American Association of Community Colleges

SOCIAL MEDIA HOW-TO GUIDE

facebook
twitter
cotweet
hootsuite
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SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS CAN BE A GREAT ADDITION TO ANY CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS OR MARKETING PLAN. With social media, AACC members can reach their students, faculty, alumni, donors and community where they are already interacting online. These platforms provide real-time access for members to share news and information important to their college, as well as listen and gain feedback on topics of significance.

This guide serves as a brief overview and example of various online activities that AACC members have at their disposal to share information and effectively manage their time. This guide is a resource for everyone from beginner-level to expert-level users on how to best utilize their online accounts.

As many states enter into the legislative session season, it is important to note that social media is a way to quickly and effectively share information with state legislators, their staff and their constituents. Social media should not be framed or worded as campaigning, but it can serve as a way to share examples, clarify misinformation or provide context to a story. Calls to action can be issued through social media to help make the case for supporting your college and you can provide supporting information expeditiously to your proponents.

While managing multiple social networks (Facebook and Twitter are the most used), it can seem daunting to make sure that activity, such as posts, is consistent, not duplicated, and timed correctly (i.e. nobody wants to see hundreds of tweets a day). But, with social media management dashboards like HootSuite and Co-Tweet, you can have an entire team seamlessly run your college’s social networks with a click of a button.

There are benefits to scheduling tweets and Facebook postings using a social media dashboard. When you have upcoming events such as admission deadlines, research announcements, graduation information and general news announcements – it can be much more time efficient to pre-load tweets into a system that will manage the posting for you.
Facebook vs. Twitter

You may already use Facebook for personal use, but there are many things to keep in mind when using it for a business. Facebook is an essential tool for community colleges to bring their online network of students, faculty, alumni, donors and community members together in one place where they can read and share stories about the college.

Unlike a personal Facebook page, professional pages should be carefully monitored and communications teams should have a plan in place for the types of updates they will share with page members. Facebook is a great place to share photos, videos, announcements and ask opinions of group or page members on topics of relevance to the college.

Twitter is a tool that can provide short updates and links to information to followers. An added benefit to Twitter is the use of SMS updates via mobile phone, and the ease in which users can text their updates and receive information on a variety of mobile platforms.

It would be prudent for online community managers to plan to send some updates from Facebook and Twitter, and some specifically for each platform. For example, you might send a message informing people about an upcoming fundraising event to benefit a program at your college through both tools, but provide multiple reminders on Twitter throughout the week, versus sending multiple reminders on Facebook. Twitter is an effective tool to blanket short bursts of information to a wide audience in real-time. Facebook allows more space for content, so you can include more information about your announcement.

It might look something like this (links are not active):

**MONDAY**
Twitter: Don’t forget to register for the Bollywood Ball, raising money for #AACC! Sign up here: [http://ow.ly.29Rst bollyball](http://ow.ly.29Rst)

**TUESDAY**
Facebook: No update

**WEDNESDAY**
Twitter: The #BollyBall looks like it will be a great success! Check out these cool decorations: [http://twitpic.com/bollyballdec](http://twitpic.com/bollyballdec)
Facebook: No update

**THURSDAY**
Twitter: We’re so excited to have over 25 volunteers for the #BollyBall! How can you help? [http://ow.ly.3r32](http://ow.ly.3r32)
Facebook: No update

**FRIDAY**
Twitter: Got plans? Come to the #BollyBall! See you there @reggie @susan_k @jerseygal! [http://ow.ly.29Rst](http://ow.ly.29Rst)
Facebook: No update
Facebook Groups vs. Facebook Pages

There are two types of Facebook profiles available to organizations. While they have similarities, Groups can be "invite-only" and you have the ability to send direct, individual and private messages to all members.

Facebook Groups are often focused around organizing topics or ideas, so it could be ideal for a specific campaign or event (such as a large school event that lots of different people are invited to).

Facebook Pages are more useful for professional organizations, and should probably be used as your school's official Facebook presence. Facebook Pages also provide detailed analytics on your member usage, which is great for those interested in showcasing the effectiveness of their Facebook presence.

The benefit of both Groups and Pages is that any content you publish, whether it is a status update, new photo gallery, or event creation – can be shared directly to the News Feed of those who "like" your page or are members of your Group.

Facebook Page Example:
Twitter

Twitter is the quick online publishing tool that has become a media darling over the past couple of years. Twitter is especially useful for those businesses and organizations that wish to engage with their members and/or use Twitter as an extension of their customer service. Twitter allows the user to post comments up to 140 characters at a time.

