

# **Guidelines and Best Practices for Social Media at Colorado Mesa University**

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## **Colorado Mesa University's social media guidelines**

Colorado Mesa University encourages interaction between CMU, Western Colorado Community College and the users of social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

It is important for social media admins to remember that these sites are not private. Information posted is available to everyone who visits them. Users should use discretion when posting personal information about themselves or others. Use of these sites is voluntary — anyone using them assumes the risk associated with social networking sites and agrees to hold harmless CMU for any damages that may arise relating to use of these sites.

CMU reserves the right to remove content and comments at its discretion. Content or comments deemed to be unlawful, spam, and/or abusive towards students, faculty, staff or others will be removed and reported to the site on which it appeared. Content solely intended to promote commercial products or services will be removed as well.

Comments and content posted by guests do not reflect the positions of Colorado Mesa University or WCCC. CMU encourages users to report abusive, unlawful or spam content to the appropriate site according to each site's terms of service.

If you have questions about CMU's social networks and/or this policy, please contact Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications Katlin Birdsall at 970.248.1277.

## **What can social media do for you?**

Social media is a key aspect of any communications plan. It's also one that requires constant content and engagement. Having a strong social media presence doesn't mean you control the message — the best Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter accounts are ones which allow your audience to have a conversation with you as a club/department/brand and other followers. Fans and followers should visit your sites because they recognize your organization and have something to contribute to the conversation.

## Approval

Once you've established who will serve as the administrator(s) for your social media account(s) and the purpose of the account, please fill out the **Colorado Mesa University-Affiliated Social Media Account** form.

This form should be sent to Katlin Birdsall, assistant director of marketing and communications, at [kbirdsall@coloradomesa.edu](mailto:kbirdsall@coloradomesa.edu). The Marketing Office will provide you with a profile picture and branded cover photo, further establishing your connection to CMU or WCCC, if you would like, and can discuss any questions or concerns you may have with starting a CMU-affiliated account.

## Before you begin

There are some important steps to take before you start your own social media feed:

- **Do you need it?** Not all social networking platforms make sense for all organizations. Decide which platform is the best fit for your group, and make sure you know how you're going to use it: Is it worth launching an extensive campaign, or does it make more sense simply to broadcast information on CMU's established social networks like the Bulletin, MAVzone's news feed or the digital marquees on campus? If you are unsure where to start, reach out to the Marketing Office for guidance.
- **Do your research!** Do you know who your audience is and which networks they use? Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube are the most popular options, but maybe your organization is full of TikTok, Snapchat or Pinterest enthusiasts.
- **Choose the right options.** Facebook allows you to create a personal page, a business page and a group. Personal pages are for individual users, **not** organizations. Groups are a great venue for internal communication (for example, a class that wants to talk to each other or a club that uses Facebook to organize events and have discussions). A business page is the right choice if you'd like to reach out to an external audience.
- **Create a strategy.** Know how often you'll post, what you'll talk about and who will be in charge of creating content and monitoring your page. Keep in mind that social media channels need constant feeding of engaging content which may be time consuming. Before starting any social media channel it is best to develop content first, so when the social channel is launched you have a stockpile of content to use. We recommend at least one month worth of content planned before a channel is launched.
- **Review CMU's brand standards.** It is important to accurately represent the university on your chosen social media platforms. Please review CMU's [Brand Platform](#), [Visual Identity](#) and [Editorial Style Guide](#) for guidance on how to maintain the university's brand.

Now that you have your own page, feed or channel:

- **Look for areas where you can minimize work.** Social media requires near-constant monitoring. Free software like [HootSuite](#) and [Tweetdeck](#) enable users to schedule posts in advance. Not all scheduling services support more than one platform, so once again, it's

important to research.

- **Spread the word!** Invite your current contacts to like or follow you, encourage your organization's members to share the link and include your page's URL on promotional materials. Creative contests and giveaways can get your site more followers, subscribers and fans, but make sure you comply with the social network's policies. There is no big trick or secret to gaining followers. It takes effort and creative, quality content to building your audience.
- **Pay attention to analytics.** Analytics tell you what's working and what isn't taking off in the social media world. Each social media platform includes analytics, but you may also collect data using a tool like [Google Analytics](#) so you can adjust your strategy accordingly.

