



## **Social Media Guidelines**

*Updated August 2020*

San Diego State University recognizes the importance of social media networks including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube, and Instagram. For the purpose of these guidelines, social media includes blogs, university websites, personal websites used at least in part for official university activities (such as research, teaching, residential housing groups, recognized student organizations, etc.), social media networks, and other user-generated media channels.

Social media is a powerful tool to exchange information, raise the visibility of the university and engage with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the San Diego community. While social media is an effective communication tool, it also brings its own unique challenges. Individuals who contribute to official SDSU-affiliated social media accounts in their capacity as representatives of SDSU as a part of their employment must be mindful to post as a voice of the university, not their personal views.

The guidelines are intended to provide information to students, faculty, staff and administrators who contribute to social media on behalf of the university. Further, these guidelines can be a useful guidepost for ensuring that social media activity does not violate university policies and state or federal laws.

### **Guidelines for Social Media Use on Behalf of SDSU**

The following guidelines pertain to individuals contributing to SDSU-affiliated social media accounts:

**Official pages must be approved.** All SDSU-affiliated social media channels must be supervisor-approved and routed to Strategic Communications and Public Affairs (StratComm) prior to being published. Groups and fan pages on social media sites are easy to create and promote, sometimes making it difficult for users to identify “official” pages. However, these pages require input and maintenance to be effective. If you feel there’s a need and value to generating an official group or page for SDSU, ask your supervisor and consult with the Office

of Strategic Communications and Public Affairs before allocating time or resources on the endeavor.

Always plan for a staff or faculty member to oversee and monitor the social media account if students are contributing to the account. The staff or faculty providing oversight must also maintain administrative rights on the social media accounts. For example, the social media accounts must be connected to the department or oversight staff or faculty member's email address.

Before creating a page, check to see if there is already an existing profile to avoid creating duplicate pages. If you discover your department has a social media channel that is inactive or falsely presenting as an "official" page, please [contact the Office of Strategic Communications](#) for assistance.

Upon approval of your social media channels, your social media accounts will be listed on [San Diego State University's social media directory](#). Campus social media managers are also encouraged to review social media best practices and attend social media workshops throughout the semester.

**Be respectful and responsible.** While managing SDSU social media accounts (division, college, program or other unit-level accounts), be mindful both of what you are including and be mindful of how the information will be received. It is not the university's intent to post anything that is illegal (such as obscene, defamatory, or libelous) or that is contrary to its mission and principles. If you have any concerns, speak directly with your supervisor. You may also contact StratComm for consultation by emailing [stratcomm@sdsu.edu](mailto:stratcomm@sdsu.edu).

**Keep legal and policy requirements in mind.** University social media accounts are subject to existing legal and policy requirements. Individuals contributing to SDSU-affiliated social media accounts must follow university policies and federal requirements such as the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA), [Title IX](#), and [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act](#) (HIPAA) of 1996.

**Be Selective. Not everything needs a response.** SDSU is a large public institution and, as such, is open to criticism about any number of operational or policy actions. When you see criticism online, don't take them personally. And don't feel compelled to respond to each and every criticism. If you have the ability to correct an error or factually incorrect statement, or give someone direction to a web page that does so, that's helpful.

Do not engage in debate, or simply tell someone they are wrong. When responding, be professional and courteous, as you are representing the university. Always view the profile before engaging or responding to criticism.

*Example: I can't believe SDSU is raising tuition for Mission Valley.*

*Appropriate Response: We appreciate you voicing your concerns and hope to clear up this misconception. The SDSU Mission Valley plan does not increase student tuition or fees. The California State University system-wide student costs are set by the Board of Trustees.*

Please note that the question above aims to provide clarity to a user's question in a kind and professional manner. Provide accurate information to comments when you're able to do so.

If you feel there is a post or comment that is sensitive and needs a response, forward it to your supervisor or to SDSU's Social Media Strategist, Melissa Porter at [mporter2@sdsu.edu](mailto:mporter2@sdsu.edu).

**Do not delete comments.** A California State University (CSU) system-sponsored platform is a government forum. As a governmental entity, the CSU may not restrict the content of most speech, including comments by the public on the CSU's social media accounts. The social media platforms themselves (such as Facebook or Twitter) are not governmental entities; they can and do have established community guidelines about appropriate commentary on their sites. If you believe that a comment may violate a social media platform's community guidelines, then please flag it for StratComm by emailing [stratcomm@sdsu.edu](mailto:stratcomm@sdsu.edu). Our team will triage the issue to the appropriate team to manage. You may also report the issue via the [general incident reporting form](#) found online.

