

# UW Social Media Guidelines

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## Why do we need guidelines?

Social media usage at the University of Wyoming is governed by all University of Wyoming policies, including policies that govern electronic communications. The following Social Media Guidelines are not meant to replace University of Wyoming policies, but are provided as a best practices guide on using social media in an effective and responsible manner for anyone who is managing, or considering establishing, a social media presence eligible for participation or recognition in the University of Wyoming’s social media portal. These guidelines, while not meant to be comprehensive, are intended as a useful tool for creating a successful and responsible social media site.

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## What is “Social Media”?

The term “social media” refers to online tools and services that allow any Internet user to create and publish content. Many of these sites use personal profiles where users post information about themselves. The “social” in social media comes in as these individuals find others with similar interests and interact with them through online communities, sharing information and knowledge, offering support and networking. Social media also allow for the easy sharing and re-purposing of existing content, expanding the reach of your work and enabling others to share it with their friends and networks. Popular social media services include but are not limited to: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), blogs, [YouTube](#), [Flickr](#), [Google+](#), [Instagram](#) and [Pinterest](#).

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## Should I use it?

If the audience you need to communicate with is using social media, it may be a good idea to use it. However, before getting started, it’s important to be aware of the various social channels available, content strategies for engaging your audience, and the resource requirements necessary to make it effective.

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## What kind of resources should I expect to commit?

Creating a successful social media presence takes time and commitment. Using social media is all about two-way communication. It is not enough to just be posting relevant content on a regular basis; you must

also have a plan for responding promptly to your friends/fans/followers/etc. when they reach out to you. One of the advantages of social media is its immediacy. Be sure to use this attribute to your advantage and stay on top of news and activities in your area. Questions, suggestions and concerns need quick feedback to keep your site relevant and useful.

**Here are some resource areas to consider before getting started:**

- **Who is responsible...**  
for managing your social presence? Ideally this would be many people who work with a common plan and goal. Make sure more than one person knows how to maintain your account so that if your primary manager is absent, someone else can stay engaged.
  
- **How much time and/or personnel...**  
are you willing to allocate to the tasks of sharing and developing content and continuing a dialogue with the community?
  - Updating regularly  
Be aware that it is necessary to update on a regular basis. An effective way to manage your account is to set a schedule of what types of content you will post and when.
  - Posting frequently  
For some communities, frequent posts may be acceptable. For others, the followers may not want to receive frequent messages. If that's the case, these folks may likely stop following your account. The posting frequency is something you'll need to monitor and adjust as necessary. A starting point may be to allocate 30 minutes a day to post content and reply to comments. There is no hard and fast rule as to the time requirements, so be prepared to set a starting point and adjust as necessary.
  - Checking content daily  
Inappropriate content can find its way onto your site, so daily checking is highly suggested.
  - Maintaining properly  
Make sure you have the time to maintain the site properly: A site with slow response can be more detrimental than no presence at all.
  
- **Are you dedicated to persevering...**  
It takes time to develop a social media presence, so be prepared to dedicate several months to growing that presence on a daily basis. It will take time for your community to establish and grow. After several months, assess your social media presence to determine if it is successful. Don't judge your success on numbers alone. If you have a dedicated audience that is engaged, that is the ultimate goal!

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## How do I get started?

Before creating a social media presence, establish your business objectives and the goals you want your social media site(s) to achieve. It is vital that you go through this step before starting a media presence, because clear goals will actually help you decide which social media channel(s) will be appropriate, and will make it easier to decide what content should be posted. Also check to see if it might be best to use an already existing channel instead of starting a new one.

**Set SMART Goals:** Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely

**Ask yourself questions to help set workable goals:**

- What is my **Purpose**?
  - Am I seeking to promote my department or college?
  - Am I endeavoring to communicate a campaign?
  - Do I want to create a community of "fans"? Why?
  - Do I want to create awareness or interest in my departmental/college website(s)?

