

UAFS Social Media Policy

Policy #:	2023.09.01
Responsible Executive:	Rachel Putman
Responsible Office:	Communications

1. Policy Purpose

The University of Arkansas – Fort Smith is committed to the strategic and proactive management of its external communications efforts to foster a positive public image, uphold the mission, vision, and values of UAFS, showcase the university's achievements, and empower the university's brand.

This policy aims to establish guidelines and procedures for the use, creation, operation, management, and maintenance of official social media accounts and communities to ensure accurate, consistent, and value-aligned communication.

Advancing the university's reputation on the local, state, and national stage, the UAFS Office of Communications oversees use of all social media accounts that represent the university in an official capacity. This policy is intended to protect the UAFS name and brand, understanding that every post from an official account may be interpreted to speak for the mission and values of the entire institution to prospective students, first time donors, and members of the public.

Regular review of this document is expected.

2. Policy Statement

UAFS recognizes social media as a valuable avenue to connect and communicate with students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, and the public.

It is important to understand that while the work of every department is important, and there are incredible stories to be told across the university, the best method for sharing those stories is often not a unique social media account, but more strategic incorporation of content into institutional communication strategy. The Office of Communications strongly urges units to utilize established institutional accounts, rather than requesting new unit specific accounts. This will minimize the fracturing of the UAFS brand, reputation.

Additionally, because social media platforms and communities evolve quickly, and may become subject to state or federal legislation, regular re-evaluation of strategy is required. Evaluation, assessment, content strategy, staff and faculty training, and work study training is available throughout the year to help optimize official university accounts.

This policy ensures all official university communications align with the goals and expectations of the university's strategic plan, as set forth by the Chancellor.

3. Applicability

UAFS Social Media Policy

Policy #:	2023.09.01
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This policy applies to all faculty, staff, administrators, departments, divisions, and other university-affiliated individuals, who are involved in managing official social media accounts or digital communication efforts *on behalf of the university*.

Official social media accounts are defined as any communication channels or communities that are managed by university personnel, produced on behalf of, directly associated with, funded by, or officially representative of the university, its programs, or its services.

Failure to comply will result in a take-down request. Continued violations may result in administrative action as stated below.

This policy does not apply to personal social media accounts. Questions regarding use of individual social media accounts should be directed to the Office of Human Resources Department, not the Office of Communications.

4. Definitions

ADA: ADA guidance describes how state and local governments and businesses open to the public must ensure that their websites and official digital communication channels are accessible as defined by the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#).

Administrator: An authorized individual who posts to an official account on behalf of the university and communicates its official position, policies, or views. Account administrators are responsible for managing and monitoring each site's content

Office of Communications: The department responsible for managing UAFS's public relations, media relations, and other communication efforts.

Official Social Media Account: An account knowingly representing the university.

Original Content: Content that is made specifically for use by the department or unit posting the content. Original content does not necessarily mean exclusive, but it does not include posts shared from other entities.

Reputation Management: The practice of monitoring, maintaining, and enhancing the university's reputation among stakeholders and the public, and for removing content that may violate the social media platform's respective terms and conditions.

Social Media: Communication channels used to disseminate news and information to the public and build communities of engagement and discussion.

UAFS Social Media Policy

Policy #:	2023.09.01
Responsible Executive:	Rachel Putman
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5. Policy Procedure

Account creation:

All proposals to create official University of Arkansas – Fort Smith social media accounts must be presented to the Office of Communications with justification prior to being created.

After initial approval, units must meet with a member of UAFS Communications to complete a Strategic Assessment, and Content Plan must be submitted for each new account on each platform.

The Office of Communications reserves all rights to deny account creation that violates best practice guidelines, further fractures the brand voice, or presents an increased opportunity for institutional risk.

Account administration and access:

Each official social media account should have no less than two (2) full-time university staff or faculty members as account administrators, in addition to providing access to the Office of Communications either through Meta Business Suite or by providing the username, email address, and password through interoffice mail.

When a designated account administrator leaves the university or is no longer able to run an account, it is the responsibility of the remaining administrator and the unit leadership to designate another employee to serve as an administrator and update the Office of Communications on the change.