Twitter Basics:
@ reply – an @ reply is a public reply that you can use to initiate conversation with another user. Just put the "@" symbol before the Twitter username to respond.

RT – a re-tweet (RT) is forwarding on someone else’s tweet for your followers. It’s a great way for tweets to go viral. It’s also useful to generate content that you don’t have to create. For example, retweeting a newspaper article on the benefit of community colleges is beneficial for your followers and something already online that you don’t have to generate.

DM – Direct messages (DMs) are private messages that can be sent to a user who is following you. This is a great way to engage “offline” to answer questions, discuss issues, or share more information. DMs are private only to the two parties involved.

Example Public Tweet Conversations:

@reply
NOVA_CC: We’re excited to see you @reggie_k @susanj @caligirl4 #bollyball
In response to:
Caligirl4: Just bought tickets to #bollyball!
Reggie_k: Volunteering at Bollywood Ball @nova_cc
Susanj: Who else is going to the Bollywood Ball?

RT
NOVA_CC: RT @comm_college: new studies show that community college teaches new technologies to students, giving professionals an edge

DM
For users who you follow and that follow you back, you can click message to send a private message to them.
Online Publishing
On Facebook and Twitter, there are a variety of ways to share information that is important to your community.

Facebook
- **Photo Albums** – photos can be uploaded to Facebook individually or albums can be created for multiple photos from events etc.
- **Photo Tagging** – photo tagging allows you to tag people and share your photos with their networks.
- **Video Uploads** – take short videos around your campus. Interview current students about what courses they are taking. Talk to professors about new curriculum. Speak to alumni about their jobs and how community college coursework has improved them. Short videos (under five minutes) can be uploaded directly to Facebook and shared through your group or page.
- **Bit.ly** - URL shorteners are great for squeezing long URLs into a tweet, or to track how many clicks your link has received. For more on bit.ly, click here: [http://bit.ly/pages/help](http://bit.ly/pages/help)
- **Blog integration and Notes** – Facebook allows you to integrate your blog’s RSS feed into Facebook notes. This will automatically publish your blog posts onto your Facebook Page.

Twitter
- **TwitPic** – this is a great program to easily share pictures in real-time. Imagine you’re at an event on campus, or want to showcase the crowds. Snap a picture with your smartphone and you can immediately upload it to Twitpic and send it out to your followers.
- **Bit.ly** – URL shorteners are great for squeezing long URLs into a tweet, or to track how many clicks your link has received. For more on bit.ly, click here: [http://bit.ly/pages/help](http://bit.ly/pages/help)

Analytics & Reporting
- **Google analytics** – convenient for your blog and/or website, Google provides a free tool that can track your website or blog visitors, most popular content, and top keywords.
- **Facebook Page Analytics** - Facebook Pages allow you to view “Page insights”, with information such as demographics of your fans, number of “interactions” per week (how many people “like” your posts), and the number of new fans or wall posts.
- **HootSuite Analytics** - one caveat to HootSuite analytics is that HootSuite uses its own link shortener (ow.ly), and analytics only track clicks using that shortener. The great thing about HootSuite is that it integrates your Facebook Page analytics, so you can view stats in one location. HootSuite’s Twitter stats allow you to view which one of your links are popular on Twitter, where your audience comes from, and what date they are clicking. HootSuite allows you to track overall stats for a Twitter profile, or specific stats for an individual message. They are easy to print and easy to export to a spreadsheet.
- **Bit.ly Analytics** - if you shorten your links using bit.ly, you can track how many people click on your unique link to your content. You can post these links on Facebook and Twitter to get the most value.
Tips & Tricks

- Choose a short username for Twitter that is easy to identify who you are and easy to remember. For example, Northern Virginia Community College could be @NOVA_CC or @NV_CC.
- Try to follow Twitter users in batches, so you are not seen as spam.
- Once you get over 25 "like" to your Page, you can customize your Facebook Page’s URL so that you are even easier to find on Facebook and through online searches. See more here: [http://www.facebook.com/username/](http://www.facebook.com/username/)
- Want visitors to your college’s website to become a part of your official Facebook community? [Set up a Page widget](http://www.facebook.com/badges/) that you can add to your college’s website. It allows visitors to immediately see recent conversations and/or group members of your page. One click, and they’re immediately connected! See more here: [http://www.facebook.com/badges/](http://www.facebook.com/badges/)

![Facebook Badges](image)

Edit your badge:
Choose what information is included on your badge:

Use hashtags (#) to monitor and track conversations on Twitter. For example, using a hashtag like #communitycollege or #aacc will make both your cause/affiliation known and also provide some way to track conversations. For example, if hosting an event (like the “Bollywood Ball fundraising event”) – using the hashtag #bollyball could be a good way to track any mention of your event. You can use a consistent hashtag (in the case of #comm_college) for your college, or a hashtag specific to a particular event or news announcement (#fundraising for example).

