

# CT State Community College Social Media Guidelines

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## Introduction

The Connecticut community college system merged into a unified collegiate body in 2023. Instead of individual campuses that function independently, we are now a singular college, CT State Community College (CT State), with twelve campuses and various satellite locations throughout the state. This consolidation has created unified offices and/or departments that collaborate to provide services and support throughout the college community, not just to a campus. Marketing and promotion activities were also part of departmental consolidations and, in July 2023, the Strategic Marketing and Communications Department (marketing department) was created. The marketing department provides a variety of services; graphic design, publicity, internal and external communications, website design and website management, social media management, and more.

The CT State marketing department generally takes the lead in supporting signature college events and news with relevant promotional material and other assets shared with campuses if needed. For more information about the departmental services, refer to our page on [the college website](#).

This document is meant to serve as a guide for those involved with social media at the campus level and will change and adapt as policies, rules, media, and technology changes. These guidelines are essential for creating a reliable foundation for anyone new to social media. You are welcome to bookmark this page for future reference.

Social media has been centralized within the marketing department, taking the lead on the promotion of the college and its activities as a whole. Work encompasses creating organic social media content, creating and developing social media advertising, and working with and supporting campuses on their social media journeys.

Campuses are still responsible for their own social media accounts and should work in concert with the marketing department. They assess their campus' needs and resources to determine the best way to incorporate social media into their day-to-day activities. Some

campuses devote full-time positions for social media, press and campus-based promotion, and others include that work in already existing positions. For the purposes of this document, the campus staff doing this work will be referred to as social media coordinators, whether or not that is their official title.

The CT State Social Media Coordinator, a part of the Strategic Marketing and Communications team, will meet with campus-based coordinators approximately once a month for planning and coordination purposes. Campus coordinators are welcome to reach out to their CT State counterpart outside of scheduled meetings whenever they need assistance or guidance.

CT State uses social media as a strategic communications tool to share information, stories, news and significant events that highlight the achievements of our students, faculty, staff and campuses across the state. Social media is one of our most outward-facing activities that present the college to potential and current students, their influencers, community leaders and the public-at-large.

It is important that all CT State-affiliated social media accounts maintain a unified identity while still allowing individual campuses, departments and programs to showcase their unique strengths. These guidelines apply to all social media accounts representing CT State's campuses, academic departments, programs, offices and student organizations.

The CT State social media team is here to support faculty and staff in following these guidelines. We aim to provide resources, guidance and best practice tips to ensure each official account operates effectively. The strength of the college's social media presence lies with our campus accounts and highlighting them appropriately is critical to the success of our social media activities.

## **College Office Social Media Accounts vs Campus Social Media Accounts**

The CT State official college accounts share the collective achievements and impact of all our campuses. Some of the activities we highlight are:

- **Recruitment and Enrollment:** Promoting recruitment events and activities.
- **Brand awareness:** General promotion of CT State as a leader in higher education.

- **Academic Offerings:** introducing new and existing degree and certificate programs to the general public, in support of recruitment goals.
- **Academic Successes:** Celebrating major awards, program recognition, student achievements and faculty excellence across the college.
- **Financial Milestones:** Announcing major grants, funding achievements and statewide initiatives that strengthen CT State's role as the largest community college in New England.
- **Institutional Growth:** Showcasing new partnerships, college improvements, strategic initiatives and ways that the college is advancing higher education opportunities across the state.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Informing the public of offerings for children and adults, outside of the traditional credit-based programs. These could include short-term, non-credit certificates and courses, as well as special programs for youth and seniors.
- **Community Impact:** Sharing how CT State gives back to communities through partnerships with public and private organizations, service projects and public programming.
- **Community Building:** Activities, programs and events that the college or members of the college community participate in that help support the communities in our areas.

In contrast, campus social media accounts focus on:

- **Local Achievements:** Spotlighting campus-specific successes such as student honors, program highlights, local awards, etc.
- **Community Connections:** Promoting campus-based events, partnerships and activities that strengthen ties to their surrounding community.
- **Local/Campus Identity:** Highlighting events and activities that are unique to a campus and its market area.
- **Unique Programs:** Promoting those academic programs or workforce development offerings that may be offered by a single campus.

