Social Media Guidelines
Office of University Communications

Social Media Requests

Introduction: Social Media and Web Presences

As a comprehensive research university, Howard University (HowardU or Howard) recognizes the importance of participating in online conversations and activities. We encourage responsible and respectful online activity by students, faculty and staff and maintain a commitment to academic freedom on social media platforms.

We expect that the following university core values will govern the online choices Howard University social media participants:

Truth | **Service** | **Leadership** | **Excellence**

These guidelines, in conjunction with Howard University's social media policy, are provided to outline how the above core values should be demonstrated in official communications on social media. The guidelines apply to material that Howard departments, offices and related units publish on Howard-hosted websites and related Howard social media sites. Any questions about these Guidelines should be directed to the Office of University Communications: ouc@howard.edu or socialmedia@howard.edu.

All members of the Howard Community are encouraged to adhere to and stay up to date on the rules of engagement, policies and/or terms of service provided by each individual platform (of which evolve and grow daily):
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Linkedin

(Note: This list only includes the platforms where Howard University has an official social media presence i.e. An account monitored by the University staff/personnel.)

Additionally, while active in the social space, members of the Howard University community should adhere to the following expressed policies of the University, in an effort to uphold the values listed above as well as protect the reputation and brand of Howard University:
- Students
  Student Code of Conduct
- Faculty
  Personnel Guidelines
  Faculty Handbook
- University Staff
  Personnel Guidelines
  Privacy Rights of Students
- Alumni
  Alumni Association Handbook

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- Hospital Staff
  [Personnel Guidelines](#)
  [HIPAA Sanctions](#)
  [HIPAA Breach Notification](#)
- All Howard University Community Members
  [Social Media Policy](#)
  [General Web Policy](#)
  [Branding Guidelines](#)
  [Acceptable Use of University Information Resources, Data and Communication Services](#)
  [Designated Spokesperson for Official University Communications Policy](#)

Howard University's Social Media: Purpose

Content
Share and disseminate relevant, accurate and timely information about the #HUBison experience from all angles and areas of the University.

Community
Build connected relationships through social/digital engagement amongst all the units and stakeholders of the university, including but not limited to, students, staff, faculty, administrators, alumni, supporters and friends of the University.

Collaboration
Create working, sustainable relationships between all the academic, administrative, athletic and auxiliary departments on and around the University.

Conversation
Engage in active, appropriate, University mission-related two-way digital conversation—inclusive of images, video, text and other digital language—with all units and stakeholders of the university, including but not limited to, students, staff, faculty, administrators, alumni, supporters and friends of the University.

Strategic Planning: Approaching Social Media

As a comprehensive research university, Howard University encourages responsible and respectful online activity and maintains a commitment to academic freedom on social media platforms.

If any social media account for any entity of the University is created after June 1, 2015, it must be approved by the department, unit or organization leader and then by the Office of University Communications, in order to be officially listed on the University's directory.

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New social media accounts should take into consideration the following seven (7) guidelines before creation, operation and dissemination:

1. Purpose
What is the objective for creating the account?

2. Content
Will there be enough content to consistently populate the platform?

3. Audience
Is there an identifiable audience?

4. Need
Is there a need for social/digital communication in this particular space, immediate or otherwise?

5. Collaboration
Is there an existing University account that makes collaboration possible?

6. Maintenance
Is there a University staff member or University social ambassador to operate the account?

7. Evaluation
How will this account be measured for success?

* The answers should determine if an account should be created and if an account is needed.

Social Media Directory Listings: Official Procedure

The Howard University Social Media Directory is the official listing of the University's social media presences on campus. The University's social media presence continues to grow both within and across new and evolving platforms. If you are operating an account or wish to create an account on a platform where the University does not have an official social presence and would like the account listed on the University's official directory, please contact socialmedia@howard.edu with your request.

However, across the five (5) platforms where the University currently occupies a presence—in order to be listed—a unit, department, organization or entity, should meet all of the following criteria:

Part of our community?
Follow/Like the official Howard University presence on the respective platform:

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(Twitter | Facebook | Instagram | YouTube | Linkedin)

Have an audience?
Have more than 75 fans/followers.

Have a complete picture?
Contain relevant, appropriate, detailed profile information and photos.

Have consistent content to share?
Provide up-to-date, engaging and University-related content.

Have University connections?
Include official link to the respective web page or University-page presence.

Related to the University?
Identify a clear relationship between the presence of the account and the University.

Have the necessary maintenance and staffing resources?
Have a social media ambassador or official University administrator for the account.

Greenlit?
Have approval by the department, unit or organization leader/administrator to create the social account.

On brand?
Meet the appropriate and correct branding as detailed by the University's branding guidelines.

Best Practices

Twitter
Identify Clear Objectives:
What is your intention for using Twitter and those 140 characters?
• Highlighting content
• Promoting an event
• Encouraging awareness

* Always have a goal for your content and its supporting resources.

Identify Needs and Resources:
Do you have the necessary resources to maintain a Twitter presence?
• Staff member to actively manage presence

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- Content to consistently populate the platform
- Staff member to act as ambassador for the platform both inside and outside of Howard Community

Identify Your Target Audience(s):
Who makes up the audience you are trying to reach? Demographics?
- Define your intended target audience(s)
- Communicate in a voice and tone that is appropriate for those audiences

Content should be Short and Simple:
Do you have content that can be shared in an abbreviated format?
- Use less than 140 characters where necessary
- Pictures, graphics and videos speak volumes as alternatives to words
- Make it easy for followers, supporters and others interested to share (retweet/quote) content
- Always abbreviate URLs (Hootsuite and TweetDeck are helpful for such tasks.)

