

# Electronic Communications Publishing

## POLICY

Minnesota State University, Mankato's mission reflects an institutional commitment to promote learning through effective undergraduate and graduate teaching, scholarship, and research in service to the state, the region, and the global community. Content published on official University electronic communication channels serves many constituents in order to fulfill the University's mission and goals and reflect the University's values. The University encourages faculty, staff, and students to utilize electronic communications as publication channels for furthering the University's strategic goals and objectives, for marketing the University, and for conveying information.

It is the objective of this policy to provide clear definitions and guidance with regards to branding, accuracy, responsibility to those who have been tasked with publishing content on the University's electronic communications channels, or on third-party sites where the University is being represented in an official capacity.

## PROCEDURE

Official University electronic communications must comply with all applicable federal and state laws, system and University policies, and negotiated agreements, and follow technology standards and best practices. Examples include, but are not limited to, the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 508, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Family Educational Right of Privacy Act (FERPA), Minnesota State College System (MnSCS), Acceptable Use of Computers and Information Technology Resources, World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) standards.

### Digital Platform & Content Policy

#### Purpose

Minnesota State University, Mankato creates, manages, and maintains digital content across multiple platforms to support its academic, operational, and outreach goals.

Style Definition: Normal (Web)

This policy establishes expectations for the creation, governance, and maintenance of University digital content and digital platforms, ensuring that all materials reflect institutional standards for accuracy, accessibility, security, and brand identity.

**Scope**

This policy applies to all University divisions, colleges, departments, programs, recognized units, and Contracted University Partners that create, publish, or manage digital content on behalf of the University, including but not limited to content on web, mobile, video, email, digital signage, and social media platforms.

**Policy Statement**

All University digital content and platforms must:

- Reflect the University's mission, values, and brand standards,
- Comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and system policies,
- Be accurate, current, and relevant to its intended audience,
- Be housed within University-managed systems unless an approved exception exists.

**Governance**

University Marketing and Communications (UMC) and Information Technology Solutions (ITS) share joint authority for governing University digital content. Together, the two units ensure that digital platforms reflect the University's brand, meet technical and security standards, and provide an accessible experience for all users.

UMC leads brand standards, editorial oversight, content strategy, and the accessibility of content. ITS leads technical infrastructure, system security, and accessibility at the platform and technology level, ensuring systems and tools support compliance and inclusive access.

**Hosting, Security, and Creation of Digital Platforms**

All official University digital content and platforms must be created, hosted, or managed within University-supported systems or on third-party platforms that have been formally reviewed and approved for University use. University units may not independently create, launch, or maintain websites, applications, communication platforms, or other digital tools outside of approved University environments.

Use of external or vendor-managed platforms, including social media, must follow University brand, accessibility, security, and content standards. Any request for new platforms or tools requires review and approval from UMC and ITS and must follow the exception and review processes outlined in the Digital Platform & Content Procedures.

**Accessibility and Compliance**

All University digital content must comply with the Digital Accessibility Policy and applicable federal and state accessibility standards including but limited to:

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- [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)
- [Section 504 and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act](#)
- [Minnesota State Board Policies 5.22 and 5.23](#)
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1 AA or successor standards](#)
- [W3C standards](#)
- [FERPA](#)
- [HIPAA \(where applicable\)](#)
- [CAN-SPAM \(email communications\)](#)
- [Copyright and intellectual property law](#)
- [PCI DSS \(where applicable\)](#)

[Additional University requirements include:](#)

- [Digital Accessibility Policy](#)
- [Brand and Editorial Standards \(Brand Hub\)](#)
- [Data Security and Privacy Standards](#)

**Brand and Identity**

[All University digital content must align with official brand, editorial, and visual identity standards.](#)  
[Use of the University name, logos, colors, or marks must comply with official brand and trademark guidelines.](#)

**Accuracy and Maintenance**

[Each University area is responsible for providing accurate and up-to-date digital content in compliance with this policy.](#)

**Prohibited Content:**

[The following content and code may not be published, hosted, or distributed on University-managed digital platforms. Content is prohibited when it:](#)

