

# Jackson State University Social Media Guidebook

## University Communications

### Introduction

Jackson State University uses social media to alert our constituencies about JSU news, events, programs, etc, and to engage in conversations with all members of the Tiger community. Whether it's staff, students, employees, fans or alumni, JSU uses social media to find out what's important to the entire Tiger Nation and to share that information with each other and the world. We have developed this guide to provide you the conventional wisdom regarding the use of social media.

Our hope is that you will understand how to strategize effectively to ensure your social media channel is targeting and engaging the right audience.

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#### **I. What is Social Media**

Social media is defined as the use of online tools and services that allow Internet users to create and publish content. Users with similar interests can interact in communities by sharing information and knowledge. Many social media sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, can serve as personal profiles where users can post information about themselves. Social media also allows users to gain support, share information with friends and increase existing networking circles. Popular social media websites include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Foursquare, YouTube, Flickr and blogs.

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#### **II. How does Jackson State University use Social Media**

Jackson State University is using many channels of social media to communicate and build relationships with our faculty, staff, students, parents, fans and friends. Social media allows us the unique opportunity to hear what our audiences are saying by conversing with them on any given social media channel. This type of two-way communication is a valuable tool JSU is employing to receive instant feedback. Our main tools we use are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Like us, follow us and watch and respond as our content grows!

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### III. Requirements Before You Start

*Get Approval, Be Official!*

In order to receive authorization to present a social media account as an official university entity, you must have approval from the executive director for University Communications or his/her designee.

All accounts must be **registered and approved** before going live.

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### IV. Make A Plan

- **Define your goals:** Clearly defining your goals can help you choose what social media channel is best suited for your primary objective. Think about your organization's communications and marketing and how these social media channels will help you achieve your goals. Pay close attention to the level of available resources for your social media channel. Although they are free to create, successful Social media use requires time and attention. An inactive account that does not have a continuous stream of new and relevant content will atrophy and fail. If you find that you don't have enough time to devote to the ongoing cultivation of a social media platform, consider instead leveraging another existing account: for example, a small department can funnel their message to the college's account, a lab to their department's account or a related student organization, etc. Once you determine your audience and message, you can then brainstorm which site would be most appropriate to accomplish this.
- **Determine a manager:** Designating a coordinator role to one person in your department will ensure that you maintain a focus on your social media goals. This does not need to take up a significant amount of time, but successful maintenance of social media sites involve updating the content frequently, conversing with and engaging viewers and responding to relevant events or problems that may arise. You should update your site at least twice a day. Assigning a backup person for this will ensure your accounts are managed when the primary manager is away, on vacation or is otherwise unavailable. While the social media site can be a department-wide collaborative effort, establishing a coordinator will allow for the messages to have cohesiveness and timeliness.
- **Determine a plan:** What are your marketing goals and how does social media fit within those goals? Whatever your goals may be,

clearly define them so you can always use them as a point of reference while you manage your accounts.

- **Listen and monitor:** How comfortable and knowledgeable are you about the platforms and audiences? Take the time to listen to the different channels before engaging so you have a clear understanding of audience.
- **The right tool for the right job:** Be aware of current and emerging tools, but try to consider ones that will further your marketing goals. Spreading yourself too thin can jeopardize your valuable audiences.
- **Identifying yourself:** Creating an account name that demonstrates your association with Jackson State University as well as your literal name is the best approach. For example, the JSU Admissions Office should choose the Twitter name @JSUAdmissions. Most social media platforms allow the user to create a custom profile photo or avatar. Make sure your image demonstrates who you are. Finally, be aware that your profile photo will likely be reduced in size and converted to a square shape for the purposes of displaying in news feeds. The more complex you make the image, the less recognizable it will be.
- **Launch & Adjust:** Once you've gone through the first six steps, you are ready to launch your social media site! Tell us about it, add other JSU departments and begin to add your target audience. Go forward with your intended message and goals.

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## V. Best Practices for a Successful Social Media Presence

- **Protect confidential and proprietary information:** Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Jackson 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 about fair use or copyrighted material call the Office of Contractual Services at 601-979-1065.