Similarly, find hashtags for key issues facing your state legislature and provide tweets that show your institution’s value and data that frames the impact you make locally and across the state.
Twitter lists are good ways to organize your followers into useful groups for tracking purposes. For example, you can organize a list of all the community colleges in your state on Twitter, and that way people can follow your list for updates, and you have a simple way to see what your colleagues are up to. One caveat, if you are added to a list by someone else, you cannot remove yourself from it. Usually they are beneficial though, such as being added to someone’s list of “higher education” or “community colleges in Delaware” or “state legislators in Colorado.”

Online Resources:
Facebook Page vs. Group
- [http://www.allfacebook.com/facebook-groups-pages-2010-02](http://www.allfacebook.com/facebook-groups-pages-2010-02)

Twitter
- @ replies: [http://support.twitter.com/articles/14023-what-are-replies-and-mentions](http://support.twitter.com/articles/14023-what-are-replies-and-mentions)
- RT: [http://support.twitter.com/articles/77606-what-is-retweet-rt](http://support.twitter.com/articles/77606-what-is-retweet-rt)
- DMs: [http://support.twitter.com/articles/14606-what-is-a-direct-message-dm](http://support.twitter.com/articles/14606-what-is-a-direct-message-dm)
- Hashtags: [http://support.twitter.com/articles/49309-what-are-hashtags-symbols](http://support.twitter.com/articles/49309-what-are-hashtags-symbols)
- Lists: [http://support.twitter.com/articles/76460-how-to-use-twitter-lists](http://support.twitter.com/articles/76460-how-to-use-twitter-lists)

Basic bit.ly

Google Analytics
- [http://www.google.com/analytics/features.html](http://www.google.com/analytics/features.html)

Social Analytics

HootSuite and Facebook analytics
MANAGING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

HootSuite

HootSuite is a professional social media dashboard that allows you to manage your social media accounts from one place. The main benefit to HootSuite is the ability to schedule postings. This is an enormous time saver. With HootSuite, you can update your Facebook and Twitter pages from one location, at the same time if desired, and you can schedule as many advance postings as you’d like. In addition to time management, another benefit of scheduling is that it improves your organization’s visibility. The more tweets you send, the more visible your Twitter handle and content become on Twitter.

On HootSuite, scheduling is easy. If you have an account, simply log in and type your post in the box on the upper left hand corner, then click on the calendar. Select a date and time at which you’d like the post to be sent, then select “Schedule”. Your post, or tweet, will appear in Pending Tweets and/or Pending Posts. You can edit or delete posts and tweets until they are sent out. You can also see who on your team scheduled each post, so there are no duplicates.

A unique benefit of HootSuite is the ability to integrate analytics through everything that you do using the dashboard.

Sample Day of Scheduled Posts (links are not active):

9:00 AM Visit #AACC on the web! http://ow.ly/2SpZO
12:00 PM View our latest #FB gallery from a recent lecture on criminal investigations by the #MoCo Police Dept http://ow.ly./2ShXj
2:00 PM Click here to register for the Washington Institute seminar for community college officials, November 7-9, 2010 in Washington DC! http://ow.ly/2SrRp
4:00 PM Follow us on Twitter @commcollege

Ready to Start?
Go to www.hootsuite.com
Choose your level of service. For AACC members that plan heavy use of social media, the paid PRO program is recommended. This provides unlimited social networks (let’s say you have a specific admissions campaign separate from your main college, that is using Twitter), and gives you unlimited stats history. If needed, that gives you the ability to specify your social media campaigns to specific campaigns and also provide quarterly and yearly statistics reports.

**Online Resources:**

http://hootsuite.com/about  
http://help.hootsuite.com/home  

**Co-Tweet**

Co-Tweet is an easy online portal to manage multiple Twitter accounts. This is great for managing multiple accounts for your college, or a personal and professional account(s). Co-Tweet also integrates with URL shorteners like bit.ly, tinyurl and twurl.

