



Social Media Guidelines & Best Practices

This will help outline guidelines and best practices for managing social media channels associated with the University of Wyoming.

University of Wyoming Official Accounts



University of Wyoming Institutional Marketing Social Media Team



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Rules & Regulations

Maintain Confidentiality

Observe all state or federal regulations, such as [FERPA](#), [HIPAA](#) and [University Administrative Policy Statements](#). Do not post personally identifiable information or protected health information.

Represent the UW Brand

Represent the University's brand and vision in a positive way when communicating via social media. Do not post any material that is obscene, defamatory, profane, threatening, harassing, abusive, hateful or embarrassing to another person or entity. Individuals may be held personally liable for posting such material. For more specific guidance, see the [Non-Discrimination and Non-Retaliation Policy](#).

Follow the UW Brand Standards

The [UW Brand Standards Manual](#) provides institutional guidelines for use of the UW brand elements including the UW signature, colors, photography and UW brand bar. The scope of the brand manual 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 institutional policies and guidelines.

Follow UW Regulations

Adherence to the UW Regulations is also mandatory for employees of the University of Wyoming. There are policies concerning 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](#). Make sure to familiarize yourself with and adhere to [UW's privacy policies](#).

Copyright and Intellectual Property

Be cautious when posting work that may still be owned by a third party. Types of work that may be copyrighted include books, articles, 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 to obtain the necessary permissions.

Don't use photos of people without their permission. Make sure you obtain a [model release](#) for individuals who appear in photos that you are sharing on social media sites. 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 (videos, articles, writings, etc.) in a manner that construes your department or the university as the author/creator of such work.

Please ensure all your social media profiles are set to business profiles so you don't use copyrighted materials available on the apps for personal use.

Trademarks and Licensing

University of Wyoming owns and controls its name(s) and other marks, logos, insignias, seal, designs and symbols. Unauthorized use of these trademarks is prohibited by UW trademark and licensing policies (see [University of Wyoming Trademark and Policies](#)) and is subject to civil and criminal penalties. UW reserves the right to assess financial penalties, issue cease and desist orders, or take other legal action. 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. Employees should contact UW's General Counsel Office if they are unclear or have questions relating to intellectual property.

Terms of Service/Use

Make sure to familiarize yourself with and adhere to each social media platforms terms of service/use.

Community Management

Posting on social media opens up the University of Wyoming to feedback from a variety of people online, and there are many rules and discussions around how this impacts people's first amendment rights. Therefore, it is extremely important for social media managers to follow these practices for removing or responding to comments.

Rules & Guidelines

- Hide or delete comments that include language that is obscene, vulgar, lewd or sexually explicit.
- If the post is about a very specific topic, remove comments that include topics not relevant to the posted content.
 - For example, if a post is about a faculty member winning an award and someone comments about parking on campus, that comment can be removed.
- Remove comments encouraging illegal activity.
- Remove comments that share false information.
- Remove comments that include racism, sexism or any other sort of comment that degrades another person.
- Remove and report comments that are spam or commercial in nature.
- Remove comments when social media users are bullying one another.

A standard disclaimer, such as the following, should be included within the "About" tab or other information area regarding the owner of the account, if such an area is provided:

As Cowboys, our grit, optimism, determination and curiosity are what drive the university to deliver social media content that educates, entertains and informs our Cowboy community at large. All viewpoints are welcome, and comments will not be removed based on the viewpoints expressed, provided the comments otherwise comply with this policy. However, the social media moderators of this official university channel reserve the right to remove any user content that is not directly related to the purpose of our social media content. Hate speech, discrimination, harassment, name-calling, bullying, profanity, and comments that threaten the safety of any individual or group will not be tolerated and may be removed. Any comments in violation of local, state, or federal law may be removed. The views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the University of Wyoming or its constituents.

Please note that this is an internet page on facebook.com [or twitter.com, Instagram.com, etc.]. The owner of the platform operates facebook.com [or twitter.com, Instagram.com, etc.] and has its own set of standards concerning what may, and may not, be posted and the actions that it may take regarding posts that violate those standards. The platform may apply its own standards to remove comments, and the University of Wyoming does not control or direct the platform's application of its own community standards.

Managing Community Comments

Knowing when to respond to comments and when to leave them is an extremely important part of social media management. We all love UW so much so it can feel important to come to the defense of the University if someone is commenting negative remarks, however often it is better to just ignore the comment so as to not escalate the situation.

Should I respond?

