

UTC Social Media Guidelines

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Introduction

Social media provides platforms for departments and offices at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga ("University" or "UTC") to interact with the campus community and beyond. Social media is a central element in the lives of most of our audiences. It is an important communication tool and one that can present new challenges to effective communication.

Because of social media's potential to impact perceptions of the University and its reputation, these guidelines were developed for all social media sites, accounts, interactions and posts on behalf of UTC entities, departments or offices in connection with their professional capacity / relationship to the University.

This document's purpose is to share guidelines and communicate best practices for representing UTC in a professional manner through university social media accounts. Guidance often will evolve due to the evolving nature of the social media landscape, and this guide will be updated as needed.

Official University Social Media

The Office of Communications and Marketing maintains the official social media presence for UTC:

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/UTChattanooga>

Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/utchattanooga/>

LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/school/utchattanooga>

TikTok <https://www.tiktok.com/@utchattanooga>

Twitter [@UTChattanooga](https://twitter.com/UTChattanooga)

YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/c/UTChattanooga>

As colleges, departments and offices use social media platforms, they must remember that content posted on behalf of any UTC entity reflects on the entire institution. If you are considering using one or more social media platforms or have questions about using a social media platform, contact us: social@utc.edu

If you have questions that aren't addressed in this guide or if you need more information or support, get in touch with your unit communicator or the Division of Communications and Marketing's social media team at: social@utc.edu

Why Social Media?

Social media is social because of its two-way communication, interaction and information-sharing between users. It's not about talking at people; it's about talking with people. For organizations, social media platforms are, first and foremost, communications channels that connect us directly with members of our audience.

Creating social media accounts for a department or unit should be the result of a strategic decision, based on identified goals for your social media program that support the mission of your office and the University as a whole.

A few questions to consider before establishing a social media presence:

- **Is it necessary?** A successful social media program features new, useful and interesting content that is regularly updated—and reaches key stakeholders who might not otherwise interact with your messaging.
- **What are your communication goals?** Are there needs unmet by your website, newsletter or other communication vehicles? An effective social media presence requires defining its mission and purpose, and its relationship to other communication efforts, to enable consistent messaging and purpose across all communication.
- **Who is your audience and what do they need?** An effective social media program is built on understanding your audience's information preferences and sources.
- **Which social platform or platforms will you use and why?** This decision involves knowing both your audience and how to maximize platforms.
- **Who will manage your social media presence?** Does your office have the resources to consistently maintain a social presence? Do you have someone who can write, create and curate content regularly and respond to questions in a timely manner? Do you have someone who can serve as a backup for your accounts?

Establishing Official Social Media Accounts

An official UTC social media account is one that represents a university office, unit, initiative or administrative position (for example, Dean of Students: @UTC_DOS). A comprehensive list of current official accounts is at utc.edu/social.

University accounts are used to communicate messages from and on behalf of the University. Our audiences perceive University accounts as representing the official perspectives, decisions, positions and voice of UTC. These accounts should be managed carefully with that in mind.

Official UTC social media accounts must be administered by a member of university faculty or staff. Students may serve as active contributors to the account, but credentials must be maintained by an employee. The university retains control and final approval authority over the content of messages conveyed on official accounts.

Before creating a new account, UTC employees should read the “Why Social Media?” guidance above and consult with their unit communicator or the Division of Communications and Marketing's social media team. If the decision is made to open a new account, the faculty or staff administrator should send an email with information about the account handle and administrator contact information to social@utc.edu so the account can be added to the list of official channels.

Branded University social media icons (or profile photos) are available to all academic and administrative units with official social media accounts. This is the only way to include the Power C in a social media icon. Contact the [Office of Creative Services](#) for your social media icon.

Administering Official Social Media Accounts

Official UTC social media accounts should be registered to a shared or general email address accessible by more than one person in the department or office. Email addresses already established for customer service are preferred (for example, social@utc.edu).

Passwords and logins should be known and securely maintained by page administrators as well as their direct leadership. This practice prevents departments from finding themselves in a position where only one person has access to a social media account.

Official accounts are expected to maintain UTC's brand identity, integrity and reputation by maintaining an appropriate voice, sharing and liking appropriate content and being a productive, supportive member of the University's social community.

