

# UT MARTIN

## Social Media Guidelines

V1.2025

### INTRODUCTION

Social media are powerful communication tools with the potential for significant impact on institutional, personal, and professional reputations. Social media are defined as media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques online. Examples include platforms currently used by UT Martin: LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube and TikTok.

The University of Tennessee at Martin (“University” or “UTM”) has established the following guidelines to protect the university’s interests and maximize the positive impact of social media on UT Martin and its employees.

### GUIDELINES FOR UT MARTIN SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

The following guidelines apply to employees posting on UT Martin social media accounts. A UT Martin social media account is an account created by a UT Martin employee(s) for an official business purpose of UT Martin.

- A. Notify the University.** Notify UT Martin’s Office of University Relations (731-881-7615) to register your UT Martin social media account or if you need assistance in creating or developing an account. Doing so allows your site to be added to UT Martin’s social media directory and ensures coordination with existing UT Martin social media accounts, UT Martin websites, and UT Martin communications strategies. All UT Martin social media accounts must have a regular, full-time employee who is identified as being responsible for content.
- B. Acknowledge who you are.** Acknowledge that you represent UT Martin when posting on a UT Martin social media site.
- C. Use approved photos and UT Martin logos.** Photos on UT Martin social media accounts must accurately depict your department or unit. Use approved logos for your area of the University. Photos posted on social media accounts easily can be appropriated by visitors. Consider adding a watermark and/or posting images at 72 dpi and approximately 800x600 resolution to protect intellectual property. Images at that size are sufficient for viewing on the Web but are not suitable for printing. The Office of University Relations or Instructional Technology Center also can provide guidance with graphics and design. UT Martin logo and trademark guidelines can be found [here](#).
- D. Have a plan.** Social media presences require diligent care and attention. An effective social media account requires regular updates and fresh or engaging content. UT Martin units should consider their messages, audiences and goals for their social media accounts, and their strategy for keeping information on social media accounts up-to-date. The Office of University Relations can assist and advise you with social media planning.
- E. Link back to the University.** Ideally, posts should be very brief. Whenever possible, link back to your UT Martin unit’s primary website or to other content that resides within UT Martin’s web environment. When linking to a news article about UT Martin, check first to see whether you can link to a UT Martin press release instead of to an external publication or other media outlet.
- F. Protect the institutional voice.** Posts on UT Martin social media accounts should protect UT Martin’s institutional voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste. No individual unit should construe its social media account as representing UT Martin as a whole. Consider this when naming pages or accounts, selecting a profile picture or icon, and selecting content to post. Names, profile images, and posts should all be clearly associated with the particular unit rather than with UT Martin as a whole.
- G. Think twice before posting.** Privacy does not exist in the social media world. Consider what could happen if a post becomes widely known and how that may reflect on both the person who posts and the University. Search engines can retrieve posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. If you would not make a comment at a conference or to a member of the media, consider whether you should post it online. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, ask your supervisor for input or contact the Office of University Relations.
- H. Strive for accuracy.** Check your facts before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors.

- I. Be respectful.** Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Responses should be considered carefully in light of how they would reflect on the person who posts and/or UT Martin.
- J. Consider your audience and its potential reaction to your content.** Be aware that a presence in the social media world is or easily can be made available to the public at large. This includes prospective students, current students, patients, current employers, colleagues and peers. Anticipate negative or inappropriate responses and the fact that you may be unable to control, object to, or remove those responses.
- K. Professionally moderate user-generated content.** As a public institution, the University must comply with federal and state laws that protect First Amendment rights. Social media platforms encourage two-way communication, and with that comes the possibility of negative comments. Individual user comments may not be removed or hidden simply because they are negative in nature, disagreeable, or otherwise unsavory.

If a comment, tagged post, or reply on an official University page includes one of the following, the page administrators may remove the communication.

- Use threatening language or language that incites threats or violence.
- Disclose information that is confidential or otherwise protected by state or federal law or regulation.
- Violate copyright or trademarks.
- Contain solicitations.
- Are duplicative in nature, such as one or more users repeating the same comment.
- Violate the terms of service of the social media platform.

Removing or hiding a comment is different from blocking someone on an official University page. Blocking someone on an official University page is reserved only for egregious situations that disrupt the integrity of the page or violate community guidelines. Blocking should be done thoughtfully, as it can affect the engagement and perception of the page.

If there is a question or concern with how to address a comment or reply, please contact the Office of University Relations for guidance. If a user-generated post or comment is threatening in nature, record the content via screen shot or screen recording and report it immediately to the UT Martin Department of Public Safety and the Office of University Relations.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ALL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS**

The following guidelines apply to employees posting on all types of social media account, including UT Martin social media accounts and personal social media accounts.

- A. Protect institutional, confidential, and proprietary information.** Do not post confidential or proprietary information about UT Martin, its students, employees, patients, donors, or alumni.
- B. Adhere to all applicable University policies and procedures.** The same laws, professional expectations, policies, and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, patients, alumni, donors, media and other University constituents apply to UT Martin employees online as they would in the physical world. Use social media in a manner that complies with University policies and procedures, including but not limited to:
- Human Resources policies and procedures, including but not limited to the [University's Code of Conduct, HR 580](#)
  - Information Technology policies and procedures, including but not limited to the university's policy on the [Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources, IT 110](#)
  - Fiscal policies and procedures, including but not limited to the University's policy on [Conflict of Interests, FI 125](#)
  - The University of Tennessee System [Policies Governing Academic Freedom, Responsibility, and Tenure](#)
  - University policies prohibiting discrimination and harassment, including but not limited to [HR 220](#) and [HR 280](#)
  - University policies concerning the privacy of student, patient, and employee information

**C. Adhere to copyright law.** When posting, be aware of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the university. Questions about fair use or copyrighted material should be directed to the Office of the General Counsel.

**D. Do not use University trademarks or service marks without permission.** Any use of University trademarks or service marks, such as the University's names, logos, slogans, insignias, symbols, and mascots must have prior approval. Do not use trademarks or service marks on personal social media accounts. Questions should be directed to the Office of University Relations or the Office of Trademark Licensing.

**E. Do not announce UT Martin news.** Do not announce university-related news on a social media site unless pre-approved by the Office of University Relations, whose employees are the official spokespersons for UT Martin.

**F. Respect university time and property.** Comply with the University's policy on the personal use of the University's information technology resources.

**G. Clearly identify your personal views as your own.** If you also maintain your own personal social media accounts, you should avoid creating confusion over whether or not the account is associated with the university. If you identify yourself as a UT Martin faculty or staff member online, it should be clear that the views expressed on your site are not those of UT Martin and you are not acting in your capacity as a UT Martin employee. While not a requirement, UT Martin employees should consider adding the following disclaimer to personal social media accounts. "While I am an employee of UT Martin, comments made on this account are my own and not those of UT Martin."

**H. Be aware of terms of service.** Comply with the terms of service of any social media site used.

## NON-COMPLIANCE

Non-compliance with these guidelines may result in any or all of the following:

- A. Limitation or revocation of rights to use UT Martin social media accounts or UT Martin information technology resources
- B. Removal of posts or UT Martin social media accounts; and/or
- C. Disciplinary action, as defined in Human Resources policies and procedures, the Faculty Handbook, or other applicable policies (e.g., the policies found at [policy.tennessee.edu](http://policy.tennessee.edu)).

Nothing in these guidelines is intended to infringe on the First Amendment rights of UT Martin employees.