- If the comment is positive, "like" the comment and respond to show appreciation. Some potential positive responses include cute emojis, "Go Pokes" or a "Thank you!"
- If the comment appears as an actual question, do your best to answer concisely in the comments or you can switch to messaging them privately to answer.
- If the comment is negative but it does not break any of the above guidelines to warrant removal, we recommend ignoring it and leaving the comment in place.

How do I respond?

You are representing the University of Wyoming brand so it is important to remain professional, impartial, respectful and concise.

What are the outcomes?

If you find that a comment violated the above guidelines and you choose to remove it, there are a few possible outcomes. That is why often hiding the comment is a preferred option.

- Trolling - The social media user may become angry about their comment being removed and continue to post more negative comments.
- Accusations 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. The above guidelines help to avoid this situation (most of the time). If you are removing comments or banning someone from your profile, please document it and cite your reasoning for removal. This will be important information to have in the event someone does claim censorship.
 - Example of tracking: Banned @username on 2/16/2023 due to continued bullying of another user.
- Statement of Intent: If someone asks why you removed their comment you can professionally message them and cite the reasoning from the above guidelines.
- If a situation is escalated to the point a commenter is threatening legal action, please contact Chad Baldwin, AVP of Institutional Communication at cbaldwin@uwyo.edu.

Starting New Social Media Channels

If you would like to create new social media channels you must reach out to the UW Institutional Marketing Social Media Team to begin that process at digital@uwyo.edu.

Best Practices

Adapt to Changes

Social media platforms are constantly changing their algorithm and what content is performing. Therefore, it is extremely important to adapt the type of content that you share to work with the algorithm.

Be Thoughtful About Your Posts

What you are posting is a reflection of the University of Wyoming as a whole and your specific department. Be sure to review the posts thoroughly and be thoughtful about how your audience will react. Do not include posts with obscene language or topics, false information, posts encouraging illegal activity, or alienation of certain groups.

Remember Your Audience

Your social media presence can reach prospective students, current students, alumni, colleagues, parents and stakeholders. Consider how these different groups will respond before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm or provoke any of these groups. Also, consider what target market your content is for and the best place to share that. For example, to reach parents, a Facebook post might be better. However, to reach current students, Instagram would probably be more successful.

Strive for Accuracy

Get the facts straight before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors. Make sure your links work.

Engage Your Followers

Create posts that your followers can respond to and engage with to keep them excited and invested in the content. Also feature people including students/faculty and actual photos of the University of Wyoming campus and community.

Make Your Content Accessible & Equitable

Be sure to make your content accessible for everyone who may be using it. This includes capitalizing each word in a hashtag so a screen reader can read it (#IAmACowboy), adding alt text to your social media images and adding captions to all your videos.

Ask for Help

The UW Institutional Marketing Social Media Team is here as a resource and to collaborate with. If you have questions or want to discuss strategy don't hesitate to reach out. If you have a project you want to collaborate on, also reach out!

Current Social Media Trends

Here are a few examples that provide insight into the way social media platforms differ and the type of content you should be used on each.

Facebook

- Demographic - parents of current/prospective students, alumni, stakeholders and community members
- Facebook is a great place to post photos or links to important websites or news.
- Facebook Events are great to use if you have an upcoming event you want to share.

Instagram

- Demographic - current or prospective students, recent alumni, and community members
- Instagram is a great place to post photos or videos including vertical videos called Reels.
- Instagram Stories are also a great place to share information, especially timely information, to students, including event reminders or current happenings.
- Links do not work in Instagram captions, so put links in your bio. If you want to place multiple links in your bio free tools such as [Linktree](#) are a great option. Here is an example: [University of Wyoming Linktree](#)

Twitter

- Demographic - current students, alumni, stakeholders, donors, faculty and staff
- Twitter is best for short content and links for more information.
- People often visit Twitter for news or updates.

YouTube

- Demographic - YouTube reaches a very large and diverse demographic of people.
- YouTube is used by people for research and education, as well as entertainment.
- Longer-form videos perform well on YouTube.

LinkedIn

- Demographic - alumni, stakeholders, donors, faculty and staff.
- LinkedIn is used for job connections, research and sharing accomplishments.
- You can share photos, videos and links here.

TikTok

- Demographic - prospective and current students
- This is a great place to share short, trendy videos using popular sounds.
- Students should always be the face of TikTok to connect with their peers.
- Don't forget - per university policy, do not access TikTok via your work devices or UW networks.