



Saint Mary's College Social Media Best Practices

Best Practices

These best practices are intended to give you insight into how to effectively use social media to accomplish your goals and optimally reach your audience. If you're not sure what your goals for social media are, below you will find general objectives for higher education social media accounts. While your goals may not be the same, these may give you insight into how you could utilize social media to boost awareness of your group or give you a starting point to reflect on what you want to accomplish.

Some goals for higher education social media accounts include:

- Build community
- Serve as a resource or area of expertise
- Show the personality of the institution / organization
- Strengthen mission and brand

Maintenance is key.

Maintaining a social media account is a commitment. Below you'll find some questions that will help you determine whether or not you should create an account and which platform is best for you. If you're not sure about the answers to the questions below, contact the Department of Integrated Marketing Communications at (574) 284-5343.

Before you create an account, consider these questions:

1. What is your purpose?
2. Who is your audience?
3. Which platform(s) is best for you? (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
4. Do you have time to post content regularly to meet your goals?
5. Do you have a few minutes every day to check your site to respond to comments and messages?
6. How are you going to post? (desktop, phone, iPad...)

Once you create an account, communicate clearly.

With many Saint Mary's Colleges out there, it's important to make it clear you're affiliated with Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN. It's also important to remember that when you use the Saint Mary's College name you are representing the institution. Anything you post has the potential to impact the reputation of the College.

Monitor your account.

Remember social media is a dialogue. Not all comments and replies will be positive. It is important to regularly monitor and respond to comments. If you see anything threatening, defamatory, or harassing, document the post or tweet by taking a screenshot and report it to your supervisor for further guidance on how to handle the issue. Supervisors seeking guidance on how to proceed may contact the Department of Integrated Marketing Communications at (574) 284-5343.

Negative comments are inevitable, but you don't have to respond to them all. When someone responds negatively to a post or tweet, it's important to respond quickly if you think a lot of others will see it and it's hurtful to your reputation. Try to take the conversation offline by providing the user with a person to email or call. For example: "Thank you for your concern. Please contact the Vice President of Student Affairs to discuss this issue. We're happy to help."

Connect with others.

- Follow other Saint Mary's accounts to keep in the know and so you can retweet, like, and/or share their posts.
- Use links to connect back to the College's website when possible.

Visual content is important.

Posts with photos usually receive more engagements than those without. Think about posts that show academic and personal excellence at Saint Mary's, how we're empowering women to lead, a vibrant, active community, etc. These are our Brand Pillars, you can find [more here](#). That being said, all content, especially visual content including photos, graphics, video, etc should embrace the [Saint Mary's College Style / Brand Guide](#).

Only accounts with authorization may use the Saint Mary's College logo including College-sponsored accounts like Athletics, Alumnae Relations, Admission and the official Saint Mary's College pages run by the Department of Integrated Marketing Communications. If you want to use the Saint Mary's College logo, contact the Department of Integrated Marketing Communications at (574) 284-5343.

Additionally, it is not acceptable to use someone else's photography, graphics, artwork, etc without giving them credit. It's best to take your own photos, create your own graphics within branding guidelines, etc. If you must use a photo from the web, make sure it's labeled for reuse and using it does not violate any copyright laws.

When searching for a photo using Google Images select tools for a drop down menu. Click usage rights and choose labeled for reuse to avoid any potential copyright issues.

Always ask for permission when taking photos of students, faculty, staff, alumnae, etc. to use on social media. It should not be a surprise when someone finds themselves in your post.

Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram all have built in photo editing features. If you want to enhance the brightness, eliminate red-eye, etc. you can usually do that within the platform when you upload a photo. Using of Adobe Photoshop or photo editing abilities on your desktop or phone are acceptable, too.

Use spell-check.

If you're using a computer to post, you may want to type your post into a Microsoft Word document to check for spelling and grammar mistakes. Some platforms do not have spell-check built in and it's important to avoid typos and other grammar errors that could ruin your credibility with followers.

Choose the best platform for you.

To see platform-specific Best Practices including tips and uses for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, see below. If there's another platform you're interested in using that's not listed contact the Department of Integrated Marketing Communications at (574) 284-5343.

Make your profile accessible and easily searchable.

Social media accounts and profiles shouldn't be private if your purpose is communicating with the public or specific audiences, unless you're choosing to create a Facebook group. Even still, it's important to keep in mind that pages, posts, and comments are easily searchable through platforms and often you're creating an account to boost engagement. If your account is private, it will make meeting your goals more difficult.

Platform-specific Best Practices

Best Practices for Facebook

Facebook is the top social media platform and has around 1.86 billion active users. Many organizations, departments, businesses, and causes maintain a Facebook page as a way of engaging with their audiences. Users can "like" your posts, share your content, and comment. They can contact you directly through a messaging feature, too. Maintaining a Facebook presence can help you get news out quickly, advertise events, and meet some of your strategic goals.

Choose a Facebook page or group.