Each campus account helps personalize the student and community experience while supporting CT State's broader mission and values.

## **Security and Auditing**

The CT State social media team should be given access and password information to all main campus accounts associated with the college for security and emergency purposes. They will not take over the day-to-day social media operations of campuses.

Audits of campus social media accounts will be held on a semi-annual basis under the guidance of the CT State social media team. Instructions and deadlines will be provided prior to the audit.

## **Campus Naming Structure**

The proper naming format of our campuses is Connecticut State Community College (Campus Name)' e.g.. Connecticut State Community College Three Rivers. The abbreviated version is CT State (Campus Name)' e.g. CT State Asnuntuck or CT State Three Rivers.

***Do not*** add a dash or hyphen when referring to the campus names. Ex. CT State Community College - Three Rivers or CT State —Three Rivers.

This naming structure is based on the already established guidelines created during the consolidation of the community colleges.

## **Social Media Accounts Used by the College**

These platforms serve as essential tools for sharing content, engaging with the community, and fostering interactions with various audiences. When managing or contributing to CT State's social media presence, it is essential to adhere to each platform's terms of service and maintain consistent messaging that aligns with the college's values and mission. Current accounts in use: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X (formerly known as Twitter) and YouTube

At this time there are no mandates about which platforms campuses choose to use; however, this policy may change at any time. Social media activity should remain focused on the approved platforms listed above to ensure security, consistency and alignment with institutional goals.

- Facebook is a platform for broad communication with a wide demographic, particularly adults ages 25-65, including community members, alumni, parents and influencers, and prospective students. It is ideal for sharing news, event updates, achievements and community-related activities.
- Instagram is a visual-driven platform best suited for reaching current and prospective students between the ages of 16 and 35. It can be used to showcase campus life, student accomplishments, events and college culture through photos and videos. Strong visual storytelling helps build a vibrant, engaging presence that resonates with audiences.
- LinkedIn is a professional platform. It is a space for building professional connections, promoting the college's brand and sharing accomplishments with a broader audience that values education and leadership. The social media team uses it to promote academic achievements, staff/faculty and institutional milestones, alumni success stories and high-profile partnerships; news that is primarily targeted toward alumni and the business community.
- X, (formerly known as Twitter), is best for real-time updates, short announcements and timely engagement with the public, media and education-related organizations. It is particularly effective for sharing quick communications, achievements, emergency updates and participating in public conversation. The platform tends to reach an audience aged 25-49.
- YouTube is a long-form content creator-based video platform that is used for entertainment and educational purposes. It is best used for providing instructions (ex. How to complete a complex form), sharing events and ceremonies like commencement and promoting student achievements.

As new social media platforms are created, the social media team will examine and evaluate them to determine whether or not to formally adopt them. If you are unsure of which platforms are appropriate for campus or department use, please contact the CT State social media team.

## **Creating and Managing Social Media Accounts at the Campus/Department Level**

Campus departments or units within CT State that wish to create social media accounts must ensure that the proposed account aligns with the college's mission and standards. Before launching a social media account on behalf of campus/department/office, approval from the campus social media coordinator (campus) and CT State web team (department) is required.

Campus social media coordinators are expected to maintain a list of all social media accounts associated with their campus, along with the name and contact info for each, for auditing purposes. It is highly recommended that campus social media coordinators obtain access to any campus social media account in existence, both new and legacy.

The campus must commit to maintaining the account(s) and designate the parties responsible for its day-to-day activities. Social media accounts should not be established, nor maintained by students.

To facilitate seamless account management and transitions, accounts must not be created using a personal email address or work email address with an employee's first and last name (e.g., john.doe@ctstate.edu). Instead, all accounts should be registered with a generic email address (e.g., [CTStateHoustatonicSocialMedia@ctstate.edu](mailto:CTStateHoustatonicSocialMedia@ctstate.edu)). Customized email addresses are created by the IT department and correspondences can be forwarded to the social media coordinator responsible for managing that campus' social media account(s).

