

## SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY & STAFF

### SOCIAL MEDIA DEFINED

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Tools that enable individuals to create and share content with a broad audience revolutionized the media landscape in the late 20th century. The ability to connect large groups of people who share similar interests has become a defining characteristic of the 21st century. These two developments converge to create an unprecedented era in which the barriers to mass communication are at an all-time low in human history. By combining the capacity to reach large audiences with interactive capabilities, social media has transformed the one-to-many paradigm of public relations into a two-way conversation.

To foster a diverse range of voices, Northwestern State actively encourages its faculty, staff, and students to utilize social media tools. For individuals who manage social media accounts on behalf of the university, the following policies delineate the responsibilities and obligations associated with engaging the public as representatives of Northwestern State.

### SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NORTHWESTERN STATE

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Departments or university units with social media pages are required to notify the Director of University Marketing and Branding, to register their pages and provide names and contact information for individuals who are responsible for maintaining the social media accounts. The objective is to ensure coordination and support for all official social media platforms of Northwestern State while avoiding duplication and confusion among services that operate with a single master account. An appointed full-time employee of Northwestern State should be designated as the primary point of contact for information posted on any official social media page. It is advisable to appoint two full-time employees as co-administrators for each site to ensure seamless operations. The Director of University Marketing and Branding should be granted administrative access to all social media feeds.

As a representative of a division within Northwestern State, the university reserves the right to remove inappropriate, demeaning, insulting, or threatening messages from official pages, including comments and posts. Moreover, official pages must maintain content that adheres to the university's established quality standards. Social media platforms often require more frequent updates compared to traditional websites to be effective.

### YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES REPRESENTING NORTHWESTERN STATE

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Before initiating a social media feed on behalf of your department or unit, please consider three crucial points. Firstly, by assuming the responsibility of maintaining an official social media presence for your area at Northwestern State, you are required to adhere to the university's official policies regarding social media usage. Secondly, while you represent your department, it is important to note that your statements do not necessarily reflect the views of the entire institution. Lastly, by engaging in this role, you accept liability for your comments, including compliance with state and federal guidelines.

## SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY & STAFF

### YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES REPRESENTING NORTHWESTERN STATE (CONT'D)

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- » Establishing an official social media presence for a department or unit necessitates compliance with these policies by all individuals involved in managing the feed. This entails linking back to the university's main social media account (tagging NSU in posts and including "A Department of @nsula" in the bio), providing contact information, and adhering to the guidance provided by the Director of University Marketing.
- » Advertising or endorsing external vendors or businesses is strictly prohibited on any Northwestern State University website or social media platform, with the exception of the athletic department's official website (NSUDemons.com).
- » The utilization of Northwestern State University's official trademarks, logos, seal, and colors must comply with the Northwestern State University Visual Branding Guidelines. This applies to the use of the university name and abbreviation in the context of social media.
- » The release of information deemed official by the university is subject to oversight by the Office of Marketing and Communications. It is essential to obtain prior approval from the Office of Marketing and Communications before releasing any official news concerning the university.
- » All state of Louisiana regulations regarding purchasing, contract confidentiality, proprietary information, and open records, as well as federal guidelines concerning student records (FERPA) and personnel information (HIPAA), apply. Official Northwestern State social media platforms are not to be used for political statements or endorsements. Additionally, Northwestern State University's campus computing conduct codes are applicable.
- » Keep in mind that when updating and maintaining social media websites on behalf of the university's marketing efforts, you are utilizing state resources, state computer networks, and potentially state work time. Consequently, your activities may be subject to state Freedom of Information Act requests.
- » Employees of Northwestern State University who violate these policies, as well as other university privacy and confidentiality policies, do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination.
- » Departments responsible for social media representation must ensure that their pages are regularly updated with content that meets the university's quality standards. Administrators of these pages must actively monitor their own pages and be prepared to address any issues promptly. The primary responsibility for the security of passwords and the integrity of official social media lies with the departmental or unit administrators of the page, with the Director of University Marketing and Branding serving as a secondary contact.

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### YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES REPRESENTING NORTHWESTERN STATE (CONT'D)

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- » It is the duty of social media administrators to update their platforms with engaging and interesting content. It is crucial to maintain a continuous flow of information to the community, as a stagnant page can harm the university's reputation more than having no page at all.
- » Familiarize yourself with the terms of service of various social media platforms, and if you have any questions regarding copyright or other agreement-related matters, please reach out to the Director of University Marketing and Branding.
- » Lastly, as de facto representatives of Northwestern State, it is imperative to refrain from using inappropriate language, ethnic slurs, personal insults, or engaging in unprofessional conduct. Please be mindful that as state employees, there are limitations on what is appropriate to communicate. Although social media encourages a casual tone, exercise caution regarding spelling and language. As a general rule, avoid behavior that would be considered unacceptable within the premises of your university unit. Ask yourself if the content you post is something you would want the president to read in the local newspaper.

### IN AN EMERGENCY OR CRISIS SITUATION

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If an event is unfolding on the campus, refer all traffic to the Purple Alert system, the university's main website, and official social media feeds. When you repost information from official university sources during these times, be sure to carefully copy the information and all links back to the official university source. Never speculate or report unconfirmed information in a crisis. If you see erroneous information in a crisis, contact members of Northwestern State's Office of Marketing and Communications immediately and forward links to the errors.

### WE ARE HERE TO HELP

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If you want to learn more about using social media to interact with colleagues or students, please contact Amy Lee, Director of University Marketing & Branding (leeam@nsula.edu).