Facebook.com will walk you through the steps of creating a page or a group, but it's important to determine which is best for you. A group has an internal audience and is not publicly facing. For example: Saint Mary's College Class of 2020, 2021, etc. groups and the parent groups are closed. If your audience is public, you would want to have a page. You can push out branded content to people who "like" your page.

Naming your page.

When naming your Facebook page use Saint Mary's College when possible rather than SMC and never St. Mary's. For example: Saint Mary's College English Department or Saint Mary's College Student Diversity Board. If a name isn't available, make sure to indicate SMC in Notre Dame, IN to distinguish from other SMC accounts or contact the Department of Integrated Marketing Communications at (574) 284-5343 for guidance. If you use an acronym or abbreviate your organization's name, make sure to explain in the About section.

Boosting engagement and understanding the algorithms.

Although you may be posting regularly, the posts will only show up in users' feeds if they are interacting with your content or similar content. Social media algorithms are complex and not public knowledge, but engagement like comments and shares can help your content to appear in more feeds. The algorithm shows users what Facebook thinks they want to see, which is calculated in part by:

- How often a user interacts with posts from your page
- The number of likes, shares and comments your post received and from a user's friends
- How much a user has interacted with this type of post in the past
- Whether or not people across Facebook are hiding or reporting a given post

The Facebook Insights tab on a page allows you to see the most popular content on your page and at what times users are engaging with your posts. It can be a helpful tool when planning content and choosing times to post to increase visibility in feeds.

Tag other pages and users.

You can tag other pages and users in posts when relevant. Use the @ followed by the user's name or page name. For example: Typing @SMCAdmission will tag the official Admission page and alert them that you've tagged them in a post. Their name will also be clickable so other users looking at my page can click directly to see their page.

Checking in is another function that can help to gain further reach. When publishing a post there's a little button that says "Check in." By clicking that and typing Saint Mary's College it will appear in your post as the location. It will then alert the Saint Mary's College page that you've checked in and when it shows up in others' feeds, they can see you've checked in on campus. It's mostly used to show others where you are and build engagement with the place.

Stay connected when you're away.

Facebook allows administrators to schedule posts on their page. If you know you don't have the time during a busy week, you can choose the schedule feature instead of publishing right away. This is where Insights can become helpful in choosing the right time to get optimal engagement. Typically between 12 and 9 p.m. are the best times with peak in the evening.

Best Practices for Twitter

Twitter has about 317 million active users. Posts on Twitter are called tweets and have a 280 character limit. Twitter is used to share information concisely and quickly. The most popular function is the retweet, which is similar to the share function on Facebook. You can attach photos without using up character space and links. If you'd like to shorten your link, you can use bitly.com to provide you with a shorter link, but any URL on Twitter will take up 23 characters regardless of length.

Choosing your handle.

On Twitter, the name of your account is called a handle. It begins with @ and is followed by your name. For example, we have @saintmarys or @saintmarysnews. The shorter the handle, the easier to find and tag. Never use @stmarys. @SMC is preferred, as in @SMCBelles for Belles Athletics. If a handle isn't available, make sure to indicate affiliation with Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, IN to distinguish from other SMC accounts. If you use an acronym or abbreviate your organization's name, make sure to explain in your profile.

Tag others.

You can easily tag other users by using their handle in your post for further reach. For example: "Congrats @smcbelles on the big win!" Tagging Belles Athletics will ensure that that account sees the tweet and may like or retweet it. In turn, your account will get more reach on that tweet because all Belles Athletics followers will see it if they retweet it or respond to the tweet.

Twitter is all about the hashtags.

Twitter is where hashtags originated. Now they're used across platforms, but hashtags are still most used in tweets. They can be used to gain further reach or show connection with another organization or cause. They are easily searchable through the platform and will link all tweets into a feed that use that hashtag. People who don't follow you may see the tweet if you don't change your settings to private. For best reach, an account should be public.

Never miss a tweet.

Tweetdeck is a helpful tool to schedule tweets when you don't have the time or access to the platform. It is linked to the platform and you can find it at tweetdeck.twitter.com
You can choose the date and time to schedule ahead of time and the platform will send it out.

Locate your tweet engagement.

On the bottom right corner of a tweet, there's a little bar graph icon. If you click that you can see how many people have seen your tweet, clicked the attached link, retweeted it, etc. It may give you insight into what content is most popular and what times get the most eyes on your tweets. Because Twitter is all about quick and concise messages, a tweet can easily get lost.

Best Practices for Instagram

Instagram has nearly 600 million active users. Posts include a photo or a couple photos in a gallery, with a caption. Instagram also has a story option, similar to Snapchat, which lets users upload quick video or photos and displays them in a feed at the top of normal posts. The platform is most easily accessed and utilized on a mobile device or tablet.

Choosing a name.

Similar to Twitter, it's best to keep the name short. Your name will be followed by the @, like on Twitter. For example: @saintmaryscollege is the official College Instagram handle. When available use "saintmarys" followed by your organization/group name. "SMC" is acceptable, too, but never "stmarys." When creating your profile, make sure to display clearly that you're affiliated with Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN. You can make your location Notre Dame, IN, too.

