



Southern University Ag Land-Grant Campus: Social Media Policy

What is Social Media?

Social media is a general term used to reference sites and activity on sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or any other virtual hub where users interact. Other popular social media sites include Instagram, Tumblr, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Wikipedia, Flickr, WordPress, FourSquare and the list grows daily.

Here at the Office of Technology and Communications Services, we aim to "offer opportunities for learning, discovery and engagement". With this in mind, we encourage our employees to embrace social media sites as easy-access venues for streamlining processes and enriching communications and engagement.

While we are excited about these resources, we want to make sure that you - our social media users - are aware of your rights and boundaries.

This Social Media Policy includes legal information you NEED to know, along with supplementary tips to aid your success. This is a living document which will be updated from time to time as the social media landscape continues to shift. Please contact Director of the Office of Communications Services or a designee at communications@suagcenter.com with any feedback.

Social media has given the Southern University Agricultural Land-Grant Campus and various campuses, colleges and departments the opportunity to use technology to network with a number of current and future clientele, i.e. students, faculty and staff, parents, alumni, clients, stakeholders, donors and supporters. The field of social media continues to grow, and because of this, it is imperative that we understand how to correctly and appropriately use social media to create strong relationships, share information, advance knowledge, raise awareness, build support, participate in important conversations and collaborate on new ideas.

The SU Land-Grant Campus supports the use of social media by its research and extension units in the course of their work to connect with faculty, staff, clients, colleagues, and more, sharing the sense of community present on campus with a much broader array of people. However, keep in mind that social media should only serve to supplement and not replace the official channels of communicating with your audiences. This document is designed to provide guidance, advice, and tips on how to do so safely, effectively, and within the SU Land-Grant Campus guidelines.

This policy establishes the criteria and procedure for creating the SU Land-Grant Campus' presence or participation on social media sites on behalf of the SU Land-Grant Campus. It also offers "best practices" for the successful management of these endeavors.

The Land-Grant Campus' presence or participation on social media sites is defined as: 1) Media sites established by the Center on University-owned domains (*Policy Statement on Website Hosting and URL Addressing, 2004*); 2) Accounts on external sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc., on behalf of the University; and 3) Personal accounts on external sites that are approved for use or participation by University employees as part of their job duties.

This policy applies to faculty and staff, including student employees, who engage in social media for work-related purposes or who are asked by supervisors to use or participate in social media as part of his or her job responsibilities.

Things to Consider Before Engaging in Social Media

Creating a successful social media page requires careful planning and resource allocation. Before you begin to use social media on behalf of SU Ag Center, please remember the following:

Keep in mind other Southern University policies:

This document does not affect other University policies that might apply to use of social media, including (but not limited to) the Harassment policy, Computer Use policy, Logo Usage policy, Workplace Violence policy and University Web Policy. If your use of social media would violate any of the Institution's policies in another forum, it will also violate them in an online forum.

Get necessary approval

Before starting a social media site for your program area, or unit, make sure you have approval from the Office of Communication Services. Only authorized employees may be a "content owner" or "administrator" for the Land-Grant Campus social media websites. Social media accounts that are being set up to represent an overall Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center and College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences "voice" or initiative must first be approved through the Office of Communications Services.

Approval Process

All Land-Grant Campus-related social media initiatives must first be approved by the proper authorities. Submit an explanation of the proposed social media initiative to the Director of Communications Services or designee.

The following questions shall be considered when there is a request to establish a University-hosted social media site and to participate in Internet discussions via social media on behalf of the University:

- *Will the site be used in such a manner that positively supports the institution's values, mission and goals?*
- *Can engagement with the audience add value to both the University and the audience?*
- *Is the approach as effective or efficient as other approaches that might be used (i.e. would an existing initiative or the Land-Grant Campus main website accomplish the same goals)?*
- *Does the use of social media enable the SU Land-Grant Campus to offer services it might not otherwise be able to offer or enhance current services?*
- *Do sufficient resources exist to appropriately manage the platform?*

- At least two faculty or staff members shall be designated to monitor the medium, identify problems that emerge and take action when necessary. Having multiple content owners or administrators at all times for every social media application will ensure that the application can continue to thrive and be updated regularly even if one of the existing administrators changes jobs or leaves the SU Land-Grant Campus.

