THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

Social Media Guidelines
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Introduction
Social media provides platforms for departments and offices across campus to interact with the Volunteer community. Social media has become a central part of much of our audiences' lives, offering new opportunities to share and new challenges in effective communication.

The primary goal of this document is to provide guidelines and best practices for university employees representing the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in a professional manner through official university social media accounts. Guidance will often evolve over time due to the ever-changing nature of the social media landscape, and we will update this guide as needed.

Need More Information?
If you have questions that aren't addressed in this guide or if you need additional information or support, reach out to your unit communicator or contact the social media team in the Office of Communications and Marketing at social@utk.edu.

Why Social Media?
The heart of social media, and what makes it social, is the two-way communication, interaction, and sharing of information that take place between users. Social media is not about talking at people; it's about talking with people. For organizations, social media platforms are, first and foremost, communications channels that connect us directly with members of our audience.

Creating social media accounts for your department or unit is a strategic decision, and you should be able to identify goals for your social media program that support the mission of your office and the university as a whole. There are a few questions your office should address:

- What are your communication goals, and are there needs that aren't currently being addressed by your website, newsletter, or other properties?
- Who is your audience and what do they need?
- Does your office have the resources to consistently maintain a social presence? Is there someone who can write, create, and curate content on a regular basis, respond to questions in a timely manner, etc.?
- Which social platform or platforms are you interested in joining and why?

Establishing Official Social Media Accounts
An official UT social media account is one that represents a university office, unit, initiative, or administrative position (for example, @UTProvost). A comprehensive list of current official accounts is located at utk.edu/social.

University accounts are used to communicate messages from and on behalf of the university. Our audiences perceive university accounts as representing the official perspectives, decisions, positions, and voice of the institution, and these accounts should be managed carefully with that in mind.

Official UT social media accounts must be administered by a university faculty or staff member. Students may serve as active contributors to the account, but credentials must be maintained by an employee. The university retains control and final approval authority over the content of messages conveyed on official accounts.

Before creating a new account, university employees should read the "Why Social Media?" guidance above and consult with their unit communicator or the university's social media team. If the decision is made to open a new account, the faculty or staff administrator should send an email with information about the account handle and administrator contact information to social@utk.edu so the account can be added to the list of official channels.

Branded university social media icons (or profile photos) are available to all academic and administrative units with official social media accounts. This is the only way to include the Power T in your social media icon. Contact your unit's logo liaison for your social media icon.

Administering Official Social Media Accounts
Official UT social media accounts should be registered to a shared or general email address accessible by more than one person in the department or office. Email addresses already established for customer service are preferred (for example, social@utk.edu).

Passwords and logins should be known and securely maintained by page administrators as well as their direct leadership. This practice prevents departments from finding themselves in a position where only one person has access to a social media account.

Official accounts are expected to maintain UT's brand identity, integrity, and reputation by maintaining an appropriate voice, sharing and liking appropriate content, and being a productive, supportive member of the university's social community.

All university policies, brand guidelines, social media best practices, and communications guidelines must be followed. Official university accounts must also follow the respective terms of service for social media platforms, applicable state and federal laws, and NCAA regulations.

Official account administrators have the following responsibilities:
- Create, maintain, and monitor content on respective social media sites and engage with users.
- Moderate content that violates hosting terms of service or is of a threatening or harassing nature.
- Contact representatives of the social media team or the news and information team (utnews@utk.edu) in a timely manner to communicate pending or predicted crisis communication or emergency response needs. All content related to an emergency or

event impacting the university at large is to be disseminated using established UT policies.
- Ensure that all content is relevant to the goals and objectives of the pertinent unit while upholding the standards and brand identity of the university.
- Respond to inquiries and postings using official approved accounts. Do not use nonuniversity (personal) accounts to respond to inquiries or postings.
- Deliver timely responses to inquiries or postings on official accounts. All replies should use professional, conversational language that encourages comments and engages follow-up conversation but should steer clear of engaging in debate.

Official accounts are prohibited from the following:
- Posting content that violates city, state, or federal laws and regulations
- Commenting on or posting anything related to legal matters, litigation, or contract negotiations without appropriate approval
- Using the university brand or name to endorse any product, private business, cause, or political candidate
- Representing personal opinions as university-endorsed views or policies

Moderating User-Generated Content
Social media platforms provide the opportunity for two-way conversation, and moderating user-generated posts, comments, and replies is an important part of managing social media accounts.