**Protect confidential and proprietary information.** Social computing blurs many of the traditional boundaries between internal and external communications. Be mindful of the difference. Sensitive information should never be shared via social networks, even via "Direct Messages" that are considered private. Mistakes happen, and in the world of social media, they spread rapidly and they are impossible to take back.

**SDSU-affiliated social media pages contact information should be up-to-date.** All social media pages related to SDSU should include accurate contact information, including email addresses and phone numbers. Additionally, the social media pages should include the correct link that directs back to SDSU's web properties.

**Review before posting.** Always review all aspects of a social media post before publishing, including the copy, multimedia, link and call-to-action. All posts should be factually accurate

and grammatically correct. If you're unsure about a post, get a second opinion from a colleague or supervisor.

**Be careful when using multimedia elements, including photographs, video images, printed materials.** Be aware of the media (photos, videos, GIFs) used in social media posts. All media used should be high-quality and related to your department or organization. Do not use copyrighted photos, video or music without permission or license for use. The [SDSU photo gallery](#) is also available to the campus for university use. Seek consultation with StratComm by emailing [stratcomm@sdsu.edu](mailto:stratcomm@sdsu.edu) to ensure that you have the correct intellectual property rights to use the image. Similarly, ensure that you have appropriate rights before posting any copyrighted written materials. Again, StratComm can assist in determining whether such rights have been secured.

When photographing people for print, web or video projects, please use a [model release form](#) for adults or a [minor model release form](#) for children under 18 to ensure that subjects are aware of reproduction and usage rights of their image.

**Be active and protect the voice of the university.** Remember to update and monitor your social media accounts regularly. Posting relevant and timely content is key to establishing a successful social media presence. Additionally, it's important to remember that social media is not a one-way street. Actively responding to comments and engaging with your audience will keep your followers interested. When interacting with your audience, protect the voice of the university by engaging in a professional, respectful way.

**Follow San Diego State University brand guidelines.** When creating or maintaining an SDSU-affiliated social media account, follow [SDSU brand guidelines](#). Doing so will create consistent branding across the university's social media accounts and will show your audience that your page is an authentic SDSU page.

**Have a plan.** Before getting started with social media, it's crucial to have a plan. During the planning stages, assign the designated team members that will help maintain and monitor your social media channels. While creating your strategy for social media, identify your goals, target audience and how you will measure success. It's important to also identify what type of content you plan to share on social media and if there are any opportunities to collaborate with other partners on campus.

**Make it accessible.** Remember the importance of accessibility when creating social media content. This includes using alt-text description on social media platforms that allow you to do

so, including captioning on videos, and being aware of color contrast on any social media imagery. For more information about accessibility, visit <https://accessibility.sdsu.edu>.

**Maintain good password hygiene.** Keep your SDSUid password secret. Your SDSUid is your single identifier to securely access many campus information technology services including your email, financial information and academic record. Never share it with anyone, including friends, family, or any email sender claiming to be from Library Hub, Computing Services, or any help desk. Also, do not use your SDSUid password for accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, or your bank, or re-use your personal passwords for your SDSUid password. Also, regularly update passwords for SDSU accounts, either once or twice each year. Strong passwords protect against intrusion by others; consider using a phrase that you will remember, and sprinkle in numbers or special characters to make it even stronger.

### **Recommended Best Practices for Employee Personal Social Media Use**

We have been asked to provide recommended best practices for personal social media use. The above guidelines, or any parts of them, can apply as best practices for your own personal accounts. In addition, there are a number of other sites that provide best practices for social media use, and we recommend that you consult them as well. We also provide the following reminders:

**Be transparent; identify yourself.** If you choose to comment on SDSU business policies, procedures or operations on your social media account, be transparent and state that this is your opinion and not necessarily that of SDSU. Your personal social media should not be set up in a way that leads others to believe that it is a university sanctioned or SDSU-managed site. It should be apparent (and clearly stated) that your opinions on your personal sites are yours and do not represent the views and opinions of SDSU or the CSU.

Example: Twitter bio to include “RT ≠ endorsements” or “Views are my own”.

**Be mindful of confidential and proprietary information.** Be mindful to avoid sharing confidential and proprietary information regarding the university on social media.

**Don't forget your day job.** Consistent with the CSU Responsible Use Policy, personal blogging should generally be done on personal computers and on personal time, as to not interfere with work performance.

### **Social Media Resources**

There are several social media resources available:

- Request a [Social Media Consultation](#)
- Contact San Diego State University [Strategic Communications and Public Affairs](#)
- [SDSU's Free Speech site](#)
- The California State University system's [social media and free speech guidelines](#)