College of Applied Health Sciences
Department/Unit Social Media Guidelines

AHS + Social Media

AHS' comprehensive (and evolving*) social media strategy serves as a communications and marketing function reflecting the excellence of AHS' educational, research, and engagement activities.

As in all communications and marketing, goals and objectives for our official social media accounts (Tier 1 accounts - see “Types of Accounts” below) are essential.

College of AHS' Strategic Social Media Goals

- Elevate the College of AHS brand
- Increase student recruitment efforts at every level
- Amplify the work of our academic departments and service units
- Expand advancement efforts to increase college endowment
- Create sense of belonging for students, faculty, staff and alumni

Objectives

- Tell the AHS story
- Build community amongst current students, faculty, staff and alumni
- Share research news
- Highlight alumni accomplishments
- Celebrate outstanding student stories, achievements, and awards
- Promote alumni and donor support
- Facilitate student recruitment
- Connect with stories and news from campus units and the university

* As of this writing (June 2024), algorithms, freedom of speech, access to information, and overall usefulness of certain social media platforms are hotly debated topics. The AHS marketing & communications (Marcom) team continues to follow the news and will work closely with the university’s social media leadership if/when the need arises.
AHS Departments + Units Social Media

The College of Applied Health Sciences department/unit social media accounts (Tier 2 accounts - see “Types of Accounts” below) exist to support the goals of the department/unit—and, by extension, the college. These platforms are where strategic and meaningful messages can be shared simply and effectively with various audiences, including students, prospective students, alumni, researchers and faculty, the campus community, and others.

Who is responsible for these accounts?

Because the departments and units know their audiences best, their social media content creation and posting should be managed by someone within said department and unit (depending on the needs of the department, that could be a staff member, an undergraduate or graduate student in, for example), with AHS’ marketing and communications team providing guidance and other support when needed.

The AHS Marcom team, in turn, will continually monitor departmental/unit accounts for content and information to be posted to the “Big AHS” accounts, while generating their own content.
**Types of Social Media Accounts**

AHS Marcom created a three-tiered classification system based on a model utilized by other U. of I. colleges and units. This system serves to:

a) organize all accounts affiliated with AHS, and

b) identify how they can support the goals and objectives of the official AHS social media accounts.

**Tier 1 Official Accounts:** These are official College of AHS social media accounts. They are managed and moderated by the AHS marcom team. They have been registered as “verified” university accounts in the Strategic Communications database.

A full list of Tier 1 accounts can be found in the Appendix.

**Tier 2 Official Support Accounts:** These are AHS department/unit accounts. Their objective is to communicate more directly with their specific audiences, while also adding to the larger conversation about the college and aligning with the college’s social media goals. Many of these accounts have also been verified by the Illinois STRATCOM team.

While these accounts still officially represent AHS, they are not managed by the AHS marcom team; they are instead moderated by a faculty/staff member OR student intern from the respective department. These accounts should use official university profile picture templates and follow the social media guidelines put forth by the AHS Marcom team and U. of I.'s STRATCOM office.

The AHS Marcom team does not create content or post on behalf of these accounts. However, the Marcom team will support these accounts and their content creators by occasionally providing content, guidance, and strategic support to enhance the goals and objectives of the college’s communications strategy. A member of the Marcom team should be an admin on, or have access to, these accounts.

A full list of current Tier 2 accounts can be found in the Appendix.

**Tier 3 Unofficial Accounts:** These accounts do not officially represent AHS, but they serve as casual discussion and information and distribution spaces for specific audiences related to the college and its departments/units. These accounts aren’t branded as AHS and are not moderated by the AHS marcom team. They primarily
consist of student groups or research labs, and they have no requirement to share official AHS news or messaging.

Thinking of making a social media account?

Before creating a Tier 3 account, we urge users to consider the following:

- Do you need an account?
- Who is your audience—can you reach them through this platform? Are you already reaching this audience in another, more effective way?
- Do you have time to maintain the content on this account? What will you share, and not share? Who will create this content?

Do your research and consult with the AHS marcom team if you have questions. Try to match the voice and tone of your chosen platform, and remember that these accounts represent not just your own corner of the university, but your department, college, and the university as a whole.

