

# Employee, Staff, Departments and Student Organizations Social Media Policy

## Purpose

Tennessee State University (TSU) recognizes the value of social media as a way to communicate with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the public. Social media also provides platforms for departments, divisions and units to interact across both campuses with our Tiger community. However, we also understand that social media can be a risky platform, and we want to ensure that our employees use it responsibly as we face new challenges with effective communication. We encourage all employees to use social media in a way that promotes the brand, supports the mission, and reflects positively on the university.

Our social media policy is designed to ensure that we meet legal requirements and respect intellectual property rights, data protection laws, and other relevant regulations. This policy is meant for public profiles that reference your name, title, and/or place of employment. If you're at all unsure about your profile's content, we ask that you set it as 'private' to the outside. Ultimately, you are solely responsible for what you post online, and it's a good practice to be thoughtful and considerate about how those posts may reflect on you, both personally and professionally.






## Scope for Social Media Usage

This policy outlines the guidelines and parameters for using social media on behalf of Tennessee State University through official social media approved accounts. It applies to all employees and student organizations regardless of their position or department.

The goal of this document is to provide guidelines that ensure that social media usage aligns with our values and promotes our brand in a professional manner through approved official university social media accounts. Please keep in mind that guidance will be continuously updated over time as the ever-changing nature of social media occurs through various platforms and government laws and regulations.

The rapid growth of social media technologies combined with their ease of use and pervasiveness make them attractive channels of communication. However, these tools also hold the possibility of a host of unintended consequences. To help you identify and avoid potential issues, we have compiled these guidelines. They are examples of best practices from various institutions and are intended to help you understand, from a wide range of perspectives, the implications of participation in social media.

## University Profile

Tennessee State University is active on  Facebook,  LinkedIn,  Twitter,  Instagram, and  YouTube. We'd love for you to follow, comment, and share our posts whenever you'd like, and we

will often repost and feature employee-generated content as well. Please keep in mind and remember the TN State Law 49-7-182. prohibits Tennessee public higher education institutions from allowing access to social media platforms operated or hosted by a company based in China on the institution's network. This law applies to internet services provided by an institution through a hard-wired or wireless network connection. This new law means that students, faculty, staff and members of the general public will be blocked while using the University's IT network if they attempt to access TikTok or other social media platforms (WeChat, Sina Weibo, Tencent QQ, Tencent Video, Xiao HongShu, Douban, Zhihu, Meituan and Toutiao) that are operated or hosted by a company in China.

## Social media monitoring

The marketing and communications teams of the university often monitor employee profiles, university mentions, and news channels. They may reach out to you directly if they have concerns about brand representation, customer service, sales tactics, etc.

## Social Media Definition

For the purposes of this Policy, "social media" is defined and encompasses all forms of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, such as communication posts, stories, or other activity on your own or someone else's social media profile (including, but not limited to Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, an online blog, any personal website, an online bulletin board, or a chat room or any other electronic medium.

## Responsibilities

Applications that allow you to interact with others online (e.g., Facebook, Snapchat, etc.) require careful consideration to assess the implications of "friending," "linking," "following" or accepting such a request from another person. For example, there is the potential for misinterpretation of the relationship or the potential of sharing protected information. Relationships such as faculty-student, doctor- patient, supervisor-subordinate and staff-student merit close consideration of the implications and the nature of the social interaction.

Sharing TSU news, events or promoting faculty and student work through social media tools is an excellent, low-cost way to engage the community and build our brand. Employees are encouraged to repost and share information with their families and friends that is available to the public (press releases, TSU News, TSU Today, etc.). The best way to share university news is to link to the original source. When sharing information that is not a matter of public record, please use the following guidelines:

- **Tone:** Use a professional, respectful, and positive tone in all social media interactions.
- **Frequency:** Post regularly but avoid overloading your followers with too many updates at once.

