**MSU College of Natural Science Social Media Guidelines**

**It’s best to start with a plan.**

Social media is typically associated with applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and tictok, where text, media, links and opinions are shared, discussed and distributed. Social media is an accessible, effective outlet to spread the word about your department, program, organization, or individuals.

The brief guide below provides the basics of social media platforms, analytics, etiquette, and branding for the College of Natural Science. For clarifications, questions, or an introduction to social media best practices, please contact NatSci’s Social Media Coordinator Mistie Jordan at mathewsm@msu.edu.

The official hashtag for MSU College of Natural Science is **#MSUNatSci.**

Ideally, your social media strategy should support your website and other owned media efforts so the links you will share in social media will point to your website and other MSU digital properties.

**Always begin with MSU Brand Standards**

The College of Natural Science at Michigan State University houses many unique programs, majors, specializations, and people. However, each of these components is also housed within Michigan State University. This means that each publication, website, or multimedia production needs to adhere to standards set forth by the University to maintain a united presence both within the MSU community and throughout the world.

Consistency of content, messaging, visuals, and quality from each department will ensure that the brand of the College Natural Science and Michigan State University is authentic throughout the MSU community, at home and abroad.

University Communications and Brand Standards can be viewed at  <https://brand.msu.edu/>

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s):**

**Q: Can’t we just start and learn as we go along?**

**A:** Many times, social media is THE first point of contact with folks who are interested in what you have to offer. There are best practices to follow, a variety of tools available to make social media processes easier, and guidelines to ensure genuine engagement and accessibility for the community you want to build. MSU NatSci communications is here to help you with a strong start.

**Q: Do we need a social media presence?**

A: Social media platforms require management, planning and consistency. It is important to have a plan in place before you start to make sure you have the resources available to provide a professional, consistent social media presence. The NatSci Communication team is available to help assist you assess your audience and goals. Do you have a strategy for your social presence and folks to dedicate time to content building and message monitoring? Your best social media plan may be working through the NatSci Communications office to share your messages on its established platforms.

**Q: Why do we need to use social media?**

**A:** Social media platforms are an excellent way to build community, send messages to and engage with your target audience with branded content. Use social media to promote your department events and accolades, engage with students, prospective students and alumni. A polished social media presence also makes for a well-rounded, reputable institution and gives credibility.

**Q: Do we need to have a presence on all social media platforms?**

**A:** It is not necessary to create a social profile on every platform. Assess the audience you are trying to reach and the type of messages you are trying to send to discover which platform works best to achieve your social media goals. The NatSci Communications office is available help assist you assess your audience and goals.

**Q: How will we know if what we’re doing on social media is working?**
**A:** Successful social media posts perform well, meaning they receive a high number of likes, shares, comments and saves. Analytics are available natively through many platforms. Social media management systems like [Buffer](https://buffer.com/) are also available.

**NatSci Social Media Platforms**

The following information provides a brief description of each of the major platforms used by NatSci to communicate with its various audiences. For clarifications or questions about social media, please contact Social Media Coordinator Mistie Jordan at mathewsm@msu.edu.

We encourage you to share your news with NatSci communications in the form [here](https://natsci.msu.edu/news/) or send your social media shares to Mistie Jordan at mathewsm@msu.edu.

[**Twitter**](https://twitter.com/MSUNatSci)is a news platform, primarily used to share the most recent content, research news and outreach activities. The largest percentage of this NatSci audience is male, between the ages of 25 and 64. The main purpose of a Twitter page is to keep your audience current on relevant happenings within your department/organization/group. Because the lifespan of a tweet is less than 18 minutes and the platform has a 280-character limit, it’s important to only post the most current and concise information.

Twitter Tips:

* Tweet with engaging images (e.g., people in action, vibrant colors, high-resolution)​​​​​​​
* Tag relevant users (e.g., other initiatives/colleges/departments/professors)
* Use no more than 3 hashtags (e.g., #MSUNatSci and content area e.g., #chemistry)
* Write concise copy (there is a 280-character limit, but the shorter the better)
* Retweet or tag content to the college and department
* Use language that a general audience can understand. Avoid jargon.​​​​​​​
* Video feature: 2 minutes

[**Facebook**](https://www.facebook.com/MSUNatSci) is a news sharing platform, with a focus on networking with alumni, the East Lansing Community, family of student’s audiences, such as parents, and a general audience of science lovers. Current and perspective students do browse here for information. This is the most general audience and communication about science and research needs to be geared to a wider audience. The largest percentage of this NatSci audience is female, between the ages of 25 and 64.

Facebook does not have a character limit; however, you should aim to keep your posts to a sentence or two for better engagement. Post a link for the involved details.

Additionally, your news can be a bit dated, as Facebook is not as fast-paced as Twitter.

Facebook Tips:

* Always use short, concise copy – details can be left to the information you share in your link.
* Always use images, even with article posts (upload a relevant image if the article does not auto populate with one​​​​​​​​​​​​​​)
* Take advantage of video content - shorter content is more attention-grabbing
* Tag relevant users (e.g., other initiatives/colleges/departments/professors)
* Promote your events, clubs and groups.

[**Instagram**](https://www.instagram.com/msunatsci/)is a casual, image and short-form video-based platform that will make your website presence more human and appealing to current and prospective students. Instagram has a 60-second video feature and stories. Your followers are less likely to “repost” on Instagram than they are on Twitter or Facebook.

The largest percentage of this NatSci audience is female, between the ages of 18 and 24.

The focus for Instagram is on strengthening your expertise for your department/program within the specific [**MSU Brand**](https://brand.msu.edu/)**,** and should include and belonging as a Spartan with highlights of students, offerings and customer service elements of FAQs, how-to’s, and what it means to be a Spartan. Help folks see themselves as Spartans.

Instagram Tips:

* You MUST have a photo or video in order to post.
* Make sure it is a good quality hi-resolution photo.
* Photo is best in a square 1:1 format. Video is best a 16:9 format.
* Make sure your bio link is active and takes your visitors where you want them to go since it is the only link that is clickable on Instagram. Consider a link tree page on your website to offer more ways to connect.
* [Instagram Video can be shared in a number of ways:](https://business.instagram.com/ad-solutions/video-strategy)  posts, Reels, stories and Instagram TV.
* Make an image carousel of up to 10 images for your audience to scroll through.
* Stories offer an alternative way to share links

[**Linkedin**](https://www.linkedin.com/school/msucollegeofnatsci/) is a professional platform for job posting, expertise articles and resume-like pages for individuals, businesses, organizations and institutions to share industry information, updates and work-related updates.

**Analytics**

To know how successful your platforms are performing, each above-mentioned platform includes built-in analytics.

If you are interested in a more in-depth perspective of your social media accounts, you may be interested in using a social media management system such as [Buffer](https://buffer.com/). With a management system you can schedule content, manage all your accounts in one place, and track your engagement and interaction (likes, retweets, followers, impressions, etc.).

**Etiquette**

Managing multiple social media profiles can be hard enough but managing both personal and business profiles can get confusing. To avoid posting personal or inappropriate things on your professional profiles, try using a social media management system, or use different browsers. For instance, use Google Chrome for personal profiles and use Safari or Firefox for your business profiles.

In academia, using the correct title (academic specialist, associate professor, assistant professor, etc.) is imperative to avoid offending or misrepresenting your subject. Before posting, do a look up on [MSU’s people search](https://search.msu.edu/), where you will find your subject’s full title if they work for the university.

Monitoring comments is an important part of social media best practices:

[MSU Community Guidelines](https://comms.msu.edu/social-media/social-media-resources/msu-community-guidelines) -- comments/content moderation