

## University of Arizona College of Medicine – Tucson Social Media Account Guiding Principles

### Overview

Social media is a powerful, interactive communication tool that can bring people together, create awareness, affect people’s perceptions, and influence their actions. If used properly, social media accounts affiliated with the University of Arizona (UArizona) and the College of Medicine – Tucson (COM-T) can serve to enhance communications from and to the college, to strengthen its brand, to optimize affinity and trust among target audiences, and ultimately to broaden institutional visibility and reputation. However, social media efforts that are directly associated with the institution can also potentially lead, whether intentionally or unintentionally, to negative perceptions that can damage the institutional reputation and brand.

While personal social media accounts may be used to express individual opinions and thoughts, institutional accounts need to reflect collective messaging that represents institutional culture and direction. The COM-T social media policy and guidelines define parameters and boundaries for either establishing or maintaining COM-T-branded social media accounts. When this policy was launched in Fall 2023, there had been a proliferation of COM-T-branded social media accounts at the division, department, program, and center levels, with around 130 in existence. In response, the COM-T Brand Communications Team created and shared a set of guiding principles with COM-T leadership to inform policies and guidelines to galvanize all social media efforts toward a common set of objectives and goals.

### Fall 2023: Situational Analysis and Current Assessment

- The majority of the 129 currently known social media accounts within COM-T are not managed by professional communicators who are aware of and trained to avoid communications pitfalls such as violations of HIPAA, FERPA, and copyright laws, and the mishandling of sensitive topics. Individual oversight is highly variable in terms of external communications experience and relevant knowledge. This has the potential to create legal, compliance, and reputational risk for both COM-T and UArizona.
- A lack of alignment and coordination between social media account managers results in inconsistent messaging, the presence of multiple and potentially disparate voices, and failure to adhere to established brand standards that, taken together, create confusion related to the COM-T brand. These issues stand in sharp contrast to our efforts to align all activities occurring at our 29 academic units under the umbrella of a strong college-wide communication and branding effort as outlined in the overall vision and vision elements of the COM-T strategic plan.
- Managing social media accounts as effective communications and branding tools requires significant time, effort, and cost to establish and achieve college- and unit-level objectives and goals: identify specific target audiences; create regular, compelling, and targeted posts; manage engagement with followers; and measure outcomes. These outcomes are captured in the metrics, targets, and tactics under the 8<sup>th</sup> mission area added to v1.2 of our individual and collective strategic plans. COM-T’s strategic efforts would greatly benefit from a collaborative and coordinated approach that includes all existing as well as new social media initiatives in this space.

To achieve these goals and objectives, COM-T created a set of policies that clearly inform the creation and use of all COM-T-branded social media accounts, informed by a structured evaluation of all existing and current accounts. Drafts of both proposed guiding principles and policies were presented at the Dean’s Executive Council and submitted to each unit leader to solicit feedback.

## Guiding Principles

- All “official” COM-T-branded social media accounts, while free to develop, express, and communicate according to their own mission and vision statements, must conform to and be compliant with federal and state laws, and UArizona and COM-T policies, guidelines, and branding standards.
- The COM-T Brand Communications Team will be a resource that supports any and all academic units and social media accounts within COM-T, and may act as a “clearinghouse” and “facilitator,” working together as needed to enhance communications and messaging from and to the college, to strengthen the unit and COM-T brands, to optimize affinity and trust among target audiences, and ultimately to broaden both unit and COM-T visibility and enhance its reputation.
- The COM-T Brand Communications Team will help guide all academic units toward achieving the stated overall COM-T vision and vision elements, and individual academic unit mission area-specific Strategic Plan in the context and spirit of a shared purpose, shared destiny, and pride of enterprise.
- The COM-T Brand Communications Team will work with individual academic unit social media account representatives to create specific criteria that can be used for evaluation of existing as well as proposed new COM-T-branded social media accounts.