Official university social media accounts should use an energetic, friendly, and conversational voice fitting of the department or unit, recognizing that various departments may approach conversations differently. While remaining professional as representatives of the university, it's OK to have fun on social media.

Be responsive, be factual, and be courteous. In every social media interaction, remember that you are speaking for the university.

Sometimes comments from users are negative, critical, or require careful customer service. It is important to acknowledge concerns and provide support whenever possible. Take a few minutes to identify a campus resource that might be able to help and direct the person there. Better yet, pick up the phone to a colleague and connect them to the person that needs support.

If the question or concern includes private or sensitive information, ask them to DM you and take the conversation into a private space. If negative comments persist after support has been provided, do not continue to engage with the user.

> ***Page administrators may not remove or hide individual user comments simply because they are negative in nature, disagreeable, or otherwise unsavory.***

As a public institution, the university is bound to comply with federal and state laws that protect individuals' rights to freedom of expression. If a page administrator is unsure whether a comment or post meets the qualifications for deletion (see below), they should contact the social media team for further discussion.

When necessary, page administrators may use great care and judgment to remove user-generated posts, comments, or replies only if they do one or more of the following:
- Use threatening language or language that incites threats or violence
- Disclose information that is confidential or otherwise protected by state or federal law or regulation
- Violate copyright or trademarks
- Contain solicitations
- Are duplicative in nature, such as one or more user repeating the same comment
- Violate the terms of service of the hosting platform

If a user-generated post or comment is threatening in nature, record the content via screen shot or screen recording and report it immediately to the UT Police Department (utpolice@utk.edu) and the social media team.

Maintaining Personal and Professional Accounts
Faculty and staff may maintain personal and professional social media accounts. However, an individual who identifies themselves as an employee of the university does not necessarily speak for the university or its values.

Faculty and staff who disclose their university affiliation in their public personal social media accounts should specify that their expressed opinions are theirs alone.

Staff members who must use social media accounts within their professional areas of responsibility should be mindful of how they are representing the university in the social media space.

Accessibility
Use the tools provided within each platform to make sure your social media content is accessible to users. Be sure to caption videos, optimize graphics for color contrast, and use alt text image descriptions.

Find tips and tools for accessibility on social media at thehill.utk.edu/accessibility/socialmedia.

Managing Social Media Takeovers
A social media takeover is when you allow a student or other individual to lead the content of your social media account for a set time period. A takeover is a great way for your audience to see an authentic slice of life at UT.

Content posted during the takeover represents your account and is shared on behalf of the university. As with all content on official social media accounts, posts made during a takeover will be perceived as representing the official perspectives, decisions, positions, and voice of the institution. As such, page administrators have the following responsibilities related to managing social media takeovers:

- Make a plan. Why is this person doing the takeover? What topics or event will they discuss? What information do you want your audience to come away with? Will they be asking and answering questions from the social audience, and if so, do they know what to

do when they don't know an answer? Discuss the plan with the person doing the takeover in advance.

- Ensure that the following types of content—and any other inappropriate content—are avoided:
    - Drinking or drug use
    - Hate speech or bullying (this includes putting down other individuals or institutions)
    - Nudity or sexually provocative posts
    - Promotions of businesses or anything outside of the university (unless formally agreed upon ahead of time)

The university's social media team maintains takeover guidelines, which highlight some do's and don'ts for people conducting takeovers. That document also includes the university's social media takeover agreement template, which should be completed by you and signed by the person conducting the takeover in advance of the event. Contact the social media team at social@utk.edu for a copy of the takeover guidelines and agreement.

Best practices for managing takeovers include the following:
- Make sure the person conducting the takeover understands the university's expectations for appropriate content and has agreed to terms of use for the takeover.
- Agree on beginning and end times for the takeover, provide log-in information immediately before the takeover, and change the account password after it's over. Encourage the person conducting the takeover to save the content they've posted to their devices before logging out.
- Ask the person doing the takeover to start with a video introduction—who they are, where they're from, what they're studying, etc., and to end their takeover with a farewell photo or video.
- Encourage them to show off their day and to be creative with stickers, filters, etc., as they normally would, but to keep in mind that they are representing the university and to use good judgment.
- Communicate other considerations to the person doing the takeover:
    - Don't share photos or videos of others without their knowledge (large groups out in public are OK)
    - Don't share photos or video after your agreed-upon end time
    - Don't follow or unfollow any users while you are logged on to the account without approval of the account owner
    - Don't change any account settings or information

The university's social media team is more than happy to provide information or consultation with page administrators planning a social media takeover.