- **Length:** Keep your posts concise and engaging. Use images or videos where appropriate.
- **Engagement:** Respond to comments and inquiries in a timely and courteous manner.
- **Negativity:** Avoid negative or divisive topics that could harm the university's reputation or alienate followers.
- **Maintain Confidentiality:** Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Tennessee State University, its students, its alumni or employees. Use good ethical judgment and follow university policies and federal requirements, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- **Maintain Privacy:** Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Tennessee State University, its students, its alumni or employees.
- **Judgement:** Use good ethical judgment and follow university policies and federal requirements, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- **Personal Responsibility:** TSU students, staff and faculty are personally responsible for the content they publish on blogs, wikis or any other form of user-generated content. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time— protect your privacy.
- **Liability:** You are responsible for what you post on your own site and on the sites of others. Individual bloggers are liable for commentary deemed to be copyright infringement, defamatory, proprietary, libelous, or obscene (as defined by the courts). Increasingly, employers are conducting Web searches on job candidates before extending offers. Be sure that what you post today will not come back to haunt you.
- **Correct Mistakes:** If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and be quick with your correction. If you're posting to a blog, you may choose to modify an earlier post—just make it clear that you have done so.
- **Respect Others:** You are more likely to achieve your goals or sway others to your beliefs if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.
- **Think Before You Post:** There's no such thing as a "private" social media site. Search engines can turn up posts and pictures years after the publication date. Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, it's wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear-headed. Post only pictures that you would be comfortable sharing with the general public (current and future peers, employers, etc.)
- **Monitor Comments:** Most people who maintain social media sites welcome comments— it builds credibility and community. However, you may be able to set your site so that you can review and approve comments before they appear. This allows you to respond in a timely way to comments.
- **Disclaimer Use:** If you publish content to any website outside of TSU and it has something to do with the work you do or subjects associated with TSU, use a disclaimer such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and do not represent TSU's positions, strategies or opinions."
- **TSU Logo:** Do not use the TSU logo, wordmark, athletic logo or any other TSU marks or images on your personal online sites. Do not use TSU's name to promote or endorse any product, cause or political party or candidate. TSU logo and trademark guidelines can be found at: </publications/logos.aspx>.

## What we encourage you to post about the University

- **Positive experiences:** You are encouraged to share positive experiences about your work or work-related events, such as TSU culture, team events, and charitable activities.
- **Professional insights:** You can share your professional insights on industry trends, best practices, and emerging technologies.

- TSU updates: You can share TSU updates such as new product launches, upcoming events, and milestones.
- Engage with customers & prospects: You can engage with customers and prospects by responding to comments or inquiries. (Specific support issues should be routed to the proper channels, however!)

We understand that the views expressed on any individual's social media account may not represent the views of the university; that being said, in many instances, you and your social media profile may be representing the university in some capacity unless written expressively that you do not represent the university on your social media page.

## What you cannot post

- Confidential information: Employees should not post any confidential or proprietary information about TSU, its clients, or its employees.
- Discriminatory or offensive content: Employees should not post any discriminatory remarks, harassment, or threats of violence. Similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject you to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- Personal information: Employees should not share any personal information about other employees or clients without their consent in writing.
- Logo: You cannot post any university logo without expressed written permission. [TSU Logo Guidelines](#).
- Email Addresses: Do not use Tennessee State University's email addresses to register on social networks, blogs, or other online tools utilized for personal use.
- Media: Employees should *not* speak to the media on Tennessee State University's or post on behalf of the University without contacting the Office of Public Relations and Strategic Communications first at 615-963-5331. All media inquiries should be directed to that office.

## Requirements

- Seek approval: Before posting on social media on behalf of TSU, be sure to get approval from your supervisor.
- Use clear language: Be sure to use clear and concise language when posting on social media. Avoid using jargon or technical terms that your audience may not understand.
- Be accurate: Be sure to post accurate information on social media. If you are not sure about something, check with your supervisor or another reliable source.
- Be timely: Be sure to post timely information on social media. If you are posting about an event, be sure to post the date and time of the event.
- Be responsive: Be responsive to comments and questions on social media. If someone asks you a question, be sure to answer it promptly.
- Adherence to laws/ regulations and handbooks: Respect copyright laws and all students must follow the [Student Handbook](#) (especially regarding academic honesty and student code

of conduct) and any/all regular applicable student policies, standards of conduct, and applicable law. Staff must adhere to the [Personnel Handbook](#)

## Establishing an Official Social Media Account(s)

Definition: An official Tennessee State University social media account is one that represents a university office, unit, initiative, student organization governed by TSU or administrative position (for example, @TSUpres). A comprehensive list of current official approved university social media accounts is located at <https://www.tnstate.edu/socialmedia>.

