



METHODIST UNIVERSITY SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Methodist University utilizes social media platforms to interact and communicate with current and perspective students, parents, alumni, faculty, staff, donors, the media, and its community. These platforms include, but are not limited to, social media networks — such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn— and blogs and photo/video-sharing web sites.

The purpose of this policy is to help students and employees at Methodist University understand the best practices for and responsibilities of communicating and engaging the public on behalf of MU, while assuring all posts are in compliance with school policies, employee/student behavior, branding and messaging guidelines, federal laws and regulations.

While this policy applies to University-controlled social media — all of which are ultimately managed by [Methodist University Marketing & Relations](#) (MarCom) — some guidelines for personal use are also provided.

DEPARTMENTAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

All departmental accounts must be created/registered through MarCom utilizing the [Social Media Account](#) request form and have an administrator (who is full-time faculty or staff) responsible for the day-to-day operations and content of the site/account. *Pages that have not shared new content in four-plus months will be under review and pages that have not shared new content in eight-plus months will be at risk of deactivation until an administrator can prove preparedness to reactivate and continue the page.*

The departmental admin **must** add the University's Social Media Manager as an admin to their page so MarCom – which is responsible for all outward marketing, communications, and branding for the University – can step in to assist when needed or (for University safety purposes) add/subtract content or eliminate an official university social media account at any time. **Via social media – as with all other forms of University communications – all**

departments (academic, operational, and athletics) must use university approved logos/branding.

STUDENT ORGANIZATION ACCOUNTS

All student org accounts must be created/registered through MarCom utilizing the [Social Media Account](#) form and have an administrator (the faculty or staff advisor for the organization) responsible for the day-to-day operations and content of the site/account. Prior to submitting a form for a new social media account, all requesters should check all social media platforms for any existing accounts related to their organization.

Student organizations **must** add the University's Director of Student Involvement as an admin to their page so that Student Affairs can step in to assist when needed. Student Affairs may add/subtract content on an official MU student organization social media account at any time. **All student organizations must only use logos/branding approved by the university.**

WEB SITES REPRESENTING THE UNIVERSITY

No official Methodist University organization, department, club, team, class, etc., other than MarCom, should be maintaining/operating any web site representing the University. Multiple urls/domains are confusing to our community and prospective students/parents/constituents. If you are familiar with, or an admin on an unofficial MU site outside of Methodist.edu, please contact MarCom for assistance and transition.

REQUESTING AND MANAGING AN OFFICIAL MU SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT

(There should be no site/platform being used that represents Methodist University — its departments, organizations, teams, students, or employees — that isn't approved via the account process below).

DECIDING TO START

If you have not created an official social media feed, consider whether it suits the needs of your unit. Do you need to interact with students? Does your area generate a lot of content – images, video, text – that keeps the feed engaging? Is the goal to reach out with news or to build bonds with communities? Take a moment to decide if you really should have these kinds of accounts, and do your people have the time, expertise or resources to maintain them. **Note MarCom some minimum posting requirements below.**

PLATFORM PURPOSES & USES

Define your social media goals and consider whether a specific social media platform suits the needs of your unit.

Facebook: Personal interaction, commentary, sharing of images and small videos – this is the heart of the way Facebook operates. The pace is casual, but to be effective, expect to post at least once a day, if not twice. The community you build through a social media site will want to interact with each other, as well. Moderation is a part of having a social tool enabled.

Twitter: Real-time communication of news and events. Expect to post at least once a day, if not more frequently.

Instagram: Curated visual main feed, stories for real-time communication and interactions, and reels for entertaining/educational video content. Expect to post at least 3-5 times per week.

YouTube: Video content for entertaining/educational content. Expect to post at least 2-4 times per month.

LinkedIn: Showcase what makes your department & MU special – academically, socially, culturally, etc. A chance for the department to market itself and its alumni and to build a community of professionals to keep in contact with alumni and have a network for students to utilize before and after graduation. Expect to post 2-5 times per week.

Blogs: Longer form written and visual content. In turn, these are perfect sources for links and posts on social or real-time reporting tools. Expect to post 2-4 times per week.

