KNOW

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES 2024

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
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(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 channels, such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, are in place with the purpose of providing a convenient avenue for students, faculty, staff, alumni, and outside communities alike to connect and discuss topics related to the atmosphere and activities of YSU.

The social media guidelines are a set of rules and regulations put in place to ensure that all YSU affiliated accounts display a positive brand identity and reputation for Youngstown State University across social media. All colleges, departments, organizations, units, chapters, and groups are affiliations of Youngstown State University and 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. **POST MINDFULLY.** Remember that you are posting through a YSU affiliated account and will be held accountable for all posts. 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 the loss of YSU social media privileges.
   While everyone holds diverse opinions, it's crucial to recognize that, when representing YSU, your views don't reflect those of the University. As a public institution, we maintain neutrality to honor the diverse perspectives of the faculty, staff, and students we serve. Any disagreements with the administration should not be expressed on official YSU accounts, including divisions, departments, programs, or any other entity of the university.
3. **IGNORE NEGATIVE ENGAGEMENT**. Do not engage with individuals that are seemingly looking to bully or threaten others online, often referred to as cyberbullies, spammers, or instigators. Additionally, it is not encouraged to become involved in any other inappropriate interactions.
   a. Negative feedback does not necessarily mean negative engagement. Occasionally, users will express an opinion toward a situation or experience they've had on campus. If someone messages or mentions you regarding this situation, please respond in a respectful manner. Some situations may not warrant a response, however there are instances where their feedback could provide valuable insight to help us improve as an institution. Our followers want to know that we see them and are listening to what they have to say.
   b. 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.
   c. Please use discretion while monitoring your social media accounts. If you should come across an interaction that has escalated to a posed threat or has a potential of violence, screenshot the interaction and email to YSU Police at police@ysu.edu and the Social Media Team at social@ysu.edu.

4. **COMMERCIAL PARTNERS**. As a tax-exempt university, university affiliated accounts are not permitted to endorse commercial partners. If a commercial partner is sponsoring a campus event, the affiliated account is allowed to recognize the sponsor or share their logo. However, they cannot promote the commercial partner through product demonstrations or endorsements.
5. **CREATING A NEW ACCOUNT.** You will find steps within these guidelines on how to begin the process of creating an account. All accounts are required to have at least two social media managers, use a ysu.edu email address and register with the YSU Social Media Coordinator.

University Affiliated Account Application Process

Please follow the steps below to begin the application process. After completing the application, our Social Media Coordinator will be in touch with further instruction.

1. Submit an application for a new account: New Account Application.
    a. If you have an existing account, please register the account here: Register Existing Account (Created before January 1, 2024).
2. After completing the New Account Application, the Social Media Coordinator will reach out to schedule a meeting. During this meeting, social media strategy and goals will be outlined in detail.
3. After the meeting, the new account can be created following the strategy approved by the Social Media Coordinator.

Please note: As an effort to remain aligned with university strategy, it is possible that some applicants will be denied. However, the Social Media Coordinator will assist to identify possible solutions to help applicants reach their intended goal.

Accounts Created Prior to Jan. 2024 - Account Registration

All YSU affiliated accounts are property of the university as a result, a new process has been implemented to guarantee all accounts are registered with the Office of Marketing and Communication. Under these guidelines, accounts must be registered to guarantee:

- A seamless transfer of Administrative privileges if/when an account manager leaves the department or university for any reason.
- In the event of a crisis, the account manager can remain aligned with the university crisis communication plan.
- All social media account managers are adhering to the social media guidelines.

If there is a change in administrative privileges, please contact the Social Media Coordinator.

Register Your Existing Account Here

Remember Your Posts Are Public

As a public institution, our communication records are subject to the Ohio Open Records Law. Please keep this in mind when posting to social media networks on behalf of the University.

Branding Identity

The Brand Style Guide explains the why, what, and how of YSUs visual identity. It represents what YSU stands for in peoples' minds and is shaped by every interaction they have with us. Please reference this guide when creating content for your social media accounts, this includes using the correct logos, colors, fonts, and editorial style. This guide is a living document and can change as new applications and needs for the brand identity.
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 university crisis communication plan. Refrain from posting on University-affiliated accounts.

If you receive anything incriminating to your specific social media channel, send that to YSU Police and University Marketing & Communications ASAP.

If you receive inquiries or questions from your audience regarding the crisis, direct them to the main YSU social media accounts.

Contact

Alyssa Osman
Social Media and Communications Coordinator
Youngstown State University
Office: 330-941-2251
amosman@ysu.edu

YSU PoliceCommunications Center - 330.941.3527

Best Practices:

Getting Started

Identify ***at least*** two people 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 a ysu.edu address.

When deciding your intended audience, consider the following questions:
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 messages and intended audience best, as not all channels serve the same purpose. Keep in mind, a presence on all platforms is not needed.

