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

NSU Policy 13.1 - Brand Policy

NORTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY

Policies and Guidelines

SUBJECT: Social Media and Community Standards Policy

NUMBER: 13.3

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1. Purpose

This policy and its procedures set forth the guidelines 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

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.

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.

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

3.1 General Application

This policy applies to Official University Social Media Platforms and to Northern employees, students, and affiliates when using social media on behalf of the university. Certain provisions also apply to personal social media use when required by applicable law or Northern or SDBOR policy, as described in Section 3.2. Violations of this policy may be enforced in accordance with disciplinary policies and procedures applicable to the status of the individual.

3.2 Personal and Non-University Social Media Use

Northern does not manage or moderate personal social media accounts of employees, students, or affiliates. However, use of personal social media does not exempt individuals from applicable laws or Northern and SDBOR policies, including requirements related to confidential information, intellectual property, professional responsibilities, and appropriate use of university resources. Users may not post confidential information about Northern, its students, employees or affiliates derived from university records. Employees must follow applicable federal requirements such as FERPA and HIPAA, as well as other laws, regulations, and policies.

Users may only use Northern-owned intellectual property or proprietary information as allowed by South Dakota Board of Regents (SDBOR) Policy 4.9.1.

Personal social media use remains subject to applicable social media platform terms and applicable federal and state law, as well as Northern and SDBOR policies and procedures when those requirements apply to the individual's university role, university information, or university resources.

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.

Northern shall not be responsible for comments or posts made on personal or other unofficial social media accounts. Unofficial comments and posts are not statements of Northern and do not necessarily represent the university's opinions or policies.

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.

3.3 Official University Social Media Platforms

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.

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.

Official University Social Media Platforms may not be established or maintained on platforms prohibited for university use by the State of South Dakota, SDBOR, or Northern. This includes TikTok, which is currently prohibited for university use.

Before establishing an Official University Social Media Platform, individuals must obtain approval from the Director of Communications and Marketing, successor, or designee.

An individual must be designated to manage the content of the approved Official University Social Media Platform. This platform administrator is responsible for notifying Communications and Marketing when an Official University Social Media Platform requires enforcement action or is no longer needed. Suspected account compromises, unauthorized access, credential theft, or other cybersecurity incidents must be reported to Technology Services immediately, with Communications and Marketing also notified.

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.

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.

Current Official University Social Media platforms can be found in the Social Media Directory as made available by Communications and Marketing.

3.4 Comment Moderation and Content Management

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.

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.

Northern asks that all individuals keep discussions 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.

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

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.

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.

3.5 Northern's Approach to Issuing Public Statements

Northern State University is clear in its foundational values and mission as a public institution of higher education. It is Northern's general practice, however, that neither the president nor university administrators will issue a public statement on political, legal, or other societal events or issues that do not directly involve the university or members of the Northern community.

Students, faculty, and staff regularly engage in discussion and debate about contemporary events and issues as part of Northern's educational mission and commitment to academic freedom. In the aftermath of national or international events that could potentially cause emotional or mental distress, the university actively supports and cares for students through numerous campus resources including counseling services, residence life, diversity affairs, and campus ministry staff.

In rare instances, Northern's administration may release an institutional statement on issues or events in which the campus community is directly involved. However, due to compliance with privacy laws, the university generally does not comment on student discipline or individual employee matters.

3.6 Reporting Violations

Report suspected violations to Communications and Marketing for social media content, account administration, brand, or moderation concerns; Human Resources for employee concerns; Student Affairs for student concerns; and Technology Services for suspected account compromises, unauthorized access, credential theft, or other cybersecurity concerns.

3.7 Enforcement and Incident Management

The Director of Communications and Marketing, successor, or designee, is responsible for matters related to the administration of Official University Social Media Platforms, including content management, moderation, marketing, communications, brand, and university image, in accordance with applicable policies, procedures, and laws.

Technology Services is responsible for cybersecurity incidents involving Official University Social Media Platforms, including suspected account compromises, unauthorized access, credential theft, or other security concerns. Matters involving employee conduct, student conduct, legal concerns, or other issues outside these areas will be referred to the appropriate university office.

4. Procedures

4.1 Approval Process for Official University Social Media Platforms

Colleges and departments seeking to utilize Official University Social Media Platforms shall contact the Director of Communications and Marketing, successor, or designee.

Approval of Official University Social Media Platforms shall be made by the Director of Communications and Marketing, successor, or designee, within thirty (30) days of requesting approval.

A request for approval must contain the following:

- Name of the individual assigned to manage content (platform administrator)
- Social media platform(s) sought to be used
- Proposed name of account(s)
- Proposed uses of account(s)
- Plan for regular monitoring and moderation
- Acknowledgment of responsibility for compliance with this policy
- University email address or university-controlled account information under which the platform will be registered

4.2 Platform Administrator Responsibilities

Platform administrators shall:

- Monitor their assigned Official University Social Media Platform regularly
- Moderate comments and content in accordance with Section 3.4 of this policy
- Respond to inquiries in a timely and professional manner
- Report suspected account compromises, unauthorized access, credential theft, or other cybersecurity incidents to Technology Services immediately and notify Communications and Marketing
- Maintain current account ownership and administrator information with Communications and Marketing and promptly notify Communications and Marketing of changes in administrative access. Communications and Marketing will not collect or maintain account passwords
- Notify Communications and Marketing when the platform is no longer needed

4.3 Content Removal and User Management

When content violates the standards outlined in Section 3.4, platform administrators or Communications and Marketing staff may take the following actions:

- Delete or hide individual comments or posts
- Block or restrict repeat offenders
- Report threatening or illegal content to platform administrators or law enforcement
- Document significant violations for record-keeping purposes

4.4 Account Setup and Maintenance Standards

All Official University Social Media Platforms must be established and maintained in a manner that ensures Northern retains administrative control of the account regardless of changes in personnel. Official University Social Media Platforms may not be established solely using a personal or non-university email address or account when the platform provides an institutional or university-controlled account option. All Official University Social Media Platforms must adhere to the following technical and administrative standards:

- Ensure at least two authorized university employees have administrative access to each platform at all times
- Use an official Northern State University email address to establish or register the platform where technically supported
- Use official Northern branding, including official logos, colors, and naming conventions as specified in NSU Policy 13.1 Brand Policy
- Grant Communications and Marketing appropriate administrative access to all Official University Social Media Platforms upon account creation and maintain this access at all times, where technically supported by the platform
- Configure account recovery using university-controlled contact information where technically supported by the platform

- Notify Communications and Marketing when administrators change or when the platform is deactivated, deleted, or no longer in use
- 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)

5. Responsible Administrator

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

6. Source History

Proposed by Office of Communications and Marketing 12/8/2025; Reviewed by Information Technology Services 12/8/2025; Approved by Executive Leadership Team 12/14/2025; **Revised to reflect updated responsibilities and procedures 11/1/2026**.