SDSU | San Diego State University

Social Media Guidelines

Updated: January 2021

San Diego State University recognizes the importance of social media networks. Social media is a powerful tool to exchange information, raise the visibility of the university and engage with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the San Diego community. While social media is an effective communication tool, it also brings its own unique challenges. Individuals who contribute to SDSU social media accounts in their capacity as representatives of SDSU and as a part of their employment must be attentive to these guidelines.

The guidelines detailed below serve as guidance and also provide best practices to SDSU faculty, staff and students who are managing university social media channels. For the purpose of these guidelines, SDSU channels are those that are associated with a university email account and exist on behalf of and to promote the university and university-related activities.

Social media accounts are defined as having an account registration with a social media platform, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, and the like, and includes handle names and direct links to each of the accounts. Social media may also include blogs, university websites, and, in some cases, personal social media accounts and websites used in part for university activities (such as research, teaching, residential housing groups, recognized student organizations).

The purpose of social media is to create conversation and community. SDSU deeply values and supports free speech and freedom of expression, which are fundamental rights and core to our nation's democracy. Our campus is committed to its academic mission and public mandate to serve as a place where individuals from diverse perspectives can freely express and explore ideas, concepts and opinions.

How to Use These Guidelines

These guidelines are meant to be best practices and a helpful resource to anyone using social media. For the SDSU community, they are intended for all students, faculty and staff who manage or contribute to official SDSU social media channels. Official SDSU channels are defined as those that speak on behalf of the university and have oversight by university employees.

Social media channels include but are not limited to those for divisions, schools, academic departments, offices or programs. Social media channels can include blogs, wikis and social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Tumblr and LinkedIn. The guidelines can also be useful for individuals managing accounts in their official SDSU capacity, including deans, vice presidents, faculty and staff.

These guidelines can be a useful guidepost for ensuring that social media activity is consistent with university policies and also state and federal laws.

About Personal Social Media Use

As an important note, while these guidelines may be helpful for personal social media use unaffiliated with an SDSU account, they are not designed for employee's personal use of social media.

Some maintain several social media channels, with some for personal use and others for official SDSU business. Individuals must use care to separate the two uses and may not use university resources to distribute personal communications.

It is recommended that you clearly identify your personal communications for transparency. Employees who use personal social media channels to talk about work or SDSU-related matters are encouraged to disclose their affiliation with the university, or by adding a disclaimer to their social media accounts stating that their thoughts are their own.

All students, faculty and staff are responsible for what they post on their own social media channels and sites, and on the sites of others. Unless your job duties at SDSU involve the use of your personal social media accounts on behalf of the university, and this use is explicitly authorized in writing by a school dean, department head or vice president, an employee's personal use of social media is not considered to be related to employment responsibilities at SDSU. Consequently, SDSU will not be liable for and will not indemnify an employee for any liability that results from postings they generate for their own personal social media activities and accounts.

Nothing in these guidelines should be read to restrict the ability of students, faculty or staff to engage in protected activity and speech, and the guidelines are not intended to govern or restrict communications, free speech or academic freedom.

Guidelines for Social Media Use on Behalf of SDSU

The following guidelines pertain to individuals who oversee, manage, post to and respond to messages on behalf of SDSU on university social media accounts:

SDSU pages must be approved. All SDSU-affiliated social media channels that are created must be approved by the area's appropriate administrator, whether a dean, department head or vice president. New channels should also be routed to Strategic Communications and Public Affairs (StratComm) prior to being created to ensure appropriate consultation and support Groups and fan pages on social media sites are easy to create and promote, sometimes making it difficult for users to identify SDSU channels and pages. However, these pages require input and maintenance to be effective. A SDSU social media page is an account that is managed on behalf of divisions, departments and programs or university-related business. Again, if you feel there is a need and value to generating an official group or page for SDSU, ask your supervisor and consult with them before allocating time or resources to the endeavor.