Tennessee State University (TSU) accounts are used to communicate on behalf of the university. This means that anything posted on these accounts is seen as representing the official perspectives, decisions, positions, and voice of the university. As such, it is important to manage these accounts carefully and to be mindful of the potential consequences of any posts.

The Tiger Community and other global networks perceive TSU accounts as representing the university. This means that people who see posts from approved official accounts may assume that they are coming directly from the university itself. It is important to be aware of this and to post accordingly.

Official Tennessee State University (TSU) social media accounts must be administered by a university faculty or staff member. Student Organizations that wish to create a social media account on behalf of the University must seek approval through the faculty/ staff member who oversees the specified student organization.

Students may serve as active contributors to social media accounts, but credentials must be maintained by an employee of the university and all passwords to accounts must be submitted to the Office of Public Relations and Strategic Communications. The university retains control and final approval authority over the content of messages conveyed on official accounts.

Before beginning the registration of creating a new social media account, university employees should read the social media policy in its entirety.

## Registration of Social Media Sites

All approved university social media accounts and sites must be registered with the Office of Public Relations and Strategic Communications. You are required to complete this form before creating a social media site or account. The title and handle names for all social media accounts that represent the university in any capacity must be approved. Please fill out the form here <https://www.tnstate.edu/socialmedia/policy.aspx> or directly at [Social Media Registration Form](#).

- Official Tennessee State University social media accounts should be registered to a shared or general email address of the university.
- All Social Media accounts created should be accessible by more than one person in the department or office. Email addresses already established for a department, unit or division are preferred for all social media accounts for example publicrelations@tnstate.edu

- Passwords and logins are required to be given to the Office of Public Relations and Strategic Communications and should be known and securely maintained by the page administrator(s) as well as the senior leader of the division or unit. This practice prevents departments and units from finding themselves in a position where only one person has access to a social media account.
- All university policies, brand guidelines, social media best practices, and communications guidelines must be adhered to when using social media on behalf of Tennessee State University.
- Official Tennessee State University accounts must also follow the respective terms set forth in this policy for social media platforms and are applicable to local, state, and federal laws, and NCAA regulations.

## Administering and Supervision of Official Social Media Accounts of the University

Official account administrators are responsible for the following:

- Creating, maintaining, and monitoring content on respective social media sites and engaging with users. This includes creating and sharing content that is relevant to the goals and objectives of the pertinent unit, as well as responding to inquiries and postings in a timely and professional manner.
- Moderating content that violates hosting terms of service or is of a threatening or harassing nature. This includes removing or reporting content that is inappropriate or offensive or illegal.
- Contact representatives of the University's social media team or the news and information team at ([publicrelations@tnstate.edu](mailto:publicrelations@tnstate.edu) or [socialmedia@tnstate.edu](mailto:socialmedia@tnstate.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 TSU policies.
- Ensuring that all content upholds the standards and brand identity of the university. This means using professional language and avoiding content that could be seen as offensive or controversial.
- Responding to inquiries and postings using official approved accounts. This helps to ensure that the university's message is consistent and that users are not confused about who is speaking on behalf of the university.
- Delivering timely responses to inquiries or postings on official accounts. This shows that the university is responsive to its stakeholders and that it takes their concerns seriously.

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.
- No posts are allowed that include drinking, drug use or paraphernalia, hate speech or bullying (this includes putting down other individuals or institutions), nudity, and promotions or advertising of external businesses/ vendors outside of the university.

## Consequences for policy violations

While the university's focus is on promoting positive social media use, we recognize that policy violations can occur. Consequences for policy violations may include disciplinary action, termination of employment, or legal action, depending on the severity of the violation.

## Contact Information

When in concern contact the University's Office of Public Relations and Strategic Communications at 615-963-5331 or by email at [publicrelations@tnstate.edu](mailto:publicrelations@tnstate.edu).