



Bluffton University Social Media Policy

Policy Statement:

Bluffton University strives to be a community of respect where everyone is held in mutual high regard. Our belief that every human being is created in the image of God demands that all of us welcome and celebrate the diversity in which we have been created as children of God. As members of the Bluffton University community, we strive to treat each member of the community with respect. Our social media policy is based on the mutual respect we believe we are committed to extending to each other.

Bluffton University's social media presence is an extension of the university's institutional and athletic brand. We believe a condensed and unified effort is the best way to promote Bluffton's campus events and announcements, as well as attract prospective students. Bluffton University's public relations office (PR office) is the main point of contact for any official Bluffton University social media account. The PR office is responsible for managing content creation and monitoring and listening to relevant constituents of the university online.

Social media impacts current students, future students, faculty and staff, and alumni, as well as our community members. It can be an effective tool to engage with these various audiences, but to be truly successful, it requires strategy, consistent messaging, and time, energy and resources to maintain high-quality social media platforms.

This means the following three departments may use social media individually: Public Relations (Official Bluffton University), Athletics, the President's Office. **In accordance with this policy, no new social media accounts on behalf of Bluffton University offices, departments or student organizations may be created without consulting the PR office.**

The PR office will continue to partner with athletic teams, academic departments and student organizations to help meet with needs by incorporating messages into the university's social media accounts. Working with the PR office is essential and will ensure that Bluffton University has a consistent voice and tone.

Bluffton University's social media policy will provide guidance to campus entities, including athletic teams, academic departments and student organizations, as well as personal student, faculty and staff accounts, when it concerns or is related to our campus community.

The use of social media at or concerning Bluffton University is governed by the same rules, policies and codes of conduct in the employee and student handbooks that apply to all activities related to Bluffton University. **Private activities not conducted on university accounts are still subject to disciplinary action if they reflect poorly on the university or interfere with the university in any way.**



Bluffton University’s social media policy applies to all students, faculty and staff who are discussing matters concerning the university or any member of the campus community, whether the action was conducted on official university accounts or personal accounts.

Social Media Defined:

Social media is defined as any web-based or digital tool used to share and/or receive information or host conversations. Social media includes, but is not limited to, texting, blogs, and platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, Snapchat, Google+ and YouTube.

Request to Create a New Account:

To ensure all social media efforts are condensed and unified, only approved social media accounts will be permitted. A class, group, team or organization must request for an account to be created. If approved, the new accounts must adhere to the guidelines in the social media policy.

Unless specifically authorized by the PR office, no Bluffton University employee or student may create an “official” Bluffton University presence on any form of social media, now in existence, or created in the future, or represent themselves as a spokesperson or authorized representative of Bluffton University. Some employees may be required to use social media as part of their employment responsibilities. If so, such status will be clearly stated in an employee’s work responsibilities.

Unauthorized use of the Bluffton University name, logo, or trademarks without written permission from an authorized official of the university is strictly prohibited.

Usage Guidelines:

The PR office uses social media to present information to the campus community and the public. Any content released on social media should be considered a public statement equivalent to a press release, open letter to the public, etc. Content must be accurate and appropriate, cannot violate any applicable laws (including, but not limited to, copyright, trademark and/or defamation laws) or Bluffton University policy.

When in possession of social media accounts, you agree to:

1. Assigning an administrator who regularly creates posts and monitors the content.
2. The PR office reserves the right to disable or delete Bluffton University social media accounts that are dormant (no posts, no activity) for more than three months.
3. When account administrators, especially students, have left the college and no longer require access to the social media accounts, page roles must be updated immediately and the PR office notified of the changes.



