University of Baltimore
IV-4.1 Social Media Policy
Approved: November 5, 2021

I. Policy Statement:

The purpose of this policy is to set rules for the offices and employees managing University Social Media Accounts, as that term is defined below, including but not limited to adding/deleting posts and comments and engaging with others on behalf of The University of Baltimore (the "University of Baltimore" or the "University").

The University wants to create and foster through its Social Media channels a safe space for open dialogue about and related to the University. The University of Baltimore—a community of scholars comprising students, faculty, staff and alumni—is strongly committed to a culture of inclusion, equity, justice, and opportunity for all.

The University's Social Media Accounts serve as the University's digital voice and, should objectively share campus news, events, and stories about the University of Baltimore community, and maintain and promote the University's brand. The University values and respects a wide range of perspectives and opinions, and welcomes productive dialogue within the University community and beyond. Not everything that is said or done at the University of Baltimore or by members of the University community represents the University's institutional values.

This policy does not apply to the personal Social Media accounts of University faculty, staff or students (see Section 5, Related University Policy).

II. Definitions:

1. "Social Media" are internet-based applications that enable users to participate in social networking by exchanging content with other users. Examples include, but are not limited, to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and YouTube.
2. "Social Media Manager" refers to any person or persons with password access and/or administrative powers to a University Social Media Account. Roles may include creating, editing and adding posts, reviewing comments and taking proper action as needed, and participating in any engagement or dialogue with the audience.
3. "University" refers to The University of Baltimore.
4. "University Social Media Account" refers to any Social Media account created by with the approval of the University. This includes official student group Social Media accounts.

III. Responsibilities and Guidelines:

Social Media Managers are responsible for and shall adhere to the best practices and guidelines described below. More guidelines can be found at this URL ubalt.edu/socialmediaguidelines within the University's brand website, as the demands and requirements of Social Media applications change frequently.

A. Best Practices

Social Media Managers and any user who purports to speak on behalf of the University must:

a. Make posts/comments consistent with the University's values, mission and brand. Anything you post in your role as a University of Baltimore employee reflects on the institution. Be professional and respectful at all times.

b. Use the University brand identity properly: To avoid confusion between your University-related account and the main University accounts, do not use a general University of Baltimore logo or Eubie, our mascot, for your profile image. If you use a departmental logo, do not modify it in any way, i.e., changing the design or color.

c. Monitor comments and messages, and respond appropriately and in a timely fashion.

   i. If you find posts or comments about the University, always offer to assist should someone be seeking information or indicating frustration with or criticism of a University area or function.

   ii. Timeliness equals credibility, so try to respond quickly. Let the user know that you'll look into the issue for them and provide additional responses only as needed.

   iii. Comments made by the public on a University Social Media Account may not always reflect the values, mission and brand of the University and Social Media Managers must use discretion in how they react to these comments. The University, as a public institution, must comply with the First Amendment and is often constrained in its ability to delete certain comments or ban users, even if the University disagrees with the content of the comments.

   iv. Before taking any action, Social Media Managers must contact the Office of Marketing and Creative Services for review on whether the comment qualifies for deletion or if the user should be banned.

      1. The decision whether to delete a comment or ban a user will be made in collaboration with the Office of Marketing and Creative Services and any other appropriate authority as necessary.

      2. Cases of deleted comments or bans should be documented by the account's Social Media Manager (such as through a screenshot) and retained by the department, and a copy should be shared with the Office of Marketing and Creative Services.

      3. The Social Media Manager should consult with the Office of Marketing and Creative Services regarding whether a new comment that links to this Policy is necessary.

   v. Comments or posts that fit into these categories are subject to deletion:

      1. contain content that is deemed discrimination or harassment based upon protected class (sex, gender, marital status,

pregnancy, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, veteran status, or other legally protected characteristics);

2. contain true threats of violence directed toward a particular individual or group of individuals;
3. believed to contain defamatory language;
4. contain commercial endorsements, advertisements or appear as spam; or
5. disclose confidential information or personally identifiable information, such as an email address, home address or phone number of the commenter or others.

vi. Repeated and egregious violations may create cause for banning the user from that Social Media account.

vii. Don't hide comments on platforms that allow it.

viii. Where possible, include a link to this policy on your social media platform.

ix. Posts by a Social Media Manager that include typos, inaccurate information, or that go against the University's standards can be deleted by another account manager. See Sanctions section for necessary next steps.

d. Respect intellectual property: Do not post any material that infringes upon any rights of third parties, including any intellectual property rights. When posting text, images or video, obtain proper permission and ensure you've included proper attribution for another person's work. Do not use licensed music in your videos, unless you purchased the rights to use it and have explicit permission.

e. Be cognizant of the University's responsibility under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") and do not post any student educational records, or any information from student educational records, without a written release signed by the student. For more information, including what qualifies as an "educational record" and the release that the student can complete, visit ubalt.edu/ferpa.