CONSIDERATION CHECKLIST:

- **Goals:** What are your goals and how will social media help you achieve them?
- **Audience:** Who is your primary audience, and is social media the appropriate channel to reach them? Is your audience large enough to warrant a channel? Consider what relevant information you have to share, and what your audience wants to know.
- **Time:** Do you have the bandwidth/time to plan, create, and share quality content and engage with your audience?
- **Resources:** Managing a social media account is time and labor-intensive. Do you have the proper resources (e.g. staffing, bandwidth, tools) in place to develop written and visual content and monitor reaction to your posts every day?
- **Volume of Content:** Can you produce the necessary amount of content at a high enough level of quality? Examine your ability by creating a content calendar, and fill out at least the first four weeks. Remember that every piece of content generally requires a visual to perform well, not just words and/or a link.
- **Platform Selection:** Which social platform(s) are best suited to accomplish your goals and attract and engage with the audience you want to reach? Each channel is unique, and different demographics use social media channels in different ways.
- **Strategy:** What is the goal for your social media and how will you work towards it?
- **Coordinators:** Who will take responsibility for day-to-day oversight of your social media and who will be responsible for planning, creating, and delivering content and engaging

with the audience? Who will be responsible for updating passwords for protection and manage who has access to the page content and settings? Who can serve as back-ups.

- **Continuity:** Will you be able to post with regularity? How frequently are you intending to post on your social media and are you prepared to create content to maintain that consistency during the slower times of the year?
- **Approvals:** Have you submitted a Social Media Account request form and worked with the MarCom department to gain official approvals to create your MU social media accounts?
- **Analysis:** How do you define success for your social media presence for the first month, the first six months, and the first year? Plan to assess on a regular basis whether your social media is fulfilling your established goals and meeting your specific measures of success (e.g. clicks, reach engagement, sentiment, etc.).
- **Accessibility:** Be prepared to include subtitles, closed captioning, transcripts, alt text, image descriptions when possible/applicable.

PREPARATION: Create a selection of fake/trial posts to explain your mission and demonstrate the value/benefit of following and interacting with your page. Share the page within your department/field.

LAUNCH: After receiving a written/final approval from MarCom, promote the page by sharing within and outside of your department. Promote it to current students and within other department marking & promotional materials.

ANALYTICS: Use your analytics as a roadmap to see what is or is not working, what your audience is or is not interested in, optimal posting times/content types, etc.

UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA AT METHODIST UNIVERSITY

Social media used to promote departments, services, and student organizations at MU, should follow these guidelines:

Guidelines for Posting:

- **Tell our story consistently:** University-affiliated pages should have new posts a minimum of once a week (preferably once a day) to maintain an active social media feed. Dormant social media accounts are a poor reflection on the specific organization and University. Social media platforms are a wonderful tool to promote all that is great about MU, please do it often.
- **Interact in an MU tone:** Keep a respectful, professional tone when posting on or answering questions as a University-affiliated page.

- Stay on brand with any MU-affiliated site/feed: Consistency in branding/messaging is crucial for credibility. No altered logos of any kind should be created/posted. Logos and other branding guidelines can be found in the [University Identity Standards Manual](#).
- Keep confidential information private: In accordance with [HIPAA and FERPA laws](#), confidential student and employee information – such as health records, fines, suspensions, etc. – should not be made public. Confidential information can also include donor/gift information, operating plans, University financial information, or even internal communications/emails. All posts must adhere to MU [Student Code of Conduct](#) and [Employee Policies](#).
- Use common sense: Refrain from making inappropriate posts containing vulgarity, nudity, racially or culturally insensitive material, or potential/alleged criminal activity. You represent not just yourself, but the entire MU community.
- Provide accurate, reliable information: Share up-to-date information from credible sources. If sharing an opinion piece, make sure that is well noted.
- Do not endorse (conflict of interest): Unless otherwise approved by administration, no University-controlled page should use the University's brand (name, colors, emblems) to endorse people, products, political opinions/parties, business, social issues, or causes. No advertising is allowed, and be careful not to use University social media (property, confidential information, accepting gifts, etc.) for personal gain.
- Keep log-in credentials: Make sure there is an accurate record of log-in information (maintained by an organization-affiliated, full-time faculty or staff advisor) that can be passed down to future social media admins. This will assure that duplicate pages, which can cause frustration to those seeking information, aren't created. As admins leave the university (students graduating for example) log-in information should be updated/changed immediately.
- Respect intellectual property: Give credit where it is due and keep copyright laws in mind when posting.
- Follow NCAA and USA South Athletic Conference rules: This applies to any posts, comments, or messages related to the recruitment of student-athletes.

