

## University Policy 5101: University Social Media Accounts

**Category:** Facilities, Operations, IT

**Subcategory:** Media and Brand

**Covered Individuals:** All USU Employees

**Responsible Executive:** Vice President for Marketing and Communications

**Policy Custodian:** University Marketing and Communications, Director of Social Media

**Last Revised:** 2024/11/12

**Previous USU Policy Number:** N/A

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### 5101.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Utah State University is committed to developing a strong social media presence to communicate with the campus community and others interested in Utah State University. The University encourages colleges, departments, statewide campuses, programs, groups, and entities to be active in the social space and create social media accounts to communicate about University current events, announcements, issues, accolades, organizations, and other University matters, and to provide a limited public forum to encourage substantive discussions about these topics.

This policy applies to Officially Recognized Accounts created and maintained by University employees for official business purposes of the University, including University faculty and staff, groups, departments, statewide campuses, programs, entities, etc. Social media channels included under this policy include all interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation or sharing of information, ideas, career interests, and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks.

### 5101.2 POLICY

#### 2.1 University Social Media Accounts

**2.1.1 Officially Recognized Accounts.** Social media communication from an entity of the University regarding University matters will be facilitated through an Officially Recognized Account. Communication unrelated to University matters may not be facilitated through an Officially Recognized Account. All

Officially Recognized Accounts will be listed in a social media directory on the University's official website unless exempted by the University's Director of Social Media. Officially Recognized Accounts opened on behalf of the University are owned by the University.

**2.1.2 Approval of Officially Recognized Accounts.** Before a social media account becomes an Officially Recognized Account, the account must be approved per the procedures detailed in [Social Media Procedures 5101](#).

#### 2.2 Account Administrators

**2.2.1 Required Account Administrators.** All Officially Recognized Accounts will have at least two benefit-eligible employees acting as Account Administrators. If there are not two employees available to serve as account administrators, the University's Director of Social Media or their designee may serve in the capacity of one of the two required Account Administrators. If an Account Administrator resigns from their role as Account Administrator of an Officially Recognized Account, the Appropriate

Administrator will designate another benefit-eligible University employee to fill the role of Account Administrator of the Officially Recognized Account and remove the former Account Administrator's administrative permissions to the Officially Recognized Account.

**2.2.2. Account Administrator Responsibilities.** Account Administrators are responsible for the following, in regard to the Officially Recognized Account for which the Account Administrator is responsible:

1. Managing and monitoring all content posted on behalf of the University via the Officially Recognized Account to ensure compliance with University directives and policies;
2. Identifying and alerting the Appropriate Administrator of unlawful or off-topic content posted from third parties that are subject to removal under this policy and [Social Media Procedures 540](#);
3. Ensuring the Officially Recognized Account is active and engaging (if an Officially Recognized Account has not been updated in more than 90 days, the Appropriate Administrator will close the Account); and
4. Ensuring all accessibility compliance guidelines for social media accounts, as outlined by the University's Marketing & Communications department, are followed.

## 2.3 Content

**2.3.1. Relevance to the University.** An Officially Recognized Account is a limited public forum that facilitates communication about University matters and allows for inclusive and meaningful discussion. As such, posts and content from an Officially Recognized Account will strictly regard or relate to University matters. Further, the University retains the right to delete or hide off-topic content posted by a third party to an Officially Recognized Account, such as spam, solicitations, commercial content, and other content irrelevant to University matters.

**2.3.2 Private, Controlled, or Protected Information.** Only public information may be posted on an Officially Recognized Account. Information that is private, controlled, or protected under state or federal law, such as the Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA), the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), along with information designated as private, controlled, or protected under University policy, such as Policy 558: Protecting Private Sensitive Information and Critical Institutional Data, should not be posted or otherwise made viewable on an Officially Recognized Account. Any content posted to an Officially Recognized Account that contains private, controlled, or protected information will be deleted in accordance with [Social Media Procedures 5101](#) in an expedited manner.

**2.3.3. Intellectual Property.** Content that violates another person's copyright, trademark, or other intellectual property right should not be posted or made viewable on an Officially Recognized Account. Any content posted to an Officially Recognized Account that violates an intellectual property right will be deleted expeditiously in accordance with [Social Media Procedures 5101](#).

**2.3.4 Disruptive Activity.** A third-party account may be blocked, or content from a third-party account may be deleted or hidden if the content posted by the third party is posted to an Officially Recognized Account in a manner that prevents others from meaningfully engaging with or accessing the content posted by or to the Officially Recognized Account.

**2.3.5. Unprotected Content.** Content posted or otherwise made viewable on an Officially Recognized Account that violates University policy and does not receive First Amendment protection, such as obscene or defamatory content or content that amounts to a true threat or unlawful harassment, will be deleted in accordance with [Social Media Procedures 5101](#) in an expedited manner.

Content that is critical, negative, or offensive in sentiment that relates to University matters and is

otherwise in compliance with the law is NOT to be deleted or hidden by any method, including through the use of any filtering capabilities offered by the hosting social media platform.

**2.3.6. Content posted from an Officially Recognized Account.** Consistent with this policy, the University will not censor or remove protected, on-topic content posted to an Officially Recognized Account by a third party. The University does, however, require posts originating from an Officially Recognized Account to strictly comply with University policies, such as University Policy 3002: Respectful Workplace, and otherwise adhere to the highest standards of civility, inclusion, and respect.