Example of a Tier 3 account: Illini Wheelchair and Scooter Clinic
**Best Practices: Account Management & Security**

Per the [Social Media Best Practices for Account Access & Security](#) put forth by Public Affairs as a guideline for account management and security, we recommend the following for department/units:

1. Keep a record of every person who has access to each social media account. Remove people who should no longer have access to post to the account. This should be audited at least once a year. Make sure at least two people have access to the accounts at all times in case account management changes or if you become locked out.

2. Keep a secure record of all account passwords. **Only people who are actively managing the accounts should have access to the current passwords.** Passwords should also be updated as soon as someone who has access leaves the unit or no longer needs access to the account.

3. Ensure passwords are securely shared. Never share a password via email, in a public Box folder, text message, etc.

4. Use department emails, rather than personal ones, for account purposes. This should be applied to all accounts used for social media content or digital advertising (e.g., Google Ad account, Canva account)

5. **The AHS Marcom team should be aware of your social media account users, email addresses, and passwords in case of emergency or a need for other assistance.** Please [let AHS Marcom know](#) when you have made changes.

6. The Provost’s Office and Illinois social media team have [resources](#) for anyone experiencing online “trolling” attacks. Consult these resources and let us know if this might apply to you or someone in your unit.
Best Practices: General Social Media Strategy

AHS accounts refer to the Social Media guidelines put forth by StratComm as a guideline for social media strategy. Below are general guidelines for social media strategy AHS marcom recommends departmental/unit accounts adhere to:

1. Develop an appropriate tone for the account. Each unit has a unique audience and voice.

2. Post several times a week, every week across all platforms. This could mean twice a week some weeks ... or many more times per week. Create quality content that not only promotes your department and AHS’ mission, values, and goals, but also resonates and connects with your intended audience.

3. Don’t forget to tag AHS in your posts, so we can share. And of course, tag other relevant departments to signal boost.

4. Promote social accounts in other communications. Examples include emails, posters and digital signs in buildings, publications, and more. The goal is to create awareness and help dedicated followers find you.

5. Identify your audiences and build your strategy around these audiences. Each social media platform requires a unique strategy. Different audiences resonate with different tones, messages and interactions. Consider the tone of each platform and the audience. A tweet about an internship success story might sound and look different than a story about faculty research on Facebook.

6. The @uofillinois social media team has offered pointers on making a sound social media strategy. Reach out to marcom@ahs.illinois.edu for any specific strategy tips!

Comment Policy

For potentially obscene, harassing, or generally unwanted comments left on social media posts or accounts, AHS consults the University of Illinois’ own Social Media Comment Guidelines under “Comment Procedures.” We recommend other departments and units do the same.
Accounts may sometimes receive negative comments or responses. Simply because a comment is negative is not a sufficient reason to delete or hide it. Instead, only delete or hide comments that violate the comment policy.

If you have any questions at all or are dealing with a situation that you need help with, please do not hesitate to contact AHS Marcom.

**Visual Identity: Photos, Videos and Graphics**

The words, tone, colors, images and fonts of every post create brand identity. Content shared on the AHS accounts should be visually identifiable as being associated with the [Illinois brand](http://www.illinoisbrand.com) and AHS. The priority is to create and post clean, accessible, and consistently branded content.

**Photo and Video Content Permission**

Before taking photos or videos of students, faculty or others that you plan to share on social media, remember to get their signature on a [Talent Release Form](http://www.illinoisbrand.com). We must obtain written permission to share content for any person whose likeness is visible or prominently featured. Can they be identified in the photo or video?

After obtaining the signature(s), store the Talent Release Form in a safe place—very, very few signatories will reach out with a request to remove any content they’re in later on, but it's vital to have the permission written out.

For events where you plan to create visual content through photos or video, remember to print out a [photography notice signage](http://www.illinoisbrand.com) and include disclaimers ahead of the event. Read the university’s full guidance [here](http://www.illinoisbrand.com).

**Graphics and Image Sizing**

When creating graphics for social, consider the following:

1. *Does this message or information need to be a graphic?* Most of the time, the information on a graphic can be shared in the body copy of the post. Graphics can be good for visually unifying a recurring series (e.g., Alumni Spotlights, podcast episodes) but they should remain high quality and connected to the Illinois brand.
2. *Is this too much information for a graphic?* Text should be minimal and easy to read. Too much text can become inaccessible or hard to read, especially on mobile. QR codes or URLs designed on the graphic should be avoided. Instead, link out to relevant content in the copy of a post, through a link in a bio, or embed the URL into the post.

