

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

I. Purpose

St. Thomas University supports the use of social networking websites, blogs, micro-blogs, and other online media communications (“social media”) to promote the University to the broadest possible audience. The University maintains an official presence on several popular social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, and members of the University community’s use of social media to stay connected with the University, connect with one another, communicate about University programs and events, share campus news and information, and announce activities and campus events.

The opportunities that social media offers are very exciting – it’s a way for us to take part in a global conversation about the great work that we do. However, the risks are much greater than traditional communication mechanisms.

The following policy and guidelines are intended to help us mitigate those risks but also make the most of the opportunities that social media presents. It is relevant for members of the University posting in the capacity as a University employee (i.e. when posting any social media content which reference their employment at the University), those posting officially on behalf of the University, or employees with personal profiles balancing their affiliation with the University, understand STU’s commitment to certain fundamental Judeo-Christian principles which holds to be demonstrable through faith and reason.

II. Applicability

This policy applies to:

- all STU employees and students who manage or contribute to official STU social media accounts; and,
- all STU employees who use personal social media accounts.

III. Key Terms

- A. Official STU Social Media Account** is an account that represents or speaks on behalf of the University or University controlled entity. These include, but are not limited to, accounts for academic departments, student clubs and organizations, offices, and individual employees at STU.
- B. Social Media Administrator** is an individual that is officially approved by STU’s Office of Communications to manage an STU Social Media Account.
- C. Social Media Platforms** are websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking, including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, Snapchat, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, etc.
- D. University Sponsored** is an official capacity by a college, school, department, office, program or other unit of the University for purposes of representing the unit by disseminating news and information, promoting activities and/or otherwise communicating with its community members or the general public.

IV. Policy Principles

The following *six principles* apply to the use of social media for all St. Thomas University employees:

- Show respect for human dignity and adhere to STU's Mission and Catholic Identity Statement;
- Do not use social media to disparage, abuse, threaten, harass, or invade the privacy of STU, faculty, staff, students, or our affiliates;
- Do not imply STU's endorsement of personal viewpoints;
- Do not provide false or misleading information;
- Ensure confidentiality of information obtained through the University is maintained; and,
- Do not use social media to the detriment of STU academic and professional activities.

Academic Freedom Statement: Educators, within the Judeo-Christian framework, shall refrain from attacking or impugning these principles. Those who disregard this directive, intended to safeguard the Mission of the University, will compromise their value as members of the faculty.

Below are a few key items to keep in mind:

- Think twice before posting. The internet is permanent and word spreads fast.
- Protect the University's reputation. Posts on social media must be professional and respectful in tone. We are judged by our collective voice – St. Thomas University.
- Made a mistake? If so admit it, correct it, modify it, be honest about it and your correction.
- Be a scout, contact the Director of Communications about anything you think is particularly significant – either positive or negative.

A. Official STU Social Media Accounts

All official STU social media accounts are owned by the University, the employee(s) who manage or contribute to these accounts, must follow the guidelines within this policy. One employee is designated as the Social Media Administrator. Additional employees may be granted access to administer the account, on a case by case basis. The Social Media Administrator is ultimately responsible for all activities on the account, including but not limited to monitoring the account use and content posted.

Before creating a new social media account associated with the University, the [Social Media Account Request Form](#) must be completed for review and approval by the Office of Communications.

All official STU social media accounts must:

- Be registered with the Office of Communications, by completing the [Social Media Registration Form](#);
- Use a STU email address for its establishment; and,
- Share the URL link (handle) and email address used to create the account in the [Social Media Registration Form](#).

Any changes to the Social Media Administrator will require an update to the [Social Media Registration Form](#).

