

Reviewed April 2017

San Diego State University Social Media/Personal Web Sites and Web Logs Guidelines

San Diego State University recognizes that social media sites, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, etc., and personal Web sites, Web logs, or blogs, can be an effective tool for exchanging information and raising the visibility of the university. Therefore, employees are permitted and encouraged to contribute content about SDSU and their work. However, there are a number of guidelines employees are asked to follow when posting information about the university on personal social media sites, blogs or other forms of user-generated media. We ask that you keep in mind the mission of SDSU when unsure what or how to post. And understand that you are as much a representative of the university in your “virtual” world as you are in your “real” world.

The following are guidelines – not rules - that assume you are acting as a representative of SDSU. While difficult, if you wish to maintain a separation between your personal and professional lives on line, there are tools you can use on your social networking sites that allow you to maintain a degree of privacy.

1. Participation may be part of your job. SDSU may request that employees maintain work-related, supervisor-approved social media accounts or blogs, which can be managed and updated during work hours. It is expected that employees will be transparent in their activities, using their real name rather than writing anonymously or under a pseudonym, and disclose or explain their role at the university.

2. Be transparent; identify yourself, be professional. Engaging in dialogue in an interesting, fun and productive manner is the best way to use social media. If you choose to include SDSU in your profile on a social site, conduct yourself professionally there. Be transparent and identify yourself clearly as an employee of SDSU in any business-related discussions. Be yourself and feel free to say what is on your mind, but do so respectfully. Your opinions should be apparent as yours and not represent the views and opinions of SDSU, unless specifically authorized by a supervisor to do so.

3. Official groups or pages must be supervisor-approved. Groups and fan pages on social media sites are easy to create and promote, sometimes making it difficult for users to identify “official” pages. However, these pages require input and maintenance to be effective. If you feel there’s a need and value to generating an

official group or page for SDSU, ask your supervisor before allocating time or resources on the endeavor. There are dozens of existing SDSU related groups and fan pages that are not “official.” Participation in those groups can be as valuable, if not more, than creating your own. Weigh the value of these groups/pages to creating a new one prior to starting.

4. Social sites are public, permanent and retrievable. Your messages on the social Web can be read by anyone, even those not in your “social sphere.” You are searchable and what you say can spread and stays online forever. **Use common sense.** Presume that even if you don’t identify yourself as an SDSU employee on a particular site, the vast and growing repository of data on the Web will make you identifiable to outside parties as such. Similar to university email, employees should have no expectation of privacy when using or posting on social media Web sites. You are as much a representative of the university in your “virtual” world as you are in your “real” world. Act accordingly. Before pressing “Send,” ask yourself if you would be comfortable with your supervisor, colleague or president reading that message.

5. Be Selective. Not everything needs a response. SDSU is a large public institution and, as such, is open to criticism about any number of things, from parking and traffic, to policies. When you see these things on line, don’t take them personally. And don’t feel compelled to respond to each and every criticism. If you have the ability to correct an error or factually incorrect statement, or give someone direction to a Web page that does so, that’s helpful. But do not engage in debate, or simply tell someone they are wrong. If you feel there is a post or comment that is sensitive and needs response, forward it to your supervisor or to SDSU’s Interim Chief Communications Officer at gina.jacobs@mail.sdsu.edu.

6. Be nice. Understand that social networking expands your audience to include students, faculty, staff, prospective students, media and others in the community – and their audiences. Any number of these people can read your posts. Don’t vent, bash, or poke fun at people, businesses, companies, brands, competitors, or geographical locations. Do feel free to ask questions and share your opinion in a respectful manner. Think before posting and when in doubt, don’t press “Send.”

7. Be respectful and of good moral character. Avoid posting any content derogatory or in defamation of SDSU, its services, employees, students, constituents or competitors. Similarly, employees should not post any material that is obscene, defamatory, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing, abusive, hateful, or embarrassing to another person employed by the university, or the university itself. Think before posting and when in doubt, don’t press “Send.”

8. Mind and learn from the competitors, but don't openly engage in true "competition." One of the many benefits of social media is the ability to learn and share with colleagues around the world. Watching how other universities are using social media and engaging with them can be a valuable way to share best practices and create great professional relationships. However, anything other than friendly, lighthearted competition should be avoided. Don't harass them. Do not be contradictory or engage in "mudslinging." Take the competitive high road. Always view bios or profiles before engaging.

9. Protect confidential and proprietary information. Social computing blurs many of the traditional boundaries between internal and external communications. Be mindful of the difference. Sensitive information should never be shared via social networks, even via "Direct Messages" that are considered private. Mistakes happen, and in the world of social media, they spread rapidly and they are impossible to take back. If something is considered of a sensitive nature, err on the side of caution and use traditional methods of email or "snail mail" to distribute to appropriate parties.

10. Don't forget your day job. Make sure that your online activities do not interfere with your job. Personal blogging generally should be done on personal computers and on personal time, as to not interfere with work performance.

11. Be aware of liability. You are legally liable for what you post on your own site and on others.

For any questions about these guidelines or any matter related to the university's policy on social media, personal Web sites, Web logs, and other user-generated Web content contact Gina Jacobs, SDSU's Interim Chief Communications Officer at gina.jacobs@mail.sdsu.edu.