Using a social media based customized email ensures continuity when personnel changes occur, reduces security risks and maintains proper oversight. This practice also helps safeguard the affiliation and alignment of the account with the broader CT State brand.

Furthermore, all social media account managers should develop a succession plan that is shared with the CT State social media team.

## **Content Sharing Best Practices**

Whenever possible, you should try to optimize content sharing to maintain follower engagement. Below is a list of the optimal times for you to consider.

- Facebook – At least 4 times a week
- Instagram – Daily, if possible, but at least 4 times a week

- LinkedIn – 3 to 4 times a week
- X – Multiple times a day, if you have enough content
- YouTube- As needed

## Before Creating a Social Media Account, Consider

- Who is your target audience and how does it differ from the campus' or the college's audience?
- How will you engage your target audience(s)? (Students, alumni, community members?)
- What platforms best serve your objectives?
- What are your goals for this social media presence? What types of information do you plan to share or highlight?
- Who will serve as the account administrator(s)? Who will be responsible for posting and monitoring?
- How frequently will the account be updated to ensure active engagement?
- How will you define and measure success (e.g., engagement rates, event attendance, community growth)?

## Account Naming Structure

When creating your social media account(s), please refer to this naming structure: CT State [campus name or abbreviation of campus name][department/type of activity]. See the examples below.

- CTStateNVStudentActivities
- CTStateTunxisStudentActiv
- CTStateCapitalFoodPantry
- CTStateQVGym

Refer to the following links for detailed instructions on creating each social media platform. Each link will direct you to the corresponding social media site:

- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [X](#)

## Account Security

Maintaining the security of all CT State-affiliated social media accounts is critical. Follow these guidelines to protect accounts from unauthorized access and ensure proper oversight:

## Register Accounts with the Social Media Coordinator

All social media accounts affiliated with CT State must be registered with the CT State Social Media Coordinator. Send a Teams message that includes the account username(s), the platform, the email address(es) associated with the account, and the account password(s).

This helps the college conduct regular security checks and prevent potential breaches or unauthorized access. Once this information is received, the Social Media Coordinator will work with the campus account owner to determine who else may need to be added to the account for access.

## Password Management Best Practices

- **Create Strong Passwords:** Use a unique, secure password for each account. A strong password should include a mix of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers and special characters.
- **Store Passwords Securely:** Use a trusted password management tool approved by IT to store credentials safely. Avoid writing down passwords or sharing them in unsecured ways.
- **Update Passwords Regularly:** Change passwords periodically and immediately after personnel changes or suspected security issues.
- **Limit Password Access:** Only provide account credentials to authorized personnel. Avoid sharing passwords via email or unsecured communication methods.

## Additional Security Measures

- **Enable Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA):** Wherever possible, enable MFA for an extra layer of protection against unauthorized access.
- **Monitor Account Activity:** Regularly check account activity to identify any unusual behavior or unauthorized access attempts.
- **Report Security Concerns Promptly:** Immediately notify all people responsible for the account about security breaches or other issues.
- **By adhering to these best practices, you can ensure that campus accounts remain secure, professional, and consistent with the college's standards.**

## Moderation and Monitoring

Monitoring your social media accounts is an important part of maintaining a positive social media presence. Questions and inquiries should be responded to in a timely manner, and any

offensive or inappropriate comments on your posts should be hidden or deleted as soon as possible. Please note that banning or blocking accounts is not allowed.

Account monitors are not expected to have answers to all questions received. They can, however, consult with content experts in order to craft appropriate responses.

## Emergency/Crisis/Hacking

In the event of an emergency, like an account hacking or credible threat made to a campus or person, please contact the Director of Digital Marketing and the Social Media Coordinator. *In the case of the latter, first contact your campus police department.*

## Event Coverage/Announcements

Each campus is responsible for managing local event coverage, e.g.. student activities, open houses, press conferences, and other campus-specific activities. If a campus would like additional exposure on CT State's social media accounts, they should tag CT State. Tagging CT State accounts makes it easier for the Social Media Coordinator to view and share posts to the broader statewide audience, helping amplify significant campus achievements and initiatives. Please do not assume that your post will be seen without a tag. Even though the social media team regularly monitors campus accounts, tagging is the only way to guarantee that your content rises to the top.

