

# Social Media Policy and Procedure Guidelines

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## Introduction and Policy Purpose

The rapid pace in which information can be communicated to a global audience drives today's digital culture. Social networking, which includes a growing number of social media platforms, is an important vehicle for sharing our stories, events and information with our audiences.

The University of South Carolina Upstate's Office of Marketing and Communications ("UMC") understands the growing interest among departments and groups across campus to create and utilize social media platforms. Upon receiving proper approval from the Office of Marketing and Communications, campus entities are allowed to create University-related social media accounts if the guidelines in this social media policy are met.

Social media is decentralized by nature. However, the university's identity, image and brand must be cohesive, intentional and strategic. The Office of Marketing and Communications is responsible for integrated communication to all constituencies and audiences, and therefore maintains authority over any communication involving the university's name, brand or likeness, to which all university entities and affiliates must be accountable.

The purpose of the Social Media Policy is to ensure accuracy, consistency, integrity and protection of the identity and image of the University of South Carolina Upstate (hereby "University") by providing a set of required standards for social media content from any department, school, facility, organization, entity, or affiliate.

All social media content under University jurisdiction (i.e., housed on University servers or on other servers funded by University budgets, or content that uses the University's brand or likeness) must comply with local, state and federal laws and with USC Upstate's policies, rules and regulations. Further, the reputation and image of USC Upstate is determined, in part, by the quality of information published electronically by its students, faculty, staff, and affiliations.

## Official Sites

The social media manager in the Office of University Communications maintains official social media platforms on behalf of the University. These platforms promote University activities, events and educational opportunities by providing timely, engaging and relevant content that assists in building broad-based support for the University's mission of teaching,

research and service. The University's social media directory can be viewed online at [www.uscupstate.edu/socialmedia](http://www.uscupstate.edu/socialmedia).

## **Platforms**

The University of South Carolina Upstate currently uses the following social media platforms to connect with the community: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Instagram, Flickr, FourSquare, YouTube and Vimeo. Any entity seeking to use a different social media platform must gain approval from the Office of Marketing and Communications prior to the account being established.

## **Requesting an Account**

While a social media account is often desired, it is necessary in very few instances. The official University social media platforms include a growing base of followers; recognized entities of the University can submit University-related content to be promoted on official social media platforms.

However, if a social media account is desired, the following steps must be taken to create and register a University-related account:

1. Visit [www.uscupstate.edu/socialmedia](http://www.uscupstate.edu/socialmedia) and complete the online form to request a University-related social media account.

The Office of Marketing and Communications will evaluate the need for the requested account and reserves the right to decline requests. Please allow up to 10 days for a response.

Denied requests can be appealed through administrative channels.

2. If the requested social media account gains approval, the Office of Marketing and Communications will create the account and maintain administrative access to the account, and the entity representative(s) will be set up as the primary administrative user(s) of the account.

Because the account will represent both your entity and the University, it is important to secure the approval of your department head/dean/manager before creating an account.

Before seeking a social media account for your entity or organization, consider the following questions:

### **How does having social media presence differ from our primary website?**

*Example:* The USC Upstate Alumni Association uses its website to list information about the association, its events and programs. The association's Facebook feed ([www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/)

USCupstatealum) allows for interactivity amongst alums, picture sharing, and community-building.

### **What do we plan to achieve with social media?**

*Example:* One purpose of the university's Twitter feed (@uscupstate) is to provide timely customer service for complaints and to demonstrate that we care about the needs of our audience.

### **What kind of information will we share with users?**

*Example:* A limited-time discount on books or a special-themed lunch may be Facebook posts from the USC Upstate Bookstore or Dining Services.

### **What audiences are we trying to engage and why?**

*Example:* @UpstateSpartans is the official Twitter account of USC Upstate's athletic programs. The Spartans have a Facebook community (Facebook.com/UpstateSpartans). Students, fans and the sports community can follow the Spartans with up-to-the-minute updates on games, stats, athletes, and more.