Linking to the web.

Currently, it's not possible to share links in the captions of your photos. If you want a link to accompany a photo, the best way to do that is putting the link you want followers to click on in your profile and direct them there. "Link in profile" is commonly used on Instagram to share more content outside of the platform.

Sharing content requires permission.

It's not easy to share content on Instagram with the click of a button like on Facebook or retweeting on Twitter. If you'd like to share a photo posted by another account, make sure to get permission to repost a photo through a repost app or screenshot. Messaging another user through the platform may be the best way to gain permission.

Graphic standards

Zooming in on Instagram is not as easy as on other platforms, especially since it's mainly used on smart phones or tablets. Make sure if you're creating any graphics that not only are they in line with branding standards, but the text is big enough to read. If you regularly post graphics with small text, another platform will be more conducive to viewing.

Double tap the screen if you like it.

You can click the little heart to "like" something on Instagram or simply double-tap the photo. You can also comment or share with other users through private messaging.

Share your location.

On Instagram, it's easy to share the location of the photo by typing in the place when you're posting. This is a way to get further reach and show up as a suggested account for users who follow other Saint Mary's Instagram accounts or students. You can also tag others by using the @ and the name of the account to link quickly between accounts.

Hashtag Usage

Hashtags are useful for joining conversations and getting further reach with your message. It's important to look at how the words look without spaces in between. For example, we wanted to launch a campaign about Belles volunteering using the words belles care, but if we put together #Bellescare, it looks like Belle scare. We decided to go with #SMCBellesCare. Capitalization can become important in distinguishing words and phrases.

Here's a list of commonly used ones:

#GoBelles

#HomeSweetSMC

#DiscoverSMC

#SMCSummerLearn

#SMCBellesCare

#BellesofSaintMarys

#BelieveinBelles

#BellesGrad2017

#BellesNextSteps2017

#BelleYeah

Access and Accountability

While the Department of Integrated Marketing Communications doesn't require administrative access on social media accounts, it is important that several responsible users have access to a page or login information to an account as a way of due diligence.

If a user or account is wrongly representing the College with inappropriate logo usage and/or making statements on behalf of the College, those posts will be reported through the platform as inappropriate and taken down if the administrator doesn't respond to requests to remove or in a case of emergency.

If you no longer want to operate your account or have the resources to do so, please contact the Department of Integrated Marketing Communications for help in deciding what to do with the account.

Directory of College-sponsored Accounts

Facebook

[Saint Mary's College](#)
[Saint Mary's College Notre Dame, IN - Alum Association](#)
[Saint Mary's College Residence Life](#)
[Saint Mary's College Campus Ministry](#)
[Saint Mary's College Financial Aid](#)
[President Jan Cervelli](#)
[Saint Mary's College Athletics](#)
[Weddings at Saint Mary's](#)
[Belles Give Back](#)
[Moreau Center for the Arts at Saint Mary's College](#)
[BAVO SMC](#)
[Saint Mary's College Summer Camps](#)
[Career Crossings at Saint Mary's College](#)
[Saint Mary's College Belles Volleyball](#)
[Saint Mary's College Belles Cross Country](#)
[Saint Mary's College Belles Lacrosse](#)
[The Writing Center at Saint Mary's College](#)
[Saint Mary's College Dining Services](#)
[ResNet at Saint Mary's College](#)
[Saint Mary's Security](#)
[Saint Mary's College Campus Ministry](#)
[Women's Entrepreneurship Initiative Saint Mary's College](#)
[Health and Counseling Center at Saint Mary's College](#)
[Cushwa-Leighton Library](#)
[Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN. / Financial Aid](#)
[Saint Mary's College Softball](#)
[Saint Mary's College Office for Civic and Social Engagement](#)
[Saint Mary's College English Language School](#)
[Saint Mary's College Graduate Programs](#)
[Saint Mary's College Embody Summer Institute](#)
[Helpdesk at Saint Mary's College](#)

Instagram

[@saintmaryscollege](#)
[@saintmaryscollegeadmission](#)
[@smcalumnae](#)
[@bavosmc](#)
[@saintmaryssummercamps](#)
[@bellescampusministry](#)

[@smcreslife](#)
[@smc dining](#)

Twitter

[@saintmarys](#)
[@saintmarysnews](#)
[@SMC Admission](#)
[@smcbelles](#)
[@SMCALumnae](#)
[@CareerCrossings](#)
[@BAVOSMC](#)
[@SMCStuAffairs](#)
[@SMC JanCervelli](#)
[@BellesGiveBack](#)
[@MoreauSMC](#)
[@Cushwa Leighton](#)
[@ResNetSMC](#)
[@SMC GrAdmission](#)
[@WeddingsSMC](#)
[@HelpDeskSMC](#)
[@Belles Soccer](#)
[@SMC Basketball](#)

Social media is always changing and these guidelines will be updated to reflect those changes. If you have any questions, contact the Department of Integrated Marketing Communications at (574) 284-5343.