All University policies, brand guidelines, social media best practices and communications guidelines must be followed. Official University accounts must also follow the respective terms of service for social media platforms, applicable state and federal laws and NCAA regulations.

Official account administrators have the following responsibilities:

- Create, maintain and monitor content on respective social media sites and engage with users.
- Moderate content that violates hosting terms of service or is of a threatening or harassing nature.
- Contact representatives of the social media team or the communication team (news-release@utc.edu) in a timely manner to communicate pending or anticipated crisis communication or emergency response needs. All content related to an emergency or event impacting the University at large is to be disseminated using established UTC policies.
- Ensure that all content is relevant to the goals and objectives of the pertinent unit while upholding University graphic standards and brand identity.
- Respond to inquiries and postings using official approved accounts. Do not use non-university (personal) accounts to respond to inquiries or postings.
- Deliver timely responses to inquiries or postings on official accounts. All replies should use professional, conversational language that encourages comments and engages follow-up conversation but should steer clear of engaging in debate.

Official accounts are prohibited from the following:

- Posting content that violates city, state or federal laws and regulations.
- Commenting on or posting anything related to legal matters, litigation or contract negotiations without appropriate approval.

- Using the UTC logo, brand or name to endorse any product, private business, cause or political candidate.
- Representing personal opinions as university-endorsed views or policies.
- Paid advertising/promotional content using copyrighted material without permission of the copyright holder. (When in doubt, contact the Communications and Marketing Social Media Team at social@utc.edu.)

Moderating User-Generated Content

Social media platforms enable two-way conversation, and moderating user-generated posts, comments and replies is an important part of managing social media accounts.

Official University social media accounts should use an energetic, friendly and conversational voice fitting of the department or unit, recognizing that various departments may approach conversations somewhat differently. While remaining professional as representatives of the University, it's OK to have fun on social media.

Be responsive, be factual and be courteous. In every social media interaction, remember that you are speaking for the University.

Sometimes comments from users are negative, critical or require careful customer service. It is important to acknowledge concerns and provide support whenever possible. Take a few minutes to identify a campus resource that might be able to help and direct the person there. Better yet, pick up the phone to a colleague and connect them to the person who needs support.

If a user question or concern includes private or sensitive information, ask the person to send a direct message (DM) and take the conversation into a private space. If negative comments persist after support has been provided, do not continue to engage with the user.

Page administrators may not remove or hide individual user comments simply because they are negative in nature, disagreeable or otherwise unsavory.

As a public institution, the University is bound to comply with federal and state laws that protect individuals' rights to freedom of expression. In very limited and specific circumstances, comments may be deleted or disabled. If a page administrator is unsure whether a comment or post meets qualifications for deletion (see below), contact the social media team.

When necessary, and in very limited and specific circumstances, page administrators may use great care and judgment to remove user-generated posts, comments or replies only if they do one or more of the following:

- Use threatening language or language that incites threats or violence.
- Disclose information that is confidential or otherwise protected by state or federal law or regulation.

- Violate copyright or trademarks.
- Contain solicitations.
- Are duplicative in nature, such as one or more users repeating the same comment.
- Violate the terms of service of the social media platform.

If a user-generated post or comment is threatening in nature, record the content via screen shot or screen recording and report it immediately to the UTC Police Department (safety@utc.edu) and the Communications and Marketing social media team.

Maintaining Personal and Professional Accounts

Faculty and staff may maintain personal and professional social media accounts. However, an individual who identifies themselves as a UTC employee does not necessarily speak for the University or its values.

Faculty and staff who disclose their UTC affiliation in their public personal social media account profiles should specify that their expressed opinions are theirs alone and do not represent the views of the University. Employees can do so by including the following statement, or something similar, in their social media account's bio, "views expressed are my own and do not represent my employer."

Staff members who use social media accounts within their professional areas of responsibility must be mindful that they represent the University in the social media space.

Accessibility

Use the tools provided within each platform to make sure your social media content is accessible to users. Be sure to caption videos, optimize graphics for color contrast and use alt text image descriptions.