## Branding

Refer to the [brand guidelines on the CT State website](#) for branding information. Social media templates are also available to ensure consistent and professional representation of the CT State brand across all platforms. Please use them to maintain brand integrity and alignment with college standards.

- **Follow Branding Standards:** Use CT State's official logos, colors, fonts and other branding elements as outlined on the CT State website. Ensure all visuals are professional and consistent with the college's image. For each platform, it is important to size your images so that they are optimized for the platform.
- **Use Approved Templates:** To simplify the creation process, the marketing department page provides access to [pre-designed templates](#) tailored for social media. These

templates include options for event announcements, achievements and general updates, making it easy to produce professional and on-brand content.

- **Maintain Visual Consistency:** Stick to a cohesive look and feel in all posts. This includes using official fonts, consistent colors and approved imagery. Avoid using personal designs or unofficial graphics that do not align with the CT State branding.

## Hashtags

### What is a hashtag?

A hashtag (#) is a symbol used in social media placed before a word or phrase, with no spaces, which creates a clickable and searchable link.

It is similar to the subject line in an email. It gives the readers a sense of the subject matter of a post. A hashtag can create tone or mood, but more importantly, it aggregates information into a searchable format for social media. It is also used for categorization and discovery purposes by organizing posts and can help expand the reach of posts by increasing searchability beyond current followers.

A hashtag also makes it easier for social media users to join current conversations, track and stay up to date with trending topics, as well as help develop a social media brand or marketing identity through the creation of customized hashtags.

While hashtag use is optional, the list below provides guidance on how many to use per post.

- **Facebook:** 1-2 per post if discussing a particular subject or to organize posts for future search purposes.
- **Instagram:** 5-10 per post, however a maximum of five is preferred.
- **LinkedIn:** 3-5 per post.
- **X:** 1-2 per tweet if discussing a particular subject.

### Official CT State Hashtags:

- **#CTStateCommencement[Insert year]** – Promotes and aggregates commencement activities. It can be used in conjunction with a campus-based hashtag. Ex. #CTStateCommencement2026 #CTStateThreeRivers. The Social Media Coordinator will share information about commencement-related hashtags.
- **#CTStateNursing, #CTStateManufacturing, etc.** – Promotes particular programs at the college.

- **#CTStateOpenHouse**- Promotes open houses.
- **#CTStatePride**- Expresses college pride.

Please contact the CT State Social Media Coordinator for the most up-to-date hashtag list.

## **Paid Advertising**

Throughout the year, the marketing department runs paid advertising campaigns to increase attendance and promote the college as a leader in two-year higher education. Said campaigns include social media components managed by the department and inclusive of all campuses. On occasion, advertising may focus on specific events or activities occurring at a particular campus or campuses. In those rare cases, the marketing department will work with the appropriate campus representatives.

The marketing department discourages campuses from undertaking their own paid campaigns because they can undercut collegewide promotions, cause brand confusion or inadvertently misrepresent the college's academic offerings. However, there may be rare occasions when a campus campaign is needed. If a campus believes that they may need that type of promotion, they should contact the Senior Director of Strategic Marketing and Communications to discuss. Paid campus campaigns should not be undertaken without the marketing department's knowledge or consent.

## **Best Practices**

**Strive for Accuracy:** Prior to posting, please review the language for any spelling and grammatical errors. Make sure names and titles of identified people are correct and confirm all shared information is correct.

**Be Respectful and Polite:** Social media often sparks a wide range of comments and conversations, including differing opinions. While we encourage open and respectful engagement, it's important to carefully manage your responses. Always keep interactions professional, thoughtful and in line with CT State's values.

Clear instances of bullying, harassment, or harmful behavior should be reported directly through social media. If a post appears unusual or does not violate guidelines, exercise discretion and seek guidance from the CT State Social Media Coordinator. By staying calm and

professional, you can help ensure CT State’s social media remains a safe and welcoming space for everyone.

**Respect Copyright and Fair Use:** Adhere to copyright laws, fair use guidelines and the intellectual property rights of others and the college at all times. The [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#) website is a good resource.