Best practice is to register accounts to a shared or general uafs.edu email address accessible by more than one person.

Account administrators should maintain an active dialogue between themselves and their leadership, faculty, and all content creators within their respective units.

It is also their duty to ensure that all students who have access to their accounts understand the Social Media Policy, the UAFS Social Media Best Practices Guide, and the account-specific Strategic Assessment.

Student account administrators should be mentored on the UAFS brand, unit goals, and strategic social media use. The Office of Communications has training available to students and employees to ensure strategic use of social media.

Issues management:



UAFS Social Media Policy

Policy #:	2023.09.01
Responsible Executive:	Rachel Putman
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Account administrators are responsible for notifying and proactively communicating with the Office of Communications regarding emerging issues, contentious posts, communication concerns, or potentially divisive content.

Posting Frequency and Response Times:

Content frequency thresholds establish trust with your online community, ensuring you are active, responsive, and engaged online.

Though best practice varies by platform, the minimum frequency expectation for a university-branded account **is one original content post per week per platform.** (Shares from other accounts are encouraged, but not considered original content.)

Units who feel they do not have content to sustain this requirement year-round but have ideas for creative social media content should collaborate with the Office of Communications to share their content on the @UAFSLions channels.

Account Administrators are expected to provide customer service on all messages, requests and concerns received on social media within **2 working days**.

Accounts with no original content for **10 days** or taking longer than **5 business days** to respond to messages requesting customer service may receive a warning.

Accounts that post no original content for more than 30 days may receive a removal notice before being unpublished. If a user wishes to reactivate an unpublished account, a new Strategy Guide must be submitted with a plan for content creation.

Use of the UAFS Name and Brand:

The name “UAFS” should be listed prior to the name of the college, department, or program. This helps build an awareness of all units as university affiliated, and helps users find relevant UAFS units in search results.

“UA Fort Smith” or “University of Arkansas Fort Smith” should not be used in account names. These versions of the institution name do not reflect how users search for UAFS and are not optimal length for display on social media platforms when paired with unit names.

*Note: Registered Student Organizations should use the inverse rule, adding “at UAFS” or “_ or . UAFS” to the **end** of their handles and usernames.*

Logo use must adhere to the [UAFS Graphic Standards Manual](#), and be approved by UAFS Marketing for use on social media.

UAFS Social Media Policy

Policy #:	2023.09.01
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Quick tips for logo use and brand compliance include:

- Use university-approved graphics to maintain continuity in profile picture, banner picture and any branded assets.
- Do not attempt to create your own version of the UAFS logo for use on social media. UAFS Marketing or Communications will create your social media logo.
- Do not stretch, invert, or otherwise edit the UAFS logo.
- Do not use the UAFS Lion in profile picture or avatars.
- Do not manipulate the UAFS Lion for use on any social media post.
- The UAFS Logo created for your department's social media accounts may not be copied, printed, or used in any other format other than on social media.

Social Media Content Standards:

All posts made from official university accounts should be treated as if they were being printed in the viewbook or the newspaper. Remember all posts, engagements, and interactions represent your unit and the university.

It is imperative to uphold the strategic direction, mission and vision, and brand pillars of the university. Content should reflect and respect the diversity of our community and the authentic work being done on our campus and should encourage online dialogue and community building.

Visuals that feature students, staff, faculty, or community members should be reviewed thoroughly before posting to protect individual privacy and university reputation.

Intellectual Property and Platform-Specific Standards:

All posts must respect [intellectual property laws](#). Images, videos, music, text, and digital designs are often trademarked or copyrighted, and may only be used with express permission by the license holder.

Though comedic memes, radio hits, TikTok sounds, and viral videos may be shared extensively by social media creators, this kind of content may still be protected from use by brands and corporations without compensation.

Further, posts must abide by the terms and conditions of each social media platform. This is especially important as platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels

UAFS Social Media Policy

Policy #:	2023.09.01
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implement specific content access and standards for “business” accounts.
ALL official university accounts are considered “business” or “corporate” accounts.

Claiming an account bearing the UAFS name, logo, or property is a “personal” account to gain access to more popular content is unlawful and a violation of platform terms.

