

# KNOW



## SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES 2026



## **3356-4-26 Social media management and engagement on official and affiliated university channels.**

Responsibility Division/Office:	Office of Marketing and Communications
Responsible Officer:	VP of Strategic Communications
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**(A) Policy Statement.** The university recognizes the importance of social media as an evolving technology to communicate relevant information and enhance the university's reputation and profile.

**(B) Purpose.** To provide guidance for current and future use of official and affiliated university social media channels.

**(C) Scope.** This policy applies to individuals including university faculty, staff, volunteers and students, including student employees, who create for, contribute to, and/or are granted access to official or affiliated university social media channels.

**(D) Definitions.**

1. "Social media" - internet-based applications that are accessible and scalable allowing users to post content on topics in various forms. Some forms of social media include: platforms, blogs, and mobile-based technologies that enable users to create and share content and engage with other users.
2. "Official university social media channel" - any social media channel having a direct affiliation with the university. These include channels that are sponsored, controlled, or managed by academic departments, schools, and colleges; university offices, and academic and administrative leadership.
3. "Affiliated social media channel" - social media channels created by a university-sponsored organization as part of its activities.
4. "Post" - publication of content in any form on social media.
5. "Collab/repost/share" - refers to any instance in which content created by one account or individual is distributed, co-published, or featured on another account's social media platform.

**(E) Parameters.**

1. The university's office of marketing and communications shall establish, and when appropriate, revise guidelines and/or best practices for university-sponsored and affiliated social media channels. (Please refer to the university [social media webpage](#)).
2. Individual departments, colleges, programs, or administrative offices may establish additional guidelines specific to their areas of study or responsibilities. However, these guidelines must be reviewed and approved by the university's office of marketing and communications prior to implementation.
3. Official and affiliated university sponsored and social media channels and posts are subject to all applicable state and federal laws and regulations. These include, but are not limited to, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and copyright law, university policies, guidelines, and best practices established by the office of marketing and communications, and "The Student Code of Conduct."

4. Information created and stored on official and affiliated university social media channels may be subject to Ohio public record law and public records requests.
5. The university's office of marketing and communications reserves the right to hide or delete comments, or to remove, mute, unfollow, or block users on any social media platform without notifying the affected user. If a comment needs to be deleted, it will be documented.

**(F) Procedures.**

1. Prior to implementation, each new official and affiliated university social media channel must be reviewed and registered with the office of marketing and communications. The office of marketing and communications shall be added as a social media administrator for each official social media channel for the purpose of providing coverage during departmental transitions, which can result in lapses of maintenance or "lost" accounts.
2. Each official and affiliated university social media account shall have a full-time university employee as an account manager. The account manager is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and all other relevant university policies.
3. Those who create or post content on an official or affiliated university social media channel are expected to follow digital accessibility standards as defined in rule 3356-4-22 of the Administrative Code (university policy 3356-4-22, "Digital accessibility standard").
4. Individual users may not instigate collabs from their personal accounts with official and affiliated university accounts. Content originating from personal accounts should not be reposted, shared, or featured on official and affiliated university channels unless it reflects the mission, vision, and values of the university and complies with brand standards.
5. Individual users may not use personal accounts to contact, direct message, or collect contact information from prospective students, or members of the public in an official university capacity. All official communications must occur through approved official or affiliated university channels.

**(G) Enforcement.**

1. Noncompliance with this policy will be referred for review by the appropriate supervisory authority and may result in corrective action, including, but not limited to, termination of employment.

# Overview

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## Social Media Guidelines:

Youngstown State University social networking channels, such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, are in place with the purpose of providing a convenient avenue for students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members alike to connect and discuss topics related to the atmosphere and activities of YSU.

The social media guidelines are a set of rules and regulations put in place to ensure that all YSU affiliated accounts display a positive brand identity and reputation for Youngstown State University across social media. All colleges, departments, organizations, units, chapters, and groups are affiliates of Youngstown State University and are expected to adhere to these guidelines.

## Account Creation

### University Affiliated Account Application Process

Please follow the steps below to begin the application process. After completing the application, our Social Media Coordinator will be in touch with further instruction.

1. Submit an application for a new account: [New Account Application](#).
2. After completing the New Account Application, the Social Media Team will reach out to schedule a meeting. During this meeting, social media strategy and goals will be outlined in detail.
3. After the meeting, the new account can be created following the strategy approved by the Social Media Team.

