

Policy Type: Administrative

Applies to: Faculty, staff, student employees, students, and volunteers.

## **POLICY DATES**

Issued: July 1, 2012

Revised by: Ryan Smith

Edited: March 1, 2024

Reviewed: March 1, 2024

Social media communications continue to evolve and have become powerful elements in our daily communication processes. Social media platforms are being embraced by individuals and organizations in our society and gave the ability to impact the reputations of individuals and organizations.

The University of Mount Union (hereinafter referred to as Mount Union) actively uses social media platforms to engage in dialogue with constituents and to promote the institution’s events and successes. Mount Union also recognizes that the use of social media can also open the door to unintended consequences.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure all social media transactions facilitated on behalf of Mount Union represent the institution’s best interests in an effective and positive manner while facilitating and encouraging interaction with the public. The goal of this policy is to remind the campus community to promote and protect Mount Union’s reputation and interests, and to demonstrate how existing policies and regulations can offer important safeguards when navigating social media.

## **Definitions**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Social Media	Social media is defined by Mount Union as public forms of communication that are used via the Internet. This form combines integrated technology, social interaction and construction of words and/or pictures.
Social Media Applications	These applications allow you to interact with others online. Sites include, but are not limited to: LinkedIn, Facebook, X (previously known as Twitter), Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat, Myspace, YouTube, YikYak, TikTok, Shutterfly, Flickr, Periscope, Foursquare, SCVNGR, Pluk, Blogs, Wikis, Digg, etc.
“Going Dark”	Refers to a period when we would not post on social media as a result of a tragedy, crisis, or other situation that would be deemed inappropriate to post in the traditional sense across institutional channels.
Engagement rate	Measures how involved an audience is with the content being posted. To find the engagement rate, divide the number of interactions with a post by the number of account followers.
Campus Communication Committee	Made up of representation from enrollment, communication, alumni, athletics, marketing and academic affairs.

## **Policy Details**

Social media is defined by Mount Union as public forms of communication that are used via the Internet. This form of communication combines integrated technology, social interaction and the construction of words and/or pictures. Sites include, but are not limited to: LinkedIn, Facebook, X (previously known as Twitter), Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat, Myspace, YouTube, YikYak, TikTok, Shutterfly, Flickr, Periscope, Foursquare, SCVNGR, Pluk, Blogs, Wikis, Digg, etc. or any social site that can be created by a person and utilized for promoting the institution in any manner.

Social media applications allow you to interact with others online, yet they should be used only with careful consideration of the implications of “friending,” “liking,” “following,” “searching” or accepting such a request from another person. The potential always exists for liability issues as well as the misinterpretation of the relationship or the potential sharing of confidential or proprietary information. Representatives of the institution and their social media relationships with one

# Social Media Policy

## ADM 14.0

### Office of Marketing/Office of Human Resources/ IT

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another, including colleagues, subordinates, prospective students, current students, alumni, donors, parents and others, merit close consideration of the implications and the nature of the social interaction. This policy was created in an effort to provide guidelines for faculty and staff members in these cases.

#### **General Social Media Guidelines**

The following guidelines have been established to ensure that faculty and staff members using social media refrain from harming Mount Union or themselves through social networking whether navigating those networks on the job or off.

**These guidelines are intended to guide efforts that are made as an official representation of the University, but they also are useful to keep in mind for personal social media interaction as well.**

**Any posting of information and material on a social media site may give rise to personal liability and/or liability to the entity employing the individual posting the material or information. Utilization of social media in any manner is subject to any law or regulation impacting the use of the material published.**

#### *Refrain from Using Your Personal Social Media Sites for the Conduct of Business*

Personal social media accounts should not be used by faculty or staff members of the institution to conduct business on behalf of Mount Union. Faculty members may create a Facebook group page, linked from their personal pages, to support teaching and learning related to a particular course. Please see additional guidelines for Facebook group pages on p. 2 of the *Guidelines and Procedures for Official Social Media Sites*.

#### *Respect University Time and Property*

Mount Union computers and time on the job are reserved for university-related business as approved by supervisors and in accordance with Mount Union policy. Your online activities should never interfere with your job or commitment to Mount Union's constituents. It's appropriate to post at work if your comments are directly related to accomplishing work goals, such as seeking sources for information or working with others to resolve a problem. Reserve participation in personal social media conversations for your own time. See the Technology Resources Acceptable Use Policy for additional details on the acceptable use of Mount Union-owned technology.

