



## BALL STATE UNIVERSITY SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

Social media are powerful communications tools that have a significant impact on organizational and professional reputations. Because they blur the lines between personal voice and institutional voice, Ball State University has crafted the following policy to help clarify how best to enhance and protect personal and professional reputations when participating in social media.

Social media are defined as media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Examples include but are not limited to LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and MySpace.

Both in professional and institutional roles, employees need to follow the same behavioral standards online as they would in real life. The same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, alumni, donors, media, and other university constituents apply online as in the real world. Employees are liable for anything they post to social media sites.

### SECTION 1: POLICIES FOR ALL SOCIAL MEDIA SITES, INCLUDING PERSONAL SITES

- **Protect confidential and proprietary information:** Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Ball State, students, employees, or alumni. Employees must still follow the applicable federal requirements such as FERPA and HIPA, as well as NCAA regulations. Adhere to all applicable university privacy and confidentiality policies. Employees who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination.
- **Respect copyright and fair use:** When posting, be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the university. For guidance, consult the [Guidelines for Copyright Compliance](#). Direct questions about fair use or copyrighted material to the copyright and intellectual property manager in [University Libraries](#) at 765-285-5330.
- **Don't use Ball State logos for endorsements:** Do not use the Ball State logo or any other university images or iconography on personal social media sites. Do not use Ball State's name to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate.
- **Respect university time and property:** University computers and time on the job are reserved for university-related business as approved by supervisors and in accordance with the [Information Technology Users' Privileges and Responsibilities](#) document.
- **Terms of service:** Obey the Terms of Service of any social media platform employed.

## SECTION 2: BEST PRACTICES

This section applies to those posting on behalf of an official university unit, though the guidelines may be helpful for anyone posting on social media in any capacity.

- **Think twice before posting:** Privacy does not exist in the world of social media. Consider what could happen if a post becomes widely known and how that may reflect both on the poster and the university. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. If you wouldn't say it at a conference or to a member of the media, consider whether you should post it online. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, ask your supervisor for input or contact [University Marketing and Communications](#) (UMC) at 765-285-1560.
- **Strive for accuracy:** Get the facts straight before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors. This is especially important if posting on behalf of the university in any capacity. (See "Institutional social media" below.)
- **Be respectful:** Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Responses should be considered carefully in light of how they would reflect on the poster and/or the university and its institutional voice.
- **Remember your audience:** Be aware that a presence in the social media world is or easily can be made available to the public at large. This includes prospective students, current students, current employers and colleagues, and peers. Consider this before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm, or provoke any of these groups.
- **On personal sites,** identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as a Ball State faculty or staff member online, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the institution.
- **Photography:** Photographs posted on social media sites easily can be appropriated by visitors. Consider adding a watermark and/or posting images at 72 dpi and approximately 800x600 resolution to protect your intellectual property. Images at that size are sufficient for viewing on the Web, but not suitable for printing. Remember that the policies of [Ball State University Photographic Services](#) related to purchasing and using their images apply online as well as in print. Contact Photographic Services at 765-285-1571 with questions.

## SECTION 3: INSTITUTIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA

If you post on behalf of an official university unit, the following policies must be adhered to in addition to all policies and best practices listed above:

- **Notify the university:** Departments or university units that have a social media page or would like to start one should contact their communications managers in UMC. Units that are unsure who to contact or that do not have a communications manager should contact UMC at 765-285-1560 or e-mail [umc@bsu.edu](mailto:umc@bsu.edu) to ensure all institutional social media sites coordinate with other Ball State sites and their content. All institutional pages must have a full-time appointed employee who is identified as being responsible for content. Ideally, this should be the unit head of the department.
- **Acknowledge who you are:** If you are representing Ball State when posting on a social media platform, acknowledge this.
- **Have a plan:** Departments should consider their messages, audiences, and goals, as well as a strategy for keeping information on social media sites up-to-date. Your communications manager in UMC can assist and advise you with your social media planning.

- **Link back to the university:** Whenever possible, link back to the Ball State Web site. Ideally, posts should be very brief, redirecting a visitor to content that resides within the Ball State Web environment. When linking to a news article about Ball State, check first to see whether you can link to a release on the Ball State News Center ([www.bsu.edu/news](http://www.bsu.edu/news)) instead of to a publication or other media outlet.
- **Protect the institutional voice:** Posts on social media sites should protect the university's institutional voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste. No individual Ball State unit should construe its social media site as representing the university as a whole. Consider this when naming pages or accounts, selecting a profile picture or icon, and selecting content to post—names, profile images, and posts should all be clearly linked to the particular department or unit rather than to the institution as a whole.

UMC also has created a Web page with advice and recommendations for posting to specific popular social media sites. Refer to the [UMC Web site](#) for more information.