

OFFICE OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

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SOCIAL MEDIA OVERVIEW

MAXIMIZING OUR DIGITAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Social media offers the School a set of tools to foster and engage with a community of people, building credible authority for our brand. A social media presence serves as a vital first touchpoint to reach and target relevant users, and depending on your strategy, can drive qualified traffic to your website, as well as leverage niche resources and specialties.

In addition to responsive communications, social media actively engages prospective audiences, such as students and alumni — showcasing the school's core value propositions, the expertise of faculty, the hands-on experience in the field, and the direct opportunity to shape policy and practice.

The Office of Communications and Marketing manages the school's main accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn and we have thousands of followers. We welcome and encourage your contributions. You may also start your own social media account if you have the time, resources and desire to engage your audience on a consistent basis.

SCHOOL SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

As an integrated strategy, the content we develop and share across social media coordinates seamlessly with our other core channels – from web to email to print. No longer is social media an afterthought, rather, it's a predetermined, measurable strategy that feeds into our goals as an institution.

Approach

Our strategy is two-fold, separating organic tactics, which typically focus on brand awareness and engagement, from paid tactics, which typically focus on recruitment. It's important to simultaneously deploy organic and paid efforts in order to maintain brand health, while still reaching new audiences.

Purpose

The general purpose of social media is to reach your audience in a targeted way, make a personal connection via conversation, and still offer an authentic, expert voice. At the School, the goals of social media are to:

- Recruit prospective students
- Build community with current students and alumni
- Inform and educate the public
- Reinforce the School's brand and messaging
- Leverage research and work through storytelling
- Reach new audiences
- Drive qualified leads to our website where users can engage on a deeper level

Values

The School's core values are incorporated into our social media strategy. We promote open conversations and exchange of ideas, concrete and substantive dialogue, and communication that offers a sense of place. We also encourage active feedback from audiences, responsiveness to stakeholders, as well as creativity and a sense of fun.

Brand Management

When using social media on behalf of The School of Education, your account should reinforce the School brand. Consider the following:

- Link to other School social media accounts as appropriate
- Include visuals that follow platform and brand standards
- Editorial quality is important — limit typos, grammatical errors and subpar content
- Remember everything you post has the potential to affect the School's reputation. Content should enhance, not detract from, the institutional brand.

Voice & Tone

While voice is consistent across channels, tone varies according to audience and platform.

	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	INSTAGRAM
Voice	The School's voice is purposeful, enterprising, unafraid, honorable, engaged, inspired, collaborative and proven.		
Key Audience(s)	Alumni, local teachers and ed professionals	Media, policy influencers, thought leaders and event attendees	Students, prospective undergraduates and young alumni
Tone	Tone on Facebook is friendly and conversational, and it always encourages engagement through CTAs and requests for shares or followers. At the same time, most posts should drive traffic to the School site.	Tone on Twitter is brief and informative, and positions the School in the academic community. This channel keeps the school relevant in a busy channel, and provides an outlet to connect with media and press.	Tone on Instagram is fresh and youthful. Everything is about our visual brand, and beautiful photos relating to the school should always be used. This channel emulates the student story.

A PRIMER ON MAJOR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

About Facebook

- World's largest social network, with more than 2 billion users worldwide.
- 1.4 billion users visit the site on a daily basis; 25-34 year olds are the biggest segment for U.S. users, but the platform continues to skew toward older users
- While video performs best, photos, graphics and visuals do well on Facebook.

About Twitter

- Fast-moving marketplace and a big political platform: increasingly used as a newsfeed in lieu of traditional news sources and aggregators.
- 330 million active monthly users. More than 70% of Twitter users have at least some college education, and 45% of new users have college degrees.
- 72% of users are between the ages of 18–49.

About Instagram

- More than 1 billion users, with 500 million active every day.
- 71% of Americans between 18 and 24 use this network.
- Demographics for U.S. users are 43% African Americans, 38% Hispanic, and 32% white.

