Guidelines for Social Media at Tennessee Tech University

1. Introduction
   a. Purpose
      i. Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have gained popularity in recent years as a means for individuals and organizations to connect in a more participatory fashion. For institutions like Tennessee Tech, social networking sites provide another opportunity to reach out to our various audiences, particularly prospective students, current students and alumni. The Tennessee Tech Office of Communications & Marketing is responsible for the university’s official social media presence but encourages other departments and units to establish a presence of their own in the social media sphere.
      ii. The following steps and guidelines will help individual units in their planning and deployment of a social media presence.
   b. Official Presence of the University
      i. The Tennessee Tech Office of Communications & Marketing is responsible for the university’s official presence in social media. Currently, the department maintains and monitors the following social media sites:
         1. Facebook
         2. Twitter
         3. YouTube
         4. Google+
      ii. The Office of Alumni Relations maintains and monitors the following site:
         1. LinkedIn
      iii. Each of these sites is designed to provide broad-based information about the university to our primary audiences of current students, prospective students and alumni.

2. Social Media Objectives
   a. Tennessee Tech’s presence in social media is designed to accomplish the following objectives:
      i. Extend the university’s reach and influence online by connecting and building relationships with key audiences, such as prospective students, current students and alumni.
      ii. Provide additional channels for these key audiences to communicate and interact with the University.
      iii. Provide additional channels for audiences to receive and share official University information.
      iv. Monitor the university’s reputation in the social media sphere.

3. Social Media Guidelines
a. Departments, offices, student organizations, etc. that wish to establish a presence on any social media site are asked to follow these guidelines:
   i. Learn about social media. Which platform is right for you? In the United States, most of the social media focus is on a few tools (Facebook, Twitter). In other parts of the world, other networks are important and should not be neglected. If your department is responsible for recruiting international students, for example, you may wish to look at other social networks.
   ii. Be prepared for work. Social media is an extremely fast and open medium. Be prepared for that. In many cases, a step-by-step approach in which you learn to use the different tools as an observer is advisable.
   iii. Have a plan. Before you get started in social media, think about it from a marketing standpoint. Ask yourself:
      1. Who is my audience? Current students? Prospective students? Alumni? Each audience has different interests and responds to different messages and different communications approaches.
      2. What do I want to accomplish with this audience? How will social media help me reach my goals? Keep in mind that the nature of social media is two-way communication that strives to create a sense of community and engagement. If you aren’t willing to engage in that kind of dialogue with your audience, then maybe a social media presence isn’t right for you. Keep in mind that a social media presence is more informal than, for example, a departmental webpage.
      3. How do I want my audience to respond? What is the ultimate goal of using social media? Develop the right metrics to measure how you are meeting your goals.
   iv. Integrate social media into your communication plan. Social media is not a stand-alone, create-and-forget solution to your communications and marketing challenges. For example, even tech-savvy prospective students are far less likely to trust a social networking site than, say, a university website or traditional viewbook.
   v. Choose the right tool. Facebook is great for most audiences, but if you are trying to recruit students to your department, LinkedIn might not be right for you. Research trends.
   vi. Follow Tennessee Tech’s visual style. Use the Tennessee Tech logo or signature and in text, be sure to use the correct university name (Tennessee Tech or TTU, not TN Tech or Tenn
Tech). General style guidelines can be found at www.tntech.edu/ocm.

vii. Follow all University privacy, computing, and web policies. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about the University, students, prospective students, faculty, staff, alumni, business partners or research partners. Employees using social media on behalf of the university still must follow all applicable federal requirements such as FERPA and HIPA, as well as NCAA regulations. Adhere to all applicable university privacy and confidentially policies. Employees who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination.

viii. Feel your creation. Social media sites will die if they are not fed regularly. This means providing frequent updates to your social media accounts. Plan ahead by creating a calendar of when to share news/events/deadlines.

ix. Be prepared for staff changes. Always have multiple staff members with access to your social media accounts. This allows for easy changes in the account of staff changes or vacations.

x. Contact us. Let us know that you have created an online presence for your organization so we can help promote it.

4. Best Practices when Participating
   a. When posting on behalf of a university unit, follow these guidelines:
      i. Don’t tell secrets. It’s perfectly acceptable to talk about your work and have a dialogue with the community, but it’s not OK to publish confidential information. Confidential information includes things such as unpublished details about proprietary research, details of current projects, financial information and personnel information.
      ii. Protect your own privacy. Privacy settings on social media platforms should be set to allow anyone to see profile information similar to what would be on the University website. Other privacy settings that might allow others to post information or see information that is personal should be set to limit access. Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see.
      iii. Be honest. Do not blog anonymously, or use pseudonyms or false screen names. Tennessee Tech is committed to the principles of transparency and honesty. Use your real name, be clear who you are, and identify that you work for Tennessee Tech. Nothing gains you notice in social media more than honesty – or dishonestly. Do not say anything that is dishonest, untrue, or misleading. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, point it out. But also be smart
about protecting yourself and your privacy. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and also be cautious about disclosing personal details.

iv. Respect copyright laws. It is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use or fair dealing of copyrighted material owned by others. You should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else’s work, and always attribute such work to the original author/source. It is good general practice to link to others’ work rather than reproduce it.

v. Respect your audience, the University, and your coworkers. Don’t say anything contradictory or in conflict with the University website. Don’t say anything contradictory or in conflict with the University website. Don’t be afraid to be yourself, but do so respectfully. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, offensive comments, defamatory comments, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory – such as politics and religion. Use your best judgment and be sure to make it clear that the views and opinions expressed are yours alone and do not represent the official views of the University.

vi. Protect Tennessee Tech students, prospective students, alumni, faculty, staff, business partners and suppliers. Students, prospective students, alumni, faculty, staff, partners or suppliers should not be cited or obviously referenced without their approval. Never identify a student, prospective student, alumnus, faculty member, staff member, business or research partner, or supplier by name without permission and never discuss confidential details of a customer engagement. It is acceptable to discuss general details about kinds of projects and to use non-identifying pseudonyms so long as the information provided does not violate any non-disclosure agreements that may be in place with the research partner or make it easy for someone to identify the customer.

vii. Controversial issues. If you see misrepresentations made about the University in social media, you may point them out. Always do so with respect and with the facts. If you speak about others, make sure what you say is factual and that it does not disparage that party. Avoid arguments. Brawls may earn traffic, but nobody wins in the end. Don’t try to settle scores or goad competitors or others into inflammatory debates. Make sure what you are saying is factually correct.

1. Potentially dangerous comments. Use your best judgment; if someone posts something inflammatory, threatening or otherwise seriously concerning, notify
the proper authorities on campus. Take screenshots before deleting anything to forward to authorities, and for your own records.

viii. Be the first to respond to your own mistakes. If you make an error, be up-front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so. If someone accuses you of posting something improper (such as copyrighted material or a defamatory comment about them), deal with it quickly – better to remove it immediately to lessen the possibility of a legal action.

ix. Think about consequences.

x. Disclaimers. Many social media users include a prominent disclaimer saying who they work for, but that they're not speaking officially. This is good practice and is encouraged, but don't count on it to avoid trouble – it may not have much legal effect.