



Social Media Guidelinesⁱ

The following Social Media Guidelines have been developed for all University of San Diego students, faculty and staff.

Social Media has become a popular tool for communication and as technology evolves we can expect that the medium will continue to grow in both functionality and popularity. Many universities have used social media to engage in new ways with prospective students, current students, parents, faculty, administrators, and alumni. As a constantly evolving but increasingly effective tool, many universities have encountered fundamental problems establishing and enforcing formal social media policies; consequently, the University of San Diego does not have an institutional policy governing the use of Social Media tools.

The Office of Public Affairs and Information Technology Services have prepared these guidelines to offer assistance to university representatives including students, faculty and staff as they move forward with approved social networking ventures.

Because social media technology is changing, we are continually redefining our approach to how USD should represent itself in social media spaces. USD already has a presence on many of the social networks and we expect this to grow. A current listing of official USD social media sites is located at:

http://www.sandiego.edu/directory/social_networking.php

The following guidelines are intended to help maintain a strong, consistent communications strategy.

Naming Conventions in Social Media

- Try to use University of San Diego when naming your account. This helps to distinguish us from other colleges and universities with USD as initials.
- If possible, avoid acronyms. We are all familiar with University of San Diego's own brand of alphabet soup, but your audience may not be.
- If your department or unit name is too long to use in its full form, abbreviate as necessary, but be sure to use the full name and University of San Diego in your biography or description.

Use of the University of San Diego Logo in Social Media

USD Marketing and Strategic Partnerships released a new version of the logo guidelines that included best practices for web usage. If you intend to use the logo to identify your account as affiliated with USD, be sure to visit <http://www.sandiego.edu/marketing/brand-manual.php> and read the rules.

Social Media DOs and DON'Ts

DO:

Confer with Public Affairs and ITS.

Before you add a social media platform, it is wise to check with the Office of Public Affairs (news@sandiego.edu). Discuss the way the platform will be presented, such as the name, graphics, department group, student group and come up with a strategy. Think about the audience, who will manage the content, what kind of content will be shared, and what platform would be best. ITS (web@sandiego.edu) can offer suggestions on technical considerations and tools to efficiently administer social media sites.

Plan for site administration.

A USD staff or faculty member should always oversee and take responsibility for a department's or organization's social networking accounts. It's great — and, in fact, desired — to have students tweeting or posting to Facebook so that the voice and interaction is genuine and organic, but when a student graduates or moves on to other work, it's critical that university employees and faculty have access to any social media accounts open on behalf of the university.

Be transparent.

Tell your audience who you are and what you do at the University of San Diego. Community members can feel deceived if you hide your identity or intent.

Use the space to share some of the fun and entertaining things about USD and your unit.

Places like Twitter and Facebook are casual and informal in nature. People go there to play, connect and engage in entertainment, in that regard, the medium is perfect for informal interactions with the university.

Respond to comments and questions.

It is easy to think of social networks merely as tools to push out University of San Diego content and forget that they are actually built around dialog and interaction. Responding to questions and comments builds relationships and credibility and keeps the human element prominent within a social networking site.

Take advantage of trusted students to do your social networking, when appropriate.

Depending on your intended audience, using trusted students to maintain Facebook pages and Twitter accounts brings the benefit of an authentic voice. If, for example, you are trying to connect with prospects, there is really no one better equipped to tell them what it's like here than current students. These audiences are savvy and will recognize spin when they see it.

Be timely and update regularly.

Nothing is more frustrating to users than an account that has not been touched in over a week. You can mitigate the burden by having multiple administrators for an account. There are also several kinds of social media management tools that could help schedule posts ahead of time and monitor several accounts at once, such as TweetDeck, HootSuite, Feedly, or Buffer. Try to schedule posts as they come up — even in the middle of the night.

Pay attention to (and delete) spam.

