Social Media Guidelines

Definitions:
Platform - A social media interface that allows users to create accounts, post and share content, and utilize unique content features such as instant messaging, image editing and live-streaming. Examples of popular platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Snapchat and Google+.

Account - One specific username and password tied to a platform. Many refer to accounts as “channels” or “pages.” A social media account allows users to post content on behalf of an individual, organization, department or group to a specific platform.

Official Accounts - Any account that is tied to or represents Georgia Southern University and has been approved by the Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing.

1. Introduction:
Social media is an integral part of the way in which we communicate today. As with everything we do, it serves a greater purpose. It is another way in which we build and maintain relationships with our stakeholders.

Because of its very nature, there are risks involved. As good stewards of the State’s resources, in all of its forms, we are responsible for the way in which we present information and interact with faculty, students, staff, prospective students, parents, alumni and the greater community. What affects the reputation of the University System of Georgia and its institutions, affects the reputation of all of us.

Nevertheless, Georgia Southern University encourages colleges and departments to actively use social media to communicate and engage with their audiences.

These guidelines are designed for Georgia Southern University employees participating in social media usage as an official job function on behalf of the University as well as personal social media usage to help ensure that we remain good stewards.

2. Getting started:
   ● What to do:
     i. Determine why you want to create the account. Consider your goal.
     ii. Determine if there are any existing social media accounts (including the official University accounts) that already represent your organization or accomplish your goal.
     iii. Determine if you have enough content to regularly post and keep your audience engaged, or could your information be disseminated through the University’s main social media accounts?
     iv. Determine your audience and what they are interested in.
     v. Determine which social media platform(s) will best help you achieve your goal and how your social media presence will be different than other communications with your audience.
vi. Determine who will manage the account and be responsible for the social schedule.

vii. Seek approval from your supervisor.

viii. Contact the Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing to register your new account in the official University social media directory and for additional information.

3. If you already have an account:
   ● If your organization already has a Georgia Southern-related account, please make sure it meets these criteria:
     i. Consistent posts: Ideally, posts should be made daily during the workweek, or more. The more you post, the more your content is visible to your audience. If you aren’t sure you’ll have enough content to post daily, contact the Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing for assistance with developing a plan or with promoting your messages through the University’s main accounts would be more appropriate.
     ii. Appropriate content: Content should include information relevant to your audience/organization. Personal opinions and information should not be shared on official University accounts.
     iii. Contact the Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing in order to be added to the official University social media directory. In order to be added, the aforementioned guidelines must be met, in addition to an established audience of 100 or more fans or followers.

4. Account Administration:
   ● Designate at least two administrators. Having more than one will prevent an account from becoming stagnant if the person who created it leaves.
   ● Account administrators should have the time and enthusiasm to populate, maintain and monitor the account in order to see what engages users, be creative, plan ahead, etc.
   ● Students or interns should not be allowed to manage accounts as they may vacate positions leaving accounts inactive, unmanaged and inaccessible.
   ● Instead, students may contribute to the creation of content for accounts, paying special attention to consistency of voice and flow of content. It is the responsibility of the account manager(s) to proof and approve content prior to posting.

5. Guiding Principles:
   ● Ensure a link to www.georgiasouthern.edu is visible on the account. Any additional linked accounts should also be an official georgiasouthern.edu site.
   ● Social accounts should begin with “Georgia Southern University” or “Georgia Southern” followed by department/college name. For example, “Georgia Southern University Athletics” or “Georgia Southern Athletics.” Do not use “GSU.”
   ● Be thoughtful, creative and respectful, but keep personal views separate. “I” language should not used.
   ● Be familiar with the rules/terms of use of the social media platform.
   ● Be accurate. As a higher education institution, we are held to a higher standard of grammatical accuracy and correct information. Updates should be proofread. Use spell check and other tools to ensure content is accurate. Attach links to support and ensure the accuracy of statements.
Plan ahead. Try to plan social posts at least a week or two in advance. This will allow ample time for proofreading and scheduling. Contact the Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing if assistance is needed with scheduling posts.