Please note: As an effort to remain aligned with university strategy, it is possible that some applicants will be denied. However, the Social Media Team will assist to identify possible solutions to help applicants reach their intended goal.

### Naming Your Account

Be intentional when naming your account, as to not confuse your intended audience. Include "YSU" before the name of your organization or department to help your account be more accessible and show up in search results. (Don't forget, all YSU Accounts must be [registered](#) with the Office of Marketing and Communications).

### Choose Your Profile Picture

All University-Affiliated Accounts must have their profile picture approved by the Social Media Team to ensure correct formatting. College, division, and department accounts must visually represent Youngstown State University through proper use of the Block Y or approved College Badges in their profile picture.

### Creating Your Bio/About Section

Tell your audience exactly what they'll find on your page. Your bio should include necessary information, such as who you are, what you do, where you are located, and how to get in touch

with you. Make sure to add a link to your page on the website to let people learn more! If you are participating in or running a social media account for yourself or an organization (such as a student organization) that may reference the University, please remember to use a disclaimer such as: "The postings on this account are my own and do not necessarily represent the positions, strategies, or opinions of Youngstown State University."

*Example - Campus Recreation:*

*Campus Recreation Center at Youngstown State University*

*Get Rec'd, Penguins 🐧 Join our cutting-edge facility for innovative wellness and fitness programs, club and intramural sports, and more!*

*<https://ysu.edu/campus-recreation>*

## **Monitoring**

Watching what your audience is talking about and staying up-to-date on messages is crucial to running a successful social media account. Social listening (monitoring) is a commonly used tool to help do both of those. From there, you can publish posts and track mentions, comments and messages. If you're interested in a social media management platform, set up a meeting with the Social Media Team to discuss specific needs and platform recommendations.

## **Strategy**

Figuring out how you want to utilize your social media account is important. Rather than going into it without a clear plan, the Social Media Team will sit down with your department, college, or organization to identify clear goals and content strategies for your accounts. For training on how to evaluate social media analytics and performance, schedule a meeting with the [Social Media Team](#).

If you need help creating a flyer or other graphic for an event, reach out to [Creative Branding and Design](#).

## **Collaborations and Reposting**

As an affiliate of the broader YSU community, you may be compelled to repost, reshare, or collaborate (Instagram) on posts for a variety of reasons. YSU supports these actions, so long as they adhere to the following basic requirements:

- The content is relevant to both parties.
- The content does not include any inappropriate language or imagery.

## Account Registration

All YSU affiliated accounts are property of the University. A process has been implemented to guarantee all accounts are registered with the Office of Marketing and Communications. Under these guidelines, accounts must be registered to guarantee:

- A seamless transfer of administrative privileges if/when an account manager leaves the department or university for any reason.
- In the event of a crisis, the account manager can remain aligned with the university [crisis communication plan](#).
- All social media account managers are adhering to the social media guidelines.

If there is a change in administrative privileges, please contact the Social Media Team.

[Register Your Existing Account Here](#)

## Content Guidelines

- 1. TERMS OF SERVICE.** Be mindful of the terms of service (TOS) of each social media network. Most of these include prohibiting the use of copyrighted materials, zero tolerance policies with harassment and threats, privacy policies, etc. Violation of the network's TOS may result in a suspension of your account by the social network.
- 2. POST MINDFULLY.** Remember that you are posting through a YSU affiliated account and will be held accountable for all posts. Do not use profanity, expletives, display alcoholic beverages, promote substance abuse, openly bash Youngstown State and the surrounding area, or argue with someone through a YSU affiliated account. Doing so will result in the loss of YSU social media privileges. While everyone holds diverse opinions, it's crucial to recognize that, when representing YSU, your views don't reflect those of the University. As a public institution, we maintain neutrality to honor the diverse perspectives of the faculty, staff, and students we serve. Any disagreements with the administration should not be expressed on official YSU accounts, including divisions, departments, programs, or any other entity of the university.
- 3. IGNORE NEGATIVE ENGAGEMENT.** Do not engage with individuals that are seemingly looking to bully or threaten others online, often referred to as cyberbullies, spammers, or instigators. Additionally, it is not encouraged to become involved in any other inappropriate interactions.
  - a. Negative feedback does not necessarily mean negative engagement. Occasionally, users will express an opinion toward a situation or experience they've had on campus. If someone messages or mentions you regarding this situation, please respond in a respectful manner. Some situations may not warrant a response, however there are instances where their feedback could provide valuable insight to help us improve as an institution. Our followers want to know that we see them and are listening to what they have to say.
  - b. Do not hide or delete a comment or post just because it is negative, but only if it contains spam/links, profanity, hate speech, sexual harassment, attacks on others, commercial advertisements, political endorsements or unlawful activity. Try to resolve any problems by responding as soon as possible when appropriate to do so.
  - c. Please use discretion while monitoring your social media accounts. If you should come across an interaction that has escalated to a posed threat or has a potential of violence, screenshot the interaction and email to YSU Police at [police@ysu.edu](mailto:police@ysu.edu) and the Social Media Team at [social@ysu.edu](mailto:social@ysu.edu).

