POLICY

Effective Date: May 7, 2019
Approved By: President Sabah Randhawa

See Also:  POL-U1600.02 Ensuring Equal Opportunity and Prohibiting Discrimination and Retaliation

POL-U6500.02 USING SOCIAL MEDIA AT WESTERN

This policy applies to all University faculty, staff and students.

Definitions:

**Social Media**: External websites or services based on participant contributions to the content. Types of social media include blogs, micro blogs, social and professional networks, video or photo sharing, and social bookmarking. Examples of social media sites are YouTube, Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumblr, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.

**Directory**: A website directory located at [https://social.wwu.edu/](https://social.wwu.edu/). It is a digital aggregator and record repository for Western’s official social media accounts.

**Official Social Media Accounts**: Social media accounts listed in the directory that are sponsored by the University and officially represent the University, or a University division, college, unit or program.

**Account Administrators**: University employees or student-employees who manage, monitor and maintain official social media accounts as a part of their job duties or as a means to accomplish their official University responsibilities.

**Supervisors**: Supervisors of academic and non-academic units, and others who have direct oversight responsibility for Account Administrators and official social media sites within their area.

**Official University Business**: Activities performed by a University employee, or authorized volunteer or student as directed by his or her Department Head, in order to accomplish University programs or as required by the duties of his or her employment.

**Posts or Comments**: All text, images, videos, audio, website hyperlinks and any other information published, posted and/or distributed through social media.

1. **University Recognizes the Benefits of Social Media**

   Western has a thriving social media community with a wide array of accounts representing various aspects of our University. Western uses social media to enhance its communication
and engagement with students, faculty, staff, alumni and others to support the University’s strategic plan.

2. **University Recognizes Freedoms**

Western recognizes both academic freedom, as expressed in the Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement and Faculty Handbook, and freedom of expression, as protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States and Washington State Constitution, as it pertains to the use of social media.

3. **Only Official Social Media Accounts Represent the University**

Only official social media accounts can:

a. Represent the University on social media;

b. Use the Western logo or brand as part of their profile image and

c. Utilize University funds for social media advertising.

4. **University Communications Maintains a Directory of Official Social Media Accounts**

The Office of University Communications and Marketing maintains a directory of the University’s official social media accounts at https://social.wwu.edu/.

Employees who wish to establish new official social media accounts must:

a. Obtain approval from the appropriate department head using the Western Official Social Media Account Request E-Form;

b. Complete the *Social Media at Western* training; and

c. Make a reasonable effort to monitor posts and comments on their social media sites.

d. Create and strong passwords as per [ATUS universal password requirements](#).

Employees and student-employees may contact the Office of University Communications and Marketing for assistance with official social media questions and access to additional training and reference resources.

Employee or student personal social media accounts are not considered official social media accounts. However, personal social media accounts that are used for official university business may have content that is subject to public records disclosure and retention requirements outlined in Section 6 of this policy.
5. **Supervisors Are Responsible for Account Administrators and Official Social Media Sites**

Supervisors are responsible for supervising the activities of their employees and student-employees who are account administrators. Supervisors should communicate regularly with account administrators regarding social media content and correspondence.

6. **Social Media Records Are Subject to Public Records Disclosures and Records Retention**

Social media records prepared, owned, used, or retained on official social media accounts, and records created on other sites while conducting official university business, are subject to the State of Washington Public Records Act and may be disclosed under a public records request (RCW 42.56).

Account administrators of official social media accounts must ensure that the contents of an official social media site are properly archived and retained as part of the social media directory social.wwu.edu. Specific social media content may trigger further retention requirements. University Archives and Records Management is available to assist administrators with content specific retention questions.

7. **Users of Social Media Responsible for Posts and Comments**

Faculty, staff and students (“users”) using social media are responsible for their posts and comments on any social media site, including official social media sites, personal social media sites and the sites of others.

The following non-exhaustive list of University policies, and federal and state regulations, apply to faculty, staff and students using official social media sites, and may apply to their use of personal social media sites and the sites of others, depending on the nature of such use:

- **Discrimination**- Users shall not engage in actions that constitute discrimination, including harassment and bullying, on the basis of a legally protected characteristic. See POL-U1600.02.

- **Sex Discrimination**- Users shall not engage in actions that constitute sex discrimination, which includes sexual misconduct. Sexual harassment, gender harassment, and sexual violence are forms of sexual misconduct. See POL-U1600.04.

- **Student Educational Records**- Users shall not disclose student educational records or personally identifiable student information that violates the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). See POL-U7100.01.

- **Mandatory Title IX Reporting**- All University faculty, staff (except confidential support professionals), resident assistants and graduate teaching assistants are responsible
employees and must promptly report sexual misconduct, including sexual violence, to the Title IX Coordinator. See POL-U1600.04.

- **Social Media Account Provider Rules**- By joining a particular social media network or service, users agree to abide by that provider’s terms of service. Users should review those terms carefully.

- **Illegal Activity**- Users shall not engage in illegal activity or encourage the illegal activity of others.

- **Impersonation**- A user shall not impersonate another actual person on social media. See RCW 4.24.790.

- **Privacy of Personal Information**- Privacy of protected personal information must be maintained by all users. Users shall not disclose protected information including, but not limited to, student, employee, financial, and health information that may violate privacy laws. Personal information in any format (e.g. print, photo, video, audio) are subject to privacy protections. See Privacy.

- **Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights**- Users must preserve the copyright and intellectual property rights of others. See POL-U4520.03 and POL-U4520.04.

- **Western Logo and Brand**- The University owns and controls its name(s) and other marks, logos, insignias, seal, designs and symbols. Unauthorized use of these logos and brands is prohibited by the University Brand Central.

- **State Ethics Laws**- Users of social media are subject to the University policy and State of Washington regulations regarding the use of University resources for the private benefit or gain of faculty, staff or another person, or for the purpose of assisting a political campaign for election of any person to any office or for the promotion of or opposition to any ballot proposition The Ethics In Public Service Act, Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Chapter 42.52.

- **Student Conduct Code**- Student users of social media are subject to the Students Rights and Responsibilities Code WAC 516-21.

- **Employment Contract**- Faculty and staff users are subject to their terms and conditions of employment with the University.

Users may use the University's Social Media Guidelines for additional reference.
8. **Employer Access to Employee Personal Social Media Accounts is Limited**

   Employer access to employee personal social media account is limited per [RCW 49.44.200](#).