Make sure the “about” section of the account is updated with current information. Please see Training Guidelines for an example.

If you receive a request from the media, the request should be forwarded to the Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing.

Specify where events are taking place (Armstrong Campus, Liberty Campus or Statesboro campus).

6. Dealing with Negativity:

- Stay away from statements involving sensitive language, including but not limited to obscene language, profanity or ethnic slurs.
- Remove posts and/or comments that are inappropriate, offensive in nature, or violate policies or create a threatening environment.
- Do not engage in a back and forth argument. We allow freedom of speech as long as it does not violate any guidelines, laws, etc.
- If an error is made even after the post content has been proofed and fact-checked, correct it quickly by editing the post or deleting the post if the error is realized immediately upon posting. If an error is realized after the post has received engagement, correct it quickly. It is important to get things right on the first post.

7. Photography Guidelines:

- Photographs posted on social media accounts can easily be downloaded and used by visitors. Please consider adding a watermark and/or posting images at 72 dpi and approximately 800x600 resolution, which will make the images appropriate for the web but not for printing.
- The University has photos for use by other departments and colleges on its official Flickr account, www.georgiasouthern.edu/flickr. Archival photos can be obtained from the Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing.
- Be mindful of copyright and fair use laws when posting images on social media that are not obtained from one of the accounts listed above.
- If you are posting photos of children in public areas on campus, while not required by law, it is courteous to ask the adult present with the child for permission to publish the photo of the child on social media.

8. Privacy:

- Confidential, proprietary and trade-secret information about Georgia Southern or its affiliates, students, employees or alumni may not be posted without their permission. Disclosing student educational records or personally identifiable student information violates the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and disclosing student medical records violates the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA).
- All applicable laws, regulations and University policies must be adhered to, especially those pertaining to copyright and intellectual property, employee or student conduct, use
of University resources, information and data, student privacy, Title IX and NCAA rules and regulations.

- Remember all content shared or posted may be subject to Georgia’s Open Records Law.
- Search engines can generate posts/images years after they are created, and comments, posts and photos can instantly be captured via screenshot and shared. Keep this in mind when posting on behalf of Georgia Southern.

9. Emergency and Crisis Communications:
- In the event of an emergency on campus, the University’s Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing will disseminate information using the University’s official social media accounts.
- All other University social media accounts should not post information regarding the emergency unless it is to direct followers to the University’s official accounts or official emergency website.
- In the event of an emergency or other sensitive event, administrators for other University social media accounts may be asked to pause activity on their accounts.

10. Logo Usage:
- Georgia Southern University is a federally registered trademark owned by the University System of Georgia Board of Regents.
- To request your college, school or department’s official Georgia Southern University nameplate, contact the Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing at marketing@georgiasouthern.edu.
- The Georgia Southern University logo appears in three formats: Primary, vertical and horizontal. Additionally, the eagle icon can be used alone. Logos are available in full-color, two-color, blue, gold, white or black. For examples of those formats, visit georgiasouthern.edu/marketing/university-logo.
- Logos are created only by the University’s Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing. Attempts to create new logos, or modify or recreate existing logos are not permitted.

11. When posting as an individual about Georgia Southern:
- Georgia Southern faculty and staff are encouraged to share events and news with their social media “friends” and “followers.” However, if identifying yourself as an employee of the University, keep the following in mind:
  i. Be authentic. When identifying yourself as a Georgia Southern employee in personal posts, be clear that you’re sharing your personal views and not speaking as a representative of the University.
  ii. Don’t use the Georgia Southern logo or make endorsements on your personal online sites, and don’t use the University to promote or endorse any product, cause or political party or candidate.
iii. In a crisis situation, do not post personal opinions about the crisis or misleading information. Share only information that has been released by the University or on the University's official social media accounts.