Understanding Hashtags

- Hashtags are useful for Instagram and Twitter to organize your content and make it searchable.
- Only use 1-2 hashtags per tweet maximum. Good to use at least one hashtag per tweet to expose new audiences to your message.
- If you are using a term in your tweet, you don't need to repeat it as a hashtag.
- Hashtags on Instagram should be put in a separate comment underneath your post.

Facebook Best Practices

- Keep posts between 80 and 250 characters.
- Always include visuals and valuable keywords. Hashtags aren't important.
- Post 4-7 times per week to maintain current audience engagement.
- Link to resources.
- Interact: mention people, organizations. Cross-promote content.
- Change headers and profiles photos quarterly to match seasons.

Twitter Best Practices

- Utilize relevant keywords, hashtags and tagging.
- Post frequently each day.
- Link to resources.
- Interact: mention people, organizations. Cross-promote content.

Instagram Best Practices

- Post text can be lengthy.
- Always include high-quality branded visuals.
- Utilize relevant keywords, hashtags and tagging.
- Post in-feed once per day, and update stories frequently.
- Link to related content in your bio.
- Do not push content directly to Facebook.
- Utilize student perspectives via stories and takeovers.

Additional Resources to Review

- Follow @Facebook, @Instagram and @Twitter on respective platforms for tips and updates.
- Use Facebook IQ for digital insights and market research, and access case studies and online trainings via Facebook Blueprint.
<https://www.facebook.com/iq>
<https://www.facebook.com/blueprint>
- Social Media for Nonprofits:
<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2016/04/25/social-media-effectiveness-for-public-engagement-an-example-of-small-nonprofits/>
- Guide to posting on Twitter:
<https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-social-media/twitter>
- Guide to posting on Facebook:
<https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-social-media/facebook>

Channel Recommendations

As mentioned above, these social media channels can be used for a variety of purposes. Once you determine the objectives for your social media strategy, note the channel that can best serve those goals:

- If your primary goal is to reach out to prospective students, especially undergraduate or high school levels, start with Instagram.
- If your goal is to maintain a consistent place to share updates with teachers, college graduates, alumni, or just a broad audience, start a Facebook page.
- If your goal is to reach new, target audiences, and encourage users to take a specific action, Facebook Advertising is your best option. This can be done with or without a Page.
- If your current students need a closed place to share information, start a Facebook Group that is invitation only.
- If you would like to share news, ideas, and comments on a regular basis, start a Twitter account.

Considering Social Media?

Social media can be an extremely valuable asset, but it also requires a significant investment of time and energy, as well as a strong strategy. Once social media is integrated into your strategy, it becomes a

normal component of your daily tasks. Just as you would email your audiences with significant news, you also adapt that content for social media. From web to presentation to email to social media, your content should remain consistent, high-quality, relevant, and engaging.

Here are some critical questions you should answer to help inform whether social media would be a good fit for your team:

What are your objectives?

Clear objectives are critical for a successful social media presence. Are you interested in advocacy, promoting research, or shaping practice in the classroom? Social media is all about engaging in conversations, so if your objective is primarily to push out news, then social media may not be the best fit for your goals. If you want to promote an event or share news about your program, submitting content for consideration on the School's existing social media sites might be a better choice.

Who is your target audience?

Does your target audience consist of fellow researchers? Policymakers? Practitioners? Students? Figuring out who you want to reach and have a conversation with will help determine which platforms to use and how to grow a following. Having a clear idea of your target audience will also help you develop successful content that is relevant and engaging for the people you're communicating with.

What resources do you have?

Social media accounts require daily maintenance and the ability to continually engage with others. Success in social media takes not only time and strategy, but it often takes an outgoing personality, an enthusiasm in providing helpful information, visual and written communication skills, and a desire to make connections. Is there someone in your organization who is willing and able to do this on an ongoing basis? If that person were to leave, would you have the resources to continue managing your accounts?

What types of content will you share?

Maintaining a successful presence on social media also requires a steady stream of new and interesting content, including written content as well as high-quality photo and video. What unique content can you offer on a consistent basis? Do you have sources of high-quality photos to accompany written content? What value will this content provide to your audience?

Creating Strong Content

See below for some strategies to develop content for your social media account that meets your goals and generates significant engagement.