BEST PRACTICES

- **Be Prepared:** Create a selection of posts to explain your mission and demonstrate the value/benefit of following and interacting with your page prior to launching a new page. Continue planning content in advance, a monthly content calendar, with flexibility for spontaneity and/or unexpected content, is recommended.
- **Create Excitement:** Share content highlighting successes, advancements, and achievements of your department and other areas of the university

- **Be part of the group:** One of the benefits of participation in university social media is sharing social media content from within the university community. It also provides you with content to keep your feeds moving by coordinating with others to pick up and repost information from other feeds.
- **Start & be a part of the conversation:** Comment, like, and engage with your audience as they interact and engage with your content
- **Be Consistent:** Once a feed or page is started, update it regularly with engaging content. Remember: stale social media is more damaging to the university than no page at all.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Social media is arguably the No. 1 medium students, parents, and community members use to contact businesses and educational institutions about various topics, including conflict.

While Methodist University welcomes comments and discussions, it reserves the right to remove such if defamatory, spam, unrelated to the topic of the post, threatening, business promotions, or personal attacks. **Please utilize MarCom (at a minimum alerting MarCom) if you see sensitive posts.**

Here are a few ways to respond to conflict – again, utilize MarCom for a strategic response – on a University-affiliated social media page:

- **Be as helpful as possible:** If you don't know the answer to a question, redirect it to someone who can help them. Off-platform discussion is often more personal and helpful to everyone.
- **Don't respond on behalf of the University without guidance:** MarCom works closely with administration, which speaks on behalf of the University. If you're unsure on how or to respond, please contact the Digital Media Coordinator in MarCom.
- **Be kind and refrain from arguing:** Address any issues that arise, but do not engage in arguments on a University-affiliated social media page. Offer solutions and keep a professional tone. Many times, even without all the facts, people just want to be heard. Do not delete posts just because you may disagree with them, but also know that threatening/libelous/abusive comments should not be tolerated. Reach out to MarCom for assistance if you need assistance.
- **Be careful:** Addressing internal or criminal investigations as they are being conducted can lead to additional inquiries or charges (for you and the participants). Posting images of participants (alleged victims, for example), can be very harmful to them in a variety of ways.
- **Site administrators cannot delete or block materials without consulting MarCom**

PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Methodist University encourages free speech and expression on personal social media accounts of students and employees. However, the University is not liable for postings of a student or employee on their personal site/account.

Please be mindful of what is posted, especially if Methodist University is tagged in any way on your profile. By tagging Methodist University, you are connecting your personal profile to the institution. Be sure to state that your opinions are your own, and do not necessarily reflect the views of friends, family, or your employer/institution.

Even on personal pages, keep confidential information private, and be mindful of copyright laws.

Lastly, you should not use the University's brand for your personal platform, (logo, name, images) and do not endorse any person, idea, product, or cause on behalf of the University without prior approval from administration.

THE MARCOM TEAM IS HERE TO HELP

Whether it's with the creation of a platform, logo usage, or conflict management, MarCom is available to assist every organization and person at MU thrive in our social media environment. Please utilize the university [Identity Standards Guide](#), remember you are representing the excellence of Methodist University in every post (be it image or text), and don't hesitate to reach out to MarCom for advice, high-quality images, logos or other at:

- Karalee Scouten – Digital Media Coordinator
kscouten@methodist.edu
- Brad Johnson – Director of Marketing & Communications
bjohnson@methodist.edu