Final project

Data Law, Ethics & Business Intelligence

# Social Media Policy for Saint Peter’s University

## Introduction

Universities worldwide have recognized that social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc., have become very important, effective and influential communication channels for communities as well as for the larger audience. Students, parents and the public around the globe follow these mediums which includes, but not limited to social media profiles, handles, posts, etc., for gathering information and interacting with official/un-official channels. Along with advertisements, these social media channels enable the universities to connect with wide sorts of people and business for variety of reasons like promoting a cultural event, cheering for the athletic teams, announcing news, etc. Hence, a university must have social media presence, but by virtue of its nature, a social media presence can very well be misused, therefore, universities must have a policy and/or guidelines dictating its usage by the university’s official channel, educators, administrators, students, etc. The purpose of using social media channels on behalf of the university is to support its mission, vision, values, programs and goals, including university information, news, strategies of marketing and branding, content and directives. Therefore, when using approved and/or official social media channels affiliated with the university, it is critical that the community members recognize that they are always representing the university. So, every university should offer policies and guidelines for official use of social media to assist in posting content and managing these sites.

## Social Media Policy

The main purpose of a social media policy is to ensure quality and appropriate use of the social media channels by its moderators and users. A social media policy can help a university to develop a clear, engaging and effective strategy when using social media and emerging communication technologies to achieve its goals.

## Identified common set of best practices

The common set of best practices identified as part of the comparative analysis of the different social media policies and guidelines for different universities are as below:

### Legal Standards

All Official University Social Media Sites must adhere to state and federal laws and regulations, and University policies. Only public information may be posted on Official University Social Media Sites. Official University Social Media Sites must not contain sensitive personal information as defined by privacy laws and policies.

1. Employee/Student privacy
2. Do not disclose student information. Abide by Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
3. Personally Identifiable Information related solely to a current or former student or employee of the University is protected.
4. Follow all applicable state, federal, and university laws, faculty and staff handbooks, regulations, and policies, such as FERPA, HIPAA, and NCAA Regulations.
5. Respect confidentiality of all participants and never disclose PII information
6. Crediting sources of content
7. You are encouraged to link to your source material ANY TIME you are able. This will help reduce the possibility of misinformation and it will also drive traffic.
8. Employees are encouraged to share University news and events that are a matter of public record, with their family and friends. We strongly advise linking straight to the information source as the most effective way to pass along news on personal sites and to avoid potential issues with copyright infringement.
9. Disclaimers
10. The views expressed on this [blog; website] are my own and do not reflect the views of my employer.
11. Institutional and departmental social media accounts must include the institutional disclaimer statement as provided for and provided in the guide to social media.
12. Opinions expressed on this site may not represent the official views of the university.
13. All content posted here does not necessarily reflect the views/ opinions of the university.
14. Intellectual property
15. All Official University Social Media Sites must respect intellectual property rights, federal Copyright law and University policies.
16. No social media activity can contain any copyrighted or trademarked material without permission of the copyright/trademark holder except as permitted by law.
17. Complies with all laws, regulations and University policies, including but not limited to harassment, privacy, confidentiality, copyright, trademark, intellectual property, information security, information technology, commercial soliciting and libel.
18. Site administrators are responsible for ensuring that social media content posted on the site is not infringing on the intellectual property rights of others.
19. Photo/Video release
20. Social media content on an Official University Social Media Site may sometimes include photographs, audio or video. Site administrators are responsible for ensuring that social media content posted on the site is not infringing on the intellectual property rights of others.
21. Photographs, drawings, video clips or sound clips may not be used without permission of the person who created them or the entity owning the rights where applicable.
22. Make sure that videos or electronic recordings comply with any university policies governing the use of electronic recording devices.
23. Ask before you take pictures and tell subjects how you intend to use their image. Consult the Office of University Communications for releases for video or photography if necessary.
24. Do not "tag" people in photos on public social networks; if they want their image found, allow them to tag themselves

### Brand Standards

The university expects departments, programs and individuals using social media on its behalf to abide by official university standards for branding, graphics and written communications. This includes using standardized account-naming conventions and preapproved graphic templates for Twitter. For other sites or accounts, consult with The Office of University Communications, which administers these guidelines and can provide account- and program-specific guidance.