- Am I trying to generate a specific online reputation for my department/college?
- **Who is my *Audience*?**  
Different audiences may be best addressed in different social media paths. Make sure this is the correct vehicle for your audience.
  - Am I going after prospective students – how young?
  - Am I reaching out to non-traditional students?
  - Am I seeking to keep current students involved?
  - Do I want to communicate with alumni?
  - Do I hope to attract potential faculty?
  - Do I want to build relationships with a community or agencies involved with my school?
- **What is the right *Voice* for my intended audience?**  
Authenticity is key when working with social media. Continually ask, “Is this the right person/voice for this audience?”
  - Student voice?
  - Faculty voice?
  - Human resources voice?
  - Athletics voice?
  - Alumni voice?
- **What is my perceived *Role*?**  
A good social media strategy includes all of the following roles:
  - Listener
  - Active contributor
  - Aggregator (someone who re-publishes content and information)
  - Conversation starter
- **What is my *Content*?**  
Some examples of content that you might share include:
  - Videos
  - Pictures
  - Audio interviews
  - Research findings
  - Charts or infographics
  - General topic discussions
  - News stories
  - Read more about this topic below under the heading, “What type of content is appropriate to share.
- **What is my *Schedule*?**  
Create a schedule for the types of content that you will be sharing and when. Have a plan and follow it, rather than randomly posting information.

**Determine how to measure the success of your social media channel. Some metrics may include:**

- ***Increased traffic***  
... to your website from social media channels.
- ***Improved search engine rankings***  
... for your website.
- ***Gain in number of participants***  
... in the community (Facebook “likes,” Twitter “followers,” blog subscribers, LinkedIn “followers,” etc.)
- ***Achievement of a number of engagements***  
... with the community (Facebook pageviews, comments or shares, Twitter replies or re-tweets, blog pageviews, etc.)

- **Reached certain percentage of participants...**  
in the community. For example, 70% of the students in your department.

## What are the technical issues involved?

A considerable amount of time and resources will go into creating your social media channels, developing their identities, and attracting followers. In the event that the assigned administrator of your social media channels leaves, you want to take steps to ensure that those investments are not lost and that you don't have to start over from scratch, creating confusion for potential followers about which channel is now official.

### Registering/maintaining an account

- **Set up for longevity**

In order to retain control of a social media channel, it is best to register channels using account information that will have the most longevity. For example, if you are considering creating an official social media page on behalf of a University of Wyoming department or event for participation in the University of Wyoming's social media portal, register the account using a **department email address that is not attached to a specific individual or employee**, and use a password that you can share with a few individuals within the department. When registering the social media site, consider input from others in the department, including all relevant department heads, supervisors or persons in administration.

- If a generic email address of this type is not available, [contact IT](#) about setting one up. Some email address options have fees (currently \$4-\$6/month), while other options may be free.
- To prevent the loss of control of an account, especially Facebook, contact Institutional Marketing at [webhelp@uwyo.edu](mailto:webhelp@uwyo.edu) so that a central administrator can be added to your **primary** department account. Adding this backup administrator provides account management continuity in the event that other administrators become unavailable.

- **When an administrator leaves**

In the event that an individual who controls a social media channel with only a single administrator intends to leave, it is important to have this person hand off control of the social media channel to someone else, such as a supervisor or another employee, by changing the email address and other contact information on the account to the new or temporarily assigned administrator. *It can be extremely difficult to gain control of a social media channel that was controlled by a departed employee or other individual if this hand-off of control does not take place.*

- **Allowing for multiple administrators**

Some social media channels, such as Facebook pages, allow for multiple administrators. On Facebook, each administrator must have his or her own Facebook account.

- On social media channels of this type, after one individual sets up the new page, additional administrators can be added by "liking" the page, after which the initial administrator can select "make admin" when viewing the list of followers for the desired additional administrators.
- On Facebook, and other social media channels that accommodate multiple administrators, it is highly recommended that there are at least two persons who are made administrators on the account. For those considering launching a site on behalf of a University of Wyoming department or event, it is recommended that two full-time staff employees be designated as the administrators, in addition to Institutional Marketing. This will allow the account to persist under department control, even if one of the employees leaves.

### Naming your account

- **Capitalize on UW's brand image**  
If your social media channel is going to be used for a UW department or an official UW event or group, capitalize on UW's brand image by using the UWYO prefix for any naming, web address, or "handle." For example a Facebook page url might be [www.facebook.com/UwyoReslifeDining](http://www.facebook.com/UwyoReslifeDining), or a Twitter handle might be @UWyoEngineering. This will allow your channel to benefit from being closely linked to UW's brand image in the minds of your potential followers, who will be more able to recognize you as an official channel of the university. For the full name of your channel, use the format "University of Wyoming **Your Department Name.**"
- **Keep it short!**  
Keep your names, web addresses and handles as short and descriptive as possible in order to make the name more memorable for any marketing or communications you might do for the channel.
- **Naming primary account holders**  
If creating a departmental social media site, it is highly recommended that student employees not be the primary account holders, since their stay with UW may be limited. See the 'longevity' section above under "Registering/Maintaining an Account."

