



Social Media Guidelines

PURPOSE: NJCU maintains University-wide social media channels designed to serve a broad base of constituents. In addition to these main channels, individual departments may operate their own social media channels, which serve targeted or niche audiences. While each department oversees its own social media channel(s), all NJCU social media accounts have an impact on the University. In order to ensure that channels are being properly maintained in the event of staff turnover and so forth, a central database compiled by the Office of Communication, University Advancement, has been designed to ensure continuity within established channels. All departments with social media channels should provide the names of social media account administrators as well as their NJCU phone numbers and email addresses to the Communications office. Departments also should provide account login information including username and associated email address for any University-operated accounts. This information will be kept confidential and used for access during emergency situations only.

Please note: This does NOT apply to any personal social media accounts held by NJCU employees or students.

SCOPE: Members of the NJCU community—faculty, staff and students. As stakeholders of the University, each individual who communicates via these channels on behalf of the University is expected to follow these guidelines. Important to keep in mind is that the goal of social media is to increase the collective benefit of sharing our story via these channels, thus creating a robust and dynamic digital presence designed to help the University fulfill its mission of providing excellence in education to a diverse student population.

BACKGROUND: Since its mainstream adoption within the past 10 years¹ social media has transformed the ways in which we communicate. Throughout this time, education, awareness, usage, and strategy have continued to evolve.

Amidst these ongoing iterations, social media remains at its core a vehicle for creating and maintaining conversation. In this regard, those who engage in social media must ensure they are researching, listening, communicating out, and responding in ways that mirror any other type of conversation.

As applied to New Jersey City University (NJCU), social media channels provide an important means by which to tell our story. Our social channels provide opportunities to position and promote the University and to foster engagement with a range of audiences.

¹ <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/social-media-history>

POLICY:

NJCU Social Media Policy

The Social Media Policy can be found in the NJCU Employee Handbook:
[NJCU Employee Handbook](#)

Social Media: Guidelines for Success

Areas to Address *Before* Launching Social Media

Every successful social media channel or campaign begins with spending time at the outset on a plan. When considering creation of an NJCU social media account, be sure you and your department can adequately address the following:

- Do I have buy-in from my immediate supervisor? The department head?
- What is the purpose of this channel (e.g., to create awareness, to provide important updates, to give insights into current research)?
- What are your short- and long-term goals for establishing a social media channel?
- Who is your primary audience? Secondary or other audiences?
- How will you measure your successes (Note: Everything in social media is measurable, and social media sites generally have built-in analytics that are free and simple to use. Be sure to have a plan in place to capture and assess metrics before you launch a site.)
- Have you set the right expectations? Bear in mind that like any other channel for communication, social media channels will take time and attention.
- Are you resourced appropriately to maintain a regular and consistent content schedule? Note: If you are uncertain about the time commitment, try posting or blogging before you make the site public. If the commitment seems too great, pare down your strategy, or hold off until you can adequately resource the effort.
- If you do find yourself unable to maintain an existing site, it is best to turn the account off or set it to private until you are able to resource the effort once again. Inactive social media accounts reflect negatively on any organization. If you are finding it difficult to create content for your social media account, please consult with Communications to discuss ideas and other options.

Best Practices

While social media platforms continue to ebb and flow among demographic groups, your strategy should remain constant: Providing value-added content designed to foster engagement. Your strategy should be based on content as opposed to channel so that when the next social media craze arrives, you will be ready to migrate your content to where your audience is. Applying these guidelines will ensure that you are optimizing the return on behalf of your department, while mitigating risk to yourself or the University.

Make Your Content Discoverable

If you have done the work to create your social media channels and fill them with substantive and value-added content, you will want to ensure that you are attracting audiences to visit these sites.

Some helpful tips:

- Be sure to use NJCU in the title of your social media account.
- Avoid acronyms for your department for audiences who may be unfamiliar with your area and to ensure that keywords related to your department show up in an online search.
- Promote your social media channels in other channels, and give audiences a reason to tune in (e.g., “Follow us on Twitter for campus activities, news, and more”).
- In the profile section of each social media account you create, include a statement that states your affiliation with NJCU.
- Be sure to present the same profile description, avatar, and other standard information on all social media accounts. This helps to bolster your credibility as audiences will see alignment and consistency across channels.
- Promote the NJCU brand by using only the official NJCU logos and marks found in the University’s [Graphic Style Guidelines](#).
- Choose a recognizable profile image or avatar. This image should be iconic and make it easy for users to identify your department. Should you require assistance with selection or sizing of the image you select, please contact [Communications and Marketing](#).

