

## UC San Diego Social Media Guidelines

### INTRODUCTION

Social media is essential to building the UC San Diego brand and increasing the greater community's awareness of our impact locally, nationally and worldwide. It provides an opportunity for us to meet people where they are and engage them in the work that we do, day in and day out, to drive innovation and make our world a better place. As a channel that allows for direct communication with our audience, social media can help us educate, inspire and empower campus advocates.

This guide was developed to help campus communicators understand the principles we use to represent UC San Diego on social media.

*UC San Diego affiliated social media accounts that do not follow these guidelines, or that are inactive for more than one year, may be asked to be removed.*

### BEFORE GETTING STARTED ON SOCIAL MEDIA

**Do you really need a social media account? 10 questions to answer before you do anything.**  
(Adapted from [Vanderbilt University](#))

A successful social media strategy requires research, clearly defined goals, smart tactics and dedicated effort. Before you set up new accounts, think through these 10 questions:

**1. Is there a larger umbrella account that can help share your content?**

Avoid duplicating efforts. For example, if you are a program or office within a department, could you share your information on the department's page? If so, try working with the administrator of that page first, rather than creating a duplicate (or very similar) account that would compete for users' attention. You can find a list of existing [campus social media accounts here](#).

**2. Do you have a communications strategy?**

Social media does not stand alone. There should be a strategic communication plan in place that includes social media as one tool to implement that plan. So, does your group/department have a communications strategy? Does your larger umbrella organization have a plan?

**3. What are you trying to accomplish?**

If you want to promote an event or share news about your department, submitting content for consideration to the UC San Diego Calendar or existing social media channels might be a better choice. Social media sites require daily maintenance and engagement. Check out these tips for [how to publicize on campus](#).

**4. Who is your audience?**

Knowing who you want to reach will help you figure out which platforms are best for you.

**5. Do you have unique, interesting, shareable content?**

You've heard it before: "Content is king." Give your followers a reason to follow you. Providing relevant, interesting content is essential for social media.

**6. Do you have the time and resources?**

Managing social media well takes time. Can you dedicate time to planning, writing, listening, responding and measuring?

**7. What are your goals?**

If you don't have goals, how will you know that social media is working for you? Establish SMART goals—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time Bound—that relate to your unit's overall goals.

**8. What is your message?**

Trick question. Social media is about connecting and conversation, not pushing a message. To be a good participant, first you must be a good listener. Your community will tell you what they want to hear from you.

**9. Do you have what it takes?**

It's not just time and strategy. Being successful with social media requires a willingness to continually learn and adapt, and to make connections and collaborate with others. Some professional experience with communications is strongly encouraged before hosting an account on behalf of UC San Diego.

**10. How is this in the best interest of UC San Diego?**

Any social media activity on behalf of UC San Diego should align with our [university's strategic plan and mission](#).

## GETTING STARTED

### Obtain permission from your supervisor and consider the following:

#### Strategy

You've thought through the 10 questions above. Now you need a plan that will guide your efforts. Our [Strategy Worksheet](#) is a great tool for getting started.

#### Naming Conventions

- Use "UC San Diego" not "UCSD" when naming your social media account.
- For Twitter, you may use "UCSD" if your character count is significantly impacted. Be sure to use the full "UC San Diego" name in your bio or about section.
- Avoid acronyms. Your audience may not be familiar with the abbreviated name.

#### Avatars and Cover Photos

Consider the following when choosing the images that will represent you on social media:

## *Avatars*

- All profile pictures and avatars should align with the [Brand Identity Guidelines](#) [PDF]. Use of the UC San Diego seal is not permitted.

## *Cover Photos*

Consider the following when choosing a cover photo for your social media sites:

- **People.** Include people whenever possible, even when the focus is a building or other inanimate object. This shows that our students, faculty and alumni are always at our core.
- **Action.** Try to show the creative process. Showing people making or doing things helps you connect with your audience.
- **Authenticity.** Avoid overly staged, stock-like photography. Stock images can look artificial and often lack impact.
- **Quality.** All images should be optimized for the social media network on which it will be posted. Check the specific dimension requirements for your social media network before uploading a new photo.

For additional pointers on using photography, review the [Brand Identity Guidelines](#) [PDF].

Need photography? Download photos from our image gallery at [ucpa.ucsd.edu/resources/image-library](https://ucpa.ucsd.edu/resources/image-library).

## **CONTENT**

Content is what drives social media. It is the topics we talk about, the messages we write and the photos, videos and links that we share.

### **Our content should be:**

#### ***Purposeful, educational, inspiring***

Be respectful of our audience's time and attention. Share content that is relevant and adds value to our community. Avoid being too promotional. Seeking out content that is educational and/or inspiring is a good place to start.

When sharing content, ask yourself: Is this something that...

Is timely and topical?

You would share with your own friends and family?

Is relevant to your audience?

Positively and accurately represents UC San Diego?

#### ***Easy to understand***

Write clearly and concisely. Avoid jargon and acronyms. Write messages that make sense in any context (this makes our content relevant and shareable wherever it is encountered).

#### ***Unbiased***

Content shared on behalf of UC San Diego needs to be as unbiased as possible, particularly around politically sensitive topics. When in doubt, do not post. Do not endorse or promote any product, political party, candidate or cause.