**Sample Day of Scheduled Tweets (links are not active):**

9:00 AM Registration deadline for winter 2011 courses is today! Register now at: http://bit.ly/cc.winter  
12:00 PM Check out this article on the benefit of community college courses for the unemployed: http://bit.ly.cc.benefit  
2:00 PM Don’t forget to congratulate our winter graduates!  
4:00 PM: RT @jerry_c: really enjoying my classes @NV_CCI – Thanks, we’re glad you are having fun!
Ready to start?
Go to www.cotweet.com

Decide whether you want the standard version or enterprise version. Both versions offer the same management tools with the ability to have multiple users managing multiple accounts, but the standard version only keeps data for the last 30 days. The enterprise version is fairly pricey at $1,500 a month, but offers more robust analytics and tracking, a reply all function and unlimited conversation history. The Enterprise version also has a SalesForce integration that will be useful if any AACC members actively use SalesForce.

**Online Resources:**
http://support.cotweet.com/home
Getting Started: http://support.cotweet.com/forums/38267-how-to-s-user-guides
Business use cases for CoTweet: http://www.twitip.com/how-to-use-cotweet-to-join-the-conversation/
Setting up an Account (with screenshots): http://web.appstorm.net/reviews/communications/become-a-social-network-ninja-with-cotweet/

**CoTweet vs. HootSuite**
Both dashboards are helpful in managing social media tools, but which you choose depends on your organization’s needs and who will be managing the accounts. HootSuite not only integrates with Twitter AND Facebook, but it does offer more analytics features, so if that is important to you then go with HootSuite. If you want a simple Twitter monitoring tool where you can easily assign team members to respond to tweets (say, for customer service needs), then Co-Tweet might be a better option. Co-Tweet Enterprise is significantly more costly than HootSuite Pro.

**Online Resources:**
http://www.michaeldhart.com/blog/2010-02-01/twitter-power-tools-hootsuite-vs-cotweet
http://blog.hootsuite.com/tag/hootsuite-vs-cotweet/
Top 10 Steps AACC Members Should Take to Get Into

10. Register for a Facebook Group or Page. Determine what works best for your community and needs.

9. Sign up for Twitter. Follow other community colleges in your state. Follow higher education advocates, local businesses and state legislators.

8. Brainstorm topics of interest for your college. Think about what is important to your stakeholders and supporters. How can you provide information and resources to your members online? Think about what content you have to share, and make sure you have enough to make it worthwhile!

7. Determine your team. Figure out who from your communications, marketing and/or public affairs department wants to be or should be involved in external and online communications. Assign duties as necessary.

6. Brand consistency. Make sure that your brands are properly represented in all of your social network profiles. A strong presence is important to the cohesiveness of your college brand.

5. Authenticity. Be real. Don’t just be a talking head. Don’t have someone post for you. Make sure messaging comes directly from within your college.

4. Regularity reigns. Make sure you’re posting new content at least once a week. Try to plan ahead and space out your messages so you are updating regularly.

3. Engage. Don’t just post announcements and updates. It’s similar to coming across as a spammer. Ask questions, respond to conversations, get involved! Take the time to interact with your followers – don’t just talk at them, talk with them.

2. Promote. Make sure that it’s easy for your stakeholders to find your online networks. Include social network badges and links in all your communications. Think website, e-mail newsletters or other communications, physical mailings, advertisements, promotions, and e-mail signatures. Think about the thousands of people you touch on a daily basis – and how they can all be a part of your online social network!

1. Listen! Learn from your followers about the kind of content they want to see, and how they are engaging with you online. Do people always comment on your Facebook photos? Add more! Do you get a lot of comments on blog posts about a certain topic? Write more about it, share it through all your online properties, and keep giving your online community what they want.
Some suggested resources for advanced social media users among AACC member schools:

- **The Networked Nonprofit** by Alison Fine and Beth Kanter — this book deals with social media use among nonprofit organizations but schools and community colleges can learn great insights from it as well. It deals with many of the issues all institutions face when deciding to use social media in their communications efforts.
- **CollegeWebEditor** — blog which deals with higher education issues in web, technology and social media.
- **EduGuru** — blog on higher education marketing, technology and web development.
- **Uwedb** — Online community for higher education web professionals and web developers.
- **Four Reasons Your Social Media Marketing Campaign Sucks** — blog post on social media strategy and why some campaigns fail.
- **Nonprofit Organizing in 140 Characters or Less** — document on how to use Twitter strategically.
- **Framework and Matrix: The Five Ways Companies Organize for Social Business** — an analysis of how companies organize themselves in embracing social media in their operations.
- **The DigiActive Guide to Twitter for Activism** — a guide to how Twitter has been used for political advocacy worldwide.