#### *Recognize Issues of Liability and Civil Law*

Injurious and defamatory statements may subject you and/or Mount Union to civil liability. Faculty and staff members are responsible for what they post on their personal sites and on the sites of Mount Union. Individuals across the country have been held liable for copyright infringement as well as defamatory, libelous, or obscene comments.

#### *Respect Copyright, Fair Use and Intellectual Property*

Show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others, including those owned by Mount Union. For additional information, consult Mount Union's Non-Infringing Uses of Copyrighted Material statement. Do not use intellectual properties of Mount Union, such as photography, video, artwork, and publications copyrighted to the University, without authorization of the Office of Marketing.

#### *Be Familiar with Existing Conduct Policies*

Adhere to all existing policies and procedures of the University, including but not limited to:

- Employment Policies Handbook for Hourly Staff
- Employment Policies Handbook for Administrative Staff
- Employment Policies Handbook for Faculty
- Faculty Handbook
- Student Handbook
- Statement of Business Conduct and Ethics
- Technology Resources Acceptable Use Policy
- Identity Program

#### *Preserve Confidentiality*

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Do not disclose confidential or proprietary information of Mount Union or its students, alumni, donors, trustees and faculty or staff members, or any other individuals in any way affiliated with Mount Union. Examples include information about a student's grades or performance, admission status, GPA, Social Security number, or any other private personal information that a person has not consented to have published. As a guideline, refrain from posting anything that you could not legally present in a public forum. Apply principles of ethics and adhere to all University policies and federal requirements, including, but not limited to:

- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA)
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

#### *Observe NCAA Regulations*

All Mount Union employees are asked to abide by NCAA regulations when interacting and communicating on social media platforms. Thus, employees should not contact (e.g., tweet on Z (previously known as Twitter), or "friend" on Facebook) any prospective student-athletes on social media until such athletes have officially committed to the University.

#### *Refrain from Disparaging Remarks*

Do not make disparaging remarks about Mount Union or its programs, services, or constituents.

*Show Respect* Don't use ethnic slurs, personal assaults or obscenity or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the Mount Union community. Show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered sensitive, including politics and religion. Don't pick fights.

#### *Don't Be a Bully*

Refrain from bullying or harassing any constituent of Mount Union through any social media outlet, whether on personal time or work time. Abusive, harassing, threatening or defaming posts will not be tolerated by Mount Union and may result in disciplinary action being taken. All faculty and staff members are expected to treat their colleagues and peers in a respectful and dignified manner and are personally responsible for ensuring that their behavior does not constitute bullying and/or harassment.

#### *Beware the Rumor Mill*

Do not engage with rumors related to Mount Union in any way. Do not like, comment, repost, reply, follow, friend, etc. toward any post or account that might be feeding into a rumor mill. Refrain from denying or affirming them whether doing so outright or in subtle ways, speculating about them or furthering them through hypothetical scenarios. Direct inquiries regarding rumors should be brought to the attention of the Office of Marketing so that the administration can determine if an official institutional response is required.

#### *Protect Constituents and Business Partners*

No material should be posted on a social media site that refers to or identifies any other individual without the express permission of that individual. The same policies, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, alumni, donors, faculty and staff members, trustees, media and other University constituents apply online as in the real world. Be prepared to remove any personal pictures of Mount Union constituents or coworkers or discussion of any personal situation involving named or pictured individuals posted to social media sites upon the request of those individuals. Never discuss confidential details of business partnerships.

#### *Maintain Transparency*

When posting, faculty and staff members should be upfront about their identity. Never pretend to be someone else. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors.

#### *Refrain from Endorsements*

When representing Mount Union, do not endorse any opinion, product, cause, religion, political party, or political candidate unless it is related to an officially approved institutional effort. Those who are uncertain about whether or not an effort is officially sanctioned by the institution should contact their supervisor or the Office of Marketing.

### Office of Marketing/Office of Human Resources/ IT

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#### *Be Accurate*

Verify facts before making comments. Avoid making unsubstantiated claims. Cite and link to sources when possible. If a mistake is made, admit it. Correct mistakes promptly.

#### *Apply the Front-Page Test*

If it's not appropriate to print on the front page of a newspaper, then it's not appropriate to post on social media. In cases where faculty and staff members aren't certain whether posting information is appropriate or not, they should feel free to discuss the matter with a supervisor. However, as a rule of thumb, if you must ask, it is likely questionable enough not to be posted.

#### *Protect Your Identity*

Don't provide personal information that could put you at risk for identity theft, including a home address or telephone number. Identity theft has negative consequences for the individual and could potentially compromise Mount Union security.

