



*Initiated 12/19/2023*

## **Social Media**

*(adapted in part from VU Social Media Handbook)*

Social media gives Vanderbilt University (VU) the opportunity to engage in ongoing conversations with our students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni, colleagues, prospective students, fans and friends about what is most important to them, extending the community found on the Vanderbilt campus to the world.

Vanderbilt Divinity School (VDS) employees who manage a social media presence must familiarize themselves with [VU's Social Media Handbook](#). VU also has a community on Slack where they discuss best practices, upcoming campaigns, and more. Contact the [Social Media Team](#) if you manage an account and would like to join the Slack community.

Social media content should be limited to VDS business. Requests for social media coverage may originate from Vanderbilt University departments and schools, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, VDS faculty and staff, VDS alumni, registered student organizations – see [Exhibit A](#), and off-campus community partners.

### **Goals and Strategies**

- **Tell the Vanderbilt Story.** Our goal is to promote what sets Vanderbilt apart and to encourage fans to become brand ambassadors. That is why we share human interest stories about our students, faculty, staff and alumni. Incorporate branded hashtags when appropriate.
- **Listen, engage and learn.** Our goal is to be aware of the sentiment towards the Vanderbilt name and brand and try to positively influence it. Analyze previous conversations and reevaluate to improve future communications.
- **Share Vanderbilt's best content to raise brand awareness.** The best way to encourage our audiences to engage with us is to create content that is timely and relevant. Time posts carefully and in conjunction with what's going on in our community and our world.
- **Act as "One Vanderbilt."** One of Vanderbilt's strengths is its size: ten outstanding schools and colleges all connected by a compact central campus. Our goal is to work together and give our social media content maximum effectiveness.
- **Share Research.** Our goal is to position Vanderbilt as a leading research institution among its peers by sharing research stories. We want to highlight the great work that's going on at our university.

### **Items to Consider Early**

Social media platforms can be an excellent tool for reaching and engaging your key audiences, but a successful social media strategy requires research, clearly outlined goals and objectives, smart tactics and dedicated effort.

- **Who is your audience?** Figuring out the type of people you want to reach will help determine which platforms or existing channels may be best for you.
- **Do you have unique, interesting, shareable content?** Managing social media well takes time; it's more than just "posting something" to fill your channels – give your followers a reason to follow you. In the case of Instagram, do you have a supply of eye-catching images and graphics to share?
- **What are your goals?** Whatever your goals are – information sharing, event publicity, humanizing your department, etc. – write them out and revisit them periodically.

### **Account Security and Guidelines**

- It is recommended that social media account managers update the passwords for all accounts at least once per semester. This will strengthen the security related to Vanderbilt's social media accounts and further protect the university's digital identity and online reputation.
- Multiple people should have access to all of your department's social media accounts. At least two people should have access with at least one person being a full-time faculty or staff member.
- When the admin of an account leaves Vanderbilt, they must transfer the admin role to another Vanderbilt person before they leave. Passwords should be changed immediately.
- Choose passwords that are at least eight characters in length with a combination of upper- and lower-case letters, numbers, and special characters. Do not re-use passwords or use your e-password.
- The email address associated with the account should be a Vanderbilt email account.

### **Student Organizations**

- Like other schools and departments at the university, student organizations should follow the guidelines set out in the handbook.
- Only student organizations officially recognized by the university should refer to themselves as official accounts.
- Content from student organizations that are NOT officially recognized by the university cannot be posted to the VDS account – see [Exhibit A](#).

### **University Policies**

- Social media usage at Vanderbilt is governed by the same policies that govern all other electronic communications ([Appropriate Use of Tech Assets Policy](#), [Conflict of Interest and Commitment Policy](#), [FERPA Policy](#)).

### **Accessibility**

- It is important to ensure that your content is accessible to all users. Accessibility compliance is also legally required. Some tips for creating accessible content include:

- Alternative text descriptions – When posting images, provide alternate text captions (or “alt tags”) that describe the image and provide context.
- Captioning videos – Include subtitles, closed captions, or transcripts to your social media videos.
- CamelCase Hashtags – Make hashtags easier to read by capitalizing the first letter of each word. For example, use #VanderbiltUniversity, not #vanderbiltuniversity.

### Best Practices

- **Be respectful.** Only student organizations officially recognized by the university should refer to themselves as official accounts.
- **Be timely.** One of the great benefits of social media is the ability to share information almost instantly with a global audience. Be prepared to move quickly in response to new developments, announcements, or emergencies with relevant information on your site.
- **Be aware of the world around you.** Do not tweet or post during times that would make your brand, and hence the Vanderbilt brand, appear to be out of touch with what’s going on in the world. For example, do not tweet a fun, cheery graphic in the immediate aftermath of a terrorist attack; likewise, don’t share a serious or sad story in the middle of the Super Bowl. If you have tweets or posts scheduled and something occurs in the world to impact those posts, reschedule them immediately.
- **Accept and monitor comments.** A social media site without comments isn’t very social. Be prepared to accept and respond to comments. Understand that not all comments will be positive and respond to negative comments professionally and by providing any additional information that may help resolve the issue. Post a disclaimer on your site stating you reserve the right to remove inappropriate comments.
- **Separate personal from professional.** Keep these two presences as separate as possible. Make sure you understand your role in representing VU and VDS on school accounts.
- **Promote your accounts.** Make it easy for people to find you on social media. Have links and icons on your website. Include your accounts on everything you send out (think: flyers, post cards, calendar entries, posters, email signatures – you cannot oversaturate promoting your accounts).

Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the VDS Dean or designee.

## Exhibit A

### Officially Recognized Student Organizations Affiliated with the Divinity School

- Divinity Student Organization
- International Student Association (Divinity and Graduate School)
- LatinX Seminarians
- Methodist Student Organization
- Office of LGBTQIA Concerns, Vanderbilt Divinity School (GABLE)
- POIESIS
- Society of St. Cornelius
- Students Exploring Chaplaincy
- The Access and Inclusion Project
- The Office of Al's Pub
- Vanderbilt Black Seminarians

All student groups are encouraged to register their organization annually with the Office of Student Organizations, Leadership, and Service in order to be recognized by the University as a registered student organization (RSO). Registration must be completed by an INCOMING officer who will hold their position in the new academic year. All Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) are entitled to the following privileges(<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/studentorgs/registering-your-org/>):

- Financial support from the University (Student Services Fee allocation, and other sources when available)
- Use of University facilities for conducting regular business. Student organizations are prohibited from establishing offices, social spaces, or living quarters, off-campus
- Use of University meeting rooms and facilities at no charge or at a reduced rate
- Use of University electronic resources (e.g., Anchor Link, listservs, University-hosted website), and member subscription to the student leader listservs maintained by SOLS
- Use of common space and storage space allocated for registered student organizations
- Opportunity to solicit funds from, or make sales to, members of the University community on campus
- Participation in the annual Student Involvement Fair and other programs promoting participation hosted by the University
- Opportunity to advertise and promote the organization and its purposes on campus, and to advertise in Student Affairs-supported publications and other media
- Ability to publish events on Anchor Link and in the University Events Calendar
- Use of the official registered student organization mark, which incorporates the Vanderbilt University logo, official University spirit marks, and the name "Vanderbilt University," or titles indicating institutional affiliation, such as "Black and Gold," "VU," or "Commodore," for purposes generally consistent with the organizations' purposes and their usual activities or to identify themselves as campus groups (See Marketing and Communications policy for more information)