OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE
SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

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INTRODUCTION

Use these guidelines to inform and enhance your department's social media strategy. **Be sure that your marketing specialist and Student Life digital communications coordinator are aware of all social media efforts**.

Social media is constantly evolving and the most successful users are those who plan for growth and change, track their progress to identify opportunities for improvement and keep an eye out for updates in social media.

Therefore, these guidelines should not serve as your only resource for social media. Instead, they should inform the development and implementation of your social strategy and provide an overview of Student Life's standard social media practices.

STRATEGY

Before getting started with social media, document a thorough strategy. Your strategy should fit into your overall marketing plan – social media is one of multiple pillars supporting your department's marketing and communications. Your strategy should answer the following questions about your department's social media efforts:

- What are my **objectives**?
- Who is my target **audience**?
- What is my **voice**?
- What **platforms** will I use?

- What **content** will I share?
- What will my **process** look like?
- How will I **measure** my success?

You can find a sample social media strategy at osu.box.com/v/sl-social-strategy-example and a blank social media strategy template at osu.box.com/v/sl-social-strategy-template.

OBJECTIVES

Documenting your department's social media objectives will give you a baseline to reference as you build your social media efforts over time. Take into consideration your department's purpose. How can social media support your department in fulfilling it?

Create measurable goals so you can more easily track your success, and define the primary metrics by which you will measure progress.

AUDIENCE

Social content is not "one size fits all;" it will vary depending on who is consuming it. When defining your audience, be as specific as possible. For example, "students" is too broad – "students living in residence halls" or "students looking for internships" are better.

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VOICE AND TONE

Voice and tone are important pieces of your department's brand. **Voice** is a consistent writing style that makes your content recognizable. **Tone** varies depending on the content itself.

NOTE: Refer to University personality guidelines found at brand.osu.edu/our-brand/ when developing a voice and tone for your department.

Voice

A good way to define your voice is to break it down into personality, rhythm and vocabulary.

- Personality: How you come across (straightforward, personal, witty, etc.)
- Rhythm: The way your content reads (short and sharp, slow and musical, etc.)
- Vocabulary: The words you use to get a message across (simple, wordy, poetic, etc.)

Tone

While tone can change depending on the content, as a Student Life department, always be polite and respectful.

When deciding what tone you should use for a given piece of content, consider how your target audience is feeling and how you want them to feel. A frustrated or angry audience is unlikely to respond positively to a witty remark – opt for a more serious tone instead.

PLATFORMS

The quality of your social profiles is much more important than the quantity. In other words, **do not put your department on more social media platforms than you can effectively manage**. When deciding which platforms to use, take into account your goals and audience. Different social media platforms reach different audiences and serve different purposes.

	Twitter	**Instagram**	**Facebook**
Demo	18 to 29	Under 35	18 to 49
Overview	High volume of easily digestible information	Medium to high volume of engaging visuals	Low volume of impactful content
Content	Customer service Event reminders Event coverage Deadlines Tips	Event coverage Product/service photos Short videos Highlighted people "Stories"	Ohio State news Third party content Photo albums Videos Events

Other platforms

Student Life does not use social media platforms outside of Twitter, Instagram and Facebook except on a case-by-case basis. Consult your marketing specialist and digital communications coordinator with any inquiries regarding YouTube, LinkedIn, Snapchat, blogs, etc.

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CONTENT

Your content will inform your users' understanding of your department. Planning ahead and having a process will contribute to the success of your social media efforts. Remember to:

- Use a calendar for planning
- Submit marketing requests at least four weeks in advance
- Listen to and engage with your audience; monitor closely for issues requiring elevation
- Be consistent, accurate and appropriate

Content calendar

Use a calendar to keep track of upcoming campaigns, events or blog posts and determine how you will promote them on social media. If you have year-round or evergreen messaging, schedule posts ahead of time so you will not forget to push them out.

You can find a sample content calendar at osu.box.com/v/sl-content-calendar-example and a blank content calendar template at osu.box.com/v/sl-content-calendar-template.

Marketing requests

Request graphics from Student Life marketing as early as possible (minimum four weeks in advance) using the marketing request form at studentlife.osu.edu/secure/marketing/.

You may also want help planning a social media campaign, amplifying messaging or connecting with others around the university. Consult the digital communications coordinator to strategize.

Listening

Watch for content that is relevant to your department to discover feedback; opportunities to share user-generated posts and engage with your audience; and alerts that attention and action are required.

Follow other Ohio State departments and organizations on social media. Track hashtags, keywords and locations by searching or setting up streams in Hootsuite.

Some useful hashtags are:

- #BuckeyeBites
- #BuckeyeforLife
- #BuckeyeLove
- #BuckeyesGive
- #GreenBuckeyes
- #wellnessOSU
- #MyOhioState
- #new2osu
- #OSUgrad

Engagement

Maintain an active presence by joining the conversations you find when listening and monitoring. Be sure to:

- Like, reply, share/retweet/repost
- Tag relevant departments/units and people
- Use hashtags and location tagging for increased visibility
- Share content from other Student Life units and individuals
- Follow up with users who express concerns, but ignore inflammatory/profane feedback or complaints about things that cannot be changed or helped

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Elevation

Elevate negative feedback to appropriate staff. **Profanity, threats of any kind, self-harm, etc. MUST be reported to your marketing specialist and digital communications coordinator**.