Facebook pages, in particular, are subject to spam in the comments. One way to avoid this is to not allow comments on your posts, but the trade-off is that you are having a one-way conversation. The site/page administrator should pay attention to all of the social networking accounts you use and delete spam as necessary. Be careful in what you choose to delete, though, as it can be seen as a form of censorship. A rule of thumb we use on the University of San Diego Facebook page is to delete anything that does not relate to the university and keep anything that does — even if we don't particularly like it.

Be engaging in your prose.

You will get the most reward for your effort when your content is engaging. Because of the casual nature of social media, it is encouraged to be witty, puny, and tongue-in-cheek when appropriate to the subject matter. “Casual” does not equate to sloppy, however, and too much use of online shorthand (e.g., “OMG, I h8 that! ROFLMAO!”) is not appropriate if you’re communicating on behalf of the University of San Diego.

Know your audience.

Mediums like Facebook and LinkedIn give you access to the demographics of your audience. Pay attention to this when determining what to post. For example, the primary audience for the University of San Diego Facebook page is current students; therefore, it makes little sense to use the space to promote alumni events unless they are geared to the whole USD community.

Allow conversations to blossom.

The point of social media is for people to connect and build relationships — both with one another and with USD. It is possible that you might post something that will lead to a conversation with comments you or your supervisors might be uncomfortable with. You should resist the urge to moderate these conversations unless things degenerate into hate speech or otherwise onerous tones. **If you become aware of rogue or offensive dialog, please report it to the Office of Public Affairs at (619) 260-4681, news@sandiego.edu.**

Consider the use of multiple kinds of media.

It's easy and effective to post photos and video content, in addition to text. As a University of San Diego social media site administrator keep in mind that it is advised to seek input from the Office of Public Affairs specific to photos and video content.

There are no strict rules about using photographs of the campus, events, or other USD-related themes, but keep in mind that you are representing the university to the outside world and choose images that are of high quality. It is strongly recommended that individuals interested in placing photographs on their social media sites seek input from the Office of Public Affairs: <http://www.sandiego.edu/publicaffairs/>.

Respect copyrights

Always give people the proper credit for their work and make sure you have the right to use something before you share it. Never post copyrighted photos, music, text or video content without the permission of the copyright owner. For more information on copyright see: <http://www.sandiego.edu/legal/copyright.php>.

Protect your community

Understand that USD's official discrimination and harassment policies apply online. Every member of the university community is responsible for creating and maintaining a climate free of discrimination and harassment. USD's policies can be found at: <http://www.sandiego.edu/safety/reporting/hatecrimes/>.

DON'T:

Sink to their low level.

Like any social interaction, you will encounter people who are rude and offensive. Resist the urge to respond, either from the official account, or your own personal perspective. You cannot win the argument and engaging in the exchange will only escalate conflict. Instead, trust that your community to self-police bad behavior. In many cases of negative dialog, other users will call out the bad behavior and, eventually, it will self-resolve.

Rely on institutional news to be your sole source of content.

It is certainly valid to post links to the USD News Center or student *Vista* articles and other official sources, but it's worth noting that things we find important (e.g. Presidential speeches, dean's announcements, etc.) are not always seen to be so by our audiences. For example, a University of San Diego Facebook post on USD third baseman Kris Bryant being drafted second overall by the Chicago Cubs received 318 likes and 7 comments, while a post about a new academic program only received 1 like.

Put all of your eggs in one basket.

Social media can be a wonderful complement to existing communications platforms and web pages, but never forget that you are a user of any given platform, not a client. Functionality within social network platforms will change without any advance notice or consultation, and user support often consists of FAQ pages and user forums. In other words, don't depend exclusively on social media for anything that's critical to your mission.

Ban a user without thinking twice.

It may be difficult to rescind a ban. Ensure that you really want to do it before you click the button to ban someone from your network.