The following pages provide guidelines and best practices for specific social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat. For questions about other platforms, please contact the Marketing Office.

## Guidelines and best practices for Facebook

### Guidelines

1. When you open a social media account, especially one representing Colorado Mesa University or Western Colorado Community College, you agree to comply with applicable federal, state and local regulations.
2. Clearly indicate your association with CMU or WCCC by incorporating it into your handle. Spell out “Colorado Mesa University” or “Colorado Mesa” — do NOT use the acronym CMU. Because of this association, your page and profile should reflect a professional image, presence consistent with the university.
3. When you’re asked to supply a website, provide a link back to the CMU or WCCC sites. The link may be related to your organization or department, or may send users directly to CMU’s homepage.
4. Send the three pieces of information discussed on page three of this document to the Marketing Office before you begin.
5. Do not post advertisements for commercial products, or product or political endorsements. Don’t comment on legal matters affecting the university.
6. Screen spam, personal attacks and off-topic comments, but don’t censor the conversation.
7. If someone posts something purely for commercial purposes on your wall, delete it as long as you’re sure you’re not censoring the conversation.
8. Check the feed daily. If you’re asked a question that another department or organization can answer better, refer them there quickly — within 24 hours of the original post.
9. If an administrator changes or leaves, contact the Marketing Office.
10. If a page is going to be abandoned, delete it and inform the Marketing Office so that it can be deleted from the CMU Social Media Directory.

### Facebook Best practices

#### **Do you know which format is right for your organization?**

A *page*, the recommended platform for all CMU organizations, is used to promote a particular brand to an audience. Pages are searchable and can be seen by anyone even if they are not registered or logged into Facebook. Pages are beneficial because they are customizable and they provide insight into the interactions between the page and its fans, giving an organization a good idea of the page’s success. A Facebook page is the best way for organizations to market themselves and interact with their intended external audience.

A *group* is a useful tool for an organization’s internal use. Unlike a page, a group is not accessible to the general public — members must ask to join the group. A group is great for individual classes, club members or people working on group projects who want to

communicate without having to be friends on Facebook or giving out other personal information.

A *profile* is used by individuals. CMU clubs, organizations and departments should **NOT** create a personal Facebook profile. If your organization has already created a profile Facebook page, please convert it to a business page by following [these instructions](#).

### **Do you know your audience?**

Facebook is a great way to connect with audiences of any age. The majority of daily users are an older demographic but current students and prospective students do still utilize Facebook. If you know who you're speaking to, you know the best way to get through to them. You can see who's engaged with your Facebook page by checking Facebook's "Insights" on your page's administration panel. You can also [target Facebook posts to specific audiences](#).

### **Don't control the conversation**

Social networking differs from other forms of communication in that you are not the driver of the conversation. Page administrators should monitor posts for vulgar or abusive behavior, but you shouldn't censor or modify interactions in your favor.

Completely off-topic or totally commercial posts that don't drive the conversation may be deleted, but negative comments are not necessarily a bad thing. If you allow the community to voice opinions, it will flourish. If you censor harmless interactions, visitors will feel restricted and your engagement will suffer. Negative feedback provides a great opportunity to provide "customer service" and see which aspects of your organization are not working as intended.

If your audience has questions or concerns, address them as soon as possible. This lets others know that you're listening and you have answers. Because social networking is so immediate, people expect real-time customer care.

### **Administrator-generated content**

The most effective Facebook pages are visually appealing and continuously updated. Regularly update your page with timely content, photos and videos (recommended at least 3x/week). Remember that solid, quality content gets shared, while shoddy, confusing or boring content gets ignored. Use pictures, videos, GIFs and any other visually-interesting materials to showcase your organization.

### **User-generated content**

Customize the privacy restrictions from your Facebook wall so fans can upload photos and video. Creating content lets everyone feel more engaged. Your users will generate some great photos, videos or posts! Be sure to ask for permission and give credit when using user-generated content.

### **Measure, evolve, adapt**

Facebook insights allow you to measure your page's growth and follower engagement. Learn from these successes and failures, and apply that knowledge to your social media strategy.

