

Pittsburg State University
Suggested Social Media Guidelines for PSU Departments and Organizations

Purpose of Guidelines

Social media is one of the most influential and popular technologies of the 21st century. It has the ability to bring large groups of people together, improve understanding and allow share their experiences in an open and free arena. However, it also has the ability to intrude into the privacy of its users and bring disruption to their lives.

We want you to enjoy your experience with social media and have developed a short list of guidelines to help you get the most of your time online.

These guidelines are meant to guide the publication and commentary that is posted on social media platforms by employees on behalf of Pittsburg State University and its related divisions, offices, departments, and official organizations, clubs, committees, etc. ("PSU entities").

For the purposes of these guidelines, social media means any facility for online publication and commentary, including but not limited to: blogs; wikis; and social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube.

These guidelines are in addition to and complement any existing or future guidelines and policies regarding the use of technology, computers, e-mail and the internet.

PSU entities are encouraged to follow these guidelines when publishing or commenting via social media. PSU employees may be subject to these or other campus policies and/or guidelines on personal sites to the extent they identify themselves (either openly or inadvertently) as a PSU employee (other than as an incidental mention of place of employment in a personal blog on topics unrelated to PSU).

Publication and commentary on social media platforms carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication (including but not limited to such things as print media, radio and TV communications, etc.) or commentary.

All uses of social media platforms by PSU entities while they are functioning in the capacity as an employee, organization or other representative of PSU should follow the same standards that PSU entities must otherwise follow.

Additionally, student organizations should take note of information concerning the [Code of Student's Rights and Responsibilities](#).

Remember the Three Do's:

- Do be smart
- Do be respectful
- Do be professional

Setting up Social Media

Assistance in setting up social media accounts for the purpose of representing one or more aspects of PSU and the recommended settings for those accounts can be obtained from the office of University Marketing and Communication.

For official PSU entity sites, profile information (including such things as “look and feel” and/or use of PSU trademarked, copyrighted or branded logos and materials, etc.) should be obtained from the Office of University Marketing and Communication. Contact information for official department and office accounts should be consistent with PSU directory information.

The Office of University Marketing and Communication should be notified of the creation of non-personal social media accounts for PSU entities so that they can be properly documented and included in various directories, promotions, and other resources. Where possible, all official PSU entity social media site administrators should grant the Director of Web Marketing administrative rights or login credentials to the account in order to provide redundant access in the event the original creator is no longer available. PSU entities needing assistance with social media issues should contact the Office of University Marketing and Communication.

Don't Tell Secrets

It is perfectly acceptable to talk about your work and to have a dialog with the community, but it is not okay to publish confidential information. In many cases it can be illegal. Confidential information can include (but not limited to) things such as: student information; health records; employee information; details of current projects; financial information; and research and trade secrets.

Please refer to the policies and information on [Student Conduct Code](#) and [Student Organization Handbook](#) (pdf).

Protect your own privacy

Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see. In addition, be cautious about disclosing personal details and be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy, as well as the privacy of others.

Be Honest

When posting on behalf of PSU, do not blog anonymously by using such things as pseudonyms or false screen names. PSU believes in transparency and honesty. Be clear who you are, and identify that you work for PSU. Do not say anything that is dishonest, untrue, or misleading. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be clear about your viewpoint and interest. Remember that what you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully.

Respect copyright laws

It is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others, including PSU owned trademarks, copyrights and brands. Do not quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work, and always attribute such work to the original author/source. It is good general practice to link to others' work rather than to reproduce it.

Please refer to PSU policies concerning [copyrighted materials](#) for [additional information](#).

Please refer to information concerning the use of [PSU logos](#).

Respect your audience, PSU, and your coworkers

The public in general, and PSU's employees, students, and constituents specifically, reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Do not be afraid to be yourself, but do so respectfully. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, offensive comments, defamatory comments, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory. Use your best judgment.

Protect PSU students, employees, constituents, and business partners

Students, employees, constituents, and business partners should not be cited or obviously referenced without their approval. Never identify a student, employee, constituent, or business partner by name without permission and never discuss confidential details on social media platforms. It may sometimes be acceptable to discuss general details about projects and to use non-identifying pseudonyms. The information provided should not violate any non-disclosure agreements that may be in place with the student, employee, constituent or business partner or make it easy for someone to identify them.

Please refer to the policies and information on [FERPA](#) and [students' rights](#) to [privacy](#).

Controversial Issues

If you see simple or general misrepresentations made about PSU on social networking platforms, you may point that out, but always do so with respect by using the correct facts. If you speak about others, make sure what you say is factual and that it does not disparage that party. Avoid arguments. Brawls and flame wars (heated online arguments) earn traffic, but no one wins in the end. Don't try to settle scores or antagonize others into inflammatory debates.

In cases involving incorrect information being disseminated concerning PSU, especially related to current or high profile events, or in situations that may include delicate subject matter, or where you might otherwise be unsure about how best to correct the situation, you should notify University Marketing and Communication.

Be the first to respond to your own mistakes

If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so. If someone accuses you of posting something that is improper (such as their copyrighted material or a defamatory comment about them), deal with it quickly.

Removing others' posted materials

Removing other individuals' postings from a social media site that you control is often not advisable unless that information is highly defamatory or objectionable. PSU values the right to freedom of speech. At the same time, the University wants to portray a high level of professionalism and courtesy on its official sites. In many cases, the broader social media community that is following the site will provide a level of self-policing for the site. For questions concerning the removal of other individuals' postings, please contact University Marketing and Communication.

Consider the Impact of Posts

Always consider the potential impact of your posts. Many prospective students, faculty members and donors first learn about Pittsburg State through the web and social media. A post made in the heat of the moment or in anger, may be the first (and likely last) impression they will have of our university.

Once again, it is all about using good judgment. The use of a personal blog to denigrate or embarrass PSU, our students, or your co-workers, is imprudent and ill-advised.

Disclaimers

Although it is not required, many social media users include on their personal accounts a prominent disclaimer saying who they work for, but that they are not speaking officially. This is a good practice that can help avoid confusion and is encouraged. Don't rely on it to avoid trouble - it may not have much legal effect.

Social Media Guidelines

The following guidelines will contribute to successful use of social media.

The best way to be interesting, stay out of trouble, and have fun is to write about what you know.

Quality matters. Use a spell-checker. If you're not design-oriented, ask someone who is about the look of your blog, and take their advice on how to improve it.

The speed of being able to publish your thoughts is both the great feature and great downfall of social media. The time to edit or reflect must be self-imposed. If you are in doubt over a post, or if something does not feel right, either let it sit and look at it again before publishing it, or ask someone else to look at it first.

Contact information for the Marketing and Communication Dept:

Questions about these guidelines? Setting up a social meeting site? Other?

Feel free to email us at: socialmedia@pittstate.edu