**Protect Confidential and Proprietary Information:** Any employee, student or vendor managing a CT State social media account must adhere to all applicable college privacy and confidentiality policies. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about CT State, students, employees or alumni. Pay particular attention to the applicable federal requirements, such as the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy ACT \(FERPA\)](#) and the [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability ACT \(HIPAA\)](#). Sharing such private information can result in legal action against you and/or CT State. Never post or comment on any legal matters, litigation or any parties with whom the college is in litigation.

## Accessibility

**Alt Text:** Alt text refers to the description of images that are read aloud to users of screen readers and should be incorporated in all social media posts. Guidance and examples can be found [here](#).

**Proper Use of Flyers and Brochures:** Flyers and brochures have been created for print distribution and while they can be converted into digital format, it is recommended that they not be used in social media because screen readers are not able to read them. Instead select one image to highlight, add alt text, and then place the flyer or brochure’s information in the post.

**QR Codes:** QR codes can be a useful tool for directing audiences to additional information, like websites and registration forms, but they are not necessary on social media. Please do not use them. Add any important links to the post.

**Proper Use of Hashtags:** When using a hashtag, capitalize the first letter of each word (also called CamelCase). This ensures accuracy for the screen reader to interpret hashtags aloud. Without capitalization, screen readers may mispronounce or misread long hashtags, making content inaccessible to users with visual or cognitive impairments. Ex.: #CTStatePride **NOT** #ctstatepride

For more guidance on accessibility and social media, visit, <https://www.section508.gov/create/social-media/>.

## Photography and Image Use Guidance

**Use High-Resolution Images:** Aim for clear, high-resolution images (2MB or higher). Most modern smartphones can produce images of this quality.

**Show Diversity:** Capture photos that reflect the diversity of the CT State community to ensure college represented.

**Keep It Relevant:** Use photos that match the event, story or topic you are highlighting.

**Ask for Consent:** Get permission when taking close-up photos or videos of individuals, especially in small group settings. Please note that the college's catalog includes language about our [photography and videography policy](#).

No AI: The use of AI photos, illustrations or video is prohibited. The marketing department has access to a vast photography library and can provide images if requested.

### Quick Tips

- Following the accounts of campus and college leadership, peer institutions, local companies, community organizations and other institutions is highly recommended.
- Share relevant posts from people or organizations that you follow if they share information that is helpful to your followers.
- Invite people to like your page or follow your account regularly.
- Don't be afraid to ask your followers to share your content.
- Consider including an open-ended question in your posts or asking followers their opinion as a way to increase engagement.

## Social Media Contact Information

People with formal social media roles at the college and campus level.

### CT State Social Media Team

- Vivian Nabeta, [vivian.nabeta@ctstate.edu](mailto:vivian.nabeta@ctstate.edu), *Director of Digital Marketing*
- Jazzminda Acevedo, [jazzminda.acevedo@ctstate.edu](mailto:jazzminda.acevedo@ctstate.edu), *Social Media Coordinator*

### Campus-Based Social Media Team

- **Asnuntuck:** Adam Rivers, [adam.rivers@ctstate.edu](mailto:adam.rivers@ctstate.edu), *Adjunct Professor*
- **Capital:** Alexis Daley, [alexis.daley@ctstate.edu](mailto:alexis.daley@ctstate.edu), *Campus Public Relations Coordinator*
- **Gateway:** Haley Guerrero, [haley.guerrero@ctstate.edu](mailto:haley.guerrero@ctstate.edu), *Development Associate-Communications*
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- **Northwestern:** Susan Stiller, [susan.stiller@ctstate.edu](mailto:susan.stiller@ctstate.edu), *Executive Assistant*
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- **Quinebaug Valley:** Jennifer Green, [jennifer.green@ctstate.edu](mailto:jennifer.green@ctstate.edu), *Executive Assistant*
- **Tunxis:** Sam Chandler, [sam.chandler@ctstate.edu](mailto:sam.chandler@ctstate.edu), *Marketing and Public Relations Assistant to the Office of the Campus President*