

Digital Marketing for Baylor University

Social Media Best Practices

(updated 1/7/19)

BACKGROUND: Social media is a powerful tool for effectively communicating worldwide. Because it is easily accessible, searchable and global in reach, any individual social media account bearing the Baylor name may provide an individual's initial point of contact for the entire University. Social media also inherently offers both opportunities and risks.

These guidelines have been compiled to help ensure that social media accounts using the Baylor name and representing the University are managed in a manner consistent with the University's standards, values and beliefs, and reflect a level of excellence that adds value to Baylor's national reputation. The current version of this document is located at:

<https://www.baylor.edu/socialmedia/index.php?id=865088>.

Further, these guidelines are intended to help facilitate planning and gaining authorization with department chairs, deans and vice presidents prior to launching a social media channel on behalf of the university or any unit of the university. Before launching a social media account that will represent Baylor University or any subset (a school, college, department, organization, etc.), please carefully consider these guidelines and ask the following questions:

GUIDELINES:

What is the purpose of this account?

Social media accounts can serve many purposes. Is this a service desk aimed at answering questions? An emergency communication channel? A channel for marketing or promoting Baylor or a related program? Does it serve an academic purpose? Or is it a blend of these options?

Is launching this platform authorized?

Because of the wide reach and visibility of social media, it is important to make sure department chairs, deans and/or vice presidents are aware of and endorse social media platforms prior to making them publicly available.

Who is targeted with this account?

The primary audience could be students, parents, faculty, staff and/or the general public.

What are the goals?

Once a general purpose is determined, set some concrete goals. How many posts will be made daily or weekly? How many interactions are needed for this to be a worthwhile endeavor? What is the criteria for success or failure? What measures will be employed (followers, comments, retweets, etc.) to track growth and success?

What kind of content and response will the account offer?

Social media can be a beast requiring near-constant feeding, in perpetuity. How will it be fed and who will feed it? What sort of content will be shared, and where will it come from?

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Will the account respond to inquiries? If so, will the account be monitored and managed outside of regular business hours? Keep in mind that slow responses (or none at all) can reflect badly on both the representative unit (school/college/department/etc.) and on the university.

Who will run the account?

Whose job will it be to keep the social media outlet fed? Do they know what to say, and how to use the platform? How much of their time will this require? Will someone be keeping an eye on the feed to make sure the messages are really what you want to say?

Is there a back-up administrator, in case something happens to the primary platform handler? Each account should have at least two administrators with the ability to log in (i.e., knowledge of the username and password). If one account administrator leaves the department, the password should be changed and a new administrator found to replace the departed individual.

Is everyone with access to the account familiar with these policies?

Remember, conduct on a university social media platform is governed by the same policies and principles that govern all of our work at Baylor; policies such as these are of particular importance: Standards of Personal Conduct BUPP 023; Code of Ethics BUPP 024; Technology Systems Usage Policy BUPP 025; Policy on Usage of Copyrighted Material; Network Usage Policies; Baylor Graphic Standards; Web Site & E-mail Privacy Statement; Student Policies & Procedures; Faculty Handbook; and Intellectual Property Policy BUPP 721.

Is there a plan to build an audience?

Investing time in posting without investing time in getting an audience is counter-productive. An 'if you build it, they will come' plan is good for a movie plot, but not for a social media platform.

Are there other communication tools (printed pieces, emails, website, other social media platforms) that will promote this account? How will the account be promoted to internal audiences (faculty/staff, students, organization members, etc.)?

How will negativity or worst-case scenarios be handled?

Sooner or later, someone will post or reply with something negative or off-color. How will those negative responses or comments on your feed be handled? What if a reply or post is negative, but not false or profane? Choices here may include deleting posts or banning users (on some platforms). What criteria will be used prior to taking such a step?

Further, there is a chance the account could be hacked and start sending out bad messages; will anyone notice if that happens? What is the plan for regaining control or mitigating the damage?

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Social media can be a great way to communicate. However, it isn't a panacea. Someone really has to work at this for it to be useful. And there are risks; you need to know them and decide how you are going to mitigate them before you start. It is strongly advised that no social media platform be launched prior to making concrete plans to manage these risks.

Do you want your platform to be listed on the Baylor social media directory?

To have a Baylor-related social media platform listed on Baylor's [social media directory](#), an account administrator will have to provide some basic information and confirm that these guidelines have been reviewed and heeded.

[If you still have questions or are looking for more guidance on operating an official university account, [please contact us here.](#)]