#### *Don't Be Naïve About "Privacy"*

"Privacy" in social media does not exist. Remember that many systems save information even after the author has "deleted" it, and many search engines turn up posts and pictures long after the initial publication date. Consider the unintended consequences of comments being forwarded, copied and/or subpoenaed. Be sure that what is posted today will not come back to haunt you in the future. Be careful.

#### *Let Somebody Know*

Mount Union faculty and staff members are responsible for reporting any social media posts, whether directed at or coming from a Mount Union community member, that include comments that are bullying or harassing in nature and/or threats of harm to oneself, others or the institution. Individuals can report such information confidentially through the Ethics Point system.

### **Guidelines and Procedures for Official Social Media Sites**

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Mount Union was an early adopter of social media as a marketing and communication tool. The institution shares campus news, event details and the accomplishments of faculty and staff members, alumni and students across a variety of social media platforms. These sites have been valuable marketing tools, yet they differ from traditional media as they were created to facilitate dialogue. In honor of this "conversational" spirit of social media, the goal of the institution's social media efforts is not to not simply disseminate information at individuals but communicate with them in a way that encourages discussions and the exchange of thoughts and ideas.

The primary tools that Mount Union currently uses include Facebook, Instagram, X (previously known as Twitter), LinkedIn, and YouTube. The Office of Marketing coordinates and maintains these social media presences with input, and sometimes assistance, from other offices and departments on campus.

Mount Union's official social media presences, as of April 1, 2012, are as follows. This list is subject to change. For an up-to-date listing, please contact the Office of Marketing.

#### YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/user/universitymountunion>

#### Facebook

[www.facebook.com/UniversityofMountUnion](http://www.facebook.com/UniversityofMountUnion)

[www.facebook.com/purpleraiders](http://www.facebook.com/purpleraiders)

[www.facebook.com/mountunionalumni](http://www.facebook.com/mountunionalumni)

#### Instagram

[www.instagram.com/mountunion/](http://www.instagram.com/mountunion/)

[www.instagram.com/purpleraiders/](http://www.instagram.com/purpleraiders/)

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[www.instagram.com/lifeofaraider/](http://www.instagram.com/lifeofaraider/)

#### Twitter

<https://twitter.com/mountunion> (@mountunion)

<https://twitter.com/purpleraiders> (@purpleraiders)

<https://twitter.com/mountunionalum> (@mountunionalum)

#### LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/school/university-of-mount-union>

#### TikTok

<https://www.tiktok.com/@mountunion>

[https://www.tiktok.com/@purple\\_raiders](https://www.tiktok.com/@purple_raiders)

#### WordPress

[blog.mountunion.edu](http://blog.mountunion.edu)

#### Flickr

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/mountunion>

#### Pinterest

[www.pinterest.com/mountunion](http://www.pinterest.com/mountunion) [www.pinterest.com/purpleraiders](http://www.pinterest.com/purpleraiders)

The above listed presences are the only Mount Union social media sites officially sanctioned by Mount Union. It is extremely important to avoid diminishing the brand and outreach of the institution through a proliferation of “official” presences. These sites, however, are an integral component of the institution’s marketing and communication strategies, and as such, are updated and monitored regularly by the Office of Marketing with additional assistance from designated offices on campus. The number of fans, followers and views continue to increase on a daily basis. These official sites have allowed the institution to build a stable and involved participant base, thus benefitting the communication efforts of the institution and individual offices and departments who work cooperatively with the Office of Marketing to post information.

#### Requesting an Official Social Media Site

The Office of Marketing annually reviews emerging social media needs and remains flexible in an effort to make necessary adjustments to fulfill constituent needs. Individuals wishing to create a social media site as an official representation of Mount Union should submit a written request, including their justifications, to the Campus Communication Committee. Submissions must include the written approval of the vice president of their respective areas. Once submitted, the Campus Communication Committee will review the request to determine if a new official presence is needed or if an existing site or other alternative can fulfill the need.

Mount Union’s philosophy on official social media sites is to keep them to a minimum. Overabundance of Mount Union-sanctioned sites will diminish the visibility of any one site and dilute the brand of the institution. In addition, the institution’s established sites have already garnered significant followings, and it is in the best interest of every office and department to message through these sites to best take advantage of the thousands of fans and followers already engaged with Mount Union.

If a new official presence is approved, the Campus Communication Committee will create the account, including the username and password. The Office of Marketing will maintain a record of all usernames and passwords to all sites. At that time, a schedule of information must be presented to the office and the requesting party will bear responsibility for updating and maintaining the site.