- [Uses copyrighted, licensed, or proprietary materials without permission](#)
- [Promotes or advertises external businesses or services without an approved partnership](#)
- [Is created for personal gain or unrelated commercial activity](#)
- [Presents unlawful, partisan, or controversial material in a manner that violates University standards or implies institutional endorsement, unless clearly identified as academic material](#)
- [Misrepresents or implies unauthorized University endorsement](#)
- [Conflicts with University mission or expectations for professionalism, inclusivity, accuracy, or respectful communication](#)
- [Links to external sites inconsistent with accessibility, security, accuracy, or University values](#)
- [Interferes with or degrades University systems](#)
- [Includes unsupported, outdated, or end-of-life software components](#)
- [Uses insecure development or coding practices](#)
- [Contains known vulnerabilities such as injection attacks, XSS, or insecure deserialization](#)

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Social Media Accounts

Any University social media account representing the University must:

- Use University branding and approved account identifiers.
- Be coordinated through UMC prior to launch.
- Maintain professionalism, inclusivity, accuracy, and accessibility
- Follow digital accessibility expectations for images, videos, and posts.

Accounts created without University coordination may be required to remove or adjust University branding.

Compliance and Enforcement

UMC and ITS may review University digital platforms to ensure compliance with this policy. Violations may require corrective action including but not limited to content removal, or referral to the appropriate Vice President.

Definitions

**Official public electronic communications channel- Any University Units**  
Academic, administrative, service, and outreach units formally part of the University's organizational structure and governed by and/or funded by the institution. Their digital content is official University communications on an Internet channel, especially (but not limited to) content.

**Contracted University Partners**  
Vendors, auxiliaries, or external providers operating under University agreements (e.g., dining services, bookstores). They may use University branding when appropriate, must comply with University standards, and primarily operate through vendor-managed systems.

**Unofficial Organizations & Groups**  
Groups without formal University recognition, such as informal student groups, staff interest groups, or independently formed organizations. They may not use University branding in ways that misrepresent themselves as official units and cannot host digital platforms on University-managed systems.

**Official University Digital Platform**  
A platform or channel owned, managed, or contractually supported by the University for delivering official content (e.g., mnsu.edu, Maverick One Stop, The Fountain, Mavlife, official social media accounts, digital signage, email communications).

References

- Microsoft Copilot (2025). Used to assist in updating language and refining definitions during policy revision process.

Policy History

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~~2025: Modernized policy language and expanded the scope to include all University digital platforms, not just websites and apps that are~~ Clarified expectations for governance, accuracy, brand alignment, and approved hosting of digital content. Strengthened accessibility, security, and legal compliance requirements. Updated definitions and established shared governance between University Marketing & Communications and Information Technology Solutions.

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Procedures

Purpose

These procedures outline how University digital content is developed, maintained, and governed across all official platforms.

They ensure that all content reflects University standards for quality, accessibility, security, and brand alignment while remaining accurate and relevant to its intended audience.

Platform Governance

All University digital platforms, including websites, Maverick One Stop, The Fountain, Mav Life, official social media channels, and other supported applications, follow governance, accessibility, and content standards established jointly by University Marketing and Communications (UMC) and Information Technology Solutions (ITS).

This includes both public-facing and internal systems used to communicate official University information.

Each platform’s administrative owner (e.g., UMC, Academic Technology, or Student Affairs) ensures that content practices within their area align with University digital content and accessibility standards.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **University Marketing and Communications (UMC)**  
UMC leads University-wide digital content strategy and is responsible for ensuring brand integrity, editorial quality, and accessibility within content. This includes:
  - Establishing and maintaining brand and editorial standards.
  - Providing guidance on content structure, voice, and clarity.
  - Ensuring content is created and maintained in an accessible to the general public. Examples include all websites on the [msu.edu](#) domain and social media sites for the University or its entities in alignment with institutional accessibility expectations.

**Official private electronic communications channel:** Any official University communications channel with role-based access restriction.

- **Entity: A University Information Technology Solutions (ITS)**  
ITS leads the technical environment that supports University digital content and is responsible for accessibility, security, and infrastructure at the system and platform level. This includes:
  - Managing and securing the technical infrastructure that hosts University digital content.
  - Ensuring platforms, tools, and systems meet accessibility compliance requirements.
  - Overseeing system security, data protection, and technical standards that support reliable and inclusive access.

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- **Content Liaisons (Designated by Area Leadership)** Each division, office, college, department, program, or strategic content group recognized unit must designate a professional staff member to serve as that area's Content Liaison. The Content Liaison is responsible for:
  - **Official:** Maintaining the accuracy, accessibility, and quality of the area's digital content.
  - **Information published by:**
  - Ensuring content aligns with University entities' Official policy, brand standards, and editorial expectations.
  - Coordinating regular reviews, updates, and corrections.
  - Serving as the primary contact with UMC and ITS for content governance and required actions.