B. **Social Media Management Guidelines**

a. Prior University approvals should be obtained before creating an account on any platform that would serve the University or any affiliated organization within the University. To obtain approval to create a University social media account, contact the Office of Marketing and Creative Services at marketing@ubalt.edu.

i. A faculty or staff adviser and/or department employee other than the account manager should have account information, including the handle, account email address and password, for each University-affiliated account, and when possible, be a page/account administrator.

ii. All accounts, whether existing or new, should be connected to a University email (@ubalt.edu) affiliated with the office, division, department, etc., under which that account falls (ex. marketing@ubalt.edu or sga@ubalt.edu). No account should be

primarily tied to a student account or any non-University email, such as Gmail.

b. As a Social Media Manager, you are one of the University's most visible ambassadors. To be most effective in this important role, you should strive to:

    i. Connect with the Office of Marketing and Creative Services: Notify staff of your role on a particular account and to discuss strategies, goals and campaigns, including partnership opportunities to better amplify your messages.

    ii. Separate personal from professional: Balancing your professional and personal social media presences can be tricky, particularly if you are an avid user in both arenas. Keep content about your non-work life on your personal page. If you are using a personal account and represent yourself in association with the University of Baltimore, please make it clear that your opinions are your own and consider how your interactions in that capacity reflect on the University. Be sure to double check that you have the correct account open before you post.

        1. Remember that everything you do online can and will live forever: Think before you post, remembering that anything you post on social media is far from private. It can be shared, stored and spread among networks.

    iii. Be cognizant of your audience. Just as you should embrace the University's brand voice, consider the tone appropriate for your channel's audience when posting and interacting.

    iv. Be active. Social media presences require diligent care and feeding. You'll need the dedicated time and resources to check in on your accounts at least daily and to post fresh content at least several times a week. Your presence is only as interesting as your last post; a stale and stagnant social media account will lose followers quickly.

        1. If your account becomes inactive, consider passing the torch to someone else or deactivating the account entirely.

        2. If you're considering a new account, contact the Office of Marketing and Creative Services to make sure there isn't an existing or similar account and to receive additional guidelines for how to make a new account successful.

    v. Be timely. One of the great benefits of social media is the ability to share information almost instantly with a vast audience, but that audience also expects this timeliness and will not tolerate old news. Be prepared to move quickly in response to new developments, announcements or emergencies with relevant information on your social media platform. A short amount of accurate information delivered at the time of need can sometimes be more valuable than a full report delivered well after the issue has passed.

c. Accessibility Guidelines

    i. Avoid graphics with flattened text or multiple images, such as flyers, and use alt text whenever possible (several platforms offer this option when posting). Consider an alternative, such as a visual without text, large text options on Stories, a link to an accessible webpage/PDF, repeating the text in the post, etc.

     ii. Emojis are embedded with descriptive information so use them in moderation and place them at the end of posts to avoid confusion or unnecessary repetition.

    iii. Hashtags should include capital letters in the absence of spaces so text-to-speech technology recognizes separate words (e.g. #BuiltForThis instead of #builtforthis).

    iv. All videos must contain captioning/subtitles.

        1. Be sure to edit captions generated by a transcription service. Proper nouns and grammar are often incorrect. For platforms that don't offer captioning (Instagram main feed, LinkedIn and Twitter), consider embedding captions using a third party or offering a link to a captioned version or transcript.

IV. Sanctions

Individuals failing to adhere to the University's best practices set forth by this policy can lose access to manage and/or post to a University Social Media Account and may be referred to the Office of Human Services or Division of Student Success and Support Services for potential disciplinary action. Violations of any other applicable University policy made through Social Media may result in sanctions set forth in the appropriate policy.

V. Related University Policy

I-12.3 Policy on Student Social Media Privacy, available at the following URL: ubalt.edu/policies/administrative/I-12.3.pdf

VI. Questions

For questions about this policy, contact the Office of Marketing and Creative Services at marketing@ubalt.edu.