

Social Media and Community Standards Policy

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Sources/Links:

[SDBOR Policy 7.1 - Acceptable Use](#)

[SDBOR Policy 4.9.1 - Intellectual Property](#)

[SDBOR Policy 4.9.3 - Professional Employees](#)

[SDBOR Policy 1.7.6 - Communications and Branding](#)

[SDBOR Policy 7.1 Acceptable Use of Information Technology Systems](#)

[NSU Policy 7.24 Digital Accessibility Policy](#)

[NSU Policy 13.1 - Brand Policy](#)

NORTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY

Policies and Guidelines

SUBJECT: Social Media and Community Standards Policy

NUMBER: 13.3

1. Purpose

This policy and its procedures set forth expectations for acceptable use of social media at Northern State University (Northern). This policy establishes standards for official university social media platforms, protects the university's brand and reputation, ensures compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and provides clear guidelines for content moderation and community engagement.

2. Definitions

- A. **Social Media:** Media disseminated through virtual, highly accessible, and scalable publishing techniques, as well as the social interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities or networks ("platforms"). Examples include but are not limited to Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, Threads, and Flickr.

- B. **Official University Social Media Platforms:** Northern approved and managed social media online communities used to inform users of university-related news, events, emergencies and other important information, as well as foster university-related discussion and sense of community among users.
- C. **Platform Administrator:** An individual designated to manage the content of an approved Official University Social Media Platform who is responsible for monitoring, moderating, and maintaining the platform in accordance with this policy.

3. Policy

- A. **General Application:** This policy applies to all Northern employees, student employees, and affiliates managing or posting to official Northern State University social media accounts, or when publicly identifying themselves as representatives of the university. Violations of this policy may be enforced in accordance with disciplinary policies and procedures applicable to the status of the individual.
- B. **All Social Media Sites**
 - I. Users may not post confidential information about Northern, its students, employees or affiliates derived from university records. Employees must follow the applicable federal requirements such as FERPA and HIPAA, as well as other laws, regulations, and policies.
 - II. Users may only use Northern owned intellectual property or proprietary information as allowed by South Dakota Board of Regents (SDBOR) Policy 4.9.1.
 - III. Social media individual use is subject to all applicable social media platform terms, Northern and SDBOR policies and procedures, including but not limited to SDBOR Policy 7.1, as well as federal and state law.
 - IV. Northern shall not require students or employees to create a social media account or use a particular social media site in order to receive general university information or participate in a class, major, department, program, or interest group. This does not preclude course assignments related to creation of social media germane to the legitimate course academic contents.
 - V. While Northern acknowledges the use of social media and encourages the use of Official University Social Media Platforms, Northern shall not be responsible for comments or posts made by users. Unofficial comments and posts are not statements of Northern and do not necessarily represent the university's opinions or policies.
 - VI. Individuals using personal social media accounts indicating they are affiliated with Northern are responsible for ensuring that their audience understands they are speaking as private citizens and not in their roles as Northern employees or on behalf of the SDBOR or Northern. Additionally, professional employees, as defined in SDBOR Policy 4.9.3, must comply with the requirements of SDBOR Policy 4.9.3 in their use of personal social media.
 - VII. Platform Administrators are responsible with accessibility requirements and compliance with NSU Policy 7.24 Digital Accessibility Policy

- C. Official University Social Media Platforms
- I. All Official University Social Media Platforms must publish and consistently enforce the standards in this and other Northern and SDBOR policies. Use of social media for official communications is subject to SDBOR Policy 1.7.6 Communications and Branding, NSU Policy 13.1 Brand Policy, and other associated guidelines and policies.
 - II. Official University Social Media Platforms must support the mission, goals, and programs of Northern, but do not replace the Northern official website and may not be used to conduct official or required university activities.
 - III. Before establishing an Official University Social Media Platform, individuals must obtain approval from the Director of Communications and Marketing.
 - IV. An individual must be designated to manage the content of the approved Official University Social Media Platform. Each approved platform must maintain a minimum of three (3) administrators, including at least two (2) current Northern State University staff or faculty members, to ensure continuity of account management and prevent abandoned pages when an administrator separates from the University.
 - V. The platform administrator is responsible for notifying Communications and Marketing or other designated university official when an Official University Social Media Platform requires enforcement action or is no longer needed and has been deleted.
 - VI. The platform administrator is responsible for notifying the Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) of a compromise or suspected compromise of the user credentials.
 - VII. Users are responsible for following this policy as well as its referenced provisions, and the Northern Social Media Guidelines that are set forth and published by Communications and Marketing.
 - VIII. The content shared and maintained on Official University Social Media Platforms must be in accordance with applicable provisions of policies, procedures, and laws. Content posters must properly obtain and acknowledge intellectual property rights of others. Northern remains the owner of its trademark, brands, and other intellectual property utilized.
 - IX. Current Official University Social Media platforms can be found in the Social Media Directory located on northern.edu/nsu-social-media-directory
- D. Comment Moderation and Content Management
- I. Northern recognizes that social media is a relevant means of communication that is worthy of thoughtful, purposeful engagement to promote the university and its people, programs and priorities, and to build community among alumni, students, parents, employees and friends. All content on Official University Social Media Platforms—including user comments—should seek to create an atmosphere of respectful dialogue and community.
 - II. The Official University Social Media Platforms are monitored by the Office of Communications and Marketing. While Northern respects and welcomes honest, open dialogue, social media is not typically the most efficient way to manage specific concerns or issues. Items of individual concern should be directed to the appropriate

office or department, or to the Office of Communications and Marketing through direct message or by emailing communications@northern.edu.

