

Bethel College Guidelines for Official Use of Social Media

CREATING A SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT

Before creating any type of social media account, your office or department must contact Erin Kinzel (807.7382 or Erin.Kinzel@BethelCollege.edu) in the marketing and communications office (MarCom) and determine the following:

- What is the purpose?
- Who is the audience?
- Who will be the official social media manager for the account?
 - This must be a faculty or staff member who takes responsibility for the account as a whole and is knowledgeable about the platform used.
- Who will create content for the account and take responsibility for interacting with fans/followers?
 - If the person responsible for the day-to-day content and interaction is a student:
 - The social media manager is responsible for providing oversight, communicating these guidelines and best practices to the student, monitoring the content and ensuring that all guidelines are followed appropriately.
 - What plan is in place for when the student graduates or decides to stop making updates?
 - What will happen if the student doesn't do a satisfactory job and someone else needs to take over midstream?
- What is the plan for creating and posting content?
 - Think about the types of content that will be posted and have a plan for generating on-going content.
- After the above points have been discussed and both MarCom and the department/office agree to move forward, the social media manager will meet with Erin Kinzel to set up the account.

DOS AND DON'TS FOR OFFICIAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

- **Be professional:** Social media is a place to show some personality, but posts must remain professional in tone and in good taste. For the most part, avoid the use of text/IM shorthand or colloquialisms.
- **Protect the institutional voice:** No individual Bethel College office or department should construe its social media site as representing the college as a whole. Consider this when naming pages or accounts, selecting a profile picture or icon and selecting content to post — names, profile images and posts should all be clearly linked to the particular office or department rather than to the institution as a whole.
- **Don't post sensitive information:** It is the responsibility of the Marketing and Communications Office (MarCom) to serve as the official voice of the institution to the local media, and to release information that is accurate, up-to-date, and in the best interest of the college. Posting sensitive information via social media prior to the information being released from MarCom is prohibited; such actions put the college in an awkward, and possibly damaging, position. Word of mouth can spread quickly and it is possible for media outlets and constituents of the college to find information shared via social media. If the information posted is not complete, it may lead the media and the public to draw incorrect conclusions. Ex. – A staff, faculty or student passes away tragically, a fire on campus, or a tornado destroys a building. These are obvious examples that are not intended to cover the full range of information that may be considered sensitive. If in doubt, ask MarCom.

- **Don't create content for which you aren't an expert:** When creating content for your account, stick to the things you know best. For example, if you post on behalf of the Life Sciences Department, don't create content about the volleyball team. (Unless you are working with them on something related to Life Sciences.) You may re-post information – the Life Sciences administrator may see something interesting about the volleyball team and want to re-post it to the Life Sciences audience – but stick with content that makes sense for the office or department which you represent.
- **Identify that we are the Bethel College located in Indiana:** Since there are several colleges and universities named (or previously named) Bethel College, each of our social media initiatives should identify our location so readers know that they have (or don't have) the correct Bethel College. For example, “this is the official page for soccer at Bethel College (Indiana),” or “This page is for current and previous students of the OM program at Bethel College in Mishawaka, Indiana.”
- **Follow the terms of service:** Make sure you follow the rules of any platform that you use. A common example – it is against Facebook's terms of service for a business or organization to act like a person, meaning that you may not use a personal profile to represent your office or department.

MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR OFFICIAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

- Post at least once per week
- Respond to questions or comments in a timely manner and remove any spam posts (within 24 hours is best; within 3 days is acceptable)
- Post quality content – Examples of content that are not quality are: spamming your followers, or, ONLY reposting content taken or copied from other pages, etc.

MONITORING OF OFFICIAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

- The assistant director of marketing regularly monitors all official social media initiatives.
- If an account is not following these guidelines and best practices, the account's social media manager will be contacted to discuss the situation, or depending on how serious the situation is, corrective action procedures may be implemented as described in the HR Manual, policy [12.7\(b\) Social Networking](#).
- The goals for the applicable department's use of social networking will be revisited. MarCom will provide suggestions and may also work with the social media manager to create a detailed plan for posting.
- If compliance with these guidelines continues to be an issue, MarCom will meet with the social media manager and the department chair/office director. We will reassess the purpose of having the social media presence and will determine a course of action, which may include deleting the account and corrective action procedures as described in the HR Manual, policy [12.7\(b\) Social Networking](#).
- The Digital Information Policy Board has the right to review any official social media accounts. The board may require deletion of any account if it is deemed inappropriate or detrimental to the college.

Best Practices for All Employees' Use of Social Media

Bethel social media managers must follow these best practices when posting on behalf of the college. All employees should consider these points when participating in social media for personal use.

- **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 college. 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 on an official Bethel account, ask your supervisor for input or contact MarCom at SocialMedia@BethelCollege.edu or 574.807.7382.
- **Strive for accuracy:** Get the facts straight before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors. This is especially important if posting on behalf of the college in any capacity. (See Dos and Don'ts for Official Social Media Accounts for more information about creating accurate posts.)
- **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 college 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, alumni, trustees, colleagues and peers. Consider this before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm or provoke any of these groups.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FACEBOOK

- **Carefully select and monitor privacy settings:** Facebook's privacy settings are complex, and they can choose to make changes to them at any time. Make sure you understand how privacy settings work, and set them appropriately for the type of information you share and the type of friends you have. For example, if you have current students as friends on Facebook or if you want your settings to remain somewhat open, you will need to think more critically about the type of content you post on your profile. However, if you want to be more open about the type of content you share, consider having more stringent privacy settings and not having current students as friends.
- **Don't seek out current or prospective students as friends:** It is generally unwise to seek out a Facebook connection with current or prospective students. However, if they seek you out as a friend, it is up to you to determine if you want to accept their friend request. (See below.)
- **Consider having an overall personal policy for who you will be friends with:** It is good to think about what boundaries you want to have on Facebook, and it is definitely okay to enforce those boundaries without feeling badly for saying "no" to someone. You may want to have a personal policy for not being friends with current students, students who work in your office, co-workers, supervisors, etc.
- **Be careful about what you post:** Before you post those vacation photos of yourself in a bikini, consider your audience. Will co-workers, supervisors, or current students see those photos, and what effects will that have? Use wisdom when posting comments on the profile content of others. For example, if a student posts a photo of her spring break in Florida and she is wearing a bikini, is it wise for you to comment on it?

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TWITTER

- **Remember that Twitter is public:** Unless you have a private account, everything you post on Twitter is publicly accessible. And even if you have a private account, it is easy for your followers to retweet what you post. It only takes one inappropriate comment to create a mess.
- **Consider who you follow:** Who you choose to follow says something about you. If you tweet information that is a conflict of interest for Bethel or if you violate the Covenant of Lifestyle by following, for example, a pornographic publication, be aware that the information is public to anyone who chooses to look at your account and you will be held accountable.
- **Don't automatically follow anyone who follows you:** While it is good Twitter etiquette to return a follow, make sure the person is not a spammer or doesn't have a suspicious account.