# Guidelines and best practices for Twitter

## Guidelines

1. When you open a social media account, especially one representing Colorado Mesa University or Western Colorado Community College, you agree to comply with applicable federal, state and local regulations.
2. Clearly indicate your association with CMU or WCCC by incorporating it into your page name. It's alright to use the acronym CMU in your handle as long as you spell out "Colorado Mesa University" or "Colorado Mesa" in your bio. Because of this association, your page and profile should reflect a professional image, presence consistent with the university.
3. When you're asked to supply a website, provide a link back to the CMU or WCCC sites. The link may be related to your organization or department, or may send users directly to CMU's homepage.
4. Send the three pieces of information discussed on page three of this document to the Marketing Office before you begin.
5. Follow @ColoradoMesaU on Twitter, so the university can follow you back and retweet your content as appropriate.
6. Do not post advertisements for commercial products, or product or political endorsements. Don't comment on legal matters affecting the university.
7. You don't have to reply to spam, personal attacks and off-topic comments, but don't censor the conversation or lash out because of negative feedback.
8. Check the page several times per day. Twitter requires even closer monitoring than most other social networks. If you're asked a question that another department or organization can answer better, refer them there quickly — within 24 hours of the original post.
9. If an administrator changes or leaves, contact the Marketing Office with the update, and change your password.
10. If a page is going to be abandoned, delete it and inform the Marketing Office so that it can be deleted from the CMU Social Media Directory.

## Best practices

### **Do you know your audience?**

Unlike Facebook, Twitter engagement levels are not measured by how many people visit your page, but by how many people mention you, retweet you or favorite your tweets. The only way to get to know your Twitter audience is to pay attention to and participate in the conversation around you.

### **Are you comfortable with someone else controlling the conversation?**

It's easy to moderate comments on Facebook and YouTube, but you don't have the option to filter or delete the conversation on Twitter, making it the ultimate public opinion tool. Use Twitter to answer questions and criticism, share praise and let people know that you're listening and willing to engage them directly. Once again, it's all about establishing a conversation.

Completely off-topic or totally commercial posts that don't drive the conversation may be deleted, but negative comments are not necessarily a bad thing. If you allow the community to voice opinions, it will flourish. If you censor harmless interactions, visitors will feel restricted and your engagement will suffer. Negative feedback provides a great opportunity to provide "customer service" and see which aspects of your organization are not working as intended.

If your audience has questions or concerns, address them as soon as possible. This lets others know that you're listening and you have answers. Because social networking is so immediate, people expect real-time customer care.

### **Understand the language**

The # symbol followed by a phrase is known as a "hashtag". Colorado Mesa University's official hashtag is #CMesaU, which differentiates us from all the other CMUs out there (Central Michigan University, Carnegie Mellon University, etc.). Please use this hashtag with relevant postings. Admissions uses #NewMavs. The Mavericks' athletic hashtag is #RumbleMavs. Performing arts uses #cmesatheatre #cmesaudance #cmesaumusic. The Alumni Association uses #mav4life and #onceamavalwaysamav. Hashtags help organize topics and make them more searchable. The @ symbol followed by a username is used to mention someone in a tweet. When someone mentions CMU, for example, they usually include @ColoradoMesaU in the tweet.

### **Measure, evolve, adapt**

Use Twitter's analytics tool to see how successful or unsuccessful your Twitter feed is. By frequently checking your analytics, you can learn from your successes and failures, and apply that knowledge as your social media strategy evolves.

# Guidelines and best practices for Instagram

## Guidelines

1. When you open a social media account, especially one representing Colorado Mesa University or Western Colorado Community College, you agree to comply with applicable federal, state and local regulations.
2. Clearly indicate your association with CMU or WCCC by incorporating it into your feed's name if possible. Because of this association, your photos should reflect a professional image, presence consistent with the university.
3. When you're asked to supply a website, provide a link back to the CMU or WCCC sites. The link may be related to your organization or department, or may send users directly to CMU's homepage.
4. Send the three pieces of information discussed on page three of this document to the Marketing Office before you begin.
5. Follow @ColoradoMesaU so the university can follow you back and share your images/regram your stories as appropriate.
6. Do not post advertisements for commercial products, or product or political endorsements. Don't comment on legal matters affecting the university.
7. Screen spam, personal attacks and off-topic comments, but don't censor the conversation.
8. Turn on notifications for your page and check frequently.
9. If an administrator changes or leaves, contact the Marketing Office and update the password.
10. If a page is going to be abandoned, delete it and inform the Marketing Office so that it can be deleted from the CMU Social Media Directory.