## **Existing Accounts**

Entities that have an existing social media account should evaluate the need for these accounts. If interaction with the intended audience has been sparse or if followers have increased minimally over time, an account may not be needed. These entities can seek guidance from the Office of Marketing and Communications to develop and set target goals for frequency and engagement.

## **Unsuccessful Accounts**

Social media accounts that are unsuccessful due to frequency of posts and lack of engagement with audiences will be asked to dismantle their accounts and to re-direct followers to an official or an approved social media site, per the request of the Office of Marketing and Communications. An account may be deemed unsuccessful for the following reasons: lack of growth in audience, infrequency of posts, relevance of posts, etc.

## **Identification**

The username of any University-related account must clearly reflect affiliation with the University and must include "USC Upstate" or "USCUpstate." For example, rather than a page titled "Informatics Club", the name should be preceded by "USC Upstate," in effect giving it the title "USC Upstate Informatics Club." The group must provide a link to the following on its social networking site:

- a) The main University website, [www.uscupstate.edu](http://www.uscupstate.edu)
- b) The University's social networking site within the same network. (i.e. if the network used is Facebook, the group should link to the University's Facebook page).

The tag “USCU” is not appropriate, as it is often confused with the University of South Carolina Union, and should not be used.

**Branding** For avatars and thumbnails, any logos used should follow the rules dictated in the USC Upstate Image Management Manual. Pictures are acceptable as long as they are in good taste and suit the topic.

**Disclaimer** The entity must contain, if allowable, the following statement on its main page: *The opinions expressed on these pages are strictly those of USC Upstate (Group Name) and do not reflect the views of the University of South Carolina Upstate.*

**Emergencies** Page administrators must contact the Office of University Communications when there is a social media situation that the page administrator is not sure how to address. If there is a safety concern, contact either Department of Public Safety and/or the Office of Marketing and Communications immediately. Do not use social media accounts to make announcements such as emergency weather closings, until the announcement has been made by the University’s official social media channels.

**Page Administrators** Only an employee of USC Upstate or an approved representative may hold administrative access to a University-related social networking site. Should an employee be terminated or leave the employ of the University (or if he or she no longer acts in an administrative access role), all log-ins and passwords **should be changed immediately** to protect the security and integrity of social media sites.

**Frequency** Page administrators are expected to create posts that engage with their audiences at least twice weekly. If two posts per week are problematic, a social media account is not the ideal medium.

All social media sites must abide by **all** [University Code of Student Behavior](#) and [Image Management Manual](#) standards. This Social Networking Policy is a component of the overall Image Management Manual.

**Content Expectations** Any private or confidential information cannot be shared by an entity administrator via a social networking site. Only appropriate, respectful, accurate and honest content is permitted on any University-related social networking site. The use of obscene language or extreme abbreviations of language that would make the communication difficult to read is not allowed.

**Tone** Page administrators are expected to maintain a professional and personable tone when using social media. Page administrators should share timely, relevant and appropriate information. Proper English is expected and the use of obscene or derogatory language is prohibited.

**Re-Evaluation**

The Office of Marketing and Communications reserves the right to re-evaluate the need for an entity's social media account due to inactivity.

**Media Contact**

No social networking entity administrator or representative may assume the role of University spokesperson without permission in writing from the Assistant Vice Chancellor of Marketing and Communications. The Assistant Vice Chancellor of Marketing and Communications must be notified immediately if a University- related social networking site is receiving any inquiry from a member of the news media.

**Copyright**

Beware of the authenticity of social media posts to prevent copyright or intellectual property infringement. Note the original source of text and multimedia elements to ensure creative attribution. However, simply assigning credit to an artist is not sufficient—you must have permission to post someone else's image or intellectual property.

[Click here to read the executive summary of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act.](#)

**Restrictions**

The laws governing the University non-profit status would suggest that no commercial (for-profit) individuals or institutions be promoted through a University medium such as social media. The University does not allow for paid advertising (commercials or endorsements) but does provide consideration for its corporate sponsors and underwriters when deemed appropriate by the Office of Advancement.