

Social Media Guidance

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Social Media Guidance

Florida State University employs individuals in a wide range of roles, including faculty, administrators, staff, and student employees, each of whom may engage with social media in different personal and professional contexts. This guidance document is intended to help members of the University community better understand how the University operationalizes its policy on the appropriate use of social media by employees. Because responsibilities, communication channels, and professional expectations vary across positions, the guidance provided here is designed to offer broadly applicable best practices that can assist employees in applying the policy in their specific roles. The document also addresses considerations related to the use of personal and private social media accounts by individuals who work at Florida State University.

No guidance document can anticipate every situation in which social media may be used. Accordingly, this resource is not intended to be exhaustive, nor does it provide examples or illustrative scenarios because each instance is unique. Instead, it presents general best practices intended to support employees in exercising sound professional judgment when using social media in ways that may intersect with their roles or responsibilities at the University. Employees should consult the [University's policy 3-20](#) and appropriate supervisory or administrative offices if questions arise about how the policy applies in particular circumstances.

I. Purpose of This Guidance

The information included here is intended to supplement official university policy and regulations for employee usage of social media in professional and personal contexts. This is provided to clarify how related policies may apply in practice and does not replace or revise existing policies or contractual protections.

II. Commitment to Academic Freedom and Open Expression

Florida State University is committed to maintaining, promoting, and encouraging [academic freedom](#) and open inquiry, discourse, teaching, research, publication, and service, without fear of censorship or retaliation. The University is also committed to protecting the FSU community against internal and external influences that restrict academic freedom, while recognizing that social media engagement occurs within existing professional and institutional responsibilities.

As stated in the BOT/UFF Collective Bargaining Agreement, “Academic freedom and responsibility are essential to the integrity of a true university and are rooted in a conception of the University as a community of scholars united in the pursuit of truth and

wisdom in an atmosphere of tolerance and freedom” (Art. 5). A cornerstone of the academy, academic freedom ensures that faculty and students have the freedom to pursue, create, and disseminate knowledge and critically explore topics and views, even those that may be politically unpopular or controversial, without fear or favor. Academic responsibility includes upholding the ethical standards of one’s discipline, practicing intellectual integrity, and presenting oneself as a representative or spokesperson for the University only when explicitly authorized to do so.

III. Distinguishing Personal and Institutional Expression

FSU employees have long used social media for personal purposes in ways that were understood as distinct from their institutional roles; however, that separation is difficult to maintain. In the past, guidelines like sending or posting messages from personal accounts signaled that these communications were personal views, not those of the institution. Employees can no longer expect to be disassociated from the university when posting online, even from personal accounts. Because names, affiliations, and expertise are often easily searchable, readers can often connect an employee’s posts to FSU regardless of intent. Adding a disclaimer such as “views are my own” is a good practice, but even that is not a guarantee that readers won’t connect the statements or views to the University.

Another way that communication is evolving is that it’s often difficult to draw lines between public and private digital spaces. Posts to private individuals or groups can be copied and shared. Deleted posts may have already been copied or archived. FSU employees should assume that all digital communication, including those on social media, is potentially public. Even posts with an initially small audience can become viral quickly, and the content and context of that original message might be lost along the way. A defining feature of social media is that content circulates beyond the original intended audience, often without the author’s knowledge, consent, or context. In addition to their own posted content, employees are responsible for content they like, share, or repost.

Many FSU employees engage in public discourse as part of their scholarly identity. In fact, the role of the public intellectual is recognized in some contexts as evidence of scholarly impact. Faculty who publicly post on contested topics face heightened scrutiny, so it may help avoid misinterpretation if the author is clear about the arguments, the evidence, and the values that inform these positions. FSU employees are responsible for personal positions as well as outside sources and content (including those produced by generative AI) that contribute to their communication.

IV. When Social Media Activity May Raise Policy Concerns

Social media is a powerful tool to connect with the FSU community and beyond. There are

many benefits to communicating through social media, and individuals employed by FSU may find social media an important vehicle for engaging with their personal and professional networks. Across social media engagement, it is important to consider academic and professional implications. Without appropriate consideration, activity on social media may raise policy concerns in specific circumstances. In what follows, several guidelines for social media use and avoiding potential conflicts with FSU policy are provided. Importantly, these guidelines are not exhaustive. If concerns about institutional policy arise, or if social media activity is perceived to cause a substantial disruption to university operations, each concern will follow due process in alignment with existing processes outlined by Human Resources and in Collective Bargaining Agreements for faculty and graduate assistants.

- Clarify That You Are Not Speaking for the University: Avoid presenting yourself as an official spokesperson for FSU. If your personal comments can be associated with FSU, include a disclaimer stating that views are your own and do not represent the university.
- Maintain Professionalism and Respect: Your conduct on personal accounts may also impact your professional reputation, as information can be easily linked across online sources. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated under FSU policy and may raise policy concerns.
- Do Not Use or Modify University Branding: You may not use FSU logos or other branding material for personal purposes. If you seek to use FSU branding for professional purposes, please see the information provided in the [Brand Style Guide](#).
- Maintain Confidentiality: Do not post confidential or proprietary information about FSU, its students, its alumni, or your fellow employees. Follow university policies and federal requirements and use good ethical judgment.
- Be Aware of Privacy Limitations: Generally, do not post any information that you would feel uncomfortable presenting in a public forum. Remember, no social media site—even with privacy settings turned on—is ever fully private.

