

Social Media Guidelines for Tiffin University

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Blogs, social networks and websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube are exciting new channels for you to share knowledge, express your creativity and connect with others who share your interests. Tiffin University supports your participation in these online communities.

Because social media channels are fairly new to many employees, we've assembled some helpful guidelines to help you use these forums effectively, protect your personal and professional reputation, and follow university policies.

- ❑ General recommendations
- ❑ If you post for Tiffin University
- ❑ If you have a personal site

General recommendations

The keys to success in social media are being honest about who you are, being thoughtful before you post, and respecting the purpose of the community where you are posting.

Be transparent: Be honest about your identity. If you are authorized by your supervisor to represent Tiffin University on a social media page, say so. If you choose to post about TU on your personal time, please identify yourself as a TU faculty or staff member. Never hide your identity for the purpose of promoting Tiffin University through social media.

Be accurate: Make sure that you have all of the facts *before* you post. It's better to verify information with a source first than to have to post a correction or retraction later. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible; after all, that's how you build community.

If you make an error, correct it quickly and visibly. This will earn you respect in the online community.

Be respectful: You are more likely to achieve your goals or sway others to your beliefs if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

Be a valued member: If you join a social network like a Facebook group or comment on someone's blog, make sure you are contributing valuable insights. Don't post information about topics such as TU events or a book you've authored unless you are sure it will be of interest to readers. Self-promoting behavior is viewed negatively and could possibly lead to you being banned from websites or groups.

Think before you post: There's no such thing as a "private" social media site. Search engines can turn up posts years after the publication date. Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, it's wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear-headed.

Maintain confidentiality: Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Tiffin University, its students, its alumni or your fellow employees. Use good ethical judgment and follow university policies and federal requirements, such as FERPA.

If you discuss a situation involving individuals on a social media site, be sure that they cannot be identified. As a guideline, don't post anything that you would not present at a conference.

Respect university time and property: University computers and your work time are to be used for university-related business. It's appropriate to post at work if your comments are directly related to accomplishing work goals, such as seeking sources for information or working with others to resolve a problem. You should maintain your personal sites on your own time using non-Tiffin University computers. Employees are responsible for ensuring that their online activities do not interfere with their ability to fulfill their job requirements or their commitments to their managers, co-workers, or customers.

Creating a social media page: If you or your group/organization have interest in creating a social media page/feed, please contact Marketing & Communications, (social@tiffin.edu).

If you post on behalf of Tiffin University

Be transparent: If you participate in or maintain a social media site on behalf of the university, clearly state your role and goals. Discuss with your supervisor when you are empowered to respond directly to users and when you may need approval.

Be connected: If you have been authorized by your supervisor to create an official Tiffin University social media site or a video for posting in locations such as YouTube, please contact Tiffin University's Office of Media Relations & Publications (Graphic Designer) for an approved logo and other images and to ensure coordination with other Tiffin University sites and content. Contact Graphic Designer, MaryAnn Stearns at maryann.stearns@iscg.net.

Be respectful: As a Tiffin University employee, you understand the university's commitment to respect for the dignity of others and to the civil and thoughtful discussion of opposing ideas. Some online communities can be volatile, tempting users to behave in ways they otherwise wouldn't. Your reputation, and Tiffin University's, are best served when you remain above the argument.

Be thoughtful: If you have any questions about whether it is appropriate to write about certain kinds of material in your role as a Tiffin University employee, ask your supervisor *before* you post.

Emergency Communication: In case of emergencies, authorized employees that post on behalf of the university are permitted to share information regarding the organization. If you receive any media inquiries, you must refer them to the Tiffin University Media Relations department.

Posting False Information: In the event that an official Tiffin University social media page has false information, is libelous in nature, or contains vulgar or inappropriate language or images, the Marketing & Communications department is authorized to immediately remove the post.

Personal site guidelines

Be authentic: Be honest about your identity. In personal posts, you may identify yourself as a Tiffin University faculty or staff member. However, please be clear that you are sharing your views as a member of the higher education community, not as a formal representative of Tiffin University. This parallels media relations practices at Tiffin University.

A common practice among individuals who write about the industry in which they work is to include a disclaimer on their site, usually on their "About Me" page. If you discuss higher education on your own social media site, we suggest you include a sentence similar to this:

"The views expressed on this [blog, website] are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of Tiffin University."

This is particularly important if you are a department head or administrator.

Don't be a mole: Never pretend to be someone else and post about Tiffin University. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors. There have been several high-profile and embarrassing cases of company executives anonymously posting about their own organizations.

Take the high ground: If you identify your affiliation with Tiffin University in your comments, readers will associate you with the university, even with the disclaimer that your views are your own. Remember that you're most likely to build a high-quality following if you discuss ideas and situations in a civil manner.

Be aware of liability: You are legally liable for what you post on your own site and on the sites of others. Individual bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to be proprietary, copyrighted, defamatory, libelous or obscene (as defined by the courts). Employers are increasingly conducting web searches on job candidates before extending offers. Be sure that what you post today will not come back to haunt you later.

Do not use the TU logo or make endorsements: Do not use the TU logo, athletic logo or any other Tiffin University marks or images on your personal online sites. Do not use Tiffin University's name to promote or endorse any product, cause or political party or candidate.

Protect your identity: While you want to be honest about yourself, don't provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use against you. Don't list your home address, telephone number, or e-mail address. It is a good idea to create a separate e-mail address that is used only with their social media site.

Monitor comments: Most people who maintain social media sites welcome comments—it builds credibility and community. However, you can set your site so that you can review and approve comments before they appear. This allows you to respond in a timely way to comments. It also allows you to delete spam comments and to block any individuals who repeatedly post offensive or frivolous comments.

Negative Posts: When you've developed a social media community, it's to be expected that you'll get some negative posts. Most of these posts, handled well, create an opportunity to strengthen your community by solving a problem or generating a good discussion. Be sure to analyze the post and confirm facts. This may involve contacting a specific department head, emailing the poster directly, or doing research on the TU website. If need be, clear up the misunderstanding on or offline and keep a close eye on future posts. Every social media channel has Terms of Service which discuss hate speech, harassment, and various other aggressions. You may cite these rules when you remove/edit a post or even block posts all together.

Link back: You are welcome to link from your social media site to www.tiffin.edu or www.facebook.com/TiffinU, www.twitter.com/TiffinU, and www.youtube.com/TiffinUniversity.