Consistency

From a posting standpoint:

- Avoid gaps in the frequency of your posts by sticking to a schedule
- Define the minimum and maximum posts per platform per day or week

From a branding standpoint:

- Use a few hashtags frequently; when possible, choose existing Ohio State hashtags
- Always check if a new hashtag has previous uses that may not align with our brand
- Refer back frequently to the voice and tone defined in your strategy documentation
- Use unique visuals that align with Ohio State and Student Life visual identity guidelines

Accuracy and appropriateness

Accuracy and appropriateness are priorities, as each department is a reflection of Student Life and of Ohio State. Here are some ways to ensure your content works:

- Check for both typos and accuracy of information
- Check that content complies with Ohio State's editorial style (www.apstylebook.com/osu)
- Ensure that content is completely free of profanity and bias
- Confirm that content and design elements have the proper approval before publishing
- In case of emergency or tragedy, remove scheduled content and seek direction from your marketing specialist and digital communications coordinator before posting
- Always consider your team's capacity for handling negative feedback

NOTE: If you have any doubt as to the accuracy, appropriateness or legality of your content, consult your marketing specialist and digital communications coordinator before publishing.

PROCESS

Before opening any social media accounts, confirm that you have the time and staff to manage your department's social media presence. Be sure you have the capacity to:

- Respond to crises 24/7 to the best of your abilities
- Regularly monitor social media on weekends, evenings, holidays, etc.
- Maintain social media activity when the typical social media managers are out of office
- Have **all** content created by students approved by a staff member prior to publication

Staff social media managers should have social media applications on their phones for easy access to alerts and the ability to respond quickly when necessary. Students, however, should never log into Student Life accounts on their phones.

Documenting your process

Set your department up for success by documenting a process for current and future social media managers to follow. Include the following:

- Team members
- Content review and approval processes
- Back-up plan for when normal social manager is out of office

MEASUREMENT

By defining a plan for tracking and reporting from the outset, you can better evaluate your progress toward your objectives. Decide how often you will evaluate social media performance and identify the metrics you need to track in order to determine progress toward your goals.

Focus on the numbers that matter to you. For example, if your goal is to get a message in front of as many users as possible, reach is a better indicator of success than likes or comments.

You can find a sample monthly social media performance report at osu.box.com/v/sl-social-report-example. Contact the digital communications coordinator for help with social analytics.

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RESOURCES
The following resources are available to help you optimize your social media efforts.

Ohio State

- Brand Guidelines: brand.osu.edu/
- Brand Guidelines – Social Media: brand.osu.edu/social-media/
- Editorial Style Guide: brand.osu.edu/editorial-style/
- University Marketing: universitymarketing.osu.edu/
- Buckeye Social Media Community: universitymarketing.osu.edu/resources/buckeye-social-media-community.html

Student Life

- Student Life Marketing Request Form: studentlife.osu.edu/secure/marketing/

You can find these templates, examples and resources at osu.box.com/v/sl-social-guidelines.

- Social Media Best Practices: osu.box.com/v/sl-social-best-practices
- Opening a New Account: osu.box.com/v/sl-new-account-checklist
- Social Media Strategy example: osu.box.com/v/sl-social-strategy-example
- Content Calendar example: osu.box.com/v/sl-content-calendar-example
- Social Media Strategy template: osu.box.com/v/sl-social-strategy-template
- Content Calendar template: osu.box.com/v/sl-content-calendar-template
- Social Media Report example: osu.box.com/v/sl-social-report-example
- Student Life Social Media Accounts list: osu.box.com/v/sl-social-accounts

Industry

- Buffer Blog: blog.bufferapp.com
- Hootsuite Blog: blog.hootsuite.com
- Sprout Social Blog: sproutsocial.com/insights

Social Media Demographics:

- blog.hubspot.com/marketing/state-of-social-media-demographics
- sproutsocial.com/insights/infographics/social-media-demographics-2017
- www.pewinternet.org/2016/11/11/social-media-update-2016

People

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ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR RESIDENCE HALLS

Residence halls may create Facebook, Instagram and/or Twitter accounts for the purpose of sharing events and updates relevant to their residents.

Before opening an account

- Become familiar with Ohio State brand and social media guidelines at **brand.osu.edu**
- Review Student Life social media guidelines and resources at **go.osu.edu/sl-social**
- Make sure an account does not already exist for your residence hall
- Inform Paul Bellini.5 and Thea Dellas.1 that you want to open an account
- Download the Student Life social media avatar at **go.osu.edu/sl-social** – all Student Life social media accounts should use this avatar; they can customize their profile banners

Account naming conventions

In order to establish consistency, residence halls wishing to open social media accounts should create account **handles** that follow the conventions below. Existing accounts do not need to change their social handles.

- Facebook: @[HallName]OSU
- Instagram: @[hallname]osu
- Twitter: @[HallName]OSU

Profile **titles** should follow the conventions below. Existing accounts should update their profile titles as needed.

- Facebook: [Hall Name] at Ohio State
- Instagram: [Hall Name] at Ohio State
- Twitter: [Hall Name] at Ohio State

Profile **bios** should open with the following copy. Existing accounts should update their profile bios.

> Official [Platform] account of [Hall Name] at The Ohio State University.
> Example: Official Twitter account of Raney House at The Ohio State University.

Keep in mind that

- Residence halls may **not** open Snapchat accounts or create Snapchat geofilters
- Residence hall social media accounts must comply with Student Life and university social media guidelines and requirements
- Names and contact information of individuals who manage residence hall social media accounts must be provided to the digital communications coordinator

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