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SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

Social media at California State University, Dominguez Hills is a powerful community-building, interactive communications and marketing tool. Through our robust social media presence, CSUDH expands its reach and creates a space where students, alumni, parents and families, prospective students, university partners, and the public can connect with us and each other.

As virtual extensions of CSUDH, each social media account created by a division, department, office, institute, program, initiative, sports team, or other university unit plays a vital role in representing CSUDH and its mission. These social media guidelines serve to:

- Outline the roles and responsibilities in managing social media accounts on behalf of a university unit
- Establish brand consistency to strengthen the presence of CSUDH on social media
- Address important university policies, state, and federal laws that employees overseeing social media at the university must be aware of and follow
- Offer social media strategies and best practices

Definition

For the purposes of this guideline, social media is defined as web- or app-based networks that are used to create a virtual extension of a campus office, program, department, or administrator to communicate information, share ideas, engage in conversations, and build community. Examples include but are not limited to Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Reddit.

Responsibility

Anyone who contributes to a university social media account as part of their job, internship, or in a volunteer capacity for a university unit is responsible for creating content and overseeing engagement that represents the best interests of the university and helps strengthen our impact and reputation. Any content posted to an official account of a CSUDH unit can be perceived as a statement made by the university itself. Therefore, care must be taken to ensure the message, tone, and responsiveness of any posts or other social media interaction align with university priorities, strategies, and professional standards.

These guidelines do not apply to an employee's personal account. However, faculty or staff who post content via their personal account that is related to their role at the university are advised to add a

disclaimer stating that the account is a personal one, and that the content and thoughts shared are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the university.

These guidelines are primarily intended to apply to those individuals who are responsible for managing, overseeing, posting, or responding to posts on behalf of CSUDH or a CSUDH department or unit with a social media account.

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.

Getting Started

Is Social Media Right for Your Program?

In some cases, a social media account may not be the best approach to meet your goals. The University Communications and Marketing (UCM) social media coordinator can help you determine if a social media strategy is the best approach, and if so, the best platform for the audience you seek to reach, and what to consider when developing a content strategy. Among the questions to ask are:

- What are your overall goals and how does adding a social media account help you reach them?
- Which social media platforms could help you best achieve your overall goals?
- Do you have ideas and the time needed to create new content specifically for your social media account?
- Could your content be shared on another account, including the CSUDH account?
- How will your social media account(s) be staffed? Do you have more than one CSUDH employee who will have administrator rights to your social media account(s)?
- Will you have enough content to keep an account active and engaging?
- How will you build a social media audience for your unit's social media account(s)?
- Will you have opportunities to engage and encourage community? Social media should be social.

If you need help answering one or more of these questions, reach out to the UCM social media coordinator to discuss. There may be better solutions to your needs than starting a new social media account.

Launching Your Account

Aligning with CSUDH brand standards strengthens the university's presence across social media and signals to our followers that an account is affiliated with CSUDH.

- New accounts must be reviewed by UCM. Reach out to the UCM social media coordinator before creating any new social media account.

- Choose an account name that incorporates CSUDH, but also your campus unit.
  - If you start more than one social media account, maintain a single naming convention across platforms.
- Keep your account name simple. Your profile name can be more detailed. Examples:
  - @csudhadmissions (account); CSUDH Admissions
  - @csudh_biology (account); CSUDH Department of Biology
  - @csudh_our (account); CSUDH Office of Undergraduate Research
- Use a branded profile image provided by University Communications and Marketing.

Once new accounts are reviewed by UCM and launched, they will be added to the Social Media Directory.

Account Management

CSUDH-affiliated accounts must be maintained by an authorized employee of the university.

- Whenever possible, at least two full-time employees should have administrative rights over your social media account(s).
- Student workers or interns can assist with social media, but clear procedures for posting on behalf of your account must be in place prior to giving them access to your account. The university social media coordinator can offer advice on working with students.
- Maintain good password hygiene. Regularly update passwords and use strong passwords to prevent intrusion by others.

Content Management

Creating content for social media is and should be fun. However, content must be more than engaging, relatable, and on trend. It must also meet CSUDH standards of conduct, accessibility, and privacy. Additionally, as a state institution, CSUDH's social media content is subject to all applicable laws and policies.

