



**University Policy:** **Social Media Policy**

**Policy Category:** Marketing and Communications

**Subject:** Standards for managing the University’s social media profiles and AU Community Members’ personal use of social media.

**Responsible Executive:** Vice President and Chief Communications Officer

**Office(s) Responsible for Review of this Policy:** University Communications and Marketing

**Supplemental Documents:** Social Media Guidelines and Tips for Faculty, Staff and Students; Editorial Style and Usage Guide

**Related University Policies:** Responsible Use of University Website and Content Management System, Information Technology Security Policy; Data Classification Policy; AU Web Copyright and Privacy Policy Statement; Lobbying and Political Activities Policy; Intellectual Property Policy; Responsible Use of University Technology Resources Policy; Freedom of Expression and Expressive Content Policy

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## I. SCOPE

This Policy sets forth requirements related to the creation and management of Official University Social Media Accounts (defined below). In addition, the Policy establishes guidance on social media behaviors for students, faculty, and staff in their personal use of social media and standards for the use of American University’s name, logo, and trademarks. This Policy applies to all University departments, recognized student organizations (RSO), faculty, staff, and students

## II. POLICY STATEMENT

American University recognizes the importance and benefits of communicating through social media. Social media provides the University and its schools and colleges, departments, and community members unique opportunities to communicate and interact online with the AU community, and broader external audiences. Social media is a powerful vehicle through which the University may disseminate relevant news to its community, listen to voices and diverse perspectives, and build goodwill. All activity on Official University Social Media Accounts must be conducted responsibly and all content must adhere to the standards set forth in this Policy. Individuals and RSOs engaged in social media activities must follow the requirements in this Policy.

## III. DEFINITIONS

*Official University Social Media Account:* A Social media profile, page, account or community which is maintained by the University. There are two categories of Official University Social Media Accounts:

1. UCM-Managed Accounts  
Social media accounts managed directly by the Office of University Communications and Marketing (UCM). These accounts serve as the main channels for the University's communications, representing its official voice and disseminating information to the public and University community. Activities on these accounts include University-wide announcements, engagement with stakeholders, crisis communications, and promoting the University's brand and initiatives.
2. Unit-Managed Accounts  
Social media accounts managed directly by a University department, office, official University organization or affiliated entity, and that have been approved by UCM.

*Recognized Student Organization (RSO):* A student led and created group that has been formally recognized by the Center for Student Involvement or a university department and has benefits and responsibilities tied to the recognition.

*Social Media:* Forms of electronic communication (such as online networking or blogging) which allow users to create, share, engage, and interact with content by users who are also within that specific platform. These platforms include but are not limited to microblogs; wikis; and other social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Threads; TikTok, BeReal; Bluesky and other websites and applications not listed here. Further guidance and a non-exhaustive list of social media accounts, websites, platforms, and applications will be maintained in the Social Media Guidelines.

#### **IV. POLICY**

##### **A. Official University Social Media Accounts**

UCM has authority and oversight over all Official University Social Media Accounts, maintaining a registry and reviewing their content and activity to ensure compliance with this Policy. All Official University Social Media Accounts, and other types of social media accounts as indicated in this Policy, are subject to the requirements set forth below and other standards that may be promulgated by UCM from time to time.

1. Access and Management
  - a. Use a shared AU email account that is accessible by multiple responsible employees within a specific department to set up an Official University Social Media Account.
  - b. Ensure that the AU email address and access credentials associated with related Official University Social Media Accounts are on file with UCM.
  - c. Designate no fewer than two full-time AU employees as Account Administrators, who are responsible for (i) compliance with this Policy; (ii) ensuring that only authorized individuals may create or post content; and (iii) monitoring and responding to their audience accordingly. More details about monitoring and community response are available in the University Communications and Marketing Social Media Guidelines.
2. Content Requirements
  - a. May not post content to lobby or advocate for legislation or policy positions;

