Biola University Social Media Policy
for Administrators of Official Biola Social Media Accounts

Introduction

At Biola University, we recognize that social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram are increasingly important forms of communication for both our community and the world at large. These mediums can be great tools for interacting and sharing stories, news, events and resources with our diverse constituency. Recognizing the growing interest among departments and groups across campus to create and utilize social media platforms effectively, Enrollment, Marketing and Communications (EMC) has developed this social media policy to serve as a guide for any faculty and staff operating an official social media account created to represent Biola University's schools, departments, programs or offices. The purpose of this policy is to ensure accuracy, consistency, integrity and protection of the identity and image of Biola University by providing a set of required standards for social media communication from any department, school, facility, organization, entity or affiliate of the university.

Who is this document for?

This document is the guiding policy for anyone who administers an *official Biola social media account,* whether as a student or an employee. An official Biola account is defined as any social media account (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.) *intended to communicate with external and internal constituents.* This includes things like athletics news Twitter accounts, Facebook pages meant for recruiting students, pages for communicating with alumni, or pages meant to brand a university department to external audiences in the way that a website does. Student clubs, closed groups, classroom accounts and internal administration pages are now also considered official Biola social media accounts due to accessibility requirements from the Office of Civil Rights.

If you have been asked to start a Biola-related social media account as part of your job at the university, but have not yet done so, please read this document and follow the steps before completing the [Application for a Biola Social Media Account.](#)

Account Approval Process

I. Getting Started
    A. While organizations and departments often desire to have social media accounts, they are

necessary in very few instances. Before starting a social media account ask yourself:

- a. How would a social media presence differ from our primary website?
- b. Will enough people realistically follow our account to make it a worthwhile time investment?
- c. Will we have a dedicated administrator who will have time to manage the account?
- d. Do we have a grasp of who our audience is and what our social media strategy will be in reaching them?
- e. Do any other accounts currently exist that are already reaching your intended audience (which would result in duplicating efforts)?
- f. Would it be more effective to have existing Biola accounts, which already have thousands of followers, share occasional updates from our area?

B. All social media sites that meet the criteria of an *official Biola social media account* (described under "Who is this document for?" above) must be registered with the University Social Media Specialist in EMC. If you have not already done so, please complete the [Application for a Biola Social Media Account](#) after reading this document and following the steps

C. Those identified as administrators of an *Official Biola Social Media Account* are responsible for managing and monitoring content of their officially recognized accounts. Administrators at any time can contact the Social Media Specialist in EMC for consultation.

- a. In the event that an administrator departs or changes jobs and is no longer an administrator on a Biola social media account, the Social Media Specialist should be notified. Arrangements for new administrators should be made and admin access for former employees should be removed.
- b. If you are creating profile pictures or cover images for your official Biola social media accounts, please work with EMC to ensure logos/imagery comply with proper Biola brand standards. For design assistance, [contact EMC](#) for design assistance.

D. Each approved account must add the Social Media Specialist as an administrator on the account. Although EMC does not intend to actively engage in maintaining these sites, this will allow the university to properly track pages and ensure access in the event of an emergency or the departure of the main administrator.

E. It is important to have a strategy and to set goals for your department or organization's social media account.

- a. Understand your audience. Who will realistically follow your social media account and why?
- b. Determine roles. Managing social media takes time. Have a clear understanding of who is responsible for posting and be clear on expectations and accountability.
- c. Set goals based on what you want to accomplish with social media (e.g. grow audience by a percentage over a set amount of time, increase engagement, etc.) and be accountable to those goals.

F. Before launching a new official Biola social media account, please make sure to meet the criteria in the order of the steps below before moving forward:

- a. Read and familiarize yourself with this document.
- b. Answer the questions provided in this "Getting Started" section to determine if or which social media accounts need to be launched.
- c. Meet with Biola's Social Media Specialist to address these answers and to discuss your

goals.

    d. Complete the [Application for a Biola Social Media Account](#) for review.

    e. For the approved account(s), begin populating the account(s) with two weeks or more of consistent posts. Share it initially with a small group of peers and the Social Media Specialist, who will provide comments or feedback. Adjust accordingly.

    f. After this is done, then announce the official launch of the account(s) through a department email or page.

    g. Note: Previously established accounts that did not go through this vetting process will need to meet the above steps.