Over-saturate the Market

Try not to send more than five or six tweets a day unless you are tweeting live from an event. Similarly, limit your Facebook posts to two or three per day. Flooding your readers with content may seem like a great way to get the word out, but high volume posting will likely be perceived as spam and people will choose to "unfollow" you.

How to Handle Breaking News and Incident-related Events

In our current world, news spreads as rapidly as someone can push the send button on their cell phone. Before you know it, the whole world is talking about something that we, as an institution, might rather they not even know. We used to have the luxury of time to craft messages in response to a tragic event such as a death or an accident on campus; this is no longer the case.

It is important to discuss the incident response with university leaders (vice presidents, deans, etc.) as well as with the Office of Public Affairs to determine the best course of action. Each event should be handled on an individual basis and there are many factors to consider when determining a course of action.

When bad news happens, there are three choices in Social Media:

Attempt to ignore it

This strategy, while seemingly the easiest, can actually inflame matters -- especially if users are specifically calling for institutional input on a topic.

Use the medium to link users to an official response such as a press release, university statement, or news article

This is a safe way to respond to calls for input, but be aware that some people will likely be frustrated by the spin factor they presume to be present in official statements. They may choose to speak out about this, which can feel like you've made things worse by sharing anything at all.

Engage at a deep level

It is possible to use social media to our advantage in times of trouble at the university. People will look to official accounts for news and updates and there is an opportunity to use these outlets in a constructive manner. Yet, care must be taken to assure that the holders of these accounts have direct access to those making communications decisions in times of crisis. The benefit to something like Twitter is the speed at which information can be distributed -- it does no good to sit on a blinking cursor waiting for the official word to make it down the line. Ideally, the account holder should be empowered to distill messages and push them out as they see fit, escalating things as the situation warrants. Be aware, though, that communication and response at this level of engagement could easily be a full-time job in an emergency situation; any decisions to engage in this manner should be carefully considered.

Please note that we do not recommend using social media as the primary means of communication during times of crisis or emergency situations, rather it should be used as one of several sources of discussion from and between the university and its audiences. The University has established the Emergency Notification System which will serve as the main source of communication during times of emergency/crisis. Emergency communications protocols have been established and should be followed. See <http://www.sandiego.edu/emergency/>.

The Balancing of Work and Life Online

There is no USD policy dictating how staff members must manage the balance between their personal online activities and those they might undertake as part of their work for the University of San Diego. We encourage you to be thoughtful in this regard, as mistakes are easily made within social media environments and have the potential for serious repercussions.

All USD employees and students are subject to the Policy on Responsible use of University Computing Resources, which can be found at:

<http://www.sandiego.edu/legal/policies/community/technology/computing.pdf>

Furthermore, USD students are subject to the student rules of conduct found here:

http://www.sandiego.edu/conduct/the_code/rules_of_conduct.php

Additionally, as users on social networks, you are subject to the company terms of service of the respective social network (i.e. Facebook terms of service, LinkedIn terms of service, etc.). It is important to be mindful of all these things as you move forward into the realm of social media; you are not merely there in your own capacity, but will also be tying your personal profile to the university at large.

Also, whether you're using social media for work or play, it is good practice to be aware of the privacy settings for all of your social media accounts and to check them regularly to make sure that the platform you're using hasn't altered default settings. You may also refer to the Social Networking Safety Tips at:

http://www.sandiego.edu/documents/its/security/documents/NCSAM_2010_social_networking.pdf.

Unauthorized or Suspicious Social Media Sites Branded as University of San Diego sites

The Office of Public Affairs and Information Technology Services have been made aware of unauthorized sites misrepresenting the University of San Diego. If you should come across a site you believe does not represent the values and mission of USD, please contact: news@sandiego.edu and include a link to the alleged unauthorized page.

ⁱ Attribution: This work is work based extensively on the Cornell University, Social Media Primer <http://univcomm.cornell.edu/socialmedia/>. Used with permission from the Director of IT Policy for Cornell University's Office of Information Technologies granted June 9, 2013 via e-mail.