- promote political activities, parties, or candidates; or promote a product, unless any of the foregoing activities are approved in advance and in writing by UCM.
- b. May not post content to express personal beliefs or statements. Official University Social Media Accounts may only post content that is relevant to their official university responsibilities and activities and is consistent with the University's academic mission. Guidance on posts of this nature is available in the University Communications and Marketing Social Media Guidelines.
  - c. Must not post confidential, proprietary, or official use only data and information as defined in the University Data Classification Policy about American University, students, employees, alumni, or any other individual without authorization.
  - d. Must comply with (i) University policies and local and Federal laws and regulations; (ii) branding, visual identity guidelines for Official University Social Media Accounts in the Editorial Style and Usage Guide; and (iii) the Social Media Accessibility section in the UCM Social Media Guidelines.
3. Emergency Communications and Public Safety
- a. For emergency situations, the UCM-managed Accounts will be the primary source of official public statements and information from the university. Emergency situations are determined by university leadership and safety services (such as AUPD). UCM will alert account managers of Unit-Managed Accounts when emergency situations are occurring and provide relevant guidance. During times of heightened safety activity/scrutiny that do not meet the threshold of an emergency, guidance for Unit-Managed Accounts will be provided by UCM.
  - b. Direct threats to the university, campus, or members of the AU community observed on social media are to be captured with a direct link and a screenshot and shared with the UCM digital team ([social@american.edu](mailto:social@american.edu)) and Public Safety ([police@american.edu](mailto:police@american.edu)).
  - c. If an AU community member is posting to social media about harming themselves or others, screenshots and other relevant information must be sent to UCM ([social@american.edu](mailto:social@american.edu)) and Public Safety ([police@american.edu](mailto:police@american.edu)). AU faculty and staff managing an Official University Social Media Account may also submit a CARE report with the contents of the posts via the myAU portal.
4. Adherence to Copyright Laws
- a. Abide by all terms of service agreements for all platforms in use;
  - b. Comply with all intellectual property laws and ensure that proper licenses or permissions are obtained for any copied or published content, including images, audio, and video; and
  - c. Ensure that all appropriate attribution, credit and citations are included in social media content consistent with any licensing or permission requirements and as otherwise necessary. Photos from University Photography within UCM may only be shared or copied with explicit permission from UCM. Questions about use of images should be directed to [photos@american.edu](mailto:photos@american.edu).

## B. Unit-Managed Social Media Accounts

In addition to complying with Section IV.A. Official University Social Media Accounts, Unit-Managed Accounts must also adhere to the following:

1. Obtain approval from UCM to create a social media profile for the department prior to establishing a profile or account. Existing accounts as of the effective date of this policy will be automatically registered with UCM.
2. Include a statement in the social media profile that the account is owned and operated by American University. Recommended language and branding standards are available in the UCM Social Media Guidelines.
3. Include a weblink to this Policy in the social media account profile.

## C. Recognized Student Organizations Use of Social Media

Recognized Student Organizations must follow the University best practices and guidelines when managing their organization's social media accounts. RSOs social media activities must comply with the law, Student Conduct Code, and other University policies, including but not limited to the Discrimination and Non-Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy and the Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy. RSO social media content or conduct that violates this or other policies will be adjudicated in accordance with the established RSO conduct processes in section XVIII of the Student Conduct Code. RSO's may use American University's name, logos, marks or other official/registered assets for social media purposes, provided such usage follows UCM branding guidelines. No alteration of the University logo or marks is allowed without permission from UCM. The university reserves the right review and revoke usage of logos and marks. RSOs are required to comply with the requirements set forth in Section IV.A.4. Adhere to Copyright Laws.

## D. Personal Use of Social Media

American University faculty, staff, and students are welcomed and encouraged to use their personal social media accounts. Content and conduct on the personal social media accounts of AU community members must comply with the law and University policies including, but not limited to, the Student Conduct Code, Faculty Manual, Staff Personnel Policy, Discrimination and Non-Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy, and Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy. If a University employee's job duties normally involve representing the University publicly, or if they identify themselves as a University employee in their social media posts, or when there is potential for their personal opinions to be mistaken for an official University position, they must use clear disclaimers that they are not speaking on behalf of American University.

## V. ENFORCEMENT

University Questions about this Policy can be directed to the Office of University Communications and Marketing. The University may direct the removal of any content or materials that violate the law or University policies. Failure to comply with such a directive or any other element of this Policy may constitute misconduct that is actionable under the Student Conduct Code, the Staff Personnel Manual, and the Faculty Manual, in addition to other remedial

action undertaken by the University, such as the suspension or revocation of authorization of the relevant Official University Social Media Account.

## **VI. EFFECTIVE DATE AND REVISIONS**

This Policy is effective as of October 4, 2024