1. Logos
2. Usage of logo and name must be properly adhered to by following the University Identity Guidelines.
3. Usage of University symbols and logos in accordance with the University policies.
4. Utilize available graphics to reinforce the university brand. Do not abuse logos. Your social media icon/profile image for your entity should comply with the UH branding standards. It should either be a photograph related to your entity, an approved logo for your entity, or another appropriately branded image.
5. Taglines
6. These short-term taglines must be approved by University Communications.
7. Taglines can also detract from the master brand and sub-brands, adding a supplemental message without adding value.
8. Hashtags
9. Should not be used to endorse products or people
10. Should be used in accordance

### Communication Standards

University Communications has compiled a list of general and outlet-specific “best practices” and recommendations regarding social media. Before beginning any social media program or endeavor, the University community members should read, review, and abide by these recommended practices.

1. What topics are permitted?
2. Discuss the topic with your manager or University Communications
3. Re-posting, posts made by University’s official account/handle, general and public information, encouraging and cheering your teams, etc.
4. What topics should be avoided?
5. Self-promoting behavior is viewed negatively and can lead to you being banned from websites or groups.
6. Political, religious or your own views without a disclaimer.
7. Endorsing products or people
8. What is the role of transparency in university communication?
9. Be transparent and avoid misrepresentation
10. Remain transparent. Be honest about your identity. Because no individual departmental social media site represents all of university, clearly link pages, account names, images and content to a particular department or unit within university. If you choose to post about university on your personal time, please identify yourself as a university student, faculty or staff member. Never hide your identity for the purpose of promoting Brown through social media.
11. What role does social media listening play?
    1. Methodical listening, monitoring and assessment, together with active management, is a requirement for engaging in social media successfully and productively.
    2. Be timely and treat social media as a real-time conversation in which participants expect information to be distributed quickly. Non-activity reflects upon the University just as poorly as negative behavior.
12. How frequently should social media communication occur?
13. Generally weekly to be active and engaging.
14. Can happen few to many times in a day, in situations like approaching admission deadlines, athletic, cultural or social events, etc.

# Social Media Policy for Saint Peter’s University

At Saint Peter’s University (SPU), we recognize that social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc., have become important and very influential community communication channels. The purpose of using social media channels on behalf of the SPU is to support its vision, mission, goals, programs, etc., including but not limited to university information, news, marketing and branding strategies, etc. Therefore, when using approved/official SPU social media channels identified with the Saint Peter’s University, it is critical that SPU community members recognize that they are always representing the University to the world. To assist in managing these sites and posting content, SPU offers the following policies and guidelines for use of social media. These policies and guidelines apply to all SPU community members.

**Comment Policy**

The Saint Peter’s University, including all its schools, education centers and affiliated programs fully supports and encourages free speech, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. When accessing any SPU social media platform, involving comment sections, the university believes that its members will be respectful and remain on topic.

**Official SPU Social Media Accounts**

Employees who wish to set up approved/official Saint Peter’s University social media accounts and speak on behalf of it through social media must apply in writing and receive permission from their department head prior to setting up the social media account. Once you have received the said permission, please contact the Division of Communications, Branding and Marketing to discuss issues such as confidentiality, privacy and FERPA.

**Web Standards**

SPU Web Standards policy and procedure regarding contact information, confidential information, correctness, funding, advertising, copyright and usage of SPU name apply equally to all official social media channels.

**News Announcements**

SPU News Media policy, Public Relations and procedure regarding news releases and campus announcements, apply equally to official SPU social media channels.

**SPU Logos, Taglines and Hashtags (Branding)**

Saint Peter’s University Name, taglines, hashtags and Logos policy and procedure applies equally to official SPU social media channels. Utilize available graphics to emphasize the university brand. Do not abuse logos. Your social media icon/profile picture for your entity should conform with the SPU branding standards. It should either be a photograph related to your entity, an approved logo for your entity, or another appropriately branded image. Same goes for taglines and hashtags.

**Photos**

If you want to post a photo, make sure it does not have any text overlays, graininess, cropping, etc. All photos must be of professional quality and follow SPU brand guideline look and feel.

**Video**

Artistic video content is usually a plus and must be approved by the Digital Communications Office. If you are wanting a video of any kind, please make sure it’s newsworthy before submitting a request.

**Social Media Dialogue**

Social media sites promote online dialogues via comments or other means, the tone of which is generally informal. Despite its casual tone, all online conversation is public. Please remember that anything you write can and will be viewed by current and future SPU community members as well as other associates and possible future employers.

When engaging in dialogue on official SPU social media sites:

* Remember that your statements and responses always represent SPU to the world
* We request that you abstain from discussing or conveying opinions regarding SPU policies, operations and personnel.
* Exercise caution, discretion, respect and thoughtfulness toward all participants
* Preserve professional language and tone
* Confidential or proprietary information must not be shared publicly on official social media channels

**Guidelines for Use**

Apart from the below guidelines, strict adherence to federal and state laws like FERPA, NCAA, HIPAA is expected.