3. *Do I have enough visual contrast?* See the chart on the SMB website that shows the accessible and non-accessible combinations of the university’s primary and secondary color palettes.

4. *Did I design the size with each platform in mind?*
   1. Instagram **1080px by 1080px** (anything 1080 px wide will look fine)
   2. Twitter/X **1600px by 900px**
   3. Facebook **1200px by 630 px**
   4. LinkedIn **1200px by 627 px**
   5. If you want to make one square size for all platforms, it’s best to use **1080px by 1080 px**
   6. Stories (Facebook and Instagram) **1080px by 1920px**

5. *Should I use stock photography or illustration?* Only when you have to. The [Image Database](#) provides consistent, quality images of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign that should be used whenever possible to reflect the excellence of Illinois on social and other communications pieces. When necessary, stock images and videos can be found through Storyblocks.

The [guidelines put forth by Strategic Communications](#) for university-wide design elements like color, graphics, typography, wordmarks, etc are extremely useful - bookmark that page!

Reminder: Use profile pictures consistent with the [social media brand standards](#). **Profile pictures should include the Block I.** Do not use profile pictures with the column I or a logo other than the Block I.
Platform Strategies

The following platform strategies specifically refer to the main college accounts. Department accounts should adhere to the same general guidelines with the exception of posting frequency.

X (Twitter)

Strategy
With a large and diverse audience on X/Twitter, this is where you might share the largest variety of content of any of our platforms. Your primary audience on X includes current students, faculty, and staff, members of the Champaign-Urbana community, other units across campus, and beyond. We recommend sharing content that builds pride, shares news about our research and faculty, mentions the College in external media publications, and connects with units across campus. Prioritize content that uses high-quality images, media elements (e.g., links, videos, call-to-action), and stories published or shared by Illinois units. Tag us @AHSillinois, as well as any faculty or institutions related to the content.

Tone & Style
We recommend maintaining a clear, concise, and casual tone when it comes to all content shared on Twitter. Sometimes that content is light-hearted or aligns with social media trends. However, it pays to be strategic and sparing when using emojis, memes, and/or relatable language (or otherwise following social media trends) to avoid presenting as unprofessional or insincere. Use tags (@whomever) when appropriate to cut down on characters!

Audience
Prospective students, current students, alumni, faculty, staff, parents, media, campus unit. The most engaged audiences on these platforms include campus units, faculty and staff, and some students, though average engagement is typically lower than other platforms.

Day-to-day management
We recommend posting 3-5 original tweets during the week. Retweets should happen as often as needed and should supplement content shared throughout the week. Resource-sharing and shoutouts for faculty and students does well here. If your department is tagged in posts, engage as appropriate (replying, retweeting, or
liking related content). Again, we highly recommend tagging @AHSillinois and other relevant accounts to foster engagement and reach a wider audience.

**Instagram**

**Strategy**
Instagram has an extremely high amount of active and engaged students and alumni. Prioritize storytelling through images that are high-quality and purposeful. The body of Instagram **posts** should give deeper context and build pride and excitement. Instagram **stories** should be used to entertain or share informational content with links and resources.

**Tone & Style**
With a student-driven audience, the tone can be casual and light-hearted. In all instances, text or an initial sentence should be short enough for users to see in-feed without having to tap “see more.” When appropriate, a following paragraph can be longer to tell stories or include relevant information. Emojis and trending language should be used intentionally and strategically.

**Audience**
General demographic: Current students, prospective students, alumni, parents, faculty, staff, campus units. The most engaged audiences on these platforms include current students, prospective students, and alumni—many faculty love to comb through Instagram stories!

**Day-to-day management**
A good lofty goal is posting 2-3 times a week in your main feed, though the focus should be on quality over quantity. Strong images are super important. Instagram stories can be far more frequent and used for story / resource sharing.

**Facebook**

**Strategy**
Departmental Facebook accounts are used primarily for building pride and connection, and for sharing departmental news/information about events and news. While audiences can be diverse, your most engaged users might be alumni and parents. Use Facebook to convey the excellence of your department to your audiences, instill a sense of pride through showcasing your impact, and to share information about events and other opportunities for engagement.
**Tone & Style**
Facebook's tone is warm, proud, and approachable without being overly casual. We recommend each post have a high-quality image, video, or link to external content. Illinois.edu links are preferred, as they allow the person posting to change the link preview.

