Social Media Guidelines - July 2016

Introduction

What is social media?

Social media is a term used to collectively describe a set of communication tools designed to foster interaction, discussion and community. These are typically third-party services, and while they are free to use, they play an important part in the way the university is viewed. These services can be used to engage with students, future students, parents, alumni and friends of the university and can have a significant impact on the institutional reputation.

Why a social media policy?

Maintaining a social media account for an organization is very different than maintaining a personal account. Because social media blurs the line between personal voice and organizational voice, Arkansas Tech has developed the following guidelines to help clarify how best enhance the reputation, brand and image of the university when participating in social media, as well as to ensure appropriate and effective use of these media.

These guidelines apply only to university-related social media accounts and not to personal usage of any platform. Remember, you are speaking on behalf of your program, department, office and university when communicating on social media.

What platforms does Arkansas Tech University support for departments and programs?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Youtube - playlist from centralized account
- Flickr - albums from centralized account
- Snapchat – share content from centralized account
- Google plus – share content from centralized account

Key Principles for Social Media Be Engaging:

Social media is supposed to be social. Avoid just broadcasting your messages. Make sure you interact with your audience and other groups on campus. If your followers mention you on social media, do your best to engage with them when possible.

Be Responsible:

Think twice, but publish once. Use common sense and good judgment when posting to social media. If you are unsure about a post, err on the side of caution and don't post.

We encourage campus organizations and departments to find an authentic, human voice and create an open, casual dialogue. However, the accounts should still remain representative of a university. Spelling, grammar and tone matter.

Be Nice:

Negative comments from followers are part of social media. If a follower has a legitimate complaint, respond in a helpful manner. Delete negative comments only when derogatory or foul language is used. Remove comments from solicitors.

Many negative comments stem from misinformation. It is okay to correct, but don't engage in heated arguments. People consistently posting rude or argumentative comments (trolls) should not be engaged.

It's okay if you don't know the answers to all the questions, but be an advocate and get the person connected to someone who does.

Be Consistent:

Check and post from your accounts regularly. We would like you to post to social media at least once a week on Facebook and several times a week on Twitter, outside of comments and replies.

Use a calendar to help with regular content updates instead of throwing something together. People want to feel like you've put thought into what you're sharing.

Be Human:

Tools exist that allow you to schedule posts and post to multiple platforms at once. Using these tools heavily can significantly impact the effectiveness of your social media efforts. People want to talk with a real person.

Social Media Branding By Platform - Facebook

Naming:

Naming Facebook sites should center around searchability, as Google's search engine is designed to pull up sites based on key word relevance.

Facebook acceptable naming conventions include:

- Arkansas Tech
- Arkansas Tech University

When using these conventions, they should be followed with more specific information about the area.

For example:

- Arkansas Tech – Alumni
- Arkansas Tech University - Ozark Campus

Profile and Cover Images:

Your profile and cover images should be something recognizable, distinctive and relevant to your department, office or program. (Official logo, photo of your building, an image of your group in action, etc)

Facebook requires profile photos be 180 pixels wide. Cover photos must be 720 pixels wide. If using a logo, you may need to add white space around the border.

Page Username:

This will make it easier to share direct access to your page. Your username should include Arkansas Tech or ATU and then specific entity information. No dashes, underscores, numbers or periods should be used.

Additional Profile Information:

You should list your specific university address, telephone number and provide a link to your university webpage.

Social Media Branding By Platform - Twitter

Proper naming of twitter sites is difficult, as there is a 15-character limit. Names should focus on searchability, as Google and Twitter both have in-house search engine that are designed to pull up sites based on key word relevance.

Twitter acceptable naming conventions include:

- ArkansasTech
- ATU

When using these conventions, they should be followed with more specific information about the area.

For example:

@ATUAlumni
@ATUEducation
@ATUDEM

Profile and Header Images:

Your profile and cover images should be something recognizable, distinctive and relevant to your department, office or program. (official logo, photo of your building, an image of your group in action, etc)

Twitter profiles should be 300 x 300 pixels wide. Header Images should be 1252 x 626 pixels wide. If using a logo, you may need to add white space around the border.

