

California State University, Fresno: Social Media Etiquette

This document includes recommendations for official use of social media at Fresno State.¹ These recommendations apply to employees or contractors communicating on behalf of Fresno State through the use of blogs, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, wikis, social networks, virtual worlds, or any other social media community. We expect all who participate in social media on behalf of Fresno State to understand the technology they are utilizing and to follow these recommendations.

Emerging platforms for online collaboration are fundamentally changing the way we work. Social media offers new ways to engage with constituents, colleagues, and the world at large. This new model can help build stronger, more successful relationships if used properly. Online social networks allow you to listen, share and engage your constituents.

If you participate in social media, please follow these guiding principles for a successful presence:

Be strategic. Before you start a social media community, develop a strategy. Determine the goals and outcomes of your community. Be sure that your community supports the mission of your department/program and [Fresno State](#). As a department/program you must determine who will manage the community and respond to followers. Determine how much time you have to devote to social media and be realistic about the commitment. In some cases a social media presence is not ideal and your needs might be better served by collaborating with other social media communities to get the word out.

Your community should be staff driven. Student interns and assistants can be very helpful in maintaining your social media community; however, it is highly recommended that staff actively supervise student work and play an active role in creating a social media strategy.

Listen before you engage. Use online monitoring tools to listen to the community before you engage. Listening allows you to better serve your constituents.

Actively maintain your social media community. As a community manager we encourage you to post fresh content and actively engage users. You should not let your social community go inactive. Non-activity reflects poorly upon the university.

Know who is engaging in your community. Keep an eye on who is engaging within your community. Block inappropriate profiles or users that create an inhospitable environment. Be mindful of community members who are using your community to post spam-like sales advertisements. It is recommended that you remove sales-type postings if they are out of context, annoying or disruptive to your community.

Be transparent. Your honesty, or dishonesty, will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. If you are blogging about your work at Fresno State, use your real name, identify that you work for Fresno State, and be clear about your role. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing you should be the first to point it out.

Please always write in the first person. If you maintain a personal blog or Web site and write opinion pieces about Fresno State, please use a disclaimer similar to this: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent Fresno State's positions, strategies, or opinions." You must comply with all disclosure laws.

Be judicious. Ask permission to publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal to Fresno State. All statements must be true and not misleading and all claims must be substantiated and approved. Please never comment on anything related to legal matters, litigation, or any parties we are in litigation with without the appropriate approval. Be smart about protecting your privacy and reputation by carefully considering the content you are publishing. What you publish is widely accessible and can remain on the Web for a long time even if you think you have deleted the content.

Write what you know. Stick to your area of expertise and provide unique perspectives on what's going on in your “area” at Fresno State. You are encouraged to syndicate relevant communications from others but please do not provide your departmental/programmatic perspective regarding other departments/programs or the university.

Respect proprietary information and content. Do not use copyrighted photos or copy without properly crediting the source or gaining permission from the source prior to use.

Abide by all Fresno State official policies. University representatives using social media should consult the following policies before designing a community.

- *Acceptable Use:* This policy provides a framework to promote and encourage responsible use of Fresno State’s information technology resources. http://csufresno.edu/its/pdfs/CSUF_AUP_2_08.pdf
- *Data Classification:* This policy describes the proper management, use and protection of university data. <http://csufresno.edu/its/pdfs/DataClassificationPolicy.pdf>
- *Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):* FERPA is federal legislation that restricts the type of information that universities can release about a student’s education record. Information that is considered to be "directory information" can be released. “Directory information” includes information contained in the education records of a student that would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Typically, "directory information" includes information such as name, address, telephone listing, date and place of birth, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, and dates of attendance. (34 CFR § 99.37.) <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>.
- *Policy on Addressing Harassment:* <http://www.csufresno.edu/humres/MAPP/II/G/G-25.pdf>
- *Standards for Graphics and Communications:* This policy addresses graphics standards that apply to both print and online communication. <http://www.csufresno.edu/ucomm/standardsmanual/charges.shtml>
- *Web Policy:* The policies in this document apply to all official campus divisions, and other administrative units, all campus affiliates, faculty, staff, student organizations and third-party Web applications. Please note that both university Web sites and third-party Web applications must be accessible to individuals with disabilities. http://cleanuptheweb.csufresno.edu/documents/Fresno_State_Web_Policy.pdf

Perception is reality. In online social communities, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. By identifying yourself as a Fresno State employee you are creating perceptions about your expertise and about Fresno State. Please act professionally at all times when engaging online on behalf of Fresno State. Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with Fresno State's values and standards. Understand that often times personal profiles can be linked to communities you manage professionally.

