

Ouachita Baptist University

SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCES

GUIDELINES

In addition to Ouachita's Social Media Policies in the Faculty/Staff Manual and the Tiger Handbook, these guidelines are a resource for members of the Ouachita community as they model responsible practice.

- **Know where you're headed.** Think through your strategy before launching an account, including target audiences, goals and ways you can measure success down the road. (See the "Establishing a Social Strategy" worksheet to get started.)
- **Listen, then engage.** Social media is about more than pushing out information to followers. Listen to your community; engage with them; act like a human and not just a news feed. Listening before you launch an account is also helpful to determine the lay of the land and where you fit in.
- **Think before you type.** The Internet lives forever and is more widely available than the evening news. Even "private" posts can be seen beyond your personal network. Use common sense and your best judgment.
- **You are Ouachita.** If you are posting for an account representing a Ouachita entity, you represent Ouachita to your readers. Keep in mind the university's vision and mission and *especially* its values (faith, scholarship, growth, character & community) as you post.
- **Post quality content.** Post content that your target audiences will find valuable, such as updates from your area, links to articles in your field, quality photos from your events, etc.
- **Actions speak loudly.** Be aware that all actions on your account – even beyond written posts – reflect on the university. Think about who you follow, posts you like/share, etc. and how those relate to the purpose of your account.
- **Be accurate.** Double-check your spelling and grammar before posting, and fact check to make sure any information you post is accurate. As a university, we are expected to be examples of excellence. Get another set of eyes on your posts before publishing, if possible.
- **Develop a consistent tone.** Even if multiple people will post to your department or organization's account, develop a tone for all authors to adopt. Your writing style should *reflect the character* of your group, but it also should *have character*.
- **Correct mistakes.** Mistakes happen. Correct small issues quickly and move on. For larger issues, contact the Office of Communications and Marketing for guidance.
- **Be respectful.** Social media is built for two-way communication. Don't get riled up, baited into arguments or caught up in negativity masquerading as school spirit. Keep it positive and remember Ouachita's values. (If you need help determining if or how you should respond to a negative post, see the U.S. Air Force Flowchart.)
- **Ensure sustainability.** Before you launch an account, make sure you can realistically sustain the account long-term. Develop a plan to provide a consistent stream of content and designate at least two managers for the account. Dormant accounts do more harm than good.
- **Be a team player.** Like, follow and repost content from other Ouachita accounts. We're all in this together. Allow the appropriate Ouachita account to be the first to release news related to their area and then share those posts using your accounts.
- **Have fun!** Social media should be a fun way for you to build relationships and publicize your department or organization. There is a lot of room for creativity in this digital space, so start brainstorming and go for it!

TIPS & TRICKS

Social media platforms change every day, and there are a wealth of resources on the web to help you manage your accounts effectively. Below are a few practical tips to get you started.

- Choose a consistent name, profile image and tone to use across all your accounts. To use university branding, apply to be an “official” account. For personal accounts, various resources are available to help you show your Ouachita pride, including branded Facebook frames and Snapchat filters.
- When creating Facebook accounts, create them as a “Page,” not an individual “Profile.” On Instagram, create the account as a business account, not a personal one.
- On Facebook, select a “vanity URL” or username. This means your page’s URL will be like facebook.com/obudepartment instead of facebook.com/pages/Ouachita-Department/167050009988139. Match your other social media usernames, if possible.
- Use each account to promote the others. Post links to your other accounts and to your website to let your followers know where they can find you on the web. Also do this with other Ouachita accounts to help build the overall Ouachita online community.
- Be careful not to confuse your personal account with your Ouachita account. On your mobile device, use separate apps to avoid mix-ups (e.g. Twitter for personal, Hootsuite for Ouachita).
- Follow other users in your field to join the conversation in your community, increase your visibility and use them as sources of content. Be aware that who you follow and posts you interact with reflect on you, as well.
- Schedule posts to appear at various times of day and throughout the weekend. Social media doesn’t only work 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Test different times of day to see when your audience responds best. You may need to use a third party tool like Hootsuite.
- On Instagram, URLs aren’t active links in posts, only in profile descriptions. If you need to send followers to a web address, put the link in your profile and a note in your post with “Link in profile.”
- On Facebook, when using URLs, be sure to review the page preview that automatically populates. Edit it if needed.
- If you use your personal email, phone number or other personal contact information when signing up for a university account, be aware that your personal contacts may see be notified that the account is connected to you.
- Be careful to only use photos, music or videos Ouachita owns, that you have permission to use or that are under a Creative Commons license.
- You are welcome to use creative assets like filters, stickers, GIFs, etc. that are available on each platform to participate in the medium’s culture and conventions. Use good judgment in specific choices and be sure you understand the cultural references; be especially cautious about using branded assets that are sponsored by external companies.
- Tagging other users (individuals or brand pages) increases the reach of your post. It invites others into the conversation.
- Use hashtags when appropriate. They increase the reach of your post by joining a global discussion. Punctuation doesn’t work in hashtags (no hyphens, question marks, etc.). Checking the other posts that use the hashtag you’re considering, especially if you are creating an extended campaign.
- Especially if you are running multiple social media accounts for your area, consider using an editorial calendar to plan your content across all platforms.

ESTABLISHING A SOCIAL STRATEGY

A social media worksheet

What Ouachita entity are you representing, and what social media platform will you use? What handle and/or account name do you plan to use?

What audience(s) are you seeking to reach?

What do you want to achieve? Is someone else on campus already filling this role on social media? If so, perhaps there is a way you can partner with them to strengthen the collective effort.

Why is this platform right for your goals and audiences? Each social media platform has different strengths and different demographic groups using them. Don't just join because it's the new thing.

Who will be responsible for managing the account? At least two managers must be designated, at least one of whom must be a faculty or staff member. Include cell phone and email contacts for each.

How often do you anticipate posting content? If you don't realistically have time to post regular, timely and relevant content, perhaps there is a different communications solution for you.

How will this new channel integrate into your overall communications plan? How will you use your existing channels to promote your social channels and vice versa? Remember, social media is likely still less important than your website, personal communications, etc.

How will you measure success and when? For example, do you want to increase traffic to your website? Connect with alumni? Choose quantitative and time-bound goals. Evaluation should be ongoing even after your initial launch.

Brainstorm ideas here for specific content you will post. Think about series ideas, establishing tone and visual style, how you will handle different types of content/situations to build consistency.

APPLY FOR OFFICIAL STATUS

Become a Ouachita social media ambassador

If you are ready to strategically engage your audience on behalf of Ouachita, join us as an Official Ouachita Social Media Account. These lead brand ambassador accounts officially represent schools, departments, teams, organizations and others within the Ouachita community. Partner with the Office of Communications & Marketing to provide the best experience for your followers and help tell the Ouachita story.

REQUIREMENTS

- Complete the “Establishing a Social Strategy” Worksheet, including keeping current contact information for account managers as they change.
- Read and agree to abide by Ouachita’s Social Media Policy, additional Guidelines document and university brand standards as a commitment to excellence.
- Commit to attending social media training and/or roundtable events provided by Ouachita’s Office of Communications & Marketing as often as schedules permit.

Applications will be reviewed by the Office of Communications and appropriate supervisors.

BENEFITS

- Receive branding support for profile and cover images from the Office of Communications & Marketing.
- Receive additional exposure for the account, including links on the university website and increased frequency of shares by primary university accounts.
- Receive additional consultation, as needed, by staff in the Office of Communications & Marketing.