Policies for Account Administrators

I. Representing the Biola Brand

A. It is of utmost importance when producing social content that the profile and posts represent Biola University's brand and message. Keep in mind [Biola University's Mission, Vision and Values](#) to uphold biblically centered education, scholarship and service — equipping men and women in mind and character to impact the world for the Lord Jesus Christ. For each post, consider if it reflects one or more of the following:

    a. A community abiding in truth.

    b. A community abounding in grace.

    c. A community compelled by Christ's love.

    d. A diverse community that encourages all believers.

    e. A relevant and redemptive voice in this changing world.

II. Best Practices for Posting

A. Social media can be used for a variety of purposes as a supplement to your existing communication efforts, including:

    a. Promoting your program, events, sending traffic to your online content, etc.

    b. Improving brand equity with customers and constituents, developing and maintaining a relationship with your audience and building buzz around your organization.

    c. Listening: inviting interaction and feedback, answering questions, gauging the interests of your audience.

    d. Communicating quickly, interactively and responsively with your audience.

B. What to post?

    a. Break exciting news, always linking somewhere for further information.

    b. Be interactive: Ask a question, give a challenge, invite audience feedback and interact with users one-on-one where appropriate.

    c. Be diverse in the types of things you share. Share photos and videos as well as links.

    d. On Facebook, avoid posts that are text-only. Always try to include a link and/or a photo as well. Adding an image to a post can increase engagement by 200 percent.

    e. Promote events beforehand, use social media for conversation during the event (e.g. hashtags and live-tweeting) and use social media to share event follow up (e.g. video of the event, once posted).

C. When to post?

a. Post when your users are most active on the platform
b. In general weekdays during business hours are the most effective times to post on social media. Evenings/overnight and weekends are less active.

D. What to avoid:
a. Don't push "post" or "publish" until you have read and re-read the post, checking for spelling and grammatical mistakes. With posts about sensitive topics it is wise to have one or two other colleagues take a look too, prior to publishing.
b. Avoid flooding your audience's feeds with useless posts. Make sure to only share content that has value for your audience. Give them resources that will interest them.
c. Don't post too frequently. On both Facebook and Twitter, this is the number one reason people unfollow an account.
d. Never use obscene or derogatory language. Avoid excessive use of slang, jargon or "texting style" abbreviations. Maintain a professional writing style and use proper English. Writing style should conform with AP and the Biola Stylebook.
e. Don't plagiarize. When using or posting online material that includes direct or paraphrased quotes, thoughts, ideas, photos or videos, always include citations. Provide a link to the original material if applicable.
f. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Biola University, its faculty, its students, its affiliates, its alumni or its employees. Respect privacy laws, including FERPA.
g. Never give out another person's contact information on a social media page without asking them for permission.
h. Do not post close-up images of students on social media without first obtaining written permission, in accordance with FERPA law. For non-student individuals, verbal permission is required. Also, never include names with photos on social media without getting the photographed person's permission. Avoid posting photos of minors entirely.
i. On sensitive breaking news topics or university emergencies, do not share information or break news on your platform prior to Biola sharing it on their official accounts (primarily Twitter: @biolau).
j. As an administrator of an account, the posting of personal opinions or emotions is prohibited. Do not use any official social media account to promote a particular political party/candidate or issue without permission from the university.

E. General tips:
a. Schedule posts. Using schedulers within the platform or third-party schedulers (e.g. Hootsuite) can help you plan and ensure a regular flow of content.
b. Social media management is a 24-hour job. Keep tabs on what is happening on your social media pages and be ready to respond in a timely fashion. Don't wait a day to answer a question; users expect quick responses.
c. Frequency of posting will depend on what is warranted by your organization. If there are enough interesting and on-topic things to share two or three times a day, that is great. But never post two to three times a day just to fill a quota. If there is nothing interesting or valuable to share, don't share anything.
d. If administering a contest, promotion or giveaway via social media, be sure to consult the platform's policies beforehand to ensure compliance.