### **A. Be Transparent and Take Responsibility**

1. Use spell and grammar checker to be sure of what you are posting online.
2. If you are posting, you are responsible, hence, think carefully and use good judgement before posting.
3. Be honest and transparent, cite sources as much as possible.
4. Make sure that you own your views and express them as your own, not the SPU’s.
5. Keep personal and professional integrity. Do not endorse just anything, use your judgement.

### **B. Be Respectful towards Your Audience**

1. Be ethical, moral and compassionate when interacting with commenters and/or followers.
2. Do not post anything that has objectionable content like defamatory, political, harassment, pornographic, etc.
3. Never make jokes, statements or post photos/videos which can directly or indirectly harm or threaten anyone’s or any communities’ sentiments.
4. Never promote any illegal conduct which includes but not limited to drinking, substance abuse, violence, vandalism, etc.
5. Do not write or post any derogatory or defamatory remarks against others.

### **C. Be Respectful towards the Property of Others**

1. Be mindful of intellectual property rights. Do not share anything that can violate copyright or trademarks laws. Refer and adhere to various IP laws.
2. Comply with user agreements and acceptable use policies

### **D. Maintain Confidentiality**

1. Must respect individual privacy rights and personal boundaries.
2. Do not disclose private facts that may cause physical or emotional grievance.
3. Personally Identifiable Information must never be posted. These includes but not limited to full name, identification numbers/cards, addresses, social security numbers, date of birth, etc.
4. Respect confidentiality and integrity of others as you would like them for yourself.
5. Do not disclose any information about another person which is protected by laws or professional standards such as education records, redacted historical records, medical information, etc.

### **E. Respect the University’s Interests**

1. Do not post anything that interferes with yours, your colleagues (students/educators) work.
2. Do not engage, if you come across any negative posts by a third party about the University or its students or personnel. Please contact the Office of Communications if you believe it needs a response by the university.
3. Be mindful that the university does not participate in any political campaign on behalf or in opposition to any candidate for public offices. Hence, posting any such stuff while representing the university is prohibited.

### **F. Be Cautious**

1. Be vigilant about who you communicate with, people may have malicious intent and may be seeking sensitive information about the university or its students or personnel.
2. Information that you post may be shared and repeated by others, so be cautious.

**Disclaimer**:

These policies and guidelines are not intended to govern or restrict personal presence on the web, nor are these guidelines intended to restrict employee rights to engage in concerted, protected activity related to the terms and conditions of their employment.

If you have any questions about the appropriateness of any content that you may want to post or reply on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc., please contact the Department of Marketing and Communications.

SPU reserves the right to remove any objectionable content. SPU may choose to defer to the policies of the social media platforms, but it reserves the right not to do so. SPU reserves the right to block or remove any account or user who violates these guidelines.

# Analysis

The social media policy for Saint Peter’s University has been carefully crafted by analyzing the important and common policies and guidelines of various other universities. Some of the key features that it addresses are as below:

1. Adoption of legal frameworks and adherence to Federal and State Laws like FERPA, NCAA, HIPAA and others as applicable.
2. Non-disclosure of private and confidential information which can harm the university or its members (students, educators, staff, etc.).
3. Non-disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information.
4. Upholding Intellectual Property rights like copyright laws, trademarks, etc.
5. Exercising cautiousness in relation to interacting, tagging, adding or pointing to people, places, events, etc.
6. Responsibility and liability in terms of the content being posted by the account holder or commenter.
7. Being transparent and showing empathy to readers, commenters, followers, etc.
8. Prohibition of misconduct, misinformation, misbehavior, misdemeanor against anyone.
9. Citing sources often than needed.
10. Prohibition of misusing and misquoting the university’s brand via logos, taglines, hashtags, etc.
11. Prohibition of misusing the university’s brand to promote products, people without proper authorization.
12. Reaching out to concerned department for creating an official channel.
13. Reaching out to proper departments via proper channels in case of doubts or help needed.
14. Properly mentions the disclaimers.
15. Strict action against violator of policies and guidelines.

## Conclusion

Everybody including people, businesses, organizations, etc., recognizes that the world of social media continues to evolve. And to reach out to the community, they must use social media as it has very large outreach. But it cannot be done on the fly, or on perspectives, it must be governed by strict policies and guidelines. These policies and guidelines are keeping the environment of the virtual world professional and usable by all varieties of people.

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