If a new presence is established, the account administrators must report the metrics of the account at the end of every semester to the Campus Communication Committee. A report detailing the account including the number of followers the

### Office of Marketing/Office of Human Resources/ IT

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account has, overall engagement, top posts for the semester, and a description of any issues that occurred with the account.

#### **Requesting Account Administrator Status**

In most cases, the account administrators of official Mount Union social media sites will be the requesting party, faculty, staff, and/or a member of the Office of Marketing. Additional individuals and other offices and departments may be approved by the Campus Communication Committee to serve in this capacity for specific sites. Others wishing to serve as account administrators should submit their request in writing to the Campus Communication Committee after first obtaining the approval of the vice president of their respective areas. If such a request is approved, social media training will be provided.

#### **Use of Group Pages for Course Instruction**

A faculty member may create a Facebook group page, linked from his or her personal page, to support teaching and learning related to a particular course. Group pages should not be created as promotional efforts for individual departments or offices. Such messaging should be filtered through the University's existing official social media sites. Group pages should be created with an appreciation for the best practices of Mount Union's *Social Media Policy* while also adhering to the following guidelines.

- Group pages should be set up as private pages, not pages that can be seen by the general public. This will require potential group members to either request to join the group or to be invited to join the group. Potential group members must then be approved by the group administrator (the faculty member creating the group). This will ensure that group members are, in fact, members of the course for which the group is being created.
- Upon the close of the semester, the group administrator (the faculty member creating the group) should remove the group members and/or delete the group if the course is not offered in a subsequent semester.

Questions regarding the use of group pages for course instruction can be directed to the Office of Marketing.

#### **Student Organization Social Media Sites**

Officially recognized Mount Union student organizations may create social media presences for promotional purposes. An organization must first seek the approval of its advisor and identify two members who will serve as account administrators. In addition, all usernames and passwords must be submitted to the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership to be kept in the Social Media Site Registration document by contacting [leadership@mountunion.edu](mailto:leadership@mountunion.edu). This will allow for the following information to be on file with the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership and the Office of Marketing.

- URLs of all social media sites
- Names of the account administrators
- Usernames and passwords for all sites

Mount Union does not maintain or actively monitor social media sites representing student organizations. An organization's social media site is the sole responsibility of the organization, its advisor(s) and its designated administrators.

Any student organization wishing to disseminate information through one of Mount Union's official social media sites should contact the Office of Marketing for assistance.

***Please also comply with rules in this policy to ensure that any official social media efforts are in line with the best practices set forth in this document. If at any time these guidelines are not being followed, the Campus Communication Committee reserves the right to request you to resubmit the documents for requesting an account.***

#### *Meet Site Requirements*

All officially recognized social media accounts will link to the official University of Mount Union channel, and the institution's website. A statement identifying it as an official site of Mount Union must be included. A profile image that

# Social Media Policy

## ADM 14.0

### Office of Marketing/Office of Human Resources/ IT

---

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represents the brand and identity of Mount Union must be included as well. You are not permitted to create your own office, department, etc. logo.

#### *Maintain Consistency with the Mount Union Brand*

Contact the Office of Marketing for approved logos and other graphic elements that may be prepared specifically for social media sites. Consult the Mount Union Identity Program for specific guidelines.

#### *Content and Account Expectations*

Officially recognized accounts must follow the content and account expectations to maintain brand consistency, stay active, and be in-line with ever-changing social media algorithms.

1. Establish an engaged following on the requested platforms per industry standards
  - a. Maintain an engagement rate between 2 and 3.5% on Instagram
  - b. Maintain an engagement rate between 0.4 and 0.6% on TikTok
2. Maintain a Consistent Posting Schedule
  - a. Academic Year: Minimum 2-3 posts per week
  - b. Summer: Minimum one post per week
3. Follow the guidelines of the Social Media Guide including
  - a. No text-heavy photos
  - b. No advertising flyers
  - c. No low-quality or blurry content
  - d. No overloading the caption/comments with information
4. Utilize photos, stories, videos, switch it up!
5. Keep a professional tone
6. Respond to all negativity offline
  - a. Send people to direct messages to discuss issues before escalation
  - b. Any escalating/ major issues please see your area vice president and report to Campus Communications Committee

#### *Going Dark*

The Campus Communication Committee reserves the right to determine when all officially recognized accounts will go dark. If accounts are to hold their content posting for a specific amount of time to honor going dark on social media, the account administrators will be alerted.

#### *Photo/Video Release*

If you photograph or film a student with the intent to publish that photo or video on a social media site, you need to have your subject sign a release form (found in the [Mount Union SharePoint](#)) **before** you post the photo or video.