Always plan for a staff or faculty member to oversee and monitor the social media account if others, including students, are contributing to the account. The staff or faculty providing oversight must also maintain administrative rights on the social media accounts. University social media channels should have a designated lead responsible for posting; do not leave accounts open for all to post original content or respond to comments. For example, the social media accounts must be connected to the department or oversight staff or faculty member's email address. This is important for security reasons, and to also ensure that social media leads are able to provide prompt responses and to triage issues to appropriate offices. Some issues reported via social media may have Title IX or other legal implications requiring active monitoring.

Before creating a page, check to see if there is already an existing profile to avoid creating duplicate pages. If you discover your department has a social media channel that is inactive or falsely presenting as an SDSU page, please contact the Office of Strategic Communications for assistance by emailing stratcomm@sdsu.edu.

SDSU social media channels are listed on [San Diego State University's social media directory](#). Campus social media managers are encouraged to review these social media best guidelines and attend social media workshops StratComm hosts. Contact SDSU's Social Media Strategist Melissa Porter at mporter2@sdsu.edu with questions.

Be respectful and responsible. While managing SDSU social media accounts (division, college, program or other unit-level accounts), be mindful both of what you are including and of how the information will be received. SDSU is prohibited to post anything that is obscene, defamatory, or

libelous. The university channels exist to support and encourage community building and connections, to promote the work of the SDSU community and to share information aligned with the university's mission and principles, which includes the university's commitment to support free speech and freedom of expression. If you have any concerns about whether or not you should post certain information, speak directly with your appropriate administrator. You may also contact StratComm for consultation by emailing stratcomm@sdsu.edu.

Keep legal and policy requirements in mind. University social media accounts are subject to existing legal and policy requirements. Individuals contributing to SDSU social media accounts must follow university policies and federal requirements such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Title IX, and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996.

Be Selective. Not everything needs a response. SDSU is a large public institution and, as such, is open to criticism about any number of operational or policy actions. When you see criticism online, don't take it personally. And do not feel compelled to respond to each and every criticism. If you have the ability to correct an error or a factually incorrect statement, or give someone direction to a resource that could so, doing so is helpful.

Do not engage in debate, or simply tell someone they are wrong. When responding, be professional and courteous, as you are representing the university via university channels. Always view the profile before engaging or responding.

Example: I can't believe SDSU is raising tuition for Mission Valley.
Appropriate Response: We appreciate you voicing your concerns and hope to clear up this misconception. The SDSU Mission Valley plan does not *increase student tuition or fees. The California State University system-wide student costs are set by the Board of Trustees.*

Please note that the example above aims to provide clarity to a user's question in a kind and professional manner. Provide accurate information to comments when you are able to do so.

If you feel there is a post or comment that is sensitive and needs a response, forward it to your supervisor, or to SDSU's Social Media Strategist Melissa Porter at mporter2@sdsu.edu.

Do not delete comments or posts. As a general rule, do not delete comments or posts, even if they are considered contentious and do not align with institutional values of diversity and inclusion. A California State University (CSU) system-sponsored platform, such as social media channels introduced on behalf of a university department or program, is a government forum. As a governmental entity, the CSU may not restrict the content of most speech, including postings

by the public on the CSU's social media accounts. The social media platforms themselves (such as Facebook or Twitter) are not governmental entities; they can and do have established community guidelines about appropriate postings to their sites. If you believe that a posting may violate a social media platform's community guidelines, please flag it for StratComm by emailing stratcomm@sdsu.edu. Our team will triage the issue to the appropriate team to assess and address if necessary. If you have concerns about an incident, you may also report the issue via SDSU's General Incident Reporting Form.

Protect confidential and proprietary information. Social computing blurs many of the traditional boundaries between internal and external communications. Be mindful of the difference. Sensitive information should never be shared via social networks, even via "Direct Messages" that might appear to be private. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about SDSU, or SDSU employees, students, affiliates, or alumni that would violate such persons' rights to privacy under applicable federal and state laws and regulations. Be attentive to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) and university policies. Do not share RedID numbers, social security numbers, banking information and other personal identifying information in the social media space. Also, respect embargos (the date before which information cannot be shared via a public channel or forum), which may be set by a researcher's funding agency or other organizations.

