with all matters of law and ethics, ignorance of the rules does not excuse violations.