Ask for and listen to see what your primary audience is interested in:

- Once you have set up a social media account, start off by listening to your community and monitoring key topics of conversation among your target audiences. Make note of relevant hashtags, popular topics, and opportunities for your brand to provide a unique voice in the conversation.

Get outside inspiration through related organizations' social media posts:

- For additional inspiration, search for other accounts by similar organizations at other institutions and note trending topics. Also, evaluate areas of focus for related professional associations and national offices. In conducting these landscape scans, you can determine the issues your community at-large is focusing on — and the social media approaches that resonate with your target audiences.
- Utilize cross-promotion to reach new audiences and grow your following. Tag related accounts and share interesting content from relevant, reputable sources. Don't forget to tag the School so we can amplify your voice!

Include shareable content such as photos, videos, and headlines:

- Remember that social media algorithms prioritize engaging content, such as videos and photos. All visuals must be high-res, optimally sized per platform, and with minimal text.
- When looking for new content for your site, keep "shareability" in mind. Ask: "Is this something we could post on social media?" If you find it interesting, chances are your audience will too — and they are more likely to share it.
- A video or photo also serves as another useful strategy to help increase the shareability of your content. Plus, most social media sites are designed to highlight photos and videos over plain text updates, so capitalize on that by including visual elements on your pages.
- Headlines for web content include high-quality keywords and briefly describe what you will find in the content's body. Headlines for social media posts are pretty different and should tell as much of the story as possible. Grab the user's attention with a headline, but make sure it follows SEO guidelines.

Encourage engagement:

- Ask questions with the intent of soliciting meaningful responses. Simply asking people to "like," "share" or "retweet" a post is not the most engaging form of content and should generally be avoided, but simple questions are a great way to drive engagement.
- Ask followers to share what they think on a particular topic related to your field. And, if you ask a question, make sure you're willing (and have the time to) interact with replies.
- Most questions should have some reference back to a piece of research you've developed or a commentary that you've written; this further enforces ties to your work and differentiates your content.
- While content strategy and development is a team effort, assign a single "owner" to each of your social media channels to ensure prompt replies and keep your tone consistent.

Building a Community of Ambassadors

To enhance the School's positioning and elevate its differentiators (i.e. hands-on practice and distinctive faculty), it is useful to designate a set of on-the-ground social media ambassadors that post from across the country (and world). Either to affirm the value of the school to prospective students or to

illustrate its impact on its student body, you can share and re-post content from alumni followers—or even current students—who are making an impact in the field. This alone underscores the School’s core value proposition: students have a direct opportunity to shape policy and practice — and have the tools to do so upon graduating from their programs.

These “ambassadors” can help raise awareness of the school and help cultivate a network of individuals that reinforce your differentiators — across the country. Consider these key tips to help build this network:

Email your ambassadors

Email works so use it to reach out to students and alumni that are engaging with your social media posts—and demonstrating commitment to the school. Provide these ambassadors with the opportunity to share pre-scripted social posts.

Provide the tools to recruit other ambassadors

Offer ambassadors the tools to recruit other ambassadors. This can range from new research and campaign updates to pre-scripted emails and social messages. Your ambassadors feel like insiders by receiving instant access to engaging content to activate their community.

Leverage LinkedIn

Prestige is important, and when it comes to showcasing the successes of both your establishment and alumni, LinkedIn is key. Use your institution’s LinkedIn page to share: academic achievements, interesting research, staff profiles, and any other content that positions your brand in a professional light online.

Faculty Ambassadors

Faculty can also serve as ambassadors, who through their research and instruction, represent the School’s impact and promise. How can the communications staff leverage this?

Faculty appear across the country — at conferences, symposiums, legislatures, and other universities — to showcase their work and drive the discussions that can shape policy and practice. Provide them with the tools and/or content to post on their social media channels (especially on-site visuals and videos!) and tag the School, using relevant hashtags from a given event, which reach countless other members of the policymaker, practitioner, or higher education community. For those who are particularly social media-savvy, you can have them “live-tweet” or “live-post” from the School channels for maximum impact and continued engagement.