Prepare for the necessary time commitment

A social media site will only be effective if the administrators take the necessary time to generate interesting and interactive content and build relationships with the online community. A channel that lies dormant can be worse than no channel at all. Keep the page fresh, posting at least twice per week, but not so frequently that you will fill up users' timelines. Posts should be brief and end with a link to content on the Land-Grant Campus' website when possible. Keep in mind that the overall goal is engagement. Be sure to share other relevant SU Land-Grant Campus content, thank people for re-tweets (when appropriate), initiate and join discussions.

- *Pages shall be updated on an ongoing basis by the department or unit that created them.*
- *Establish a process to enable rapid response to any problems that may arise.*
- *Ensure an engaging, interesting environment for visitors. To be effective, pages must be dynamic and will require updating frequently.*
- *The approved faculty or staff member shall continuously monitor the social media platform, identify problems that emerge and take action when necessary.*
- *The Office of Communications Services is charged with the responsibility to monitor social media initiatives, counsel those who represent the University online on adherence to these policies, and take action to restrict or remove an employee's ability to publish should efforts to correct the situation fail.*

Use of the SU Ag Center Brand

Any use of University marks, such as logos and graphics, shall comply with the *SU Land-Grant Campus Brand and Graphic Identity* policies of the Office of Communications Services. Please use official logos and graphics that represent and adhere to the University's guidelines. Don't use the SU name for endorsements. Do not use logos, word marks, or any other brand's artifacts for personal use on social media. If you choose to promote a product, cause, political party or candidate on social media sites, do so via your own, personal account.

- The SU Land-Grant Campus does not monitor the personal social media sites of its employees; however, the University reserves the right to review any site or activity deemed as potentially in violation of the guidelines listed here where the University is in any way affiliated. On personal sites, identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as an SU Land-Grant Campus faculty or staff member online, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the institution. Ensure that your personal social media sites contain content that is appropriate.

Make it easy for people to find your site

To maximize exposure and participation with your social media site you will want to make it as easy as possible for people to find it when searching online. A couple of suggestions on how to do this:

1. Please ensure that the SU Land-Grant Campus is listed prior to your program, office, or unit's title.
2. Try to avoid only using acronyms when naming your site.

Raising money via social networks

Charitable contributions to or on behalf of any organization whose mission is to support the SU Land-Grant Campus, cannot be solicited, nor can they be accepted, unless approved in advance by the Office of Communication Services and the approval of the Chancellor's Office.

Posting on Behalf of SU Ag Center

Sharing SU Land-Grant Campus news, events or promoting faculty, staff and student work through social media is an effective and low-cost way to engage various audiences of the Campus. In addition to the general guidelines discussed above, employees creating or posting on social media sites on behalf of SU Land-Grant Campus should remember to:

Be Accurate

Make sure you have all the facts before you post. All research, data reporting and analysis made public on the Web should be verified for accuracy. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible. That is how you build the trust of your community.

Realize your posts are public

Remember your audience. Your online presence is available to the public at large. This includes prospective clients, students, colleagues, alumni and other stakeholders. Consider this in content selection before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm or provoke any of these groups. If you have any questions about the appropriateness of the material you are posting to a SU Land-Grant Campus social media site, please check with your supervisor or Office of Communications Services.

Keep confidential matters private

Do not post proprietary information about the SU Land-Grant Campus, including information about clients, students, alumni or employees. Information collected in connection with research may be protected under a Nondisclosure Agreement, research protocol or other applicable law or agreement. Any protected information must not be disclosed through social media.

Be transparent

If you are posting as a representative of the SU Land-Grant Campus, your posts are viewed as representing the views of the Campus, so make sure to post responsibly and with respect to others in your community. Your posts directly reflect upon the Campus.