Customize Posts by Channel

While you may determine that you wish to post the same types of content on multiple social media channels, be sure to consider that the style and content should be modified to best reflect the channel and its unique audience. You may also choose to reserve some channels for one type of content (e.g., Twitter may be used for real-time updates, alerts, and so forth, while Facebook may focus on links to news stories or event exclusives). Some redundancy across channels likely makes sense, but careful strategy will optimize your efforts.

The Importance of Metrics

One of the biggest risks to any social media campaign is that of wasted time. As noted, everything is measurable in social media, so be sure to measure everything. All social media channels have built-in analytics, so take the time to identify them before you begin. In addition to quantitative measures, incorporate ongoing review. No comments to a blog post? No likes on a Facebook post? Consider your content strategy, and revise accordingly. Analyze your content to enhance engagement within a social media channel. Use analytic tools to assess your progress and watch for trends in terms of content that users respond to positively. If you are managing multiple channels, you may select a web-based dashboard such as [Sprout Social](#) or [Hootsuite](#).

Create a Content Strategy and Staffing Plan

Your content strategy should consist of types of content, as well as when and where you will post. Consistency is important, so once you have a content strategy, stick to it. Ideally, you will want to designate at least two staff members to serve as administrators for each of your social media accounts. This helps to ensure that should a staff member be out unexpectedly and so forth, that your social media channels will remain active. If you are the sole content provided for your channels and find you will be unable to post within your routine schedule, be sure to announce this on your site. Failing to post once a

schedule has been set can not only cause a decrease in audience members, it can also compromise your credibility. At the very least, be sure to include a general phone number and/or email address so that audiences have a means of contacting your department.

Relevant, Value-Added Content

Think about how the content might advance your department's initiatives and goals. Write in a manner that represents your department. Keep content up to date, and provide regular and timely value-added content that encourages feedback and interaction. When possible and appropriate, include visuals such as photos or videos, as this can increase engagement. Use a tone that is personable and informative, and provide audiences with helpful links, resources, and so forth. Ideally, link content from your social media accounts to NJCU web pages to drive traffic back to the University. When sharing news or updates from your department, include a link to the University's news release, official announcement, or departmental home page, as this, too, will help to drive traffic to the NJCU website, which in turn, helps the University's efforts in enhancing its online presence.

Always Fact Check and Cite Your Sources

As with all content presented on behalf of the University, ensuring accuracy is critical. Verify facts, cite any outside sources, and be sure to include links to those sources within your content. Remember: Links are the currency of the digital space, so you will want to ensure that you are making connections and sharing others' work, just as you would like them to share your content to a wider audience. Should an error occur, respond quickly with a correction within the channel in which the mistake occurred. Timeliness matters when it comes to your response on crises, congratulatory messages, or even simple questions. Delay of response should never become the story as this only serves to overshadow the content, itself.

Remember: Social Media is a *Public* Communication

Social media continues to hold the mystique of being intimate and thus at least semi-private. Everything you post is public. Keep in mind that even when posting to a select group in your personal space, with your personal account, this content is semi-private at best. Social media is all about connections and sharing, so expect that any content you post can and will be subject to appearing outside of your immediate network.

The content that you post on behalf of the University should always add value as opposed to introduce risk. Post respectfully and responsibly. If you are ever unsure about the appropriateness of material to share on social media, check with your department's supervisor or NJCU Communications. When in doubt, do not post. If you find yourself stopping to question whether you should, heed the hesitation and refrain.

Note that the same rules apply in social media as in any other professional channel for communication. Use correct grammar and write in complete sentences when appropriate. Avoid including content in all caps as this implies anger or aggression in the digital space. Avoid use of jargon, insular terminologies, or

institutional language. Remember, the goal is to engage, which means making your message accessible to your audiences. While abbreviations are required at times to conform to character limits, use these judiciously.

Know the Rules for Each Channel

Be sure you understand the policies of the social media channel you are using. Review the terms of service, privacy policies, and so forth periodically, as this information can change rather frequently.

All NJCU policies apply to social media accounts established on behalf of the University. Follow NJCU's [Copyright Policy and Related Guidelines](#) as well as University policies outlined in NJCU's [Student Code of Conduct](#). Be aware of student rights under [FERPA](#) and other laws regarding confidential information about students, alumni, or employees.

As a general rule, avoid offering comment on other institutions or legal matters. Know that audiences may post negative comments on your social media channel, but your response should remain professional. Be respectful of others' opinions and refrain from deleting posts or silencing those who disagree with you. Often times, this is an opportunity to clarify information, to foster education and awareness, and to turn a negative into an opportunity for discussion. When in doubt about how best to respond, contact the Office of Communication.

Delete profanity and other offensive content. Follow NJCU's social media policy. Consider posting the NJCU social media policy on your social media channel(s) to inform users.

Questions?

The NJCU Communications team is here to help. For questions about social media at NJCU, please contact NJCU Communications at 201-200-3344 or at communications@njcu.edu.