**Audience**
General demographic: Current students, alumni, parents, faculty, staff, community. The most engaged audiences on these platforms include alumni, faculty, staff, and parents of students or prospective students.

**Day-to-day management**
We recommend posting 2-4 times a week. Share similar content to other social platforms: content that builds pride, shares news about research and faculty, mentions the department and its people in external media publications, or connects with units across campus. Instagram cross-posts are welcome—if you've connected the department or unit Instagram to the Facebook page, it’s quite easy to share.

**LinkedIn**

**Strategy**
AHS' LinkedIn was created in July 2022 to connect with specific audiences we otherwise would not reach on our other platforms. It serves as a home for job postings, research stories and allows us to build a stronger connection to our alumni audience. In similar fashion to our other platforms, we want to highlight the excellence and impact of our college by communicating the impact our students, faculty, staff, and alumni have in the professional industries we are connected to and how we promote health and wellness across the lifespan.

If your department wishes to create a LinkedIn page (or already has), please link the page to AHS' for maximum visibility.

**Tone & Style**
Your tone on LinkedIn should be professional and proud. Since LinkedIn is a professional platform, we recommend refraining from using casual or informal language. Posts should always include a high-quality image, video, graphic, or link to external content, such as web or blog stories. Illinois.edu links are preferred.

**Audience**
Alumni, faculty, staff, industry professionals, and recently, many enterprising students.
**Day-to-day management**

Post as needed, but once per week is a good starting place. Focus on sharing content that highlights employment opportunities, research stories, donation or funding stories, alumni, staff or faculty spotlights, and moments or stories of pride for your department and our College.

**YouTube, TikTok, and Other Platforms**

The College of AHS has a [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com), though as of this writing (May 2024) we are not very active in that space. This is also the case with Snapchat.

AHS does not currently have a TikTok account, though we are exploring this option as of June 2024.

If departments/units are interested in creating their own accounts on these platforms, please [get in touch with AHS Marcom](mailto:info@ahs.edu). If you’ve already created accounts on these platforms, please let us know!
**Working with AHS Marcom**

AHS Marcom prioritizes creating and sharing content that tells stories, connects with our audiences, and contributes to a valuable overall AHS experience. Our shared content looks like, but is not exclusive to:

- Written news and feature stories, videos, and podcasts about students, faculty and staff that highlight their experience in AHS, their research, their opportunities and their successes.
- Articles, videos and other media that mention us or our people in external media publications.
- Images that give a glimpse into the lives of students, faculty, staff, or alumni, and a look into the campus environment.
- Stories, videos, and other media that connect people to the developments of campus and its facilities.
- Job postings.

We occasionally receive requests to post content that will not reach its target audience through our social channels. While each request is reviewed individually, these typically include research study participation* and events or fundraisers hosted by anyone other than the college or affiliated units, RSOs, or other groups.

This information will be more effectively shared via other means, including department, college or campus newsletters; the college's monthly internal newsletter, *The Dean's List*, *Eweek*, or professional/lab social media accounts.

*Current research studies will be shared monthly on AHS social media

AHS Marcom strives to maintain clear and transparent communication between departments/units about social media, from changes to best practices to information about new platforms and successful strategies. [Get in touch with us!](#) We look forward to collaborating with you.
APPENDIX

College of AHS Accounts (Tier 1)

Facebook (College of Applied Health Sciences at Illinois)
Twitter (@AHSIllinois)
Instagram (@ahsillinois)
LinkedIn (College of Applied Health Sciences at Illinois)

Department Accounts (Tier 2)

Recreation, Sport and Tourism (RST)
Facebook (Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism at Illinois)
Twitter (@RST_Illinois)
Instagram (@rst_illinois)

Kinesiology and Community Health (KCH)
Facebook (Department of Kinesiology & Community Health at Illinois)
Twitter (@KCHIllinois)
Instagram (@KCHillinois)

Speech and Hearing Science (SHS)
Facebook (Department of Speech & Hearing Science at Illinois)
Twitter (@SHSIllinois)

Affiliated Unit Accounts (Tier 2)

Chez Veterans Center (CVC)
Facebook (Chez Veterans Center)
Twitter (@CVCatIllinois)
Instagram (@chezveteranscenter)

Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES)
Facebook (Disability Resources & Educational Services at Illinois)
Twitter (@DRESIllinois)
Instagram (@dres_illinois)