The University reserves the right to immediately remove, without warning, any social media posts that do not support our University Mission and Catholic Identity Statement, and is deemed inappropriate, such as:

- Abusive, bullying, defaming, demeaning, injurious, insulting, lewd, obscene, profane, pornographic, racist, sexually explicit, threatening, or vulgar language.
- Comments that in any way might endanger the health or safety of others, particularly a member of the STU community.
- Any encouragement or promotion of hatred or violence.
- Personal attacks that disparage another individual.
- Inaccurate, irrelevant, or misleading information that is off-topic or self-serving.
- Advertisements, political statements, sales promotions, or spam.
- Material in violation of privacy and copyright laws.

All final decisions about possible removal and future continued usage rests with the University's Office of the President and/or Office of Communications.

All social media accounts must be updated regularly with current and accurate content. Dormant social media accounts bearing STU's name or logo will be deactivated immediately by the Office of Communications.

B. Employees' Personal Use of Social Media

The University recognizes that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of the University, employees must be aware that they can damage the University reputation if they are recognized as being one of our employees.

Employees are allowed to say that they work for the University, which recognizes that it is natural for its staff sometimes to want to discuss their work on social media. The employee's online profile (for example, the name of a blog or a Twitter name) may not contain the University's name and should not be focused to the area in which the employee works. If employees do discuss their work on social media (for example, giving opinions on their specialism or the sector in which the University operates), they should include on their profile a statement along the following lines: "*The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer.*"

Any communications that employees make in a personal capacity through social media must not:

- breach confidentiality, for example by:
 - revealing confidential information owned by the University; or
 - giving away confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague or partner contact) or organization (such as a partner institution); or
 - discussing the University's internal workings; or
- do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:

- making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age; or
- using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee of the University); or
- posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content; or
- bring the University into disrepute, for example by:
 - criticizing or arguing with students, vendors, colleagues, partners or competitors; or
 - committing the University to student entitlements that it does not intend to deliver
 - making defamatory comments about individuals or other organizations or groups; or
 - posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content; or
- breach copyright, for example by:
 - using someone else's images or written content without permission; or
 - failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something.

Employees are also cautioned to not post information, photos, or other items online that could reflect negatively on the University's Mission.

In response to concerns or complaints or information provided by individuals, University administrators may look up profiles on social networking sites and may use the information in formal disciplinary proceedings.

This policy applies regardless of whether such social media posts are made at work or off-site.

V. Existing Social Media Accounts

All Official STU Social Media Accounts in existence prior to this policy's effective date must have a Social Media Administrator assigned and be registered in accordance with *sections V.A.* within 90 days of this policy's effective date.

While student interns can be tremendous collaborators on social media initiatives, they should NOT be the "owners" of Official STU Social Media Accounts or profiles. Such profiles should be owned and maintained by Social Media Administrator, as appropriate.

VI. Media Interaction

Social media may generate interest from the press (print, television, radio, online). If you are contacted in any way by a member of the media about a University-related posting, you are required to immediately contact the Office of Communications before responding.

VII. Login and Passwords

We understand that some social media accounts, specifically already existing Facebook pages, may be linked to your personal accounts. If you are apprehensive about sharing your login information with the Office of Communications, we suggest creating an additional Facebook account for work-related purposes only. All social media accounts must be registered/created using your STU.EDU email, and all login information must be recorded in the [Social Media Registration Form](#).

VIII. Policy Violations

Policy violations will be determined at the sole discretion and judgement of University administration. Violations traced to employees will be referred to the Office of Administration and the Office of the President, in accordance to the Employee and/or Faculty Handbooks.

Please be aware that individuals violating this Policy may be held responsible for any personal legal liability imposed for any published content.

IX. Related Policies

This policy is designed in conjunction with the following policies and Handbooks:

- Employee Handbook
- Faculty Handbook
- Media Relations Policy, 8-1.0

X. Sunset Review

This policy shall be reviewed in one year from its effective date to determine its effectiveness and appropriateness. This policy may be reviewed before that time as necessary to reflect substantial organizational, physical, or academic change(s) at STU or any change required by law.

XI. Appendices

[Social Media Registration Form](#)

[Social Media Account Request Form](#)

Responsible Authority: *Philanthropy & Communications/ Office of Communications*