Many platforms also have specific policies on promotions such as giveaways, contests and raffles, as they may unintentionally cross into [illegal lotteries](#).

Security:

Account Administrators are responsible for ensuring that passwords and other access controls for university social media accounts are of adequate strength and changed in accordance with university policy. (Passwords provided to UAFS Communications will be kept in a secure password management system.)

All accounts bearing the university name must have multi-factor authentication enabled as available. *Best practice also suggests enabling MFA on any personal accounts with direct access and control of official social media accounts*

Be aware of the risk of phishing and hacking being posted to university accounts.

- Clicking a suspicious link via email or text while logged in to a social media account can result in the account being taken over by malicious parties.
- If your account is phished, hacked, or otherwise compromised, **immediately** report it to both the Office of Communications and Information Technology.
- Phishing posts may also be sent through social media messages or appear to be legitimate notifications, and are often disguised with text such as, “Look what someone is saying about you!” Or “Verify your account here.”
- If in doubt, check with the Communications or Information Technology offices before responding to anything that seems to be from the platform itself.
- Social media platforms will never ask you to submit your password via email or messenger, nor to verify your identity anywhere outside of the application.

Ensure that any devices that have social media login details stored on them are set to lock automatically after each use.

If any devices containing login details are lost or stolen, immediately change the passwords of all social media accounts that the device contained and inform UAFS

UAFS Social Media Policy

Policy #:	2023.09.01
Responsible Executive:	Rachel Putman
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Communications and Information Technology of the loss.

Where it appears that a breach of privacy or misuse of institutional account has taken place, Communications and IT will review actions and decide the most appropriate and proportionate course of action. Incidents deemed intentional misuse will be reported to university administration.

Adherence to State and Federal Privacy Laws:

Account administrators are responsible to ensuring accounts do not post or share content that violates state or federal privacy laws and regulations. Confidential information must not be disclosed on social media in any form.

This include information protected by the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#), and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA.)

Accessibility:

UAFS aims to make content aligned with all [Section 508 Standards](#) and [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG 2.1 AA\)](#) to ensure all university content is accessible to audiences who may have limited vision, hearing or dexterity.

[The Federal Social Media Accessibility Toolkit](#) is a living document which contains helpful tips, real-life examples, and best practices to ensure social media content is usable and accessible to all citizens, including those with disabilities.

At minimum all official social media accounts must implement Alt-Text and Closed Captions in photo and video content.

Freedom of Information Act Compliance:

As a state agency, UAFS fully complies with the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act (A-FOIA), which assures public accountability of state agencies while protecting individuals against unwarranted invasions of personal privacy.

The A-FOIA requires public entities to respond to records requests from Arkansas citizens as soon as possible or within three (3) working days after receiving the request, unless additional time is needed for legal or logistical reasons. The Director of Communications serves as the university's FOIA coordinator and manages all FOIA requests received by any individual or unit at the university.

All content created for official social media accounts, as well as all messages sent and received are subject to FOIA.

UAFS Social Media Policy

Policy #:	2023.09.01
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First Amendment Obligations:

As a public institution all university social media accounts must permit public forums to occur in comment sections and other publicly accessible locations on university accounts.

The only comments that may be deleted from university accounts are those which contain speech that is recognized as an exception to the protections of the First Amendment, such as harassment, obscenity, and true threats. The Office of Communications can help assess if this threshold has been met.

In the event that deleting account or community content is required, screenshots should be taken and recorded to document the content before it is removed.

Additionally, university accounts [may not block members of the public](#) unless the individual has demonstrated speech that is recognized as an exception to the protections of the First Amendment.

Political Practices:

The [Arkansas Political Practices Act \(A.C.A. §§7-1-101-104\)](#), as supplemented by [Governor's Policy Directive 9](#), prohibits state employees from devoting time or labor during usual office hours toward the campaign of candidates for office or for nomination to office. It also prohibits university resources from being used in political activity.

Further, [University of Arkansas System Board policy](#) states: University employees, as citizens, have the right to engage in political activity. However, no employee may involve the institution's name, symbols, property, or supplies in political activities. If employees speak publicly on matters of public interest and are identified by their name and position with the University, they should make every effort to make it clear that the employee's comments or opinions are those of the employee and not the University.