Responding to negative comments

When you find yourself disagreeing with others, keep your comments appropriate and polite. If you find yourself in a position where the communication becomes antagonistic, avoid being defensive. Please be respectful of other people's opinions. Do not publish content containing slurs, personal insults or attacks,

profanity or obscenity, and do not engage in any conduct on a social media site that would not be acceptable in Southern University workplaces or classrooms.

If an employee is involved in an online altercation where disciplinary action seems necessary, the Office of the Chancellor and/or the Office of Human Resources shall be consulted and will determine an appropriate course of action for faculty and staff members.

Don't be afraid to ask for help

If you receive a question you cannot answer, forward the question to the proper authority. If you see incorrect information about the SU Land-Grant Campus, contact the Office of Communications Services at 225- 771-5669 for assistance. Also contact, the Director of the Office of Communication Services if you have trouble creating or monitoring your social media site.

Best Practices

- Protect confidential and proprietary information: Do not post confidential or proprietary information about the SU Land-Grant Campus, clients, employees or stakeholders. Employees who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination. Employees must adhere to state and federal laws related to security and privacy information.
- Encourage comments from followers of your social media platform, but monitor interaction to ensure that discussion does not attack individuals or entities, does not use offensive language and is not threatening. Reserve the right to remove inappropriate comments from users.
- Respect copyright and fair use: Be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the Campus. General information about copyright laws can be found on the U.S. Copyright Office website at <http://copyright.gov/>.
- Have a plan: Users should consider their messages, audiences and goals, as well as a strategy for keeping information on social media sites up-to-date. An Office of Communication Services staff person can assist and advise you with your social media planning.
- Link back to the SU Land-Grant Campus: Whenever possible, link back to the Campus' website. Ideally, posts should be brief and redirect a visitor to content that resides within the main website. When linking to a news article about the SU Land-Grant Campus, check with the proper authorities first.
- Do not use any of the SU Land-Grant Campus' logos or other images, or iconography on *personal* social media sites.
- Do not use the Campus' name to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate.
- Strive for accuracy: Get the facts straight before posting them on social media.
- Review content for grammatical and spelling errors: This is especially important if posting on behalf of the Campus' in any capacity.
- Be respectful: Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Responses should be considered carefully in light of how they could reflect on the Campus' and its institutional voice.
- Remember your audience: Be aware that a presence on social media is or easily can be made available to the public at large. This includes current employees, colleagues, and peers. Consider this before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm or provoke any of these groups.
- Terms of service: Obey the Terms of Service of any social media platform employed.

An Overview of Social Networking Sites:

Facebook: An online social networking service in which “Pages” representing individuals, businesses, organizations and brands share their story, interacting with an audience of “Friends.” Viewers may “like” or comment to support a status.

Twitter: A real-time information network that connects the user to the latest stories, ideas, opinions and news in a “Tweet” of 140 characters or less.

Instagram: A fun way to share and experience moments as they happen with the SU Land-Grant Campus community through a series of pictures, videos and captions.

YouTube: A social platform that allows billions of people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos. YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small.

Blog: A website (such as Tumblr) on which an individual or group of users record opinions, information, etc., typically in the form of a short article.

LinkedIn: A business-oriented social networking site encouraging brand awareness, development of professional identity, professional opportunities, business deals, as well as new ventures.

Pinterest: A content sharing service that allows members to "pin" images, videos and other objects to a virtual bulletin board. Users can create an unlimited amount of boards, each on a different topic.

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The Southern University Agricultural Land-Grant Campus is an entity of the Southern University System, Bobby R. Phills, Chancellor-Dean; Ray L. Belton, System President-Chancellor; Ann A. Smith, Chair, Board of Supervisors. It is issued in furtherance of the Cooperative Extension Work Act of December 1971, and the Agricultural Research Program, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. All educational programs conducted by the SU Land-Grant Campus are provided to all persons regardless of race, national origin, or disability.