Account engagement best practices

- Social media is interactive, so create content that starts a conversation. Give followers something to respond to. Examples: ask a question, prompt the community to share a memory or tip, or post something that would generate Toro pride.
- Give your campus account some Toro personality. Tag social media accounts or hashtags relevant to a post to help expand the reach of your post. Do your research first and make sure any accounts you tag are active, and hashtags are ones others use.

- Listen to online conversations through social media networks to maintain a current understanding of what your audience is interested in.
- Proofread before you post, and check your facts.
- Follow other accounts, and when appropriate, like and comment on their posts, to bring more awareness to your account.

Professionalism

When posting and engaging through the campus social media accounts, be mindful that you are representing the university. Maintain professionalism.

- Be respectful.
- Do not post content on a university social media account that is obscene, defamatory, racist, violent, threatening, or libelous.
- Do not post unverified information, make false claims, or spread rumors.
- Do not post confidential or private information about an employee or student. Doing so is in violation of state and federal laws as well as campus privacy policies.
- Never share information about children that would enable a stranger to find them, such as their names or school locations, on public pages or posts to public pages.
- Review your content to ensure that there are no spelling or grammar errors.

Resharing content

Post resharing is a common practice on social media. However, in representing CSUDH, social media accounts need to ensure shared content is not copyright protected. To ensure you are sharing properly:

- Share content that was created by the account you are reposting from.
- Use resharing mechanisms offered through the platform (Example: retweeting on Twitter, sharing an in-feed post on Instagram stories), which shows where the post originated.
- Ask permission to share, and then tag the user and give credit in the caption.

Link Shortening

- URL shorteners like Bit.ly or similar services should be avoided because of their potential security risks. In the interest of maintaining robust cybersecurity practices, it is advisable to use full, unshortened URLs whenever possible.

User-generated content

Encouraging followers to tag the campus or use a campus hashtag is a way of bringing attention to the campus accounts and increase engagement. However, as a university account, all applicable copyright laws must be followed.

- When followers share their posts, photos, or videos with a campus account via direct message, through use of a campus-promoted hashtag, or by tagging the campus account, they are granting consent through those actions for CSUDH to use their content. However, it is a good practice to ask for permission to share their content. Sample copy: "Hi there. Congrats on graduating! We love your graduation photo. We'd like to share your image across our social platforms. Please reply with [#Approved](#) to confirm you are allowing us to share it. If you approve, could you please send us the original image at your earliest convenience. Thank you."
- When posting approved user-generated content, credit the user and source.

Accessibility

Social media should be made accessible to people with disabilities, and social media content creators should follow these best practice tips. Contact the university social media coordinator if you have questions.

- Add alt text to all images. Use the alt text tools built into the platform or add an image description to the caption.
- When including video, make sure the videos are captioned. Many platforms offer tools to assist with adding captions to videos.
- When using hashtags, use initial capitalization at the start of each word (this is also known as camel case) in the hashtag to make it easier for screen readers to recognize and pronounce words (example: #GoToros).
- Screen readers read the alt text of emojis. It's best to use emojis sparingly, and if multiple emojis are used one after another, make sure to add a space between each.

Community Management

Social media is a two-way form of communication, meaning others can respond and reply to your content. Some comments may be negative, others will ask questions, others may include information that alerts us to issues or activities. Use good judgment when determining how best to engage.

Positive comments

- Not all comments need a response. However, responding to a select few will demonstrate the account is active and engaging.

Criticism or trolling

Not everyone will like what we have to share and will let us know. Conflicts and crises often surface first on social media as a result of comments or direct messages (DMs) to the account. Here are a few things to consider when dealing with criticism/trolling on social media:

- **Assess the situation:**
    - Determine whether the comment is a genuine concern, constructive criticism, or just a troll trying to provoke a reaction.
    - Evaluate the validity and intent of the comment before writing a response.
- **Pick your battles:**
    - Not every negative comment requires a response.
    - Selectively engage with comments that are constructive, have the potential for meaningful dialogue, or you can factually prove.
- **Document:**
    - Screenshot the comment or DM for records. Note the date of the original post and who posted it. Save these screenshots for your records.
    - If the criticism or trolling continues, please notify the UCM social media coordinator. Depending on the nature of the issue, appropriate actions may involve reaching out to the Title IX office, the Dean of Students, or legal counsel.