This policy applies to all communications including social media posts, website content and other digital communications that bear the university's name, logo, or digital images.

Emergency Response:

During a crisis or incident that disrupts normal university operations, the university has procedures in place to communicate with faculty, staff, students, and members of the media and public as needed.

UAFS Social Media Policy

Policy #:	2023.09.01
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All crisis communication must adhere to the **Crisis Communication Policy**.

Official social media accounts are prohibited from posting during an immediate emergency or crisis without specific and express direction from University Police, a member of the Chancellor's Cabinet, or the Office of Communications.

During an ongoing emergency, accounts should not post about the emergency until official information has been disseminated by University Police, the Chancellor's Cabinet, or the Office of Communications.

After emergency information has been disseminated by one of the above entities, administrators may post the text of the information provided, but should not post additional information related to the ongoing emergency.

Under no circumstances may speculative or unverified information be posted during an emergency as this practice has direct implications to safety and security.

6. Enforcement

Willful and knowing violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action. The decision to sanction violators will be made by the responsible executive in consultation with the responsible officer and the UAFS Office of Communications.

7. Policy Management

The UAFS Office of Communications is the responsible office for implementing and administering this policy under the direction of UAFS Administration, and in the context of the University Strategic Plan and Communications Strategic Plan.

8. Exclusions

This policy may not be applicable in situations where immediate communication is necessary for public safety or security reasons, as determined by the responsible executive or the responsible officer.

This policy does not apply to most social media accounts run by Registered Student Organizations, providing that the RSO complies with the policies outlined in the RSO handbook and their accounts clearly identify their role as student organizations.



UAFS Social Media Policy

Policy #:	2023.09.01
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This policy does not apply to personal opinions or statements made by faculty or staff in their individual capacity, provided that they do not represent or imply that they are speaking on behalf of the University.

9. Effective Date

Fall 2023

10. Adoption

Fall 2023

11. Appendices, References, and Related Materials

<https://www.ada.gov/resources/web-guidance/>
<https://law.justia.com/codes/arkansas/2010/title-7/chapter-1/7-1-103>
https://www.dfa.arkansas.gov/images/uploads/personalManagementOffice/70_12PoliticalActivity.pdf
<https://www.uasys.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2018/04/465.1-Political-Activity.pdf>
<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2022/jul/29/federal-judge-rules-rapert-must-turn-over-social/>
<https://www.stephenson.law/blog/social-media-and-intellectual-property-when-sharing-might-not-be-caring>

12. Last Review Date

Fall 2023

13. Revision History

N/A.



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A University Policy is a rule that has been officially sanctioned by the Chancellor of the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith and that generally has university-wide applicability. A Policy may include governing principles, it may either mandate or constrain action, it may ensure compliance with laws, or it may mitigate the University's risk.

Broadly, a Policy is either academic or administrative in scope and application. Policies must be approved by the Chancellor (as well as the University of Arkansas System President and Board of Trustees as required), to become official University Policy.

This form shall be used for the adoption, revision, or withdrawal of all University of Arkansas – Fort Smith policies. Any policy developed or revised in any format (print or digital) that is inconsistent with this format is not an official UAFS policy.

1. To begin the policy development and adoption process, the Responsible Office is to insert the proposed policy information in the appropriate section of the document below. Please reference the section descriptors for more details. This form must then be submitted to the Responsible Executive who, if in agreement, will then send it to the UAFS Office of Compliance and Legislative Affairs for review by Senior Staff and General Counsel.
2. For additional guidance on drafting University Policy, see the Policy Development Checklist and the University Policy Responsible Executive List.

Check the appropriate classification:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy Adoption	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy Revision	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy Withdrawal	<input type="checkbox"/> Interim Policy
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Check the appropriate Responsible Office:

<input type="checkbox"/> Academic Affairs	<input type="checkbox"/> Administration & Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advancement
<input type="checkbox"/> Athletics	<input type="checkbox"/> Enrollment Management	<input type="checkbox"/> General University
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Information Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Research
<input type="checkbox"/> Safety & Risk	<input type="checkbox"/> Student Affairs	<input type="checkbox"/> U of A System