Youngstown State University
Social Media Guidelines
2022
3356-4-09.1 Social Media use on official and affiliated university sites.

Responsibility Division/Office: Office of Marketing and Communications
Responsible Officer: AVP of University Relations
Revision History: June 2014; March 2019
Board Committee: Institutional Engagement
Effective Date: June 28, 2022
Next Review: 2024

(A) Policy Statement. The university recognizes the importance of social media as an evolving technology to communicate relevant information and enhance the university’s reputation and profile.

(B) Purpose. To provide guidance for current and future use of official and affiliated university social media sites.

(C) Scope. This policy applies to individuals including university faculty, staff, volunteers and students, including student employees, who create or contribute to official or affiliated university social media sites.

(D) Definitions.

(1) “Social Media” - Internet-based applications, websites, platforms, blogs, wikis, networks, and mobile-based technologies that enable users to create and share information.

(2) “Official university social media site” - Any social media sponsored, controlled, or managed by a university college, school, department, program, office, or unit.

(3) “Affiliated social media site” - Any social media created as part of an individual’s work or university responsibilities or by a university-sponsored organization as part of its activities.

(E) Parameters.

(1) The university’s office of marketing and communications shall establish, and when appropriate, revise, guidelines and/or best practices for university-sponsored and affiliated social media sites. (Please refer to the office of marketing and communications webpage.)

(2) University sponsored and affiliated social media sites and postings are subject to all applicable state and federal regulations such as FERPA, copyright rights, university policies, guidelines, and best practices established by the office of marketing and communications, and “The Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct.”

(3) Individual departments, colleges, programs, or administrative offices may establish additional guidelines specific to their areas of study or responsibilities. However, these guidelines must be reviewed and approved by the university’s office of marketing and communications prior to implementation.
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**Social Media Guidelines:**

Youngstown State University social networking sites, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, are in place with the purpose of providing a convenient avenue for students, faculty, employees, alumni, and outside communities alike to connect and discuss topics related to the atmosphere and activities of YSU.

We want you to participate and encourage outside discussions and the freedom to express your own views and opinions. We also encourage constructive comments and posts that propose solutions to problems.

The social media guidelines are a set of rules and regulations put in place to ensure a positive brand identity and reputation for Youngstown State University across social media. All colleges, departments, organizations, units, chapters, groups, and affiliations of Youngstown State University are expected to adhere to these guidelines.

**Content Guidelines**

1. **TERMS OF SERVICE.** Be mindful of the terms of service (TOS) of each social media network. Most of these include prohibiting the use of copyrighted materials, zero tolerance policies with harassment and threats, privacy policies, etc. Violation of the network’s TOS may result in a suspension of your account by the social network.

2. **BE CAREFUL WITH WHAT YOU POST.** Do not use profanity, expletives, display alcoholic beverages, promote substance abuse, openly bash Youngstown State and the surrounding area, or argue with someone through a YSU affiliated account. Doing so will result in disciplinary action.

   In addition, we have our own opinions about a wide array of topics. **It's important to remember that when engaging as a YSU account, your views are not those of the University.** As a public university, we remain neutral to respect all faculty, staff and students we serve. Also keep in mind that any issues you have with administration do not belong on YSU affiliated accounts. Discussing University-related issues on affiliated accounts is not allowed.

3. **DON'T FEED THE TROLLS.** A troll is someone who will try their hardest to get you to engage in an argument or combative conversation with them on social media for their enjoyment. Do not give in. In this scenario, ignore and move forward.

4. **NEGATIVE FEEDBACK ISN'T ALWAYS NEGATIVE.** If someone messages, tweets or comments to you regarding a situation they’ve encountered that has upset them, please respond in a respectful manner. Some situations may not warrant a response, however there are instances where we learn from mistakes. Our followers want to know that we see them and are listening to what they have to say.
**Account Registration**

Once your account is up and running, you’ll want to contact the Social Media Coordinator to ensure that your account is listed as an approved social media account, and placed in the social media directory. Each account must be registered as soon as possible. If there is a change in administrative privileges, please update your registration each academic year.

Remember, all YSU accounts are the property of the University. Therefore, upon graduation, retirement, termination, etc., all administrative rights must be turned over to the Office of Marketing and Communication. Because of this, all accounts are required to have at least two administrators (one faculty or staff member), and accounts are to be registered under YSU email addresses.

[Register Account]

**Remember Your Posts Are Public**

As a public institution, our communication records are subject to the [Ohio Open Records Law](https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2010-09-09/pdf/E9-24679.pdf). Please keep this in mind when posting to social media networks on behalf of the University.

**Branding Identity**

This guide is organized into sections that explain and give examples of how to design and write for YSU. You should read at least the sections that cover the logo, colors and fonts, and Youngstown State's editorial style. Then you should be able to focus on the areas relevant to the kind of material you're creating. This is a living document. We can change it as we discover new applications and needs for the brand identity. Ask questions and suggest things we need to cover.

[Brand Style Guide]

**Communicating a Crisis**

**In a time of crisis**, the official University accounts are the source for correct information as a part of our campus crisis communication plan between the offices of YSU Campus Safety, University Marketing & Communications, Enrollment & Student Affairs, and President. Please refrain from posting on University-affiliated accounts unless you are sharing information from the main accounts to relay to your audiences.