## Best practices

### **Do you know your audience?**

This platform is generally used by a younger demographic (millennials and generation Z), but the channel can also feature content geared towards alumni, parents and the community. Try to generate targeted content with broad appeal. Also keep in mind Instagram, is a visually driven social media platform, so your photos or videos have to be aesthetically pleasing and eye-catching.

### **Don't control the conversation**

Social networking differs from other forms of communication in that you are not the driver of the conversation. Page administrators should monitor posts for vulgar or abusive behavior, but you shouldn't censor or modify interactions in your favor.

Completely off-topic or totally commercial comments that don't drive the conversation may be deleted, but negative comments are not necessarily a bad thing. If you allow the community to voice opinions, it will flourish. If you censor harmless interactions, visitors will feel restricted and your engagement will suffer. Negative feedback provides a great opportunity to provide "customer service" and see which aspects of your organization are not working as intended.

If your audience has questions or concerns, address them as soon as possible. This lets others know that you're listening and you have answers. Because social networking is so immediate, people expect real-time customer care.

### **Update your profile**

Your profile picture should be clear and represent your organization. This picture appears on your followers' feeds when you share an image. Mention your affiliation with Colorado Mesa University or Western Colorado Community College in your bio.

### **Understand the language**

The # symbol followed by a phrase is known as a "hashtag". Colorado Mesa University's official hashtag is #CMesaU, which differentiates us from all the other CMUs out there. Hashtags help organize topics and make them more searchable. The @ symbol followed by a username is used to mention someone in a post. When someone mentions CMU, for example, they include @ColoradoMesaU in their post.

### **Use hashtags**

Users can only search Instagram posts using hashtags. Colorado Mesa University's official hashtag is #CMesaU, which differentiates us from all the other CMUs out there (Central Michigan University, Carnegie Mellon University, etc.). Please use this hashtag with relevant postings. Admissions uses #NewMavs. The Mavericks' athletic hashtag is #RumbleMavs. Performing arts uses #cmesautheatre #cmesaudance #cmesaumusic. The Alumni Association uses #mav4life and #onceamavalwaysamav.

### **Tag others**

Tagging people ensures your post will show up in their feed. You can tag people inside the image itself or in the comments.

### **Be engaged**

Engagement goes both ways. Comment and like other people's posts. It may even help you gain more followers. You can also repost other users' relevant content by using apps like [Repost for Instagram](#). Utilizing user-generated content makes your followers feel more connected but be sure you are still creating native content.

## Guidelines and best practices for YouTube

### Guidelines

1. When you open a social media account, especially one representing Colorado Mesa University or Western Colorado Community College, you agree to comply with applicable federal, state and local regulations.
2. Clearly indicate your association with CMU or WCCC by incorporating it into your channel's name. Spell out "Colorado Mesa University" or "Colorado Mesa"— do NOT use the acronym CMU. Because of this association, your channel's content and profile should reflect a professional image, presence consistent with the university's.
3. When you're asked to supply a website, provide a link back to the CMU or WCCC sites. The link may be related to your organization or department, or may send users directly to CMU's homepage.
4. Send the three pieces of information discussed on page three of this document to the Marketing Office before you begin.
5. Subscribe to the ColoradoMesaU channel, so the university can subscribe to your channel and share your videos.
6. Do not post advertisements for commercial products, or product or political endorsements. Don't comment on legal matters affecting the university.
7. Screen spam, personal attacks and off-topic comments, but don't censor the conversation.
8. Check the page frequently for a week or two after posting a new video. YouTube requires less monitoring than most other social networks, but it's important to see if anyone has commented on your video and requires a reply. If you're asked a question that another department or organization can answer better, refer them there quickly—within 48 hours of the original post.
9. If an administrator changes or leaves, contact the Marketing Office.
10. If a page is going to be abandoned, delete it and inform the Marketing Office so that it can be deleted from the CMU Social Media Directory.
11. To comply with accessibility laws, videos on CMU's channel and its derivative channels must be accompanied by a 100% accurate transcript or closed captioning. YouTube offers a free beta service which captions videos automatically, but it's rough at best. Beware of inaccurate captions!