**Accessibility Requirements**

All University digital content must be published on-comply with the Digital Accessibility Policy and applicable accessibility standards. This includes using but is not limited to captions, alternative text, transcripts, and accessible document formats wherever appropriate.

**Exceptions for Independent or Externally Hosted Sites**

All official University electronic communication channels, for the sole purpose of promoting official University or entity objectives digital platforms must be created, hosted, and maintained through University-managed systems.

**Unofficial content:** Personal and group websites that use the University's hosting services and domains, but are not used for official University content.

**Content owner:** Any entity (departments, colleges, or a designated representative responsible for creation and maintenance of official content.

**Content maintenance:** Adding, updating and removing content to insure that it is valid and current.

**Responsibilities and Relationships**

The Office of Integrated Marketing (IM) is responsible for the overall University marketing and content strategy. IM oversees the development and implementation of appropriate marketing messaging and brand identity standards on electronic communication publishing channels.

IT Solutions (ITS) is responsible for development and maintenance of the University electronic information delivery infrastructure. ITS performs research, testing and analysis of technical solutions and standards and implements or makes recommendations for content delivery infrastructure changes.

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An entity is responsible for creating and maintaining its official content:

The official website template is the approved implementation of brand identity for official University websites. The template is developed jointly by IM and ITS and is designed to ensure adherence to all applicable graphical standards and technical requirements. All official University websites are required to use the website template. The website template is a suite of design options that have been developed to meet specific purposes based on considerations such as the nature of content presented, entity marketing objectives, and/or intended audience. Entities with coding or styling on official website pages that does not meet graphical standards or technical requirements will be notified by ITS. It is the entity's responsibility to address the coding or styling concerns with the support of ITS.

Some official University websites are resource channels and serve as a gateway to subscribed vendor resources essential to faculty and student learning and research. To achieve a solution that best ensures adherence to University brand, the website template, and technical standards where possible, entities should consult with IM and ITS in advance of the implementation.

Entities that operate units may not independently or semi-independently but are directly associated with the University through a special arrangement are considered to be semi-autonomous for the purposes of this policy. University brand and technical standards apply to semi-autonomous entities. Semi-autonomous units may utilize the website template, but it is not required. Examples of semi-autonomous units include athletics, centers, partnerships, bookstore, and food services.

**Official University content**

Entities with an official web presence, including social media, are responsible for maintaining the content on official sites. The entity must designate a faculty or staff member to serve as its web content liaison (WCL).

The WCL serves as the entity liaison with IM and ITS. The WCL is responsible for completing the appropriate role-based website training for ensuring all official content supports the spirit of this policy, is continuously monitored and regularly updated, and clearly labeled with up-to-date entity contact information. The WCL is responsible for the official social media site(s), including content posted and site security.

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The WCL may assign additional individuals who are authorized to create or maintain their official entity content, including social media sites. Except for social media content, the entity may contract with ITS to perform ongoing content management services host websites or applications outside University-supported environments.

Unofficial content

Unofficial content authors assume personal responsibility for compliance with appropriate regulations. The University does not review, edit, endorse, nor is it responsible for unofficial content or links associated with unofficial pages or sites.

Unofficial content stored on University computers or using an official University domain must not use the official University website template. Brand elements, such as official University colors and logos, are allowed. All brand elements must adhere to University graphic standards.

Areas designated for hosting personal and group content cannot be used for official content and vice versa. Examples of unofficial content include personal faculty, staff and student pages, student organization websites, personal social media sites.

Individuals or groups using University computers to store unofficial content are strictly prohibited from creating and/or operating any form of online retail operation (e-commerce, shopping or auction sites, etc.).

Official content levels

Official University websites, unless noted above, must utilize the official University website template and follow all brand standards. The content must be presented using the website template option that corresponds to the content type (e.g., program and directory pages).

Level 4- in limited cases where a unique technical, contractual, or business need cannot be met within existing University systems, a request for exception may be submitted to the UMC and ITS for review.

Requests must include:

- A clear, documented business or functional need that cannot be met within University infrastructure.
- Details on how University brand, accessibility, and security standards will be upheld.

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- Identification of a University sponsor (VP of the division or designee) responsible for the site's compliance and maintenance.
- An approved contract or agreement meeting University and Minnesota State data security and accessibility requirements.
- A plan for ongoing maintenance and a defined review or end-of-life process.