If you receive anything incriminating to your specific social media channel, send that to Campus Police and University Marketing ASAP.
When a situation occurs, all YSU affiliated social media accounts are to remain quiet to give the main account an opportunity to get proper alerts and updates pushed out to the public without interference. Statements that are crafted by University accounts without authorization will be asked to be removed. *Official statements from the University should only be shared or retweeted, and not copy/pasted or edited.*

**Contact**

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YSUPD Communications Center - 330.941.3527

**Best Practices:**

**Getting Started**

Identify the person that will be running the account for your area. Keep in mind, each account must have at least one faculty or staff administrator, and the email address registered to the account should be shareable with all admins.

Deciding who your audience is:
1. Am I using it to communicate important dates, deadlines, etc.?
2. Am I using it to market and grow our program or organization size?
3. Am I sharing news about what our students are doing?

Decide which social channel fits your message best. Do not feel the need to be present on every social platform. Think of your audience and choose the best possible platforms for your audience.

**Facebook:**
- Community: faculty/staff, alumni, donors, community members, some students
- Content Suggestions: sharing stories (news, events, accomplishments, etc.)

**Twitter:**
- Community: prospective and current students, alumni, community members


- Content Suggestions: memes (within guidelines), trends, replying back to tweets builds rapport, sharing stories

_Instagram:_
- Community: prospective and current students
- Content Suggestions: photo or video (no flyers or graphics, these are not accessible), sharing student perspectives through takeovers, utilizing stories

These are the top three platforms we typically engage with users, but know there are a number of new and emerging social media channels emerging each day. It's highly recommended to start with one social channel and grow a fan base of followers who consistently engage with your content before moving on to the next platform.

Do not hide or delete a comment or post just because it is negative, but only if it contains spam/links, profanity, hate speech, attacks on others, commercial advertisements, political endorsements or unlawful activity. Try to resolve any problems by responding as soon as possible when appropriate to do so. **Note:** if an online conversation becomes hostile or overly negative, please contact the University Marketing & Communications office with documentation of the conversation for next steps.

For training on how to evaluate social media analytics and performance, schedule a meeting with the [Social Media Coordinator](#). 

**Passwords**

All social media passwords should follow the password standards from Information Services & Technology. They recommend that passwords include longer phrases rather than university-related names, nicknames, or acronyms. Passwords should be updated at least quarterly, and again when a social media administrator (student, faculty, or staff) leaves his/her position at YSU.

Please let University Marketing know. In the event we can help recover through the social media channel, we will do so. **Please note that any account that does not post within a one year period will be asked to update the content or get rid of the account.**

[Register Account](#)

**Take Overs**
The idea behind the YSU Instagram Takeover is to get an authentic view at what our students are currently doing on and off campus and to chat with other students throughout the day. All requests will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis.

**Take Over Guidelines**

**Instagram Takeover Request**

**Social Media Holidays**

Not every social media holiday is worth celebrating, but if you find the holidays that fit your niche, you can increase your organic reach.

**Continuing list of “Social Media Holidays”**

**Engagement Guidelines**

In general, social media content adds value if it enhances readers’ knowledge or skills, including but not limited to helping them to perform their job duties more effectively; solving problems; or helping people understand Youngstown State University better.

**Remain transparent.** Be honest about your identity. Because no individual departmental social media site represents all of YSU, clearly link pages, account names, images and content to a particular department or within YSU.

**Content Guidelines**

We know the power of social media sometimes takes over — but what happens when you get questions or comments you aren’t prepared for? Take a look at our social engagement flowchart to help decide how you should best respond.
Naming your account

Try to use ‘Youngstown State University’ over ‘YSU’ as you’re able. You can use YSU in the handle (example: @ysu______). Now that we’re reaching outside of our five county area, many people know of us as ‘Youngstown State University’ over YSU. This will help your account be more accessible and show up in search results.

If you are participating in or running a social media account for yourself or an organization (such as a student organization) that may reference the University, please remember to use a
disclaimer such as: “The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the positions, strategies, or opinions of Youngstown State University.”

Monitoring

Watching what your audience is talking about and staying up-to-date on messages is crucial to running a successful social media account. Social listening (monitoring) is a commonly used tool to help do both of those things in one fair swoop. Where do you start? Platforms like Hootsuite have free dashboards that allow you to register up to three accounts. From there, you can publish posts and track mentions, comments and messages.

Strategy

Figuring out how you want to utilize your social media account is important. Rather than going into it without a clear plan, the Social Media team will sit down with your department or college to identify clear goals and content strategies for your accounts. For training on how to evaluate social media analytics and performance, schedule a meeting with the Social Media Coordinator.

If you need help creating a flyer for an event, reach out to Creative Services.

Getting the word out

There are so many cool things happening around campus on a daily basis, and we want to highlight them. Let us know! We don’t know what we don’t know, so we rely on you to tell us. Send interesting stories over to our communications team, or social media highlights to keburdette@ysu.edu. Remember that our social media accounts are seen as an outward facing marketing tool. This means that internal communications for students, faculty and staff may not be posted to our social media channels at the discretion of our Social Media & Communications Coordinator.

Also, keep in mind that social media platforms are constantly changing. What worked a year ago most likely doesn’t work as well today. Stay connected with us, we’ll keep you social.

Contact

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