

## I. Social/New Media Guidelines

### A. Purpose statement

Bobcat Athletics is dedicated to fostering a community of stakeholders that supports the mission and purpose of the athletic department. In order to accomplish this, we realize the importance of communicating using social and new media channels. Because today's stakeholder base is diverse and is pulling information from a number of different sources, we realize that we need to be where our stakeholders are to deliver timely, accurate and engaging information.

In order to do this, we foster conversations in communities that are built by Bobcat Athletics, their employees, and our stakeholders. Because the lines between personal voice and institutional voice are often blurred, Bobcat Athletics has crafted the following guidelines to help clarify how best to enhance and protect personal and professional reputations when participating in social/new media.

Employees are expected to follow the same behavioral standards online as are mandated by [Montana State University's Policies and Procedures](#), the state of Montana, the Big Sky Conference, and the NCAA. The same guidelines for interacting online with stakeholders, fellow staff, student-athletes or other university constituents apply as in the workplace.

### B. Definitions

Social and New Media are defined as media designed to communicate online through social interaction using highly accessible public publishing forums such as, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace, LinkedIn, blogs, message boards, Flickr, and other social platforms.

Personal Site is defined as a social media site that is for the sole purpose of personal use. There are no identifications of the person as a representative of Montana State Athletics and content is restricted to personal and not work-related material. The guidelines in this document are not intended to regulate personal sites. If you have an account with your name as the title, it is only classified as a personal site if it is not used for personal branding (see below)

Public Site is defined as a social media site where a person represents Montana State Athletics as a staff member or a representative of an athletic program or booster organization representing Bobcat Athletics. This includes **personal branding sites** in which employees maintain an account that promotes their own person, but as a position facilitated by their employment with Bobcat Athletics. An example of this might be a coach's blog, unless it is a personal site (see above).

## **II. General Guiding Principles**

### **A. Institutional Ownership**

Any social/new media account considered a public account (see I-B) representing the interests of Bobcat Athletics is the property of Montana State Athletics. Such sites must be registered with the department's social media manager. Permission to start a public account must be obtained from the department's social media manager.

### **B. Disclosure and Personal Responsibility**

Account managers administering sites on behalf of the athletic department must post a disclosure on their "profile" or "home page" indicating their position on the staff. If more than one staffer posts on the site, this must be indicated in the disclosure.

## **III. Rules of Engagement -Specific Guidelines**

### **A. Proprietary Information and Confidentiality**

All photos, podcasts, videos, news stories or other information not authored by an account manager should be used only in compliance with copyright laws. We always ask you to cite your sources and include a link to the main athletic website, if appropriate.

Account managers will not comment on confidential information related to department matters that may include litigation, personnel matters, including the hiring or firing of staff members, or other confidential information about finances or student-athletes. If asked a specific question you feel you cannot answer, tell the poster so. Do not engage with a poster who desires confidential information. If in doubt, ask you SID or the Director of Athletics.

### **B. Accuracy and Clarity**

Don't link to an external site promoting a product or service that is not affiliated with Bobcat Athletics without talking to the Marketing Director or Bobcat Sports Properties first.

Be careful of using jargon that only a handful of posters understand. Try to use inclusive language in your posts that encourage discussion.

Make sure your facts (times, dates, names) are correct and are spelled correctly. Don't speculate.

### **C. Disclosure**

Do not post information about specific student-athletes, unless it is related to an award or honor. Please follow the guidelines of FERPA and good taste.

### **D. Sportsmanship**

Don't talk about internal matters in the department, the MSU campus, the Big Sky Conference, or the NCAA. Practice generosity. Find something good to say, or don't say it. Don't bash the competition. Politics and religion are off limits. Don't gender bash. Common sense and courtesy should always prevail.

#### E. Disclaimers and Posting Guidelines

- Each social media account manager must post their identity along with their staff position in their profile and identify themselves as the account manager. Avatars must include a logo or picture that can be identified with the account. See your SID if you need help.
- The following posting guidelines will be posted in the profile information on all social media accounts managed by Bobcat Athletics:
  - “We invite you to become a part of the community here and post or comment on a regular basis. MSU Athletics is dedicated to building a safe and secure community online. We ask that you not use graphic language, post pornographic or offensive images, or use language is derogatory to specific people. Any comments or posts that violate these posting guidelines will be removed by the account manager.”

#### F. Respect in the Social Media Space

- Posting is speaking in public. Don't post anything you wouldn't say at a public meeting representing MSU or to the media.
- Be careful not to engage with posters who are commenting on matters related to the department's reputation. Please alert the social media manager if this is a concern.
- Don't pick fights and don't engage in them
- Answer legitimate questions--don't use a question as a forum for your opinion
- Respect people's opinions. There are circumstances in which it may be necessary to the limit access of a poster or delete a post--use the posting guidelines as a guideline if you need to delete a post. If you are in doubt, contact the social media manager. Please make a hard copy of the questionable post with name of poster and text before you delete it and give to the social media manager to file.
- If you maintain a Twitter account, please check your followers regularly for Twitter porn and block those followers. Their profiles and avatars are available to anyone who looks at your page.

#### G. Security

- Do not give out the phone numbers, addresses or other personal information of yourself, other staffers or student-athletes on a social media site. Inquiries for information may be directed to [info@msubobcats.com](mailto:info@msubobcats.com)

#### H. Crisis Communications/Emergencies

If there is an emergency or crisis involving the athletic department, social media outlets are one of the most efficient ways to distribute accurate information quickly. In the event of a crisis, social media sites that belong to the department will be managed by the department specifically. You may be given information to disseminate and should not post any other information to avoid confusion on issues of critical importance to the university and the department. Please ask you SID if you have any questions.

#### I. Don't Forget Your Day Job

You should make sure that all online activities do not interfere with your job or work commitments.

#### J. Branding

Templates, proper logos, and department color numbers are available from the SMM. Please be careful to use only the approved logos, colors and templates for backgrounds, avatars and other electronic communications.

### **IV. Procedures**

- Each social media account that is maintained by employees on behalf of Bobcat Athletics (see I-B), must be registered with the Social Media Manager in the Sports Information Department. The registration process will include a short training and mechanisms to provide access to the account if the account manager is not available.
- Each employee that manages a social media account on behalf of MSU Athletics must attend the training and sign-off in order to maintain a social media account on behalf of MSU Athletics.
- Department Team Work/Cooperation: At various times, social media managers will be asked to post information that is of general interest to Bobcat Athletics. We ask that you cooperate in these requests even if they do not pertain to your program. One of the benefits of social media is the ability to introduce community members to other communities the department is fostering.

### **V. Disciplinary Procedures**

A. Failure to follow these guidelines is a violation of the department policies and subject to discipline and/or removal of the account manager or closing of the site.