

Social Media Guidelines

This document includes recommendations for official use of social media outlets for CSU Channel Islands (CI). These recommendations apply to employees or contractors communicating on behalf of the University through the use of blogs, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, wikis, social networks, virtual worlds, or any other social media community. Social media offers new ways to engage with constituents, colleagues, and the world at large. This new model can help build stronger, more successful relationships if used properly. Online social networks allow you to listen, share and engage your constituents.

All existing laws (federal, state and local), the CSU and CI regulations and policies apply to users of communication and information technology resources including social media services, including not only laws and regulations that are specific to computers, networks, and communication technology, but also those that apply generally to personal conduct.

Please notify the [Communication & Marketing](#) office of social media outlets created for University academic programs, departments or areas so they may be included on CI's [Social Media Directory](#) Web page.

If you participate in social media, please follow these guidelines for a successful presence:

1. **Be strategic.** Before you start a social media community, develop a strategy. Determine the goals and outcomes of your community and how much time realistically you will have to devote to social media.
2. **Your community should be staff driven.** Student interns and assistants can be very helpful in maintaining your social media community; however, it is highly recommended that staff actively supervise student work for accuracy.
3. **Know who is engaging in your community.** Keep an eye on who is engaging within your community. Block inappropriate profiles or users that create an inhospitable environment and report these problems to the [Communication & Marketing](#) office for assistance. Be mindful of community members who are using your community to post spam-like sales advertisements. It is recommended that you remove sales-type postings if they are out of context, annoying or disruptive to your community.
4. **Be professional and discreet.** There can be a fine line between healthy debate and incendiary reaction. You do not need to respond to every criticism or barb. Frame your comments and posts to invite differing points of view without inflaming others.

5. **Do not disclose student information and redirection is recommended over advice.** Do not give specific advice, i.e. counseling, major requirements, financial aid, etc., to individuals through social media outlets. Redirect individuals to appropriate areas or contact them via telephone or email to provide further assistance.
6. **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 and parents, current students, colleagues, and peers. Consider this before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm or provoke any of these groups.
7. **It's a conversation; the value of your community grows as members contribute.** Talk to your readers like you would talk to real people in professional situations. In other words, avoid overly sophisticated or "composed" language. Do not be afraid to bring in your own personality when appropriate. Consider content that is open-ended and invites response.
8. **Practice good grammar and think twice before posting.** Review content for grammatical and spelling errors before posting. You undermine your credibility and therefore the University's credibility by using incorrect or bad grammar. If you are about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, then take a minute to review these guidelines. Consider legal and ethical implications before you make a message public and how your message might affect perception of your area and the University.
9. **Commit to learning how to use each social media outlet effectively.** Each type of outlet (Facebook, Twitter, blog, wiki, etc.) will likely require a different communication strategy.
10. **Actively maintain your social media community.** Make sure that you are posting current content several times per day for each social media outlet that you use and are actively engaging users. Social media is real-time and information is expected to be distributed quickly. You should not let your social community go inactive; non-activity reflects poorly upon the University.