SDSU social media pages contact information should be up-to-date. All social media pages related to SDSU should include accurate contact information, including email addresses and phone numbers. Additionally, the social media pages should include the correct link that directs back to SDSU's web properties.

Review before posting. Always review all aspects of a social media post before publishing, including the copy, multimedia, link and call-to-action. All posts should be factually accurate and grammatically correct. If you are unsure about a post, get a second opinion from a colleague or supervisor. Please also refer to the university's Editorial Style Guide for direction.

Be careful when using multimedia elements, including photographs, video images, printed materials. Be aware of the media (photos, videos, GIFs) used in social media posts. All media used should be high-quality and related to your department or organization. Do not use copyrighted photos, video or music without permission or license for use. The SDSU Image Library is also available to the campus for university use. Seek consultation with StratComm by emailing stratcomm@sdsu.edu to ensure that you have the correct intellectual property rights to use the image. Similarly, ensure that you have appropriate rights before posting any copyrighted

written materials. Again, StratComm can assist in determining whether such rights have been secured.

When photographing people for print, web or video projects, please use a [model release form](#) for adults or a [minor model release form](#) for children under 18 to ensure that subjects are aware of reproduction and usage rights of their image. Keep these records on file; you do not have to share them with StratComm.

Be active and do not allow channels to fall dormant. Remember to update and monitor your social media accounts regularly. Posting relevant and timely content is key to establishing a successful social media presence. Additionally, actively responding to comments and engaging with your audience will keep your followers interested. When interacting with your audience via university channels, do so in a professional and respectful way.

Follow San Diego State University brand guidelines. When creating or maintaining an SDSU social media account, follow [SDSU brand guidelines](#). Doing so will create consistent branding across the university's social media accounts and will show your audience that your page is an authentic SDSU page.

Have a plan. Before getting started with social media, it's crucial to have a plan. During the planning stages, assign the designated team members that will help maintain and monitor your social media channels. While creating your strategy for social media, identify your goals, target audience and how you will measure success. It's important to also identify what type of content you plan to share on social media and if there are any opportunities to collaborate with other partners on campus.

Make it accessible. Remember the importance of accessibility when creating social media content. This includes using alt-text description on social media platforms that allow you to do so, including captioning on videos, and being aware of color contrast on any social media imagery. For more information about accessibility, visit https://accessibility.sdsu.edu.

Maintain good password hygiene. Keep your SDSUid password secret. Your SDSUid is your single identifier to securely access many campus information technology services including your email, financial information and academic record. Never share it with anyone, including friends, family, or any email sender claiming to be from Library Hub, Computing Services, or any help desk. Also, do not use your SDSUid password for accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, or your bank, or re-use your personal passwords for your SDSUid password. Also, regularly update passwords for SDSU accounts, either once or twice each year. Strong passwords protect against

intrusion by others; consider using a phrase that you will remember, and sprinkle in numbers or special characters to make it even stronger.

Recommended Best Practices for Employee Personal Social Media Use

We have been asked to provide recommended best practices for personal social media use. The above guidelines are created for university accounts only, but you are free to use any and all parts of the guidelines as best practices for your own personal accounts. In addition, there are a number of other sites that provide best practices for social media use, and we recommend that you consult them as well, which provide the following reminders:

Be transparent; identify yourself. Your personal social media should not be set up in a way that leads others to believe that it is a university sanctioned or SDSU-managed site. It should be apparent (and clearly stated) that your opinions on your personal sites are yours and do not represent the views and opinions of SDSU or the CSU.

Example: Twitter bio to include "RT ≠ endorsements" or "Views are my own".

Be mindful of confidential and proprietary information. Be mindful to avoid sharing confidential and proprietary information regarding the university on social media.

Do not forget your day job. Consistent with the CSU Responsible Use Policy, personal blogging should generally be done on personal computers and on personal time, as to not interfere with work performance.

Social Media Resources

There are several social media resources available:
- Request a Social Media Consultation
- Contact San Diego State University Strategic Communications and Public Affairs
- SDSU's Free Speech site
- The California State University system's social media and free speech guidelines