Identify a Schedule and Frequency for Posts:
How often and at what times/days are you intending post?
- Create a content calendar with a plan for posts throughout the week
- Identify the best times to post
- Identify how many times a week to post (typically no more than once an hour)
- Identify a regular schedule to for posting to keep platform active and engaging

Identify Ways to Engage Audience(s):
How do you connect with your audience in a two-way conversation?
- Decide whom/what to follow on Twitter (University partners, stakeholders, influencers, staff, students, faculty, etc.)
- Share relevant information about the University or your unit on your timeline; or information related to your followers
- Create a plan to determine which followers and/or accounts to respond to or retweet
- Consider holding Twitter events to encourage conversation amongst your followers and invite more accounts to follow your presence.
- Monitor and track engagement taking note, in some form, of retweets, replies, favorites, direct messages and other digital shares

Identify Ways to Assess Progress
How are you listening to your audience?
- Use analytics to measure success (Hootsuite, native analytics and/or other softwares are helpful for such tasks.)

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- Pair analytics with content and engagement
- Better understand how to respond to, engage and converse with your audience

Facebook

Identify Clear Objectives:

What is your intention for using Facebook?
- Highlighting content
- Promoting an event
- Encouraging awareness

Always have a goal for your content and its supporting resources.

Identify Needs and Resources:

Do you have the necessary resources to maintain a Facebook presence?
- Staff member to actively manage presence
- Content to consistently populate the platform
- Staff member to act as ambassador for the platform both inside and outside of Howard Community

Identify Your Target Audience(s):

Who makes up the audience you are trying to reach? Demographics?
- Define your intended target audience(s)
- Communicate in a voice and tone that is appropriate for those audiences

Content be Short and Simple:

Do you have content that can be shared in an abbreviated format?
- Use few words as possible, where necessary
- Pictures, graphics and videos speak volumes as alternatives to words
- Make it easy for followers, supporters and others interested to share content

Identify a Schedule and Frequency for Posts:

How often and at what times are you intending to post?

Create a content calendar with a plan for posts throughout the week
- Identify the best times to post
- Identify how many times a week to post (typically no more than twice a day)
- Identify a regular schedule for posting to keep platform active and engaging

Identify Ways to Engage Audience(s):

How do you connect with your audience in a two-way conversation?
- Decide whom/what to like on Facebook (University partners, stakeholders, influencers, staff, stu-

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dents, faculty, etc.)
- Share relevant information about the University or your unit on your Facebook wall
- Create a plan to determine which organizations and/or accounts to respond to or share
- Monitor and track engagement taking note, in some form, of likes, comments, shares, messages and other digital impressions

Identify Ways to Assess Progress
How are you listening to your audience?
- Use analytics to measure success (Hootsuite, native analytics and/or other softwares are helpful for such tasks.)
- Pair known analytics with content and engagement
- Better understand how to respond to, engage and converse with your audience

Instagram

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Social Media: Four Dos and Don'ts

You should

- Listen – Listen to the conversation with and between colleagues, partners and most importantly, influencers; it will allow the possibility of gaining valuable insights for how and when to engage with certain organizations and individuals.

- Be Authentic – Honesty and transparency are key to the social experience of social media. Social networks are first and foremost human networks.

- Be Consistent – Your social presence depends on the consistency of the information in your profile and the content you share. Pay attention and adhere to the Howard University's branding guidelines to ensure that you social presence is meeting consistency and messaging guidelines.

- Be Responsive/Gracious – Acknowledge commentary (positive and negative); recognize the milestones and achievements of those in your community publicly. Share the good work happening.

You shouldn't

- Share too much – Do not to share confidential information, or information that damages the brand or reputation of the University. Also, don't leak confidential or unsubstantiated information to outside parties, (e.g. press, partners, constituents, etc.).

- Criticize – Do not criticize or defame staff, faculty, students or partners of the University.

- Spread rumors – Do not spread rumors or perpetuate messaging or ideas about the University (staff, faculty, students) that are false.

- Falsify information or persons – Do not misrepresent yourself or the University and its constituents; it is important to remember that anything online is public and the impressions you leave, no matter how small, should be honest and accurate as they affect the entire University community.

Always

- Adhere to the University's branding guidelines, website policy and social media policy.

- Adhere to the University's Designated Spokesperson for Official University Communications Policy and Acceptable Use of University Information Resources, Data and Communication Services.

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Social Media Tips

- Respect fair use and copyright laws.

- Verify the information you intend to post before you post it.

- Take responsibility and correct any mistakes or misunderstandings of content or information.
- Ensure that links work.

- Respect all users online including members outside of the Howard community.

- Credit your sources when posting information that does not belong to you.

- Add on to a conversation rather than just post irrelevant information.

- Be timely and relevant; post content on time and within current ongoing conversation.

- Reach out to a representative of Howard University's Office of University Communications with questions regarding media and publicity relative to the University's social presence at socialmedia@howard.edu.

Additionally, here is a list of best practices from across the Internet for various social platforms:

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Linkedin

(Note: these tips/guidelines list only the platforms where Howard University has an official social media presence.)