Find tips and tools for accessibility on social media at <https://blog.hootsuite.com/inclusive-design-social-media/>

Managing Social Media Takeovers

A social media takeover is when the account administrator allows a student or other individual to post the account's content for a set time period. Takeovers are a great way for your audience to see an authentic slice of UTC life.

Content posted during a takeover represents the account and is shared on behalf of the University. As with all content on official social media accounts, posts made during a takeover will be perceived as representing the official perspectives, decisions, positions and voice of the University.

As such, page administrators have the following responsibilities related to managing social media takeovers:

- **Make a plan:** Why is the person doing the takeover? What topics or events will be discussed? What information do you want your audience to come away with? Will the person doing the takeover ask and answer questions from your social audience? If

so, does the person know what to do when they don't have or know the answer? Discuss the plan with the person doing the takeover in advance.

- **Ensure and emphasize that the following types of content—and any other inappropriate content—are avoided:**
 - Drinking or drug use
 - Hate speech or bullying (includes putting down other individuals or institutions)
 - Nudity or sexually provocative posts
 - Promotions of businesses or any entity outside of the University (unless formally agreed upon in advance)

The University's social media team maintains takeover guidelines, which highlight some do's and don'ts for those enabled to conduct takeovers. Takeover guidelines also include the University's social media takeover agreement template, which should be completed by the social media account administrator and signed by the person conducting the takeover in advance of the event.

Contact the social media team at social@utc.edu for a copy of the student takeover guidelines and student takeover agreement form.

Best practices for managing takeovers include the following:

- Make sure the person conducting the takeover understands the University's expectations for appropriate content and has agreed to terms of use for the takeover.
- Agree on the beginning and end times for the takeover, provide log-in information immediately before the takeover, change the password right before the takeover, and change the account password immediately at the end of the takeover. Encourage the person conducting the takeover to save the content they've posted to their devices before logging out.
- Ask the person doing the takeover to start with a video introduction—communicating who they are, where they're from, what they're studying and anything about the takeover circumstances/location (study abroad location, for example), and to end the takeover with a farewell photo or video message.
- Encourage them to show off their day and to be creative with stickers, filters and other features as they usually would, but to keep in mind that they are representing the University and to use good judgment.
- Communicate other considerations to the person doing the takeover:
 - Don't share photos or videos of others without their knowledge (large groups out in public are OK)
 - Don't share photos or videos after the agreed-upon end time
 - Don't follow or unfollow any users while logged on to the account without approval of the account owner
 - Don't change any account settings or information

The UTC social media team is happy to provide information or consultation with page administrators planning a social media takeover.

General Best Practices and Other Considerations

- Prominently list on your organization's or department's website all officially recognized social media accounts.
- Ensure officially recognized social media accounts are clearly identified as such.
- Display University [code of conduct](#) information as appropriate.
- Ensure that all official social media accounts/users adhere to University branding guidelines: <https://www.utc.edu/communications-and-marketing/creative-services>
- Use sound judgment and common sense in any online activity:
Assume anyone can access and view postings, including those which may exist in some form long after considered "deleted."
- Ensure the accuracy of postings before making them public.
- If a posting is found to be inaccurate, retract or correct it as quickly as possible.
- **Never** post a message that could be considered advocating for or against a candidate for elected office or a political party or measure. Do not engage with political campaign accounts.
- Avoid lengthy approval processes for site visitor comments.
- Monitor and respond to site visitor comments as quickly as possible.
- Avoid online confrontations and conflicts. If appropriate, respectful disagreement may be expressed, but personal attacks are inappropriate, unproductive and reflect poorly on the individual and on the University.
- Encourage open conversation – listen to people and respond to as many comments as possible with constructive feedback. Permit negative comments (delete spam and anything inappropriate, such as profanity) and seek to respond rather than censor.

Quick Guidelines for Posting as a UTC Representative

Approval

Only authorized University representatives may make official statements on behalf of UTC. Any message that could be perceived or potentially serve as a statement on behalf of the University, one of its departments or units, must be approved by the appropriate communication official for that entity or for UTC.

Get the Facts

Ensure accuracy before posting. Official information must be verified with the appropriate UTC source. When possible, citing sources in posts is suggested.

Protect the University

Postings on behalf of UTC are perceived as speaking for the University.

Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed as infringing on the free speech rights of UTC employees as citizens, but employees' personal views of any kind are not to be purported as representing the University. When in doubt, consult your supervisor or the appropriate communication official for your department or unit.

Time Matters

Account administrators or, when necessary or appropriate, their designees, should monitor and check online postings at frequent, regular intervals.

Responsibility Matters

Postings are the responsibility of their creator.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Remember that UTC entity postings represent and reflect on the University as a whole. Be respectful of others' posted opinions, even though they may be critical of University postings. Inappropriate postings (spam, profanity or other inappropriate or threatening language) to official accounts supported by the Division of Communications and Marketing will be deleted.

Think Before You Post

When in doubt, consult your supervisor or the appropriate communication official for your UTC entity.

Think Twice Before You Post.

Privacy does not exist in the social media world. Consider what could happen if a post becomes widely known and how that may reflect on both the person who posts and on UTC. Search engines can retrieve posts years after they are created. If you would not make a comment at a conference, to a colleague or to a member of the media, consider whether you should post it online. If you're unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, ask your supervisor for input or contact the Division of Communications and Marketing social media team: social@UTC.edu

Employee Conduct Guidelines for Managing University Social Media Accounts

UTC has established the following detailed employee guidelines to protect the University's interests and maximize the positive impact of social media on the University and its employees.

Strive for accuracy. Check your facts before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors.

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 person who posts and/or the University.

Consider your audience and its potential reaction to your content. 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, patients, current employers, elected officials, news organizations, colleagues and peers. Anticipate negative or inappropriate responses and the fact that you may be unable to control, object to, or remove those responses.

Guidelines for All Social Media Accounts

The following guidelines ***apply to UTC employees*** posting on all types of social media accounts, including University social media accounts and personal social media accounts.

Protect institutional, confidential and proprietary information. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about the University, its students, student-athletes, employees, patients, donors or alumni. Do not leak, break or announce University news on personal social media accounts or on UTC accounts without appropriate authorization.

Adhere to all applicable University policies and procedures. The same laws, professional expectations, policies and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, patients, alumni, donors, media, elected officials and other University constituents apply to University employees online as they would in the physical world. Use social media in a manner that complies with University policies and procedures, including but not limited to:

- Human Resources policies and procedures, including but not limited to the university's [Code of Conduct, HR 580](#);
- Information Technology policies and procedures, including but not limited to the university's policy on the [Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources, IT 110](#);

- Fiscal policies and procedures, including but not limited to the University's policy on [Conflict of Interests, FI 125](#);
- [Policies Governing Academic Freedom, Responsibility, and Tenure](#)
- University policies prohibiting discrimination and harassment, including but not limited to [HR 220](#) and [HR 280](#); and
- University policies concerning the privacy of student, patient and employee information.

Adhere to copyright law. When posting, be aware of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the University. Questions about fair use or copyrighted material should be directed to the [Office of the General Counsel](#).

Do not use University trademarks or service marks without permission. Any use of University trademarks or service marks, such as the University's names, logos, slogans, insignias, symbols and mascots must have prior approval. Do not use University trademarks or service marks on personal social media accounts. Questions should be directed to the [Office of Creative Services](#).

Do not announce University news. Do not announce UTC-related news on a social media site unless pre-approved by the Division of Communications and Marketing, whose employees are the official spokespersons for the University. News from UTC Mocs Athletics is issued by official spokespersons for Mocs Athletics.

Respect University time and property. Comply with University [policy](#) on personal use of University information technology resources.

Clearly identify your personal views as your own. In your own personal social media accounts, you should avoid creating confusion over whether the account is associated with the University. If you identify yourself as a UTC faculty or staff member online, it should be clear that the views expressed on your site are not necessarily those of the University and you are not stating views in your capacity as a UTC employee.

Be aware of terms of service. Comply with social media site terms of service.

Non-Compliance

Non-compliance with these guidelines may result in any or all of the following:

- Limitation or revocation of rights to use University social media accounts or University IT
- Removal of posts or University social media accounts; and/or
- Disciplinary action, as defined in HR policies and procedures, Faculty Handbook, or other applicable policies.

Nothing in these guidelines is intended to infringe nor should be interpreted in a manner that infringes on the First Amendment rights of University employees.