e. If you are mentioning persons or organizations in the text of your post, be sure to tag them. It is possible they will share your post with their followers.

f. When sharing information from other users via links or "retweeting," make sure that the information is relevant to the audience and avoid promoting vendors or other commercial operations not related to Biola entities or activities.

g. Carefully consider who you "follow" both to avoid cluttering your feed and to avoid creating the impression you endorse individuals, causes or organizations that might run contrary to the university's mission and values. Refrain from "liking" or "following" sites or feeds for personal interest or communication.

h. Enlist social media champions for your accounts. Recruit willing fans or brand champions to retweet, repost or even just "like" everything you post. An activated core audience is key to expanding your reach.

i. Consider paid advertising to boost reach and build audience. Contact EMC if interested in running ad campaigns to support your social media efforts.

j. Be familiar with platform-specific policies and abide by them. Find policies for each platform on their websites.

k. If you would like an important piece of news or an event to be shared on the University's main social media channels, please contact the Social Media Specialist 2-3 weeks in advance.

III. Troubleshooting

A. **Mistakes or typos.** If you share a post with a mistake or an error in it, correct it quickly either by editing it or deleting the old one and resharing the corrected version. It's OK to delete mistake posts, though be aware that even in a short time online a social media post can be copied, screen-captured or archived. For this reason, always proofread!

B. **Problem comments and spam.** If users post content on your social media page that is clearly spam, wildly off-topic, profane or libelous, it is appropriate to "hide" or delete it. However, it is best not to delete or censor posts that merely offer disagreements or negative opinions. It is wise to include a policy somewhere on your page that describes your approach to content moderation. Example text: *[Department name] welcomes the community's contributions to its official Facebook page. Content contributed by the community is the opinion of the specific author and does not represent Biola University [or department name]. The administrators of this page reserve the right to screen and remove any content that is deemed inappropriate by University or Facebook policies. This includes, but is not limited to, content that contains commercial solicitations; is factually erroneous/libelous; is wildly off-topic; or that otherwise violate Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities. Facebook encourages all users to utilize the "Report" links when they find abusive content. Thank you in advance for your role in helping establish a safe and exemplary online community that respects and encourages others.*

C. **Inactive accounts.** If your department's account has gone unused for more than a year and you have no plans to bring it back to life, please delete the account. Inactive accounts look bad and will be removed from Biola's social media registry page.

D. **Emergencies.** When a university-wide emergency occurs, closely monitor Biola's main accounts, particularly Twitter and Facebook (which will be in direct communication with Campus Safety), and feel free to reshare the *official* crisis communications. Never share unsubstantiated or

unofficial news during a real-time emergency; only share information that has already been shared by Biola's official channels. Page administrators should contact EMC when there is a social media situation that the page administrator is not sure how to address. If there is a safety concern, contact Campus Safety directly.

E. **Blurred lines between professional and personal use of social media.** As a social media administrator on behalf of Biola, you should be careful that your personal social media interests and activities do not improperly intersect with or reflect poorly upon Biola's social media presence. Be sure to abide by the recommendations laid out in the *Social Media Best Practices for Personal Use* document.

IV. Measuring Success

A. Be sure to consult platform-specific analytics tools regularly, paying attention to who your audience is, what types of post work or don't work, and what causes spikes in reach and audience growth. Let this data guide your strategy.

B. It's not all about the number of followers you have. Are you engaging the ones you have? Set goals for engagement and measure success.

C. Are users taking action with your content? What do you want them to do? Set goals and measure them. Track click-throughs on links and get a sense for the types of content your audience responds to.

V. Further Resources

A. Definitions:
   a. Account Administrator: Individual(s) assigned with the responsibility of managing, moderating and posting for a Biola University approved social media platform.
   b. Social Media Platforms: Online spaces for sharing content that builds awareness of the represented brand and engages conversations for building the community. Examples: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat and more. (Not an exhaustive list.)

B. For further guidance and resources for social media best practices, both for individuals and Biola account administrators, please visit the Social Media Resource page or contact the Social Media Specialist in EMC.