

Northwestern Oklahoma State University

Social Media Policy

Introduction

Northwestern Oklahoma State University has developed the following policy to recognize the rights of students and employees to use social media and to help clarify how best to enhance and protect personal, professional, and institutional reputations when participating in social media. For this purpose, social media is defined as media designed to be disseminated through online social interaction and created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Examples include but are not limited to LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

Both in professional and institutional roles, employees and students need to follow the same legal and behavioral standards online as they would in real life. All laws, professional expectations, policies and procedures for interacting with students, parents, alumni, donors, media, and other University constituents apply to use of social media. Employees and students are responsible for anything they post to social media sites when representing themselves in a Northwestern official capacity.

This policy is subject to change as needed.

General Policies for Use of Social Media

Use of University Electronic Communications Network

Information stored on any University-owned communications equipment is considered by law to be property of Northwestern Oklahoma State University and the State of Oklahoma.

Electronic data, including that involving social media sites, are subject to University storage and monitoring, and may be used in University or external investigations.

Posting to University Social Media Pages

The University welcomes interaction from users of social media on its social media pages, but does reserve the right to remove any and all content from sites at its discretion. Content posted by users does not reflect the positions or opinions of the University.

Student Information

Student information is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Generally, any student record maintained by the University and personally identifiable to a student is considered an education record under FERPA and is considered private. Any information obtained from a student's education record by an employee, student or volunteer in the course of performing University duties shall not be posted on a social media site. Violators of this policy are subject to University disciplinary action.

Employee Information

Any information about a University employee obtained through employee records and performance evaluations should be considered confidential. Posting of such information on a social media site is prohibited and will be considered a violation of University policy. Violators

of this policy are subject to University disciplinary action.

Health Information

Health information of any employee or student is considered private and protected by state and federal law. Violators of this policy are subject to University disciplinary action. Employees and students of the Division of Nursing may be subject to additional privacy policies as set forth by that academic unit.

University Proprietary Property

Use of the University's logos, trademarks or trade names on social media sites is strictly prohibited unless prior written permission from the Office of University Relations has been received.

Personal Individual Use

Individual users, when speaking in their personal capacity and not on behalf of the University, should consider using personal (not University) email addresses when setting up accounts via social media. However, Facebook only allows .edu email addresses into University Networks, so using your University email is acceptable for Facebook if you wish to become a member of the Northwestern Oklahoma State University Network. Individual users of social media are personally responsible for the information they communicate and are reminded that anything posted can reflect upon the University, even if a disclaimer is included. Posts may result in liability for individual users.

Freedom of Expression

The University recognizes that freedom of expression is vital to the University's educational mission and intellectual exchanges are encouraged. Such an environment must foster acceptance, respect, openness and understanding. Student or employee posts on social media sites can result in disciplinary action when these posts are conducted on University time, on University-owned equipment, on a University web page, and/or would violate applicable federal and state laws or University policies.

Departmental and Student Organization Sites

Academic and administrative departments, and officially-recognized student clubs and organizations, may have their own social media sites upon written approval from the Office of University Relations. However, it is recommended that these entities choose to leverage the main Northwestern pages first, rather than create additional sites. Creating multiple departmental social media sites dilutes the University's existing social media brand. Additional sites should be minimized and should only be created where a valid need exists.

- A full-time staff member from the Office of University Relations must be given access to all social media sites through password or administrator privileges.
- All departmental and student club sites must have a full-time appointed employee who is identified as being responsible for content (not a student). Ideally, the head of the department should review this content.

- 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.
- Whenever possible, link back to the Northwestern website or main social media pages. Ideally, posts should be brief and redirect a visitor to content that resides within the Northwestern web environment.
- Protect the institutional voice. Posts on social media sites should protect Northwestern's institutional voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste. No individual Northwestern department should construe its social media site as representing the University as a whole. Consider this when naming pages or accounts, selecting a profile picture or icon, and selecting content to post—names, profile images, and posts should all be clearly linked to the particular department or unit rather than to the institution as a whole.
- Departmental and student organization sites should be created using University email accounts established for their areas, not personal accounts or logins. Ex. recruit@nwosu.edu was used for <http://twitter.com/NWOSUAdmissions>. Contact Computer Services to request an email account if one has not been established. The University email address and password used to create this type of site will be provided to University Relations. For Facebook, a member of the University Relations staff will be given administrative access to all University-related Facebook Pages rather than email addresses/passwords.
- Mention and spell out Northwestern Oklahoma State University in its entirety in social media posts when possible to clearly identify the institution. Use of Northwestern or NWOSU is acceptable.
- The Office of University Relations would like to post information of interest to the campus community, as well as to future students and alumni on the main Northwestern social media sites. Information to be posted should be emailed to eedavis@nwosu.edu. Information can be scheduled to post far in advance and departments are encouraged to provide calendar items as soon as they are solidified.
- Obey the Terms of Service of any social media platform employed.
- Departmental or student organization sites that fail to abide by the University's Social Media Policy may be removed or disabled.

Best Practices

This section applies to those providing official college postings on behalf of a University unit, though the guidelines may be helpful for anyone posting on social media in any capacity.

- Think twice before posting. Privacy does not exist in the world of social media.

Consider what could happen if a post becomes widely known and how that may reflect both on the poster and the college. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. If you wouldn't say it at a conference or to a member of the media, consider whether you should post it online. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, ask your supervisor for input or contact the Office of University Relations at ext. 8478.

- 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 University 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 would reflect on the poster and/or the University and its institutional voice.
- Remember your audience. Be aware that a presence in the social media world is or easily can be made available to the public at large. This includes prospective students, current students, current employers, and colleagues. Consider this before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm, or provoke any of these groups.
- On personal sites, identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as a Northwestern faculty or staff member online, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the institution.

Social Media at Northwestern

Northwestern participates on many major social media sites. We can be found on:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Pinterest