#### Ending an account/channel...or not

If you no longer plan to use a social media channel, it is best to delete the account, rather than leave it active and dormant. This prevents unwanted circumstances surrounding unmonitored activity on the channel. It also avoids the appearance that your group or department is no longer active or is "not doing anything." Some social media accounts will automatically disable after an extended period of inactivity, but it is best to delete any dormant accounts long before that occurs.

If you feel that an account you no longer desire to use has identity value for the university as a whole, please contact Institutional Marketing about transferring the account to them.

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## What type of content is appropriate to share?

It is important to recognize and respect the intellectual property of others. Intellectual property can take various shapes, but those creating and maintaining social media sites are encouraged to always apply common sense when posting content, videos, or using a third party's marks.

#### Avoid the following:

- **The premature disclosure of proprietary or confidential information**  
...that may relate to university trade secrets, research or patents
- **The endorsement of a third party good or service**  
...without proper university approvals
- **The use of a university social media site**  
...for the posting of defamatory statements
- **Using photos of people without their permission.**  
*Make sure that you obtain a model release for individuals who appear in photos that you are sharing on social media sites. The UW Model Release is available at [https://www.uwyo.edu/mktgcomm/\\_files/docs/ModelRelease/Model-Release.pdf](https://www.uwyo.edu/mktgcomm/_files/docs/ModelRelease/Model-Release.pdf)*
- **Copyright and trademark infringement**
  - Copyrights

- If work is owned by a third party  
Be cautious when posting work that may still be owned by a third party. Types of work that may be copyrighted include: books, articles (i.e. written or published works), pictures, photographs, songs, videos, etc. If a work is owned by a third party, please contact the respective owner or the Copyright Clearance Center at [www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com) to obtain the necessary permissions. Employees of the University who have questions regarding copyright issues may consider contacting UW's General Counsel office.
  - Copyrighted materials  
Please see the University's policies on copyright:  
<http://www.uwyo.edu/generalcounsel/intellectual-property/>
  - Giving credit where credit is due  
Always give credit to the original authors/creators and/or link to the original source when at all possible. Do not post or share work (video, articles, writings, etc.) in a manner that construes your department or the university as the author/creator of such work.
- Trademarks
- Misuse of trademarks  
Using a company or third party name, logo or other trademark in a manner that may mislead, confuse or deceive others as to an association or partnership when none exists, may be considered an infringement. Be careful and thoughtful as to what the actual relationship is between the university and a third party. Understand your intent for including their mark on your site.
  - Who to contact if you have questions  
Employees should contact [UW's General Counsel Office](#) if they are unclear or have questions relating to intellectual property.

**Be aware of the following rules and regulations:**

While good judgment and consideration of the potential impacts of sharing information are always the best first step, it is critical that all UW employees take the time to understand how various rules and regulations affect them and their use of social media:

- **Local, state, and federal laws**  
UW personnel's use of social media must still abide by all applicable local, state and federal laws. Of particular importance to UW are compliance with the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) when dealing with student-related information and the [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act](#) (HIPPA) Privacy Rule. These laws are complex, but in general no personally identifiable information on anyone but yourself should be shared through social media.
- **UW Regulations**  
Adherence to the UW Regulations is also mandatory for employees of the University of Wyoming. [UniReg 690](#) concerns proper use of computing and data communication facilities operated by the Division of Information Technology (which includes our connection to the Internet and all UW-owned equipment).
- **Other Codes of Conduct**  
Certain UW organizations may have additional codes of conduct or agreements signed between employees and UW. For instance, IT employees sign an IT confidentiality agreement that provides guidelines on the acceptable use of the technology and data to which they have access. For more information, students and employees may also refer to existing regulations outlined in the [Student Code of Conduct](#) and [Employee Handbook](#) (UW login required).
- **UW Brand Standards**  
The UW Brand Standards Manual (BSM) provides institutional guidelines for use of the UW Brand elements including the UW Signature, colors, photography and UW Brand Bar. The scope of the BSM encompasses all UW academic and administrative units with operational monies administered by UW. To ensure the integrity of the university's brand, all units must adhere to the institutional policies and guidelines.

