

Auburn University

Social Media Use Policy

I. Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to provide faculty, staff, and student-employees with rules and procedures for participating in Auburn University's **approved social media platforms**. This policy also applies to the use of social media sites, when the faculty, staff, and student-employee's University affiliation is identified. This policy does not govern social media activity and content that is non-University related.

Social media includes but is not limited to blogs, podcasts, discussion forums, on-line collaborative information and publishing systems that are accessible to internal and external audiences (i.e., Wikis), RSS feeds, video/photo sharing, and social networks. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, iTunesU, Picasa, blogs and other emerging electronic media are a growing and valuable part of Auburn's communications efforts that seek to connect with audiences interested in Auburn University research, instruction and outreach.

Entrusted by the University President, [The Office of Communications and Marketing \(OCM\)](#) is charged with the responsibility of monitoring the University's social media initiatives, guide those who represent the University online and ensure adherence to these policies, and to take restrictive actions in the event that this policy is violated.

*These guidelines do **not** apply to employee internet activities that do not identify an employee or faculty member with Auburn University and are purely personal.*

II. Policy Principles for University Social Media Platforms

The following criteria shall be considered when there is a request to establish a University-hosted social media site, or to participate in internet discussions or social media on behalf of the University.

- A. It is understood that employees, drawing from their experience in their areas of expertise, will engage the public through University social media platforms.
- B. The University's involvement can be carried out in such a manner that positively supports the institution's values, missions, and goals, and complies with University regulations, policies, and procedures, and state and federal laws.
- C. Engagement with the audience adds value to both the University and the audience.
- D. At least one faculty or staff member has been designated "**Content Manager**" to update and monitor the medium, identify problems that emerge, and take action when necessary.
- E. Coordinating the release of official University-level business, operations and activities to the media and the general public is the responsibility of OCM. Only those individuals officially designated by the University have the authorization to speak on behalf of the University. After OCM has released information, an employee may post that information on a social media site. OCM does encourage employees to engage in social media

interaction and communication within the respective operational scope of their college, department, or administrative unit.

- F. University faculty, staff, student-employees, colleges and departments are responsible for anticipating and managing the reputational risks posed by social media and ensuring accuracy of content.
- G. Employees will not post any material that is obscene, defamatory, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing, abusive, inappropriate, confidential, or embarrassing to another person or entity when posting to University-hosted or approved sites.
- H. Employees will identify themselves by actual name and, when relevant, position or role with the University when blogging or posting statements about University-related matters and only post content under the name presented.
- I. Any use of University marks, such as logos and graphics, comply with Auburn University's [Integrated Communications & Marketing Policies](#).

III. Policy Procedures for Social Media Account Approval

Approval for AU Social Media accounts must follow these steps:

- A. The social media Content Manager notifies and gains approval to launch social media site from Provost or appropriate Executive Vice President, Dean, Department Head, or specified designee.
- B. The Content Manager electronically submits a **Social Media Approval Application** to launch social media site to OCM for review and approval. In some instances, OCM may ask the Content Manager to make adjustments to the layout and/or substantive approach of the chosen online medium.
- C. Once the review is complete, OCM will issue a formal notice of approval.
- D. The Content Manager then activates the social media site. Respective IT providers for the college, department, or administrative unit may be involved in this final step and OCM is available to assist if needed.

NOTE: *In order to catalogue and monitor all social media sites and accounts associated with Auburn University, OCM will retroactively collect information on social media existing prior to the formulation of the Social Media Use Policy. Deans, Department Heads, and Administrators will be contacted by OCM's Social Media Coordinator and asked to complete and submit the Social Media Approval Application.*

IV. Content Management of Auburn University Social Media Platforms

Content Managers that are formally identified in the application form are responsible for overseeing compliance to the terms of University-hosted and approved social media platforms. The Office of Communications and Marketing, in conjunction with the Office of Information Technology, has final authority over appropriate use of departmental social media platforms. In addition to adhering to applicable [Office of Information Technology web policies](#), Content Managers are agreeing to the following terms when launching a social media platform:

- A. Assume responsibility for posting content and maintaining compliance with Auburn University policies including those related to HIPAA, NCAA Regulations, Conflict of Interest, Public Safety and Security, and Human Resources.

- B. Assume responsibility for the daily monitoring and maintenance of web content to ensure accuracy, the protection of intellectual property and private content, and ensuring that comments/posts are respectful and adhere to basic Auburn University policies.
- C. Assume responsibility for removing and reporting content if it is illegal, obscene, defamatory, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing, abusive, hateful or embarrassing to another person, discloses proprietary information, breaches confidentiality, or is commercial activity unrelated to official university business.
- D. Content Managers are responsible for notifying the [University Social Media Coordinator](#) in the event that a change in personnel is made in managing their site/account. This can be done by updating the information online.

Content owners agree to take all reasonably possible steps to prevent and eliminate content that violates any of these terms and acknowledge that it may be necessary to discontinue the use of the social media platform if such comments cannot be eliminated or prevented. This does not mean that all comments which are negative about Auburn University must be deleted. Content managers must involve OCM staff in managing negative or threatening feedback about the university, departments and personnel.

V. Policy Principles for Non-University Social Media Platforms

When using social media that is not University-hosted or approved, whether at work or away from work, if the employee's University affiliation is identified, employees shall observe the following:

- A. Employees may identify themselves as a University employee, but should not represent that they are communicating the views of the Auburn University, or do anything that might reasonably create the impression that they are communicating on behalf of, or as a representative of, the University.
- B. When employees choose to identify themselves as an employee of Auburn University, they should use a disclaimer when publishing a blog, posting a comment, or sharing an image on a non-University hosted or approved site if it has something to do with the work he or she does at the University. Whether publishing a blog or participating in someone else's, employees should make it clear that what they say is representative of their views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of the University. At a minimum, employees should include the following standard legal disclaimer language in their Account Profile Information:

SUGGESTED DISCLAIMER: The postings on this site are my own and do not represent the views, positions, or opinions of Auburn University.

NOTE: *This standard disclaimer does not by itself exempt University employees from responsibility when blogging. Employees should consider whether personal thoughts they publish may be misunderstood as expressing University positions. Supervisors should not assume that his or her team will read what is written. A personal blog or social media site is not the forum to communicate University policies to employees or to conduct University business.*

- C. Employees shall not create social media sites or web pages that give the appearance of official University-hosted or approved sites, or that give the appearance of representing the University in an official capacity.

- D. Using the University's official logos, graphics, or images on personal social media sites is strictly prohibited. Likewise, significant use of University-related content that creates an appearance that the site is University-hosted or approved is also prohibited.

VI. Sanctions

Violation of this policy may result in:

- A. Limitation or revocation of right to use or participate in University-hosted or approved social media and reimbursement to the University for the technology and personnel charges incurred in detecting, proving, and correcting the violation of these rules.
- B. Referring the violation to the appropriate state or federal agency, and may include any combination of disciplinary action, or civil or criminal liability.

As designated by the University President, The Office of Communications and Marketing reserves the right to request Content Managers to remove hostile, insulting, offensive, disrespectful and other inappropriate posts, comments, and content from social media that is officially associated with Auburn University.

Questions about Auburn University's Social Media Guidelines must be directed to Brock Parker, Multimedia Specialist and University Social Media Coordinator, at (334) 844-9999 or brockparker@auburn.edu

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