- **Respect university time and property:** University computers and time on the job are reserved for university related business as approved by supervisors.
- **Terms of service:** Obey the Terms of Service of any social media platform employed.
- **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 the **University Communications** at 979-2272.
- **Strive for accuracy:** Only post verified factual information on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors. This is especially important when posting on behalf of the university in any capacity. (See "Institutional social media" below.)
- **Answer Questions:** It's important to be available, helpful and friendly. Answer user questions, and pose questions of your own. This interaction will help create a mutually beneficial relationship.
- **Post and Comment.** It's always important to post interesting content for your site, but remember to also comment on postings of others in your audience. This will also help create the conversation that social media sites allow between you and your audience.
- **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 JSU faculty or staff member online, it should be clear that

the views expressed are not necessarily those of the institution. Do not use the Jackson State logo or any other university images or iconography on personal social media sites. Do not use Jackson State's name to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate.

- **Photography:** Visitors can appropriate Photographs posted on social media sites easily. Consider adding a watermark and/or posting images at 72 dpi and approximately 800 x 600 resolution to protect your intellectual property. Images at that size are sufficient for viewing on the Web, but not suitable for printing.
- **Terms of service:** Obey the Terms of Service of any social media platform employed.

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## VI. Popular Social Media Platforms

### *Facebook*

Facebook is a social networking site that connects people to other individuals. Organizations and brands are able to create pages and groups to also connect to these individuals. It is a network driven by status updates, games and applications, and content sharing such as links and photos.

- **Fan Pages vs. Groups:** Fan pages typically work best for most uses. A fan page allows a brand or entity to connect with people without using a personal account. Applications can be added to increase personality of the brand. Groups are designed to be more personalized, especially around common interests a group may share.
- **Creating Your Account:** To set up a Facebook Fan page, follow the [instructions provided by Facebook](#). You will want to set up at least two administrators for this account, with one serving as backup in case there are access problems with the original account. Creating a fake account as the administrator of an official Facebook page is strongly discouraged as it runs counter to Facebook's Terms of Service.
- **Picking & Setting Up A Username:** When choosing your username, make sure it is as literal and identifiable as possible. You want people to be able to search and find you. Don't make it so abstract that they will not be able to become a fan of your page.

For example, the Jackson State University Facebook page is titled “Jackson State University” and the url is Facebook.com/JacksonState. Once you’ve considered a name, go to <http://www.facebook.com/username/> and see if the username you chose is available. Remember, once you select a username it can not be altered. [Learn more from Facebook's Help Center.](#)

### **Twitter:**

Twitter defines their site as “an information network made up of 140-character messages from all over the world.” Essentially, Twitter is a short dialogue where people can post about anything, and have conversations back and forth. A tweet can be no longer than 140 characters.

The following are symbols and definitions that you should familiarize yourself with for your department’s Twitter account:

- **Username:** Also known as a Twitter handle. Must be unique and contain fewer than 15 characters. Is used to identify you on Twitter for replies and mentions.
- **@:** The @ sign is used to call out usernames in Tweets, like this: Hello @Twitter! When a username is preceded by the @ sign, it becomes a link to a Twitter profile.
- **Reply:** A Tweet posted in reply to another user's message, usually posted by clicking the "reply" button next to their Tweet in your timeline. Always begins with @username.
- **Mention:** Mentioning another user in your Tweet by including the @ sign followed directly by their username is called a "mention". Also refers to Tweets in which your username was included.
- **Retweet:** The act of forwarding another user's Tweet to all of your followers. Someone else can also perform this action, which is still called a retweet.
- **Trending Topic:** A subject algorithmically determined to be one of the most popular on Twitter at the moment.
- **Hashtag:** The # symbol is used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet. A complete list of definitions can be found at [Twitter Support](#).
- **Creating Your Department’s Account:** The easiest way to set up your Twitter Profile is to first create an e-mail account for your specific department. You don’t want to use your personal account.
  - Navigate to <http://twitter.com/>, enter your Department’s name

and click the yellow button on the right hand of your screen.

- Fill in the first field with your Department's name.
- Select a username from one of the usernames Twitter suggests, or create one that best suits your Department. Try to make your username as short as possible - when others retweet messages from your tweet stream, the length of your name reduces the number of available characters in their tweet, which might mean they will cut out or edit your tweet to make it possible to send (which can result in an electronic version of the 'Telephone Game' of misunderstood statements)
- Enter a password and make sure to document this for later use. It's advised that your password contains letters, numbers, and symbols.
- Enter the email address you made for your department.
- Pick sources that are related to your Department.
- Search for Jackson State University, and begin following all of the current Twitter accounts affiliated with the university.

## ***YouTube***

YouTube is a video-sharing website where users can upload, view and share videos from around the world.

### **What kind of content do we post?**

The Jackson State University [YouTube channel](#) houses videos related to university news, events, student and faculty profiles, etc.

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*For more information about this document, contact the JSU Department of Communications and Public Relations at 601-979-2272.*