#### *Understand the Responsibilities of Account Administrators*

All social media accounts officially recognized by Mount Union must have at least two Mount Union faculty and staff members as administrators at all times to ensure the protection of this policy. Under any circumstances, students will not have access to the official account. All account administrators must sign a confidentiality and best practice agreement. Should an account manager leave employment of Mount Union for any reason, or no longer wish to be an account administrator, it is the vice presidents, or the account administrators, responsibility to inform the Campus Communication Committee prior to removing himself or herself from that role so that another designee may take over administrator responsibilities. Upon termination of employment, account administrators lose rights to the site and must transfer authorization/credentials to the designated employee as part of the employee exit process. Mount Union faculty and staff members identified as administrators of accounts are held responsible for managing and monitoring content of their officially-recognized accounts. It is the responsibility of the area vice president, or the account administrator to report any problems or crises to the Campus Communication Committee. Administrators are responsible for removing content that may violate this policy or any other institutional policy. Administrators, at any time, may contact the Campus Communication Committee for consultation.

# Social Media Policy

## ADM 14.0

### Office of Marketing/Office of Human Resources/ IT

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#### *Username and Passwords*

An approved username and password will be given to the account administrators and are not allowed to be changed without permission of the Office of Marketing. The usernames and passwords of all official Mount Union social media sites must be kept on file with the Office of Marketing. Passwords must not be shared with individuals who are not approved account administrators.

#### *Be Timely*

Aim for standard times for postings and updates. In general, administrators should post to each social media site at least one to two times on weekdays and more frequently if special events or news warrant additional posts. In addition, respond to all questions and requests within 24 hours (with the exclusion of weekends).

#### **Disclaimers**

If, at any time, the Campus Communication Committee finds that an officially recognized social media site is not appropriately representing Mount Union in accordance with the guidelines previously presented, the Mount Union Identity Program or other existing University policies, the site will be terminated. At the end of each semester, officially recognized accounts must submit account metrics including follower count, engagement rate, top posts, issues with the account, etc. and the account will be reviewed.

Mount Union has the right, in its sole discretion, to remove any content for any reason from an official Mount Union social media site, including, but not limited to, content that is spam, deems threatening, obscene, a violation of intellectual property rights or privacy laws or is deemed to be otherwise injurious or illegal. If a social media site is created as an official representation of Mount Union, that site will remain the property of the institution and not the author. Further, the author does not have any expectation of privacy in and to the Mount Union computer equipment and/or software used to create any social media content.

Employee violations and misconduct in the usage of social media will be handled in accordance with applicable University policy and may include request for removal of content or the site and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Mount Union is not liable for any information posted on personal sites. Furthermore, Mount Union is not responsible or liable for any activities or incidents resulting from web content that is not posted by the University. If faculty or staff members do maintain personal accounts, it is recommended that the following appear somewhere on the account page: "Views expressed here are my own, and do not necessarily reflect those of my employer."

Mount Union does not monitor faculty, staff or student media/social networking content published independently of their work at Mount Union. The views and information on such postings do not constitute official Mount Union information or positions, and any such postings must expressly state the opinions or views expressed are not the views and opinions of Mount Union.

**This policy will be reviewed annually by the Office of Marketing, Office of Human Resources and Office of Information Technology. However, as social media is an ever-changing entity, this policy is subject to change at any time.**

#### **Responsibilities**

<b>Position or Office</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Office of Marketing	Review and Keep policy up to date
Office of Human Resources	Review and Keep policy up to date
Information Technology	Review and Keep policy up to date

# Social Media Policy

## ADM 14.0

### Office of Marketing/Office of Human Resources/ IT

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Applies to: Faculty, staff, student employees, students, and volunteers.

#### Resources

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#### Contacts

Position	Office	Telephone	E-mail/URL
Assistant VP of Marketing	Marketing Office	(330) 823-6094	<a href="mailto:marketing@mountunion.edu">marketing@mountunion.edu</a>
Director of Human Resources	Human Resources	(330) 829-6560	<a href="mailto:Humanresources@mountunion.edu">Humanresources@mountunion.edu</a>
Executive Director of Information Technology & CIO	Information Technology	(330) 823-2854	<a href="mailto:IT@mountunion.edu">IT@mountunion.edu</a>

#### History

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All changes must be listed sequentially, including edits and reviews. Note when the policy name or number changes.

Issued: July 1, 2012

Revised by: Ryan Smith

Edited: March 1, 2024

Reviewed: March 1, 2024