#### **Do you know your audience?**

YouTube's audience is mostly made up of a younger audience but with the rise of other social media networks YouTube videos do reach a wide cross section of users.

#### **Are you comfortable with someone else controlling the conversation?**

It's important not to censor comments on YouTube videos if they're not vulgar, abusive, off-topic, or purely commercial. Your audience needs to have a voice and this gives you an opportunity to address their concerns. Censoring people who are really having an issue is the quickest way to lose credibility and makes you look like you have something to hide. YouTube's administrative controls allow you to control the privacy of videos and comments. Moderating comments helps prevent vulgar or abusive input from automatically appearing under your videos, but once again, it's important not to censor your audience.

Completely off-topic or totally commercial posts that don't drive the conversation may be deleted, but negative comments are not necessarily a bad thing. If you allow the community to voice opinions, it will flourish. If you censor harmless interactions, visitors will feel restricted and your engagement will suffer. Negative feedback provides a great opportunity to provide "customer service" and see which aspects of your organization are not working as intended.

If your audience has questions or concerns, address them as soon as possible. This lets others know that you're listening and you have answers. Because social networking is so immediate, people expect real-time customer care.

### **Search Engine Optimization**

To ensure your video appears high in search results on YouTube and Google, it's important to include tags for your video. Use "Colorado Mesa University" and "Western Colorado Community College" (if it applies) as a tag in each video.

### **Build Your Audience and Connect to CMU**

Including a "subscribe" button, or at least a call to action at the end of your videos will increase your subscribers, views and reach. Whenever possible, include a link to a page on CMU's website.

### **Measure, evolve, adapt**

It's important to know where your audience is accessing your content so you know where to share it most effectively. Sharing your videos across social networking sites improves your search engine ranking, making you more visible and "Google-able", and helps you reach your audience on the most popular platforms. Utilizing YouTube is a great way to create dynamic, visually-interesting Facebook and Twitter posts.

# Guidelines and best practices for Snapchat

## Guidelines

1. When you open a social media account, especially one representing Colorado Mesa University or Western Colorado Community College, you agree to comply with applicable federal, state and local regulations.
2. Clearly indicate your association with CMU or WCCC by incorporating it into your account's name if possible. You want one that will catch people's attention and be easy to keep in mind. It's better to keep the name of your account consistent with your other social media accounts.
3. Keep it professional. Because of this association, your snaps should reflect a professional image, presence consistent with the university.
4. Send the three pieces of information discussed on page three of this document to the Marketing Office before you begin.
5. Follow ColoradoMesaU so the university can follow you back and collaborate when possible.
6. Do not post advertisements for commercial products, or product or political endorsements. Don't comment on legal matters affecting the university.
7. Check the account at least once per day. Snapchat relies on immediacy.
8. If an administrator changes or leaves, contact the Marketing Office and update password.
9. If a page is going to be abandoned, delete it and inform the Marketing Office so that it can be deleted from the CMU Social Media Directory.

## Best practices

### **Make sure you have a clear vision**

Snapchat is one of the newer social platforms. Before you start, make sure you have clear goals and a vision for what you'll be posting, who will be posting it and how you'll measure success.

### **Promote your account**

Promote your account on other social media channels. It's hard to find anyone using Snapchat's search unless you know their account name, so make sure yours is prominent on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and whatever else you use.

### **Keep it fun**

Snapchat is supposed to be used to showcase fleeting moments, rare finds, humor and secrets. If someone adds you, you've assumed the role of their friend, so act like it! Send funny shots, behind-the-scenes photos or start a game. You can also provide exclusive content like coupons or prizes just for your Snapchat followers.

**Use “My Story” to tell a story**

Snapchat’s story feature enables you to string pictures or videos together. These are visible for 24 hours and offer more flexibility than a snap that disappears forever in 10 seconds. Build a narrative with it that will keep your followers wanting more.

**Keep it personal**

Chatting directly with people will make them feel like you’re invested in them, personally.