- III. All discussions should be respectful and kind. Northern reserves the right to delete, hide, or report unacceptable comments on Official University Social Media Platforms from any user, regardless of their affiliation with the university. This includes comments from current or former students, faculty, staff, community members with no university affiliation, anonymous accounts, and other organizations.
- IV. The following types of content are prohibited on Official University Social Media Platforms and Northern reserves the right to remove from Official University Social Media Platforms without notice, content, comments, and posts that:
 - Are clearly off-topic or repetitive in nature
 - Include spam or multiple successive posts by the same user
 - Use vulgar, profane language or obscene images
 - Contain sexual content, links to sexual content, or nudity
 - Link to third-party sites for commercial purposes
 - Share confidential or private information
 - Have a clear political affiliation or promote political organizations or candidates
 - Represent a misuse of Northern's brand, logo, or likeness
 - Are inaccurate, misleading, or lack appropriate context
 - Violate copyright or trademark agreements
 - Market a product, service, or event not related to the university
 - Constitute solicitations or advertisements, including promotion of commercial ventures
 - Advocate for, constitute, or encourage violent or illegal activity
 - Promote, foster, or perpetuate discrimination based on race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic
 - Contain defamatory content or direct and target physical threats
 - Infringe upon someone's rights or violate a legal ownership interest of any party
 - Create a security risk or compromise the safety or security of the public or university systems
 - Otherwise reasonably appear to violate state or federal law, or Northern or SDBOR policies, guidelines, or standards
- V. Northern reserves full discretion, without notice, to remove content and block users who violate these guidelines. Northern may block accounts that repeatedly violate community standards, restrict accounts that post spam or malicious content, hide users whose behavior is disruptive to the university community, and report accounts that make threats or post illegal content to platform administrators or law enforcement.
- VI. While Northern does not consistently monitor all Official University Social Media Platforms, the university reserves the right to take action as outlined in this policy when violations are identified.

- E. Reporting Violations: All suspected violations shall be directed to the Office of Communications and Marketing for content-related issues; Human Resources for employee matters; Student Affairs for student-related concerns; and Information Technology Services for any data security or technology misuse incidents.
- F. Enforcement and Incident Management
 - I. The Director of Communications and Marketing, successor, or designee is responsible for handling incidents that are related to marketing, public communications, branding, or the university's image in accordance with applicable policies, procedures, and laws.
 - II. Vice President of Technology, or designee, handles all other types of incidents, following the relevant policies, procedures, and law.
- G. Approval Process for Official University Social Media Platforms
 - I. Colleges and departments seeking to utilize Official University Social Media Platforms shall make this request to the Director of Communications and Marketing.
 - II. Approval of Official University Social Media Platforms shall be made by the Director of Communications and Marketing within thirty (30) days of requesting approval.
 - III. Requests for approval must be submitted using the Official University Social Media Platform Request Form available in Team Dynamics under Communications and Marketing.
- H. Platform Administrator Responsibilities
 - I. Monitor their assigned Official University Social Media Platform regularly for content that may violate Section 3.4 of this policy.
 - II. Report suspected policy violations or inappropriate content to Communications and Marketing immediately for review and action.
 - III. Respond to inquiries in a timely and professional manner.
 - IV. Report compromised accounts to the Chief Information Security Officer.
 - V. Ensure all content conforms to accessibility requirements outlined in policy.
 - VI. Maintain current account credentials, including passwords, with Communications and Marketing.
 - VII. Regularly update the platform administrators, ensuring at least two (2) current staff or faculty are administrators at any time and removing students, faculty, or staff who have graduated or separated from Northern from administration.
 - VIII. Notify Communications and Marketing when the platform is no longer needed.
- I. Content Removal and User Management: When content violates the standards outlined in Section 3.4, Communications and Marketing shall evaluate reported content and may take the following actions:
 - I. Delete or hide individual comments or posts.
 - II. Block or restrict repeat offenders.
 - III. Report threatening or illegal content to law enforcement.
 - IV. Document significant violations for record-keeping purposes.

- V. In cases where content poses an immediate threat to safety or involves clearly illegal activity, platform administrators may take immediate action to remove or hide the content, but must notify
 - VI. Communications and Marketing within one business day.
- J. Account Setup and Maintenance Standards: All Official University Social Media Platforms must adhere to the following technical and administrative standards:
- I. Ensure at least two individuals within the department have administrative access to each platform at all times
 - II. Use official Northern branding, including official logos, colors, and naming conventions as specified in NSU Policy 13.1 Brand Policy
 - III. Utilize NSU email to establish platform and not personal email
 - IV. Grant Communications and Marketing administrative access to all Official University Social Media Platforms upon account creation and maintain this access at all times
 - V. List Communications and Marketing (communications@northern.edu) as a recovery email address on all accounts where technically possible
 - VI. Notify Communications and Marketing immediately if the platform is deactivated, deleted, or no longer in use
 - VII. Maintain documentation of all active Official University Social Media Platforms in the Social Media Directory published by Communications and Marketing (northern.edu/nsu-social-media-directory)

4. Responsible Administrator

The Director of Communications and Marketing is responsible for the annual review of this policy and its procedures.

5. Source History

Proposed by Office of Communications and Marketing 12/8/2025; Reviewed by Information Technology Services 12/8/2025; Approved by Approved by Executive Leadership Team XX/XX/2025.