

# Shawnee State University

## Guidelines for Use of Social Media

*Departmental & University Accounts*

### 1. Overview

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Shawnee State University's social media presence directly reflects our identity and brand. The SSU brand is expressed through our writing style, photography, design, trademarked logos, colors, and interactions with others.

All who represent Shawnee State University on social media share a responsibility to communicate consistently and professionally. These guidelines were developed to help departments, programs, and individual account managers uphold that standard while effectively reaching their audiences.

### 2. Before Creating a Social Media Account

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Contact the Office of Communications before creating any social media presence representing an SSU office, department, program, club, or service. Your goals, platform choice, account name, graphics, and strategy should be submitted in writing and approved before the account is launched. All accounts must be:

- Created using a Shawnee State University email address
- Registered with and granted administrative access to the Office of Communications
- Operated in accordance with these guidelines from day one

#### Questions to Answer Before Launching

Your written proposal should address the following:

- What is your primary communication goal?
- What type of content do you plan to share, and how often?
- Who is your target audience?
- Who will be responsible for maintaining the account?
- Can your goals be accomplished using existing SSU social media accounts?
- Which platform(s) best serves your goals and audience?
- How will you ensure SSU's brand — tone, professionalism, and image — is reflected in your posts?
- How will you monitor and measure your social media activity?
- How will you coordinate with other SSU accounts to avoid duplication or conflicting messages?

### 3. Content Guidelines for Departmental Accounts

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#### Know Your Purpose and Stay in Your Lane

Departmental and unit accounts exist to communicate the news, events, and achievements of that specific unit — nothing more.

- Do not like comment on, speculate about, or editorialize university-wide decisions, announcements, or personnel matters
- Do not present the unit as speaking for Shawnee State University as a whole
- Do not originate crisis or emergency communications — only share or repost official messaging from the Office of Communications
- Do not respond to media inquiries — all press contacts must be referred to the Office of Communications
- Do not use the university's primary logo, seal, or wordmark without prior approval
- Do not like, share, or repost content from other universities or institutions, even when that content seems relevant or interesting
- Do not like, share, or repost general news articles, studies, or third-party content that falls outside the unit's specific purpose, even if the content seems harmless or interesting to the account manager personally. Engagement actions are a form of endorsement and should reflect the unit's mission, not individual interests.

**When in doubt, share — don't create. If your department wants to amplify university news, repost the official message from SSU's flagship account without added commentary.**

#### Represent Your Unit Clearly

Use "Shawnee State University" in your account name to aid discoverability but make sure the account name and profile clearly identify your specific unit. Do not use names, graphics, or language that could be mistaken for the university's official flagship account.

#### Assign an Account Manager

Designate at least one primary account manager who is responsible for maintaining consistent posting, tone, and identity. The Office of Communications must retain administrative access to all departmental accounts. When account managers change, notify the Office of Communications immediately to update access credentials.

## Speak with One Voice

Posts should be consistent in style, tone, and personality. All content should reflect the professionalism expected of a university unit.

Professional social media content is purposeful, audience-focused, and mission-driven. It centers on the work, achievements, and news of the unit, not on the personal activities or visibility of individual staff members. Ask before every post: “Does this serve our audience, or could it be seen as merely self-promotion?”

As a rule, photos or content featuring individual staff members should serve a clear communications purpose, such as introducing a new hire, recognizing an award, or documenting a significant event. Casual personal photos, selfies, or posts that draw attention to an individual rather than the unit’s work are not appropriate on university-affiliated accounts, regardless of setting.

## Visuals and Branding

High-quality photography is a vital part of the SSU brand. When posting visuals:

- Use only photos you have the right to publish; observe copyright and trademark laws
- Obtain signed photo releases for identifiable students when required
- Coordinate use of any Shawnee State University logos or trademarks with the Office of Communications
- Follow SSU brand guidelines for color, fonts, and style
- Do not post photos, video, or other content featuring the University President without prior approval from the Office of Communications

## Stay Engaged and Active

If your unit has a social media account, commit to maintaining it. Post consistently, respond to questions, and monitor your account regularly. Inactive accounts reflect negatively on the university. The Office Communications may request that inactive accounts be deactivated or transferred.

## 4. Managing Comments and Community Standards

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Social media is a space for dialogue. Comments that express differing viewpoints — even critical ones — should generally be respected and left visible. However, comments may be removed if they:

- Are off topic, constitute spam, or promote unrelated products or services
- Encourage or facilitate illegal activity
- Infringe on the rights of others

- Contain nudity, obscenity, or threats

Removals must be consistent with the SSU Social Media Policy. When in doubt, consult the Office of Communications before deleting a comment.

If a comment or question falls outside your unit's area of expertise, respond helpfully by directing the user to the appropriate resource. Example: "Great question — our Admissions Office can help with that. I'll send you their contact info."

## **5. Boundaries and Prohibited Conduct**

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### **Media Inquiries**

If a member of the media contacts your account, do not respond on behalf of the university. Refer all media inquiries to the Office of Communications before providing any comment or information.

### **Political Activity and Endorsements**

SSU-affiliated accounts may not create, share, or endorse content that supports or opposes political candidates, parties, or ideologies. Do not engage in political activities or express political opinions in a way that implies you are speaking on behalf of the university.

### **Commercial Endorsements**

Do not use your SSU-affiliated account to endorse, promote, or advertise commercial products, vendors, or personal businesses. Any content related to institutional or commercial partners must originate from the Office of Communications in coordination with the Chief External Officer.

### **Rumors and Unverified Information**

Do not share, repost, or comment on rumors or unverified information about the university, its personnel, or internal matters. If you encounter such content, report it to the Office of Communications. All official announcements will be clearly designated as such and will originate from SSU's main accounts.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

Do not use your university-affiliated account for personal gain, including promoting personal social media profiles, personal businesses, or related vendors.

## Confidential and Legal Matters

Never share confidential, proprietary, or personally identifiable information on social media. Do not comment on legal matters or pending litigation. Refrain from any posts that could disparage colleagues, competitors, or critics.

## 6. Emergency and Crisis Communications

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During emergencies — including weather events, safety alerts, and institutional crises — all official communications will originate from the Office of Communications, in coordination with the Department of Public Safety and the SSU Emergency Response Team.

**During a crisis: share official SSU posts without comment — do not originate new information.**

Departmental accounts should:

- Monitor the main SSU social media accounts for official updates
- Share or repost official alerts directly, without modification or added commentary
- Pause or postpone any scheduled posts that may be insensitive or confusing given the circumstances
- Refrain from speculating, editorializing, or responding to media on crisis-related topics

## 7. Personal Social Media Accounts

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As SSU employees, your personal social media activity can reflect on the institution — even if you consider it private. When your personal accounts reference your employer or professional role, others may interpret your posts as representative of the university.

Be mindful of this perception, especially if you hold a position of public visibility. Personal accounts are not covered under these guidelines, but employees remain subject to all applicable SSU policies regarding professional conduct, confidentiality, and nondiscrimination.

## 8. Related Policies

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Your social media activity may also be subject to the following Shawnee State University policies:

- SSU Ethics Policy
- Media Information Policy
- Student Conduct Code

- Student Education Records Privacy and Release
- Human Resources Policies, including restrictions on disclosure of confidential or proprietary information
- Nondiscrimination, Harassment, and Bullying Policies
- Campus Computer and Network Use Policy

*Questions? Contact the Office of Communications.*