**4. COMMERCIAL PARTNERS.** As a tax-exempt university, university affiliated accounts are not permitted to endorse commercial partners. If a commercial partner is sponsoring a campus event, the affiliated account is allowed to recognize the sponsor or share their logo. However, they cannot promote the commercial partner through product demonstrations or endorsements.

## Ohio Open Records Law

As a public institution, our communication records are subject to the [Ohio Open Records Law](#). As such, all publicly released content must be archived and accessible at any time. If the need to delete a post arises, screenshot/archive the content and save it to an accessible location. You may then proceed with deleting the post. Please keep this in mind when posting to social media networks on behalf of the University.

## Branding Identity

The Brand Style Guide explains the why, what, and how of YSU's visual identity. It represents what YSU stands for in peoples' minds and is shaped by every interaction they have with us. Please reference this guide when creating content for your social media accounts. This includes using the correct logos, colors, fonts, and editorial style. This guide is a living document and can change as new applications and needs for the brand identity arise.

[Brand Style Guide](#)

## Crisis Communications

In a time of crisis, the official University accounts are the source for correct information as a part of our university crisis communication plan. Refrain from posting and suspend all scheduled posts on University-affiliated accounts. If you control a social media page affiliated with the university, look for these posts and update your own page(s) by directing your followers to any of the main University accounts or [ysu.edu](http://ysu.edu). Do not try to craft your own message or retype the message on your own.

If you receive anything incriminating to your specific social media channel, send that to YSU Police and University Marketing & Communications ASAP.

If you receive inquiries or questions from your audience regarding the crisis, direct them to the main YSU social media accounts.

**YSU Police Communications Center** - [330.941.3527](tel:330.941.3527)

## Best Practices:

### Strategy

When deciding your intended audience, consider the following questions:

1. Am I using it to communicate important dates, deadlines, etc.?
2. Am I using it to market and grow our program or organization size?
3. Am I sharing news about what our students are doing?

Decide which social channel fits your messages and intended audience best, as not all channels serve the same purpose. Keep in mind, a presence on all platforms is not needed.

At the university level, we have identified the following groups as our target audiences:

- Prospective Students: High school students or transfer students interested in pursuing higher education.
- Current Students: Enrolled undergraduate and graduate students at YSU.
- Non-Traditional Students: Enrolled undergraduate and graduate students at YSU who pursue education outside the typical path of full-time enrollment immediately after high school, often due to factors like age, work, family responsibilities, or delayed enrollment.
- Alumni: Graduates of YSU who have completed their studies.
- Parents and Guardians: Parents and guardians of prospective or current YSU students.
- Faculty and Staff: Academic and non-academic staff members associated with YSU.
- Community Partners: Local brands, companies, or organizations who partner with YSU-affiliated entities for any reason.
- Community: The broader public connected to the institution, such as local residents, alumni, families, partners, and supporters

Recommended platforms for university affiliated accounts:



#### **Facebook:**

- Audience: faculty/staff, alumni, parents, some students, community partners, and members of the community
- Content Suggestions: sharing stories (news, events, accomplishments, etc.)



#### **LinkedIn:**

- Audience: faculty/staff, alumni, community partners, current students
- Content Suggestions: Alumni, student and faculty success stories, research highlights, career development and community event promotions



#### **Instagram:**

- Audience: prospective and current students, alumni
- Content Suggestions: photo or video (no flyers or graphics within videos, these are not accessible), sharing student perspectives through takeovers, utilizing stories

Depending on your audience, this will determine which platform suits your objectives best. It's highly recommended to start with one social channel and grow a fan base of followers who consistently engage with your content before moving on to the next platform.