Deleting Comments

As a governmental entity, CSUDH may not restrict the content of most speech without potentially violating the First Amendment, including postings by the public on CSU social media accounts.

- Do not delete comments. In compliance with state laws, negative comments cannot be hidden or deleted. However, there may be certain circumstances where comments can be removed. For guidance, please consult with the University Social Media Coordinator.
- Do not block individual users.
- Online harassment and threats of violence may be reported to law enforcement officials.

Comments are subject to the community user agreements for each platform. If you believe that a posting may violate a social media platform's guideline, you should report it using the platform's reporting mechanism.

Legal References

While social media is often seen as a more fun or laid-back form of engagement, anything posted by an official CSUDH account constitutes an official communication by the university. Therefore, CSUDH social media must abide by existing university policy and applicable state and federal laws.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to the UCM social media coordinator [link to icasillas@csudh.edu] if you have questions or concerns.

Applicable CSUDH Policies

Accounts created for a campus unit, and contributors to those accounts, must adhere to applicable CSUDH policies and procedures, including but not limited to:

- Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy
- University Web Standards
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Student Code of Conduct
- Procurements and Contracts
- Intellectual Property Policy

First Amendment and Academic Freedom

CSUDH is a governmental institution and therefore must abide by the requirements of the First Amendment. CSUDH cannot remove most comments and posts submitted by those who are responding to material posted on CSUDH social media accounts unless the speech constitutes unprotected speech such as threats which are not protected by the First Amendment.

CSUDH is also committed to the principles of academic freedom. With respect to social media, CSUDH faculty may use social media and can engage in intellectual debate without fear of retaliation or censorship.

Advertising and Promotion

University departments or units wishing to purchase advertising from social media sites must coordinate with University Communications and Marketing to ensure proper branding and to align with marketing strategies. Advertising should also follow all procurement and contract requirements.

Confidentiality and Privacy

As a general rule, discussion of confidential or private information on university social media accounts should be avoided. This includes but is not limited to individual students' educational or financial aid information, personnel actions, or legal matters involving the university. University staff who use social media personally or while in the employ of CSUDH are subject to the privacy policies of those individual social media companies (e.g., Meta, Twitter, etc.) and should familiarize themselves with

those policies. The university is subject to federal and state laws regarding data privacy, such as [FERPA and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 ("HIPAA")](#).

Users who access CSUDH's social media accounts are subject to the university's Privacy Notice, available [here](#). This policy may be changed at any time.

Copyrights and Intellectual Property

The university's copyright policies apply to social media accounts as well. In general, university staff should avoid posting copyrighted materials on official CSUDH accounts. Exceptions are allowed under the Fair Use exemption. More information can be found [here](#).

Before sharing content someone else posted, first ensure it is content they originated, and then ask for permission to repost. Followers who share their posts, photos, or videos with a campus account via direct message, through use of a campus-promoted hashtag, or by tagging the campus account, give consent through those actions for CSUDH to use their content. When posting user-generated content, credit the source.

Political Endorsements

As a public agency, CSUDH may not endorse or campaign for a candidate for political office or a ballot measure. This includes statements made via university-operated social media accounts. Staff operating such accounts must refrain from posting or responding to any posts in a partisan manner and maintain impartiality and a non-partisan position in their role as manager/operator of the CSUDH social media account.

However, providing a forum for political debate is a critical function of an educational institution. It is therefore acceptable for students, alumni, or others to share their political opinions via social media, including as comments or responses to posts originated by CSUDH accounts. University faculty and staff maintain their First Amendment rights, as individuals, to espouse political positions or endorse candidates and ballot measures. When a campus employee's personal social media account identifies them as an employee, they should state that their opinions do not represent the position of CSUDH when discussing politics on social media.

More guidance can be found on the [CSUDH Election Standards](#) and [CSU Handbook on Election Issues](#).

Public Records Act

CSUDH social media accounts are subject to the California Public Records Act. Any posted communication or communication submitted for posting may be a public record subject to public disclosure. For Public Records Act requests, please contact UCM at ucm@csudh.edu.