

Social Media

Original Implementation: July 28, 2015

Last Revision: February 1, 2022

Overview

This policy is designed to help Stephen F. Austin State University employees and organizations in making appropriate decisions when creating/managing social media accounts and developing social media initiatives on behalf of the university. It also provides guidelines to advise employees who indicate an institutional affiliation on their personal social media profiles. This document provides general considerations, but it does not provide guidance on planning, content or performance measurements.

Social media is a broad term used to describe internet-based platforms and applications designed for online social interaction. It fosters interaction among individuals who participate in social networking via the use of virtual communities and networks. Any website, online application or platform that enables its users to interact with it and its visitors falls into the definition of social media.

Social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, among many others. These platforms are an important communication and marketing tool for the university and can provide vital information and engagement opportunities to prospective and current students, alumni and other stakeholders.

Accounts must be owned and maintained by university employees and avoid the use of a personal or person-specific email address. More than one employee must have login information or administrator access to accounts. Account access must be provided to University Marketing Communications with contact information of all university social media account managers. Information must include the existence, creation or deactivation of any and all university-affiliated social media accounts.

Student workers can be helpful content creators, but must not be owners of any official university account.

Terms of use and deletion policy

University-managed online communities are intended to inform users of university-related news and events, and to foster discussion and a sense of community among users. Users may share their opinions and comment freely about the topics the university posts. The university asks that comments are respectful and professional.

Do not delete or hide comments because of disagreement or in reaction to a commenter who reacted negatively.

SFA social pages exist to serve those affiliated with the university. All social media accounts affiliated with the university must adhere to guidelines available in the Identity Standards Manual,

developed by the Division of University Marketing Communications. The manual is approved by, and may be modified by, the university president.

Social media communications (messages, etc.) that fall within the Texas State Records Retention Schedule requirements are considered public records and are subject to the Texas State Records Retention Schedule requirements. Social media communications are included in the record series titled “Social Networking Communications” in the SFA Records Retention Schedule.

Suspension of Records Disposition (Legal Holds): A state record may not be destroyed if any litigation, claim, negotiation, audit, open records request, administrative review, or other action involving the record is initiated before the expiration of a retention period for the record set by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, or in the approved records retention schedule of the agency, until the completion of the action and the resolution of all issues that arise from the action, or until the expiration of the retention period, whichever is later (Texas Government Code Section 441.187).

Social media content that is not a duplicate record, transitory, or retained elsewhere must be captured by the administrator and maintained for the full retention period of the appropriate record series. The program area will be responsible for selecting the method of record archiving and purging, subject to the approval of the appropriate records management coordinator.

Expectations and account best practices:

Continually maintain university-affiliated social media accounts and deactivate or delete dormant social media accounts.

Departments, offices and organizations are responsible for creating content and should make posts on a regular basis, which may be multiple times a day, daily, weekly or a few times per month. It is likely that an account that posts less frequently than monthly will be deemed dormant. A minimum of one post per week is advised.

Confidentiality

Confidential information should never be disclosed, unless consent has been given and the information is shared accurately.

Care should be exercised with photographs taken on campus or during official university events when posted in a public domain. Be mindful of what the image(s) might reveal (e.g., in the background). Ensure that anyone prominently featured in the photograph has given their express consent to the photo being posted online. Photographs of minors must have parental/guardian consent.

Authorization and approvals

Obtain permission from both departmental supervisors and University Marketing Communications before making any significant announcement (e.g., campus closure, crisis communication, emergency notifications, etc.) on behalf of the university. Best practice is to wait until an announcement is first shared on the university’s main accounts before distributing (sharing) the information.

Follow the university's Identity Standards Manual to ensure university logo usage compliance. Use current logos only.

Employee use of social media

All employees acting within the scope of their employment are expected to adhere to the same standards of conduct online as they would in the workplace. Social media usage is governed by the same policies that govern other electronic communications, as well as applicable state and federal laws, and NCAA rules and regulations. Any content and/or online activity created by a poster or site moderator that violates these laws and regulations is strictly prohibited and will be removed in accordance with this policy.

Professional use of social media

Social media allows university representatives and employees to communicate and network with internal and external audiences. The university recognizes that some employees use various social media platforms as part of their assigned work duties.

While participating in any of the university's social media activities, faculty and staff must be mindful that they are representing the university and must follow appropriate guidelines.

Personal use of social media

The university allows the occasional use of social media channels during the working day, but this must not interfere with job commitments and duties.

When posting in a personal capacity, an individual may still be identified as an employee of the university even if this is not stated on their account, so they should be mindful of their audience and what is being posted in a public domain.

Accessibility:

All SFA-affiliated social media accounts must comply to state and federal accessibility laws and make content accessible to people of all abilities so they have equal opportunity to experience the content as it is intended.

All social media content, including text, images, graphics and videos, must meet current accessibility guidelines. See the state of Texas Rules and Regulations for information on meeting requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Alternative Text Descriptions for Images

Always provide alternative text descriptions for images and graphics when social media platforms allow for them. Alternative text descriptions should provide a clear and thorough description of an image and include all text used in graphics.

Captioning Videos

Video content must include captions for the benefit of those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Captions can be either closed (where a user can turn them on and off) or open (where the text is embedded into the video and cannot be turned on or off).

Context for Animated GIFs

On platforms that allow for alternative text descriptions on GIFs, provide them in the same manner as for still images.

CamelCase Hashtags

For hashtags that include multiple words, use initial capitalization, also known as CamelCase. Utilizing this technique makes the hashtag easier to read for all users and screen readers. Example: #PurplePride #SpiritFriday (rather than #purplepride #spiritfriday)

Imported Font/Typeface

Text in a font/typeface created outside a social media application is not accessible to people who use screen readers and therefore must not be used.

Security

Employees must familiarize themselves with the terms of use, privacy policy and other policies of social media platforms and networks they use. They must ensure they have protected themselves and colleagues by setting the appropriate levels of security in professional accounts on social media sites and networks. Employees must be up-to-date on all social media and networking trainings. Employees can find required trainings in their mySFA account.

Intellectual property

Use of copyrighted or trademarked material without permission in digital content may be illegal and may expose the university to financial liability. Divisions, offices and departments are responsible for obtaining clearance for use of intellectual property rights (e.g., music and photos). They also are responsible for bearing all costs associated with such clearance of rights, including any costs that may arise if the necessary clearance(s) is/are not obtained, such as legal and settlement costs.

Use good judgment

Employee actions and statements can affect others at the university and the university as a whole. Posts on social media can be replicated quickly, be taken out of context, and will remain public for an indeterminate amount of time.

Assistance

Those who need assistance on a matter related to social media may contact the Division of University Marketing Communications.

Cross Reference: Tex. Gov't Code § 441.187; Identity Standards Manual; Records Retention Schedule

Responsible for Implementation: Chief Marketing Communications Officer

Contact for Revision: Chief Marketing Communications Officer

Forms: None

Board Committee Assignment: Academic and Student Affairs Committee

Revision History: July 27, 2021
July 24, 2018