I. PURPOSE & INTENT

The purpose of this Policy is to outline standards required for creating and distributing all official digital communications regarding brand identity, messaging, promotion, advertising, public relations, and other marketing related content on behalf of the University of South Florida and all member institutions governed by the University of South Florida Board of Trustees (“USF System”). This includes, but is not limited to communications distributed in the following mediums: web sites, domain names, social media sites, and native mobile applications, as defined herein. It is not the intent of this Policy to limit the free flow of information necessary to foster a productive academic and research environment.

II. STATEMENT OF POLICY

In an effort to ensure accuracy and consistency of brand messaging throughout the USF System and to ensure compliance with the Federal Program Integrity Rules established by the Department of Education, which “strengthens the Department’s authority to take action against institutions engaging in deceptive advertising, marketing, and sales practices,” The Office of University Communications and Marketing (“UCM”) is responsible for administering and enforcing this Policy to deter any false, erroneous, or misleading statements regarding program or institutional descriptions and to ensure that the USF System messaging is consistent with the university’s branding and communication strategy.
III. **APPLICABILITY & AUTHORITY**

The following Policy applies to all member institutions and their respective; departments; colleges; schools; centers; institutes; and programs (“USF System Units”) that are communicating, either directly or indirectly, and formally or informally, on behalf of the USF System.

IV. **METHODS OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS**

A. **Official External USF System Websites**

Websites produced in direct support of and sponsored by USF System Units with a primary audience of external users are considered Official USF System Websites (“USF System Internet Websites”). Information housed on these sites is for public consumption.

All USF Internet Websites must be managed through a Content Management System (“CMS”) that incorporates technology enabling the implementation of accessibility standards as required by law and is approved by the USF System Chief Information Officer. The websites must utilize approved CMS templates to ensure consistency and compliance. All sites and site managers must adhere to the [Web Templates Terms of Use](#). For assistance in ensuring compliance with this requirement, contact UCM at [ucm@usf.edu](mailto:ucm@usf.edu).

For the purposes of this Policy, the following sites are not considered USF System Internet Websites:

1. Student organization websites managed and hosted independently from IT Resources as defined in [Policy 0-502 Appropriate Use of Information Technology Resources](#).
2. Faculty members’ websites using IT Resources primarily for communicating instructional and/or scholarly information and materials with students and peers.
3. Employee (including faculty) websites managed and hosted independently from IT Resources and do not purport to communicate on behalf of a USF System Unit.
4. Employees websites used for internal business purposes only.
B. Official Internal USF System Websites

Websites produced in direct support of and sponsored by the USF System, with a primary audience of internal users are considered Official USF System Intranet Websites (“USF System Portal Sites”). Information housed within these sites is primarily for students, faculty and staff that have a USF NetID.

All USF System Portal Sites must be managed through the USF System Portal for internal communications and must use the Portal templates provided by UCM to ensure consistency and compliance. All sites and site managers must adhere to the Intranet Terms of Use located on the UCM site. For assistance in ensuring compliance with this requirement, contact UCM at ucm@usf.edu.

C. Web Applications (both internal and external): should adhere to branding standards where possible. A variety of branding templates and standards are available for departments and vendors to utilize. For assistance in ensuring compliance with this requirement, contact IT at webservices@usf.edu.

D. Social Media Accounts: For the purposes of this Policy, social media is defined as any “publicly accessible platform through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and/or other content (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and other blogs, etc).”

Any social media account that is used by a USF System Unit to communicate on behalf of the USF System shall be considered an Official USF System Social Media Account and requires a faculty or administrative sponsor. For reference, general guidelines for Official USF System Social Media Accounts include the following:

1. USF System Units shall work with UCM to evaluate what, if any, social media presence is necessary to meet their communications needs.
2. Individuals may not portray themselves as acting on behalf of the USF System or USF System Unit, or present a social media account as an official USF System account unless authorized to do so.

3. To ensure brand consistency and messaging, UCM will periodically evaluate all existing and newly developed Official USF System Social Media Accounts and determine whether or not they will be recognized as an Official USF System Social Media Account. Accounts that do not meet appropriate thresholds outlined by UCM will be terminated.

4. New Accounts: If a USF System Unit would like to establish an Official USF System Social Media Account, they must contact UCM at ucm@usf.edu to obtain permission.

5. Employee (including faculty) personal accounts are not considered Official USF Social Media Accounts as long as they are maintained in a separate and distinct manner from all Official USF System Social Media Accounts in which the employee manages and do not purport to communicate on behalf of the USF System.

6. USF System Unit social media accounts shall not post emergency notifications, communications, or instructions except as authorized in accordance with Policy 6-010 USF System Emergency Management.

E. Mobile Applications

A native mobile application is one that is installed directly onto the smart phone and can work, in most cases, with no internet connectivity depending on the nature of the application. All native mobile applications, related to communications, marketing and community involvement must be approved by UCM and IT. USF System Units are prohibited from participating in or procuring mobile development software/services which are not approved by the University Technology Standards Board (UTSB) per Policy 0-512 Information Technology Governance Structure.
Requests for mobile applications should be directed to IT Web Services at webservices@usf.edu.

V. CONTENT USE

A. Posts and Other Content

Only the views expressed on Official USF System Internet Websites, Official USF System Portal Sites, and Official USF System Social Media Accounts (“USF System Digital Resources”) are those of the USF System. User provided content is not screened or evaluated during the submission process. Opinions expressed by other users do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the University.

B. Advertising/Sponsorships

USF System Digital Resources and associated IT Resources shall not be used to advertise or sell non-USF System products or services. Only USF System Units with an existing and approved advertising or sponsorship program may extend it to their website in accordance with UCM’s requirements.