Additional Bio Information:

You should list your specific university address, telephone number and provide a link to your university webpage.

Social Media Branding By Platform - Instagram

Naming Instagram sites should center around searchability, as Google's search engine is designed to pull up sites based on key word relevance.

Instagram acceptable naming conventions include:

- ArkansasTech
- ATU

When using these conventions, they should be followed with more specific information about the area.

For example:

- @ATUAlumni
- @ATUCampusLife
- @ArkansasTechVB

Profile and Header Images:

Your profile images should be something recognizable, distinctive and relevant to your department, office or program. (official logo, photo of your building, an image of your group in action, etc)

Profile images should be 180 x 180 pixels wide. If using a logo, you may need to add white space around the border.

Additional Bio Information:

You should list your specific university address, telephone number and provide a link to your university webpage.

Best Practices for Social Media

Linked Accounts:

Avoid linking accounts that post on multiple platforms at the same time. Users want content to look and feel different. This feels overly automated and fake.

Scheduled Posts:

Remember what posts you have scheduled and be aware of how current events could impact scheduled posts. In the event of a major tragedy, you don't want to accidentally post something that would seem insensitive or inappropriate.

Hashtags:

Hashtags should be used whenever possible to encourage sharing among all social platforms. First include #atu and then add additional hashtags you want to share.

Emoji:

Emojis may or may not be appropriate for your social media account depending on the account's purpose and voice. For example, emojis would be more appropriate for a student-run organization than for an English Department account. Make sure your use of emojis matches the voice and tone you've chosen for your account.

Punctuation:

Exclamation points in social media are welcome and can convey friendliness and excitement. Be sure to limit exclamation points to one per sentence.

Capitalization:

Avoid using all uppercase letters in posts. This feels like shouting and is hard to read.

Vary Content:

Mix up the content you post. Remember the goal is to engage and interact, so you should be sharing more than just upcoming events.

Interact with Others:

When referencing others organizations and campus groups, be sure to tag them in your message. This helps users engage with you both. Also, if someone mentions you, be sure to respond in a timely manner.

Grammar:

Proper grammar is extremely important when posting on behalf of a university account. Be sure to check any spelling, contractions and difficult words (freshman or freshmen). Misuse use of grammar reflects poorly on the entire institution.

Tone:

Remember this is a university account and not a personal account. The tone can be playful, but it should remain professional.

Bandwagon:

Use caution when chiming in on national current or political events. As an official voice of the university, doing so could put your followers in an awkward position. If you must chime in, avoid doing so in a commercialized manner.

Facebook Best Practices

Pictures:

Any time you can share content using a photo, do so. Facebook's newest algorithms separate graphics from photos. A graphic will not perform as well, so use a picture wherever possible.

Scheduling Posts:

Use the scheduler inside Facebook. This free tool allows you to schedule posts up to a year in advance.

Delete the link URL:

If you're posting a link on Facebook, you can delete the link after Facebook has processed the link. This prevents the link from being shown twice.

Third-Party Applications:

Facebook does not like third-party applications that post content for you. Using these will automatically cut the number of people seeing your post by one-third.

Twitter Best Practices

Be concise:

While you have 140 characters to craft your thoughts, try to use far fewer. This gives people a chance to engage with you.

Think Before You Retweet:

When you retweet something you're endorsing that content, so think about what you are retweeting.

Link Shorteners:

Even though links don't count toward characters allowed, use a link shortener to keep the link clean and easy to read.

Grammar:

Certain grammar shortcuts are acceptable on Twitter. It is okay to use contractions, the & sign and to remove the periods when referring to time of day.

Instagram Best Practices

Be concise:

Because this platform is primarily on mobile devices, keep your posts short and concise. Remember only three lines of content are shown automatically.

Reposts:

If reposting a photo from another user or account, be sure to give credit to the original poster. If the original poster has their account set to private, be sure to ask before reposting.

Resources available

- Online: www.atu.edu/social
- List of official university accounts
- Common university hashtags
- Help handing negative posts
- Social media strategy template