To discuss platform selection or for training on how to evaluate social media analytics and performance, schedule a meeting with the [Social Media Team](#).

## Passwords

All social media passwords should follow the [password standards](#) from Information Services & Technology. Passwords should be updated at least quarterly, and again when a social media administrator (student, faculty, or staff) leaves his/her position at YSU.

In the event that all administrators are locked out of a channel, reach out to the Social Media Team for guidance. It is encouraged to share account credentials with the Social Media Team upon registration for the purpose of account recovery. **Please note that any account that does not post within a six-month period will be asked to update the content or deactivate the account.**

## Takeovers

YSU Instagram Takeovers are used to share an authentic view of what our students are currently doing on and off campus and to chat with other students throughout the day. All requests will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis. Please keep in mind that not all requests will be approved and are subject to Marketing and Communications staff approval.

[Instagram Takeover Request](#)

## Guidelines For Student Organizations

- All Student Organizations with a social media presence must register their accounts with the YSU Social Media Team [here](#).
- It is strongly recommended that student clubs and organizations designate the Social Media Team and/or their faculty advisor as administrators on their social media pages. This ensures continued access control, especially in the event of leadership changes or graduations. Club advisors can then facilitate access for new club officers and members.
- Make a concerted effort to transfer login information and administrator privileges from one student organization administrator to the next. This practice avoids the need to create new pages each academic year, reducing confusion among club members regarding the “official” or “correct” page for the club.
- Whenever possible, include contact information for your student organization on the social media page. If the page serves as a recruitment tool, potential members should know how to connect with the group.
- Refrain from using profanity, displaying alcoholic beverages, and promoting substance abuse. It is also highly discouraged to openly criticize Youngstown State and the surrounding area, or engage in arguments through a YSU-affiliated account.

Student clubs and organizations’ social media pages are considered “unofficial” and should refrain from using the Youngstown State University (YSU) logo. It is advisable to add a statement to the profile clarifying that the page is not an official YSU social media account, and any posted content reflects personal or organizational opinions.

## Best Practices

### Be Authentic:

- Clearly state your identity and professional affiliations.
- Only remove offensive or spam content.
- Promptly admit and rectify mistakes transparently.
- Share information based on firsthand knowledge, providing source links when needed.

### Be Sensible:

- Choose usernames thoughtfully, as some platforms may not allow changes.
- Verify content accuracy and ensure proper permissions for written content, images, and videos.
- Maintain constructive and respectful communication, avoiding negative remarks about other entities.
- Exercise caution when discussing controversial topics.

### Be Engaging and Accessible:

- Respond to questions, concerns, and compliments within 24-36 hours, striving for quicker response times.
- Keep social media profiles updated with fresh content, aiming for at least one post per week.
- If unable to manage the page, delegate or delete the profile/page.
- Include a contact email address in all club profiles/pages.
- Maintain a natural and conversational tone.
- Diversify content with text, photos, videos, and poll questions

## Getting the Word Out

There are so many notable moments happening around campus, and we want to highlight them. Keep in touch with our Social Media Team by sending in any interesting stories over to [social@ysu.edu](mailto:social@ysu.edu).

Keep in mind that our social media accounts are an outward-facing marketing tool, so we may not be able to post everything we receive. We'll do our best to highlight the most interesting and exciting things going on at YSU.

## Contact

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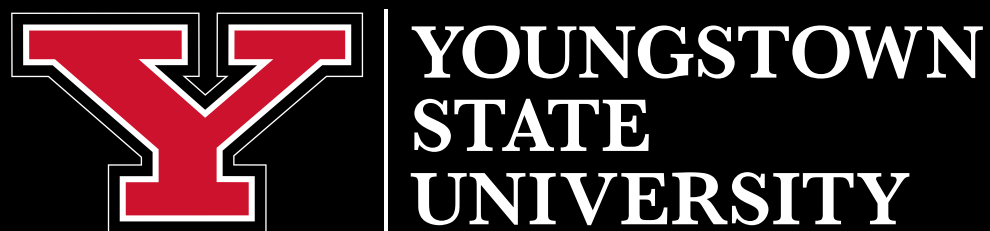
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