At the university level, we have identified the following groups as our target audiences:
- Prospective Students: High school students or transfer students interested in pursuing higher education.
- Current Students: Enrolled undergraduate and graduate students at YSU.
- Alumni: Graduates of YSU who have completed their studies.
- Parents and Guardians: Parents and guardians of prospective or current YSU students.
- Faculty and Staff: Academic and non-academic staff members associated with YSU.

Recommended platforms for university affiliated accounts:

Facebook:
- Audience: faculty/staff, alumni, parents, some students
- Content Suggestions: sharing stories (news, events, accomplishments, etc.)

LinkedIn:
- Audience: faculty/staff, alumni, current students
- Content Suggestions: Alumni, student and faculty success stories, research highlights, career development and community event promotions

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

Depending on your audience, this will determine which platform suits your objectives best. 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.

To discuss platform selection or 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. Passwords should be updated at least quarterly, and again when a social media administrator (student, faculty, or staff) leaves his/her position at YSU.

In the event we can help recover through the social media channel, we will do so. It is encouraged to share account credentials with the Social Media Coordinator upon registration for the purpose of account recovery. **Please note that any account that does not post within a six-month period will be asked to update the content or deactivate the account.**

Takeovers

The YSU Instagram Takeover is to share an authentic view of 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.

Instagram Takeover Request

Optimizing Your Channels

Naming your account

Be intentional when naming your account, as to not confuse your intended audience. Include "YSU" before the name of your organization or department to help your account be more accessible and show up in search results. (Don't forget, all YSU Accounts must be registered with the Office of Marketing and Communications).

Choose Your Profile Picture

All University-Affiliated Accounts must have their profile picture approved by the Social Media Coordinator to ensure correct formatting. College, Division, and Department Accounts must visually represent Youngstown State University through proper use of the Block Y or approved College Badges in their profile picture.

Creating Your Bio/About Section

Tell your audience exactly what they'll find on your page! Your bio should include necessary information, such as who you are, what you do, where you are located, and how to get in touch with you. Make sure to add a link to your page on the website to let people learn more! 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 account are my own and do not necessarily represent the positions, strategies, or opinions of Youngstown State University."

Example - Campus Recreation:

Campus Recreation Center at Youngstown State University

Get Rec'd, Penguins 🐧 Join our cutting-edge facility for innovative wellness and fitness programs, club and intramural sports, and more!

https://ysu.edu/campus-recreation

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. 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, college, or organization 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 or other graphic for an event, reach out to Creative Services.

Guidelines For Student Organizations

- All Student Organizations with a social media presence must register their accounts with the YSU Social Media Team here.
- It is strongly recommended that student clubs and organizations designate Social Media Coordinator, Alyssa Osman, and/or their faculty advisor as administrators on their social media pages. This ensures continued access control, especially in the event of leadership changes or graduations. Club advisors can then facilitate access for new club officers and members.
- Make a concerted effort to transfer login information and administrator privileges from one student organization president to the next. This practice avoids the need to create new pages each academic year, reducing confusion among club members regarding the "official" or "correct" page for the club.
- Whenever possible, include contact information for your student organization on the social media page. If the page serves as a recruitment tool, potential members should know how to connect with the group.
- Refrain from using profanity, displaying alcoholic beverages, and promoting substance abuse. It is also highly discouraged to openly criticize Youngstown State and the surrounding area, or engage in arguments through a YSU-affiliated account.

Student clubs and organizations' social media pages are considered "unofficial" and should refrain from using the Youngstown State University (YSU) logo. It is advisable to add a statement to the profile clarifying that the page is not an official YSU social media account, and any posted content reflects personal or organizational opinions.

Best Practices for Social Media at Youngstown State

Be Authentic
- Clearly state your identity and professional affiliations.
- Only remove offensive or spam content.
- Promptly admit and rectify mistakes transparently.
- Share information based on firsthand knowledge, providing source links when needed.

Be Sensible
- Choose usernames thoughtfully, as some platforms may not allow changes.
- Verify content accuracy and ensure proper permissions for written content, images, and videos.
- Maintain constructive and respectful communication, avoiding negative remarks about other entities.
- Exercise caution when discussing controversial topics.

Be Engaging and Accessible
- Respond to questions, concerns, and compliments within 24-36 hours, striving for quicker response times.
- Keep social media profiles updated with fresh content, aiming for at least one post per week.
- If unable to manage the page, delegate or delete the profile/page.
- Include a contact email address in all club profiles/pages.
- Maintain a natural and conversational tone.
- Diversify content with text, photos, videos, and poll questions

Getting the word out

There are so many notable moments happening around campus, and we want to highlight them. Keep in touch with our social media team by sending in any interesting stories over to to social@ysu.edu.

Just keep in mind that our social media accounts are an outward-facing marketing tool, so we may not be able to post everything we receive. But we'll do our best to highlight the most interesting and exciting things going on at YSU.

Contact

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Youngstown State University
Office: 330-941-2251
amosman@ysu.edu

YOUNGSTOWN
STATE
UNIVERSITY

1 Tressel Way, Youngstown, OH, 44555 | **ysu.edu**