V. Best Practices for Faculty

Social media is, by design, a public format. If you truly want to make your personal social media account as private as possible, you will need to take special precautions and be diligent. It is also important to maintain awareness about links between your different social media accounts and platforms and consider the potential privacy settings of people that you interact with on social media. Here are some other general suggestions:

- For each social media platform you have a personal account on, read the privacy practices and make sure you are aware of what information about you is collected and shared.
- Enable multifactor authentication for logon, where possible, and use strong passwords.
- Review and manage your privacy settings in each individual account. Make sure you understand exactly who can see and share your posts. See the [National Cybersecurity Alliance](#) or other online resources for guides on finding and managing these settings.
- Keep in mind that while you may not have 'share' functionality enabled, that does not prevent others from capturing and sharing images of your posts.
- Regularly review your social media connections (friends, followers, etc.) to maintain awareness of who can see your posts.
- Conduct an audit of your own digital footprint by doing a search using your name to see what different search engines return.
- Do not post confidential or proprietary information about the university, its students, its alumni or its employees to social media, even if you believe your account to be 'private'.
- Remember that your social media posts or reposts can spread quickly and can affect your academic or professional reputation, whether intentional or not.
- Do not present yourself as a spokesperson or official representative of the university in your personal accounts. Include a disclaimer in your social media profile stating that your views are your own and do not represent the views of Florida State University.
- When posting or reposting, respect copyright and intellectual property laws and provide proper attribution.
- Your privacy settings are really only as good as your friends' weakest settings. Even if you have an alternative name listed for your profile, for instance, your connections can reveal your identity.

VI. Review Process and Due Process Protections

Florida State University is committed to ensuring that any concerns related to an employee's use of social media are reviewed through established University procedures that provide fairness, consistency, and appropriate due-process protections. The procedures that apply depend on the employee's classification, including whether the employee is covered by a collective bargaining agreement or staff governed by University policy and human resources procedures. In all cases, concerns are evaluated using

existing institutional processes, and employees are afforded the protections associated with those processes.

Concerns about social media use may be brought to the attention of a supervisor, academic unit, Human Resources, or another appropriate University office by members of the University community or by individuals outside the institution. While reports may originate from a variety of sources, including external stakeholders, the University does not initiate or sustain a review solely because of public pressure or external complaints. Instead, the University evaluates concerns based on applicable policies, relevant facts, and established review procedures. Individuals may raise concerns without publicly identifying themselves; however, any formal review must rely on verifiable information and is conducted in accordance with University procedures and applicable agreements.

VII. Review Processes by Employee Classification

Faculty

Faculty members who are part of the bargaining unit represented by the United Faculty of Florida are afforded due-process protections under the disciplinary provisions of the applicable collective bargaining agreement. Faculty members who are not covered by the collective bargaining agreement (out-of-unit faculty) are afforded due-process protections through Faculty Senate procedures. Under these provisions, disciplinary action may be taken only for just cause and must follow established procedures that provide the faculty member with notice of the alleged conduct, an opportunity to respond, and the right to representation during investigatory or disciplinary proceedings. The agreement also establishes formal review and appeal mechanisms through which disciplinary actions may be challenged, ensuring that administrative decisions are subject to appropriate procedural safeguards.

Graduate Assistants

Graduate assistants who are part of the bargaining unit represented by Graduate Assistants United are afforded due-process protections under their collective bargaining agreement. These provisions require that employment-related disciplinary actions follow established procedures that provide notice of the concern, an opportunity for the graduate assistant to respond, and the right to representation during meetings or proceedings that may lead to disciplinary action. The agreement also provides mechanisms through which graduate assistants may seek review of employment actions taken under the agreement, ensuring that concerns are addressed through established contractual procedures.

Staff.

University Staff are subject to review processes established through University policies and procedures administered through Human Resources, including the procedures described in Employee Policy 4-OP-C-7-G governing employee and labor relations. These procedures provide for administrative review of concerns, documentation of relevant information, and appropriate notice and opportunity for employees to respond when conduct-related matters are evaluated. Staff employees also have access to applicable administrative review processes established by University policy, ensuring that employment actions are considered through structured and consistent institutional procedures.

VIII. Commitment to Fairness and Protection from Retaliation

The University is committed to ensuring that employees who participate in review processes, whether as complainants, respondents, or witnesses, are protected from retaliation and that all concerns are addressed through established procedures rather than informal or ad hoc processes. Consistent with applicable agreements and University policies, these procedures are intended to ensure that employees receive appropriate notice, an opportunity to respond, and access to the review or grievance processes available to them.

VIX. Resources

[FSU Social Media Policy 3-20](#)

[FSU Constitution](#)

[FSU Faculty Handbook](#)

[UFF 2025-2028 Collective Bargaining Agreement](#)

[2025-2028 GAU Collective Bargaining Agreement](#)

[Employee and Labor Relations Policy 4-OP-C-7-G](#)

[National Cybersecurity Alliance](#)

[University Communication/Brand Guidance](#)