### ***Accessible***

Be mindful of people using mobile devices or with slow Internet connections. Avoid sharing flash-heavy sites and linking directly to PDFs, audio or video files.

### **Other considerations:**

#### ***Respect copyright laws***

Always abide by the laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others, including UC San Diego's own copyrights and brands. It is good general practice to link to others' work rather than reproduce it.

#### ***Keep it legal***

Be aware of intellectual property, privacy and other legal issues. Do not disclose anything that contains confidential or proprietary information about UC San Diego, its employees, students, affiliates, vendors or suppliers.

#### ***Quality matters***

The speed of social media is a great feature, but it also means that time to edit or reflect must be self-imposed. Take time to check spelling and grammar before publishing your content. If you are uncertain about a post, you may want to have someone else review it for an outside perspective.

For images, check the specific dimension requirements for your social media network before uploading a photo.

***Remember, the content that you share on social media is public and permanent. Always think twice before posting.***

## **VOICE**

The same voice and tone guidelines for written communication outlined in the [Brand Identity Guidelines](#) [PDF] apply to social media. In addition, here are few style tips for writing for social media:

- **Be human.** Social media is conversational. Speak like a person, not like a machine.
- **Be relevant.** Pay attention to what's trending in your community and add value to the conversation. Every message should feel current and pertinent.
- **Be honest.** Be transparent in the information you share. Do not post anything misleading.
- **Be expressive,** when appropriate. Social media is a space where you can show pride in our campus, express enthusiasm for a new venture or share your curiosity in research.

*While social media is a less formal means of communication, our voice is always professional and ethical.*

## ENGAGEMENT

Sharing great content is only half of the social media equation. Social media managers can use social media to answer questions and talk with our audience. When engaging on social media, use the following as a guide.

### Answering questions

Often the answers to people's questions are easy. A simple comment or link to the information is all it takes. If you do not have an answer, direct the person to the appropriate campus unit or external source, whenever possible.

### Managing negative posts

Social media is sometimes used to air complaints about a company or institution. Here are a few tips to handle negativity online:

#### *Trolls*

Some people use social media solely to post rants or harass others ("trolls"). Do not engage them. Take a screen capture to document the comment should you need proof if the matter is contested or the issue escalates.

#### *Complaints or negative comments*

- **Do not delete.** It will only aggravate the commenter, and bring into question your integrity in the social media space. Do block users who abuse the site, and remove inappropriate comments as outlined in the UC San Diego Community Guidelines below.
- **Resist the urge to engage.** Avoid the temptation to respond to a rude or negative comment. It will only fuel the fire. Instead, trust that your community will self-police. Often, other users will call out the bad behavior and, eventually, the situation will resolve itself.
- **Take the conversation offline.** Sometimes a complaint does warrant a response. In these cases, acknowledge the complaint in the public stream and then take the conversation offline. For example, tweet or comment back by saying something like, "So sorry to hear you had a bad experience. Please email us at XXX@ucsd.edu so we can help resolve the issue." It's also a good idea to screen capture the original complaint and following responses, should you need proof later on.

### Comment policy

A clear comment policy on your site will help set expectations for engagement among your community.

## ***UC San Diego Community Guidelines***

We expect all commenters on UC San Diego social media sites to be respectful. Posts and comments by individuals on our pages do not reflect the opinions or policies of the university. UC San Diego retains the right to moderate or remove comments for any reason.

We ask all users to:

- Keep it relevant and stay on-topic. Comments or links about issues other than the topic posted may be deleted.
- Add value. Be part of the conversation; don't take it over.
- While debate is welcome, personal attacks and abusive language are not acceptable. If such behavior continues, users may be blocked or banned from the site.
- We may remove any content that others might find offensive or threatening, including profanity.
- We don't tolerate racism, sexism, homophobia or other forms of hate-speech. Comments that could be interpreted as such may be removed.
- We may delete any content that may put us in legal jeopardy, such as potentially libelous or defamatory postings, or material posted in potential breach of copyright.
- We may remove any posts that are obviously commercial or otherwise spam-like, including multiple identical posts.
- We discourage posts containing personal contact information like phone numbers or addresses, and if seen as spam, may be deleted.

In addition to these guidelines, all users are bound by the [UC San Diego Principles of Community](#) as well as the terms of service of the particular social media network on which they are engaging (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.).

## **EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS**

Social media plays a vital role in getting out critical information during an emergency. In the event of an emergency, @UCSDNews/@UCSanDiego will be used to deploy emergency messages via Twitter and Facebook. Managers of UC San Diego social media channels should share/retweet exactly what is posted by @UCSDNews/@UCSanDiego.

## **WHO TO CONTACT**

### **Messaging, Protocol, Best Practices**

Email [ucpa-social@ucsd.edu](mailto:ucpa-social@ucsd.edu).

### **Branding, Logos, Creative**

See our [campus brand and identity guidelines](#) or email us at [ucpa-brand@ucsd.edu](mailto:ucpa-brand@ucsd.edu).

## Legal

Contact Dan Park, Chief Campus Counsel and Associate General Counsel, at 858-822-1236 or [dpark@ucsd.edu](mailto:dpark@ucsd.edu).

We also suggest reviewing the [University of California Office of the President's Social Media Guidelines](#).

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