## 2.4 Removal of Third-Party Content

**2.4.1 Deleting Third-Party Content.** Consistent with this policy and applicable laws, the University reserves the right to delete or hide off-topic or unprotected content posted to an Officially Recognized Account by a third party. Any action taken to delete or hide content posted by a third party to an Officially Recognized Account will be done only in accordance with this policy and [Social Media Procedures 5101](#).

### 2.4.2. Blocking an Account.

**2.4.2.1. Basis for Blocking an Account.** Consistent with this policy and applicable laws, the University retains the right to block a third-party account from accessing or engaging with an Officially Recognized Account. A third-party account will not be blocked unless the third party has posted or otherwise made viewable on an Officially Recognized Account (1) spam, solicitations, commercial content, or (2) unprotected or off-topic content that reasonably demonstrates (a) a continued willful disregard of federal or state laws or University policy or (b) an intent to disrupt the purpose of the Officially Recognized Account. Any action to block an account from accessing an Officially Recognized Account will be done only in accordance with this policy and [Social Media Procedures 5101](#).

**2.4.2.2. Challenge Right.** An individual who owns an account that the University has blocked may challenge the decision to block the individual's account by following the procedures outlined in [Social Media Procedures 5101](#).

**2.4.2.3. Time Limitations.** An Account Administrator will unblock an account without petition from the account owner after the time period prescribed in [Social Media Procedures 5101](#) expires.

**2.4.3. Accounts Directed to Children.** For Officially Recognized Accounts that regularly engage and direct content to minors, the University may remove or hide offensive content that would otherwise be protected from removal by the First Amendment, such as profanity, slurs, or other content deemed harmful to minors. Decisions to remove content under this subpart will be made only in accordance with [Social Media Procedures 5101](#).

## 2.5 Reporting Violations of Social Media Platform's Policy

The University recognizes that each social media platform utilized by the University provides its own use policies and/or terms of service. Consistent with this policy, the University will not delete any protected on-topic speech from an Officially Recognized Account that violates a social media platform's terms of service; however, the University reserves the right to report such violations directly to the relevant platform.

## 2.6 Employee Violations

Violations of this policy by a University employee may result in disciplinary action.

## 2.7 Personal Accounts of Students and Employees

This policy applies only to social media accounts created to represent University units officially and does not apply to the personal social media accounts of students and employees. Employees and students may mention their University affiliation in the bio or about sections of personal social media accounts but are prohibited from using University brand elements on those accounts in ways that violate branding guidelines or other University policies.

University employees acting in an individual capacity will exercise caution to communicate clearly that they are not acting in a representative capacity or expressing the views of the University.

## 5101.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

### 3.1 Vice President of Marketing and Communications

The Vice President of Marketing and Communications implements and oversees this policy.

### 3.2 Director of Social Media

The Director of Social Media is responsible for assisting appropriate Administrators and Account Administrators as needed to comply with this policy.

### 3.3 The Office of Marketing and Communications

The Office of Marketing and Communications is responsible for (1) training University employees who operate or manage an Officially Recognized Account; (2) implementing this policy across all University departments that operate an Officially Recognized Account; and (3) updating this policy as necessary to comport with evolving social media spaces and standards.

### 3.4 The Office of General Counsel

The Office of General Counsel is the authority for interpretive guidance on legal matters related to this policy.

## 5101.4 REFERENCES

- [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)
- [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act \(HIPAA\)](#)
- [Government Records Access and Management Act \(GRAMA\)](#)

## 5101.5 RELATED USU POLICIES

- [USU Policy 2301: Individual Conflicts of Interest](#)
- [USU Policy 2107: Political Activity](#)
- [USU Policy 5100: Trademark Licensing](#)
- [USU Policy 5102: Advertising](#)
- USU Free Speech Policies:
  - [2105: Free Expression & Assembly](#)
  - [4002: Academic Freedom & Professional Responsibility](#)

## 5101.6 DEFINITIONS

- **Appropriate Administrator.** The administrator, or the administrator's designee, over a University Unit that operates or manages an Officially Recognized Account that represents the University Unit or a sub-unit of the University Unit.
- **Director of Social Media.** University Marketing & Communication (UMAC) administrator of

central University social media accounts. This individual will also oversee the social media accounts directly managed or supervised by Appropriate Administrators.

- **Officially Recognized Accounts.** University employees create social media accounts for the University's official business purposes. These accounts have gone through the official approval process designated by the Assistant Director of Social Media.
- **Off-topic content.** Speech that does not directly relate to University happenings or official business.
- **Social media.** Media designed to distribute information via online or app-based social interaction platforms using easily accessible publishing techniques. Social media includes mass media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube, blogs, podcasts, and any future social media platforms that emerge.
- **Social media accounts.** Accounts or profiles are created on social media platforms.
- **University Unit.** College, department, program, group, statewide campus location, or other University office or entity.

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**Information below is not included as part of the contents of the official policy.** It is provided only as a convenience for readers/users and may be changed at any time by persons authorized by the president.

## RESOURCES

### Procedures

- [Social Media Procedures 5101](#)

### Guidance

- [Copyright at USU](#)
- [USU Social Media Guidelines](#)
- [USU Student Code](#)
- [USU Visual Identity Program](#)

### Related Forms and Tools

- N/A

### Contacts

- [Joshua Clayson, Director of Social Media](#)

## POLICY HISTORY

Original issue date: 2021/10/15

Last review date: 2024/11/12

Next scheduled review date: 2027/10/1

Previous revision dates: 2021/10/15