- **Presidential Directives**  
[Presidential Directives](#), similar to UW regulations, provide policies and procedures for UW personnel.

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## How should I interact and respond to others?

One of the primary reasons people, businesses and institutions utilize social media to spread their messages is that those platforms provide for interactivity with the public. Social media allow private citizens to be both consumers and distributors of information, including sharing thoughts and opinions in ways that traditional media cannot accommodate.

While the ability to interact directly with the public is one of the reasons UW should engage in social media, it also raises concern. By providing platforms for people who aren't UW employees to express themselves, the university is inviting input of all types -- including harsh criticism and false information. Therefore, UW employees involved in social media in their official capacities need to be prepared to respond to such postings.

### Establishing the rules

On social media sites created and managed by UW personnel, it's appropriate to lay down rules for anyone, including members of the public, who use the forums provided. Posters who repeatedly violate the standards and guidelines expressly stated for the specific social media site may be banned from further posting on UW platforms, and the offensive comments should be deleted. Such rules or guidelines could include:

- **Keep it clean**  
Avoid language that is obscene, vulgar, lewd or sexually oriented.
- **If the site is limited to specific topics, No posts off topic**
- **No postings encouraging illegal activity**
- **Be truthful**
- **Be nice**  
No racism, sexism or any other sort of -ism that degrades another person.
- **No spam**  
No postings of a commercial nature.

**In addition, for those applying for consideration in the University of Wyoming's portal for social media, a standard disclaimer such as the following should be included within the "bio", "profile", "about" or other information area regarding the owner of the account, if such an area is provided:**

*This account is recognized by the University of Wyoming; however, the views and opinions expressed in this account are not necessarily those of the University. UW retains discretion to allow or disallow comments and/or posts on this page. For more information about UW's Social Media Guidelines, visit <http://www.uwyo.edu/LINK-TO-GUIDELINES> and for more information about the University of Wyoming, visit <http://www.uwyo.edu>.*

### Dealing with Community Comments

UW employees, of course, can't dictate what's posted on forums that aren't controlled by the university.

But whether it's a comment posted on a UW employee's blog or a UW unit's Facebook page, a tweet by someone supporting or criticizing a UW decision, or some other type of digital commentary, UW employees should take a similar approach.

- ***Should I respond?***

- If there's a post about the university, evaluate it.
- If it's positive, you can either let it stand or concur with it, possibly providing additional insight.
- If it's negative, your decision about whether to respond should depend upon several factors:
  - If it's a site dedicated to bashing and degrading others, it's probably best to avoid responding and simply monitor the situation.
  - If the posting is a rant, rage, joke or satirical in nature, it's probably best to avoid responding.
  - If there is erroneous information in the posting, and the situation doesn't meet either of the above two criteria, you should probably respond with factual information.
  - If the posting is a result of a negative experience from one of UW's stakeholders, you should probably respond in an attempt to rectify the situation.

- ***How do I respond?***

In responding to people in social media settings, here are some other things to keep in mind:

- Be transparent: If a social media site created for a University department, etc. disclose your role at UW.
- Disclose your authority: Identify your comments as those of yourself only and not representing the university as a whole.
- Watch your tone: Respond in a professional, respectful manner.

- ***What are the consequences?***

If you find that a post violated the rules you have set down and you choose to remove it, be aware of some possible outcomes:

- Trolling: A member may become angry and post more negative comments in an attempt to undermine productive conversation. This can be eliminated by banning a profile. However, this may lead to...
- Accusation of censorship or violation of First Amendment rights: This can be a difficult situation to handle, and should be taken on a case by case basis. Sometimes if you ignore the poster and continue to remove unproductive or negative posts, the issue will resolve itself. Employees should also consider contacting UW General Counsel for further advice when faced with accusations of violations of First Amendment rights.
- Statement of intent: If you remove a post and feel the need to explain it, a general statement indicating the forum's purpose may be needed. This can help quell any disagreement, as well as spark conversation that will give you insight into what your members want from the conversation.