It's a conversation; the value of your community grows as members contribute. Talk to your readers like you would talk to real people in professional situations. In other words, avoid overly pedantic or "composed" language. Do not be afraid to bring in your own personality when appropriate. Consider content that is open-ended and invite response. Constituents enjoy giving their opinion. You can also broaden the conversation by citing others who are writing about the same topic and allowing your content to be shared or syndicated. Sharing builds credibility and community and also increases followers.

Be timely. Make sure that you are posting content that is current and you are responding to your constituents in a timely manner. Social media is real-time and information is expected to be distributed quickly. We recommend monitoring your community daily during the work week.

Create excitement. Fresno State is making important contributions to the community and to the public dialogue on a broad range of issues. Our activities are increasingly focused on high-value learning. Share with the community the exciting things we are doing and open up the channels to learn from others.

Are you adding value? There are millions of postings out there. The best way to get yours read is to write things that people will value. If they value your communication, then they will stay engaged. Social communication from Fresno

State should support your department's/program's goals as well as the [Mission and Vision of Fresno State](#). Content should be thought-provoking and build a sense of community. Do not "spam" users or post for the sake of posting. Do not leave remarks that are off-topic or offensive.

Be a leader and set a positive tone. There can be a fine line between healthy debate and incendiary reaction. You do not need to respond to every criticism or barb. Frame your comments and posts to invite differing points of view without inflaming others. Some topics, like politics or religion, slide more easily into sensitive territory. Please be careful and considerate when discussing sensitive issues. When disagreeing with others' opinions, keep it appropriate and polite. If the user is leaving inflammatory remarks, use your best judgment to defuse the situation. If you cannot meaningfully help the user, sometimes not responding is the best course of action.

Make your content accessible to individuals with disabilities. Please be sure to caption videos and audio recordings. For more information regarding accessibility consult the university's Web Policy http://cleanuptheweb.csufresno.edu/documents/Fresno_State_Web_Policy.pdf.

Redirection is recommended over advice. It is recommended that you avoid giving specific advice to students, alumni or the community in a public social community (i.e. counseling, major requirements, financial aid, etc). If specific advice is needed, take the conversation offline or redirect the community member to the proper department.

Your responsibility. What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social communities on behalf of Fresno State is not a right but an opportunity, so please treat it seriously and with respect. If you wish to participate in social media on behalf of Fresno State and are unsure of how to get started, contact University Communications for consultation and guidance.

If it gives you pause, pause. If you are about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, then take a minute to review these guidelines and think about your post. If you are still unsure, you might want to discuss the topic with your manager or University Communications.

Did you make a mistake? If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and be quick with your correction. If you are posting to a blog, you may choose to modify an earlier post—just make it clear that you have done so.

Use proper grammar and proof read before you post. We recommend writing your posts in a word processor before posting to help detect spelling and grammar errors.

Respect university time and property. As stated in the [General Policies on University Computer Resources \(MAPP\)](#) <http://www.csufresno.edu/humres/MAPP/II/C/C-08.pdf>, university computers and your work time are to be used for university-related business. It's appropriate to post at work if your comments are directly related to accomplishing work goals, such as seeking sources for information or working with others to resolve a problem. You should maintain your personal sites on your own time using non-Fresno State computers.

ⁱ This document is based on the ideas and language used within the social media policies of Intel Corporation© http://www.intel.com/sites/sitewide/en_US/social-media.htm, DePaul University http://brandresources.depaul.edu/vendor_guidelines/g_socialmedia.aspx and California State University, East Bay.