Examples of potential exceptions include:

- University-affiliated operations that serve external clients or generate revenue (e.g., auxiliary or retail services using third-party systems).
- Partnerships or grant-funded initiatives requiring a distinct external presence or vendor platform.
- Vendor-dependent systems that provide technical or compliance capabilities unavailable within University-managed environments.

The University reserves the right to suspend, migrate, or remove any externally hosted website that fails to maintain compliance, security, or accessibility standards, or poses reputational risk.

#### Compliance and Remediation

Digital content that violates University policy, accessibility laws, or security standards must be corrected promptly.

Those who do not take corrective action after notice may be referred to their Vice President for follow-up.

#### The University content

Level 1 (L1) content delivers the University's core marketing messaging intended for external audiences, with the primary focus on furthering the University's strategic goals and objectives. L1 content is published on the University's main page, major audience and topic pages, select entity landing pages and brand/content elements persistent on all official sites. The University reserves the right to take immediate action to remediate or remove content that violates University sites, IM and ITS are the primary entities responsible for L1 content production and delivery systems policy or federal, state, or local laws.

#### Level 2-Entity content

Level 2 (L2) content delivers the entity's marketing messaging intended for its key constituencies, with the primary focus on goals and objectives of the entity. L2 content is published on entity landing pages and any other designated pages. IM and ITS should be involved in the development process to ensure proper messaging and technical implementation. The entity is responsible for

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maintaining the quality of L2 content. Consultation with IM and ITS is strongly recommended for significant changes or updates to L2 content.

**Level 3: Mission-critical content**

Level 3 (L3) content delivers information critical for day-to-day business functions and continuing operation of the University. L3 content is intended for internal and external audiences and may be published on official public or private websites. Examples of L3 content include academic calendars, registration and financial information, important dates and deadlines, employee information, campus services and resources, student records and emergency communications. Responsibility for integrity, validity, availability, utility and accessibility of mission-critical content is shared between the administratively responsible entity, ITS and/or other service providers. To ensure proper implementation, advanced consultation with ITS is strongly recommended prior to significant upgrades or changes to L3 content delivery systems, including vendor-licensed or other third-party resources.

**Level 4: Core content**

Level 4 (L4) content delivers essential, descriptive information to support academic and administrative functions of the University or its entities. L4 content is published on official public websites and may include academic program information, course descriptions and major requirements, scholarships, service offerings and schedules, policies and procedures. The appropriate entity is responsible for L4 content development and maintenance.

**Level 5: Directory information**

Level 5 (L5) content delivers structured data describing physical and administrative organization of the University. L5 content may be presented as alphabetical or thematic indices or via search queries. L5 content may be accessed through public or private websites. Examples of L5 content include campus maps, building and room information, addresses and phone numbers, people and group search, web search, organizational charts, A-Z listings.

**Level 6: Supplemental content**

Level 6 (L6) content delivers secondary information that supports core content by providing additional descriptions and resources. L6 content may be published on official and unofficial public websites. Examples of L6 content include

department histories; archives; missions and goals; newsletters; faculty profile pages; links of interest and registered student organization pages.

**Social media content**

Colleges, departments, offices, programs, employees, and students are encouraged to utilize social networking services such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc., to promote themselves and connect with prospective and current students, parents, alumni, donors, and the community more effectively. Any social media content created to represent an official entity of the University must use site options and settings most appropriate for business purposes. Public social media names and avatars must adhere to University graphic standards and include an image that can be identified with the account. Using an official brand element, if available, is preferred.

**Advertising and Sponsorship**

Paid advertising for the purpose of promoting non-university products or services is not allowed on official or unofficial University electronic communication channels.

Recognition of external sponsorship and underwriting is allowed in the form of logos and/or links to the external sponsor's home page. The logos and/or links must be displayed on the entity's secondary or lower pages. Payment may not be accepted specifically for the placement of sponsor logos and/or links on University electronic communication channels.

**RATIONALE**

The University conveys large amounts of information to a wide range of audiences. Publishing content through electronic communications channels, such as the Web, is an effective way to reach many people at once, is easy to update, and extends the reach of the University to a wider audience.

**Related References**

- [University Web and Digital Content Policy](#)
- [Digital Accessibility Policy](#)
- [Minnesota State Board Policies 5.22 and 5.23](#)
- [Brand and Editorial Standards Guide](#)
- [Data Security and Privacy Standards](#)

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