



Social Media Policies & Best Practices

As of: December 2022

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This social media policy is in effect for faculty, staff, and students, who participate in social media for and on behalf of the university and/or who present representations of the university, its programs and activities; its stated mission, purposes, priorities, and values; its personnel, and/or its students.

Introduction

Social media are powerful communications and marketing tools, which may have significant impact on organizational and professional reputations. Because there is not always a clear distinction between personal voice and institutional voice, the University of South Carolina Beaufort (USCB) has crafted the following policy to help clarify how best to enhance and protect personal and professional reputations when participating in social media.

Social media from USCB are intended to supplement – not replace – other channels currently in place for press, news, events, announcements, and student communication.

Social media are defined as media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Examples include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snap Chat, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter/X, and YouTube.

Both in professional and institutional roles, employees and student-representatives should follow the same comportment standards online as they would elsewhere. The same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, alumni, donors, media, and other university constituents apply online and offline. USCB's employees and student-representatives should be aware that they may be held personally liable for posts to social media sites.

Policies for Social Media Accounts (Including Personal Accounts)

1. **Protect confidential and proprietary information:** Please do not post confidential or proprietary information about USCB and/or its students, employees, alumni, donors, or other constituents. Employees must adhere to applicable federal requirements such as FERPA, PCI-DSS, and HIPAA as well as NCAA regulations and must adhere to all applicable university privacy and confidentiality policies. Employees who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination.
2. **Respect copyright and fair use:** When posting, please be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the university.

3. **Do not use USCB logos for endorsements:** Please do not use USCB's university or athletic logos or any other university images or iconography on personal social media sites for the purposes of promoting a product, cause, political party, or political candidate.
4. **Terms of service:** Please obey the terms of service of any social media platform employed.

Best Practices

This section applies to those posting on behalf of an official university department, program, center/institute, organization, or affiliate – although the guidelines may be helpful for anyone posting on social media in any capacity.

1. **Think twice before posting:** Privacy does not exist in the world of social media. Please consider what could happen if a post becomes widely read/disseminated and how that may reflect on the poster and the university. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. If the content of a post includes something that you would not say at a professional conference or to a member of the media, consider whether you should post that content online. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, ask your supervisor for input or contact the Office of University Advancement at (843) 208-8030 or weirc@uscb.edu.
2. **Strive for accuracy:** Please confirm facts and review content for grammatical and spelling errors before posting on social media– especially if you are posting on behalf of the university in any capacity. (See “Institutional Social Media Comment” section below.)
3. **Be respectful:** Because content posted to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing and/or controversial ideas, please consider responses carefully with a view towards how they might reflect on individuals, groups, organizations, and/or the university and its institutional voice.
4. **Remember your audience:** Please remember that any social media presence is or can be easily available to the public at large, including current and prospective students, parents, donors, athletic supporters, institutional colleagues, and professional peers. Consider content carefully before publishing to ensure to the best of your ability that posts will not alienate, harm, and/or provoke.
5. **On personal sites:** Please identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as a USCB faculty member, staff member, student, alumnus/a, volunteer, or affiliate online, please make clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the institution.
6. **Smart photography:** Photographs posted to social media sites can be easily appropriated. Please consider adding a watermark and/or posting images at 72 dpi and approximately 800x600 resolution to protect your intellectual property. Images at that size are sufficient for viewing online but are not suitable for printing.

USCB's Official Social Media Channels

If you post on behalf of an official USCB department, program, center/institute, organization, or affiliate, the following policies must be followed, in addition to all policies and best practices listed in this policy:

1. **Notify the university:** Any USCB department, program, center/institute, organization, or affiliate that has or would like to launch a social media page/channel should contact the Office of University Advancement at (843) 208-8030 or weirc@uscb.edu. We hope to connect university content creators/posters to ensure all institutional social media sites/channels coordinate and align. All official university pages/channels must have a full-time employee (not a part-time employee, intern, or student worker), who is identified as being responsible for content.
2. **Acknowledge who you are:** If you represent USCB, when posting on a social media platform, please identify yourself and acknowledge your role.
3. **Have a plan:** Any USCB department, program, center/institute, organization, or affiliate that posts to social media pages/channels should please consider their messages, audiences, and goals, executing on a coherent (rather than random) strategy for posts that ensures they are timely, verified, relatable, and inclusive/inoffensive.
4. **Link back to the university:** Where appropriate, please link back to USCB's main sites to reinforce the university's reach and impact. Ideally, posts would redirect a reader to content that resides within USCB's web environment: uscb.edu.
5. **Protect the institutional voice:** Please protect the university's institutional voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste when posting to social media pages/channels. Any USCB department, program, center/institute, organization, or affiliate should work to ensure that its voice is not mistaken for representing the university as a whole – a point to consider especially when naming pages/channels or accounts, selecting profile pictures or icons, and/or selecting content for posts.
6. **Misinformation:** On USCB social media channels, University officials reserve the right to remove information posted by faculty/staff/students that is deemed factually inaccurate or misleading to stakeholders. Prior to posting potentially misleading information, USCB strongly encourages fact-checking, including a conversation with your supervisor.

Institutional Social Media Comment Policy

The university expects conversations to follow the rules of polite discourse and asks that participants please treat each other with respect. The university in its sole discretion may elect to post material without enabling readers to comment on it. Further, the university may delete any comments, and university employees will not post or approve post any comments, that constitute or include:

1. Harassment of either individuals or groups
2. Threats of physical or bodily harm

3. Confidential information (e.g., information that could compromise public safety, private personal or institutional information, and/or intellectual property)
4. Commercial/vendor promotions that are not sanctioned officially by in the university.

Social Media Policy Notification

Each social media site/channel has its own terms, conditions and/or policies – to which all university employees must adhere if they choose to use these social media platforms. Not following these terms, conditions, and/or policies may lead to removal of your social media account and may affect adversely or reflect poorly on areas of the university or on the entire university. Please maintain up-to-date understandings of these requirements.

Social Media Public Use Policy

To ensure exchanges that are productive, informative, lawful, and respectful of diverse viewpoints, the university may review all comments and deny or remove comments that are:

1. **Off topic:** USCB will exclude comments not related to the subject of conversation. If you have an idea for a subject, would like to provide feedback, or would like a university representative to follow-up with you, you may contact the Office of University Advancement at (843) 208-8030 or weirc@uscb.edu.
2. **Spam:** USCB will exclude comments focused on selling a product, service, or ideology and/or comments posted for the purposes of driving traffic to a particular website for personal, political, or monetary gain.
3. **Illegal:** USCB will exclude comments that violate laws, governing the use of copyrights, trade secrets, etc.
4. **Confidential information:** USCB will exclude comments that expose/reveal confidential information, compromise public safety, and/or infringe on intellectual property
5. **Photographic content:** USCB will exclude comments that include images unless specifically requested or approved by an authorized representative of the university, e.g., for a contest or other USCB business or programmatic-related purpose. In these instances, pictures will be reviewed and will not be posted if deemed inappropriate.