Posting on Social Media:

When posting to a Bluffton University social media account, communicating with members of the Bluffton University community, or discussing the university on any site (even through a personal account and on a personal device), you must agree and adhere to the following:

1. Remember that Bluffton University is committed to a healthy campus community in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to live and work in an atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits unlawful discriminatory practices, including harassment and retaliation. Therefore, Bluffton University expects that all relationships among persons in the campus community will be free of discrimination and harassment.
 - a. It is the policy of Bluffton University that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, religion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other status protected by law, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in employment or in any educational program or activity of the university. To that end, and in compliance with federal and state laws, the university prohibits any member of the faculty, staff, administration, student body, or visitors to campus, whether they are guests, patrons, independent contractors or clients, from discrimination, harassment and retaliation against any other person in the university community in violation of this policy.
2. Carefully consider the accuracy, clarity, length and tone of your comments and posts before publishing them. All posts should align with the university's brand and be professional and appropriate.
3. Do not use pseudonyms or post anonymously.
4. Respect the views of others, even if you disagree.
5. Be truthful and accurate when discussing university programs and services.
6. Obey the Terms of Service on any social media site.
7. Where appropriate, share/retweet content from the official Bluffton University accounts rather than create a unique post with duplicated content.

You **must not** do the following:

1. Use social media to harass, threaten, insult, defame, or bully another person or entity; to violate any College policy; or to engage in any unlawful act, including but not limited to gambling, identity theft or other types of fraud.
2. Post or store content that is obscene, pornographic, defamatory, racist, excessively violent, harassing, threatening, bullying, or otherwise objectionable or injurious. In addition, do not attempt to compromise the security of any Bluffton University social media site or use such site to operate an illegal lottery, gambling operation, or other illegal venture.
3. Post copyrighted content (such as text, video, graphics, or sound files) without permission from the holder of the copyright. Remember, even information that is widely available to the public (such as text, photographs, or other material posted on the Internet) may be subject to copyright restrictions that prohibit unauthorized duplication or dissemination.



4. Post trademarked content (such as logos, names, brands, symbols and designs) without permission from the trademark owner. The “®” symbol indicates that the mark is federally registered and the owner has the exclusive right to use it. The “TM and SM” symbols indicate that the owner may have common-law rights, but the mark is not federally registered.
5. In addition, all Bluffton University brand guidelines must be followed and any university logo use must be approved by the PR office. Any usage not in line with the brand guidelines will be removed.
6. Use the Bluffton University name, logo or trademarks for promotional announcements, advertising, product-related press releases or other commercial use, or to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate.
7. Disclose confidential university information, non-public strategies, student records, or personal information concerning (past or present) members of the Bluffton University community without proper authorization.
8. Make false claims or representations about Bluffton University programs or services, and do not speculate or guess if you do not know the information.
9. Spread gossip, rumors, or other unverified information. Furthermore, do not assume that everything posted on a social media site is true.
10. Spend excessive time using social media for personal purposes during working hours or use any Bluffton University social media sites, networks, equipment, or peripherals for unauthorized commercial purposes.
11. Represent your personal opinions as institutionally endorsed by Bluffton University. If you are not authorized to post specific content on behalf of the university, then the following disclaimer should appear in your post: “These are my personal opinions and do not reflect the views of Bluffton University.”
12. Insult, disparage, disrespect or defame the university or members of the Bluffton University community.
13. Discuss legal issues or risks, or draw legal conclusions on pending legal or regulatory matters involving the university.

Potential employers often consult social media during the hiring process, so it is always in your best interest to carefully consider every post you make before publishing.

Use of AI:

To maintain the integrity, consistency, and professionalism of Bluffton University’s brand, all promotional, marketing, and public-facing communications produced by campus organizations, teams or departments must comply with established university brand standards and social media policies.

The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to create final promotional content is not permitted. This ensures that all communications accurately reflect the university's voice, uphold visual identity standards, and meet accessibility and compliance requirements.



Campus organizations, teams or departments seeking support in developing promotional materials or social media content should collaborate with the Public Relations Office. They can provide guidance, design support, and content development assistance to ensure all materials align with institutional standards and effective communication practices.

Posting to Social Media Not Affiliated with Bluffton University:

Bluffton University understands that students, faculty and staff may wish to express their personal ideas and opinions through private social media accounts. However, Bluffton University reserves the right to impose disciplinary measures, up to and including dismissal from the university or termination of employment, upon students, faculty and staff who use private social media accounts and are in violation of the Bluffton University Social Media Policy or reflect poorly on the university. If appropriate, the violation will be reported to law enforcement.