C. Use of Name, Seal, and Logo

The name, seal and logo of the USF System are the official symbols and registered trademarks of the USF System and may only be used in compliance with Policy 0-215 Use of USF System Name and Symbols.

Accounts and pages must feature the respective unit's official name, logo and/or signature. When a social media platform allows changes to layout or design, official university colors shall be used.

D. Confidential Information and Illegal or Improper Use

Confidential and personal information shall not be published on or disclosed on USF System Digital Resources in violation of Policy 0-501 Information Technology Resources – Use and Protection.
Use of USF System Digital Resources must be in compliance with Policy 0-502 Appropriate Use of Information Technology Resources.

E. **Personal Use of Official Websites/Accounts**

USF System Digital Resources shall be used to support the mission of the USF System only and are not to be used for personal gain or to promote personal business or business activities.

F. **Acceptable Use of Protected Content**

Rights and permissions must be secured before posting, sharing or distributing protected content (i.e. copyrighted materials or trademarks), including but not limited to: music, art, photographs, texts, videos or portions of videos, or information otherwise considered the intellectual property of the USF System or any third party. All third party content distributed through USF System Digital Resources with permission must be appropriately attributed to its source and owner, except when expressly not required by the respective content license.

G. **Use of Identifying Images**

It is the responsibility of each USF System Unit to obtain prior permission (i.e. a release) to post, share or distribute certain identifiable images of individuals as required. Distribution of such photographs or videos in conjunction with an official USF System communication must be authorized by UCM at ucm@usf.edu.

H. **Top Level Domain Naming**

The USF System is the sole owner of the usf.edu, usfsp.edu, and usfsm.edu top level domains and governs the use of the domains for their academic, communication and research missions.

1. **Standard Addressing**

Standard addressing for USF External Websites will be: www.usf.edu/<keyword>. UCM will work with applicable parties to establish the most appropriate keyword for each specific USF System Unit.
It is understood that there may be specific technical or business needs which require non-standard addressing, such as 3-part names (i.e. <keyword>.usf.edu). For these exceptions, USF System Units may submit a request for non-standard addressing to UCM for consideration.

2. Third-Party Vendors
It is recognized that the USF System regularly enters agreements with third-parties who host websites and applications for the USF System. USF System Units that wish to extend the usf.edu domain name to such sites or applications must request the extension through UCM, in consultation with IT Web Services.

UCM and IT Web Services will consider such requests provided that:

i. The third party adheres to the USF System branding standards as provided on the UCM Site [http://www.usf.edu/ucm/marketing/brand.aspx].

ii. The USF System has a properly executed contract with the service provider.

iii. The third party adheres to all USF System privacy policies.

iv. The third party adheres to all USF System security practices and policies.

3. Use of Domain Extensions Other Than .edu

i. .com Addresses: In order to protect the USF System’s identity and the public’s association with the USF System as an educational institution, .com or commercial domain names are strictly prohibited absent an approved exception in accordance with the Digital Communication Procedure.

ii. .org/Other Addresses: While standard addressing should be used whenever appropriate and possible, it is recognized that the USF System’s research mission occasionally calls for the use of .org or other non-
standard usf.edu addressing. USF System Units may request the use of such an address provided:

a) The address is not used for an official university department or unit (such entities should utilize standard addressing).
b) The purpose is to support a grant, research or non-traditional university program.
c) Limited branding standards for such programs have been met (entities may work through UCM on a case-by-case basis for this).
d) Requests for .org or other addressing can be made by e-mailing webservices@usf.edu. Requests will be considered by UCM in consultation with IT Web Services. If approved, entities must follow the procedures and guidelines for setting up such addressing at www.usf.edu/it.

I. Accessibility

All USF System Resources are subject to accessibility requirements and minimum web access standards as set forth in Policy 0-108 Disability Accommodations. In order to provide users with accessible content, the USF System Resources shall implement available technology within the CMS, the Portal, and social media platform(s) for all USF System Resources as applicable. The USF System will evaluate and strive to implement emerging technologies related to accessibility.

VI. EXCEPTIONS

Appropriate leadership within UCM and IT Web Services may grant limited exceptions on a case by case basis in accordance with the Digital Communications Procedure.

VII. ENFORCEMENT

Misuse of USF System Digital Resources in violation of USF System Regulations and Policies or as determined by the USF System in its sole discretion, is prohibited and may result in
disciplinary action and/or criminal prosecution. UCM and IT Web Services reserve the right and discretion to remove any site in violation of this Policy.

Use of USF System logos on any website or social media account by anyone, including USF System Units, in violation of USF System Policy and/or the rights of the USF System is strictly prohibited. All use of USF System logos or other intellectual property is unauthorized unless permission is granted in writing and signed by an authorized official with proper delegated authority. Failure of the USF System to enforce its rights does not constitute a waiver of such rights. The USF System reserves all rights whether or not expressly referenced herein. Refer to UCM's logo usage protocol and other brand guidelines for compliance.

VIII. RELATED INFORMATION

- Copyright: http://guides.lib.usf.edu/content.php?pid=56649&sid=419978
- Fair Use: http://guides.lib.usf.edu/content.php?pid=56649&sid=420228
- USF System Policy 0-105 Copyright Materials- Use and General Principles
- USF System Policy 0-108 Disability Accommodations (Public/Employees/Students)
- USF CMS Website Migration Process: http://www.usf.edu/ucm/marketing/content-migration-process.aspx
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Requirement 4.6: http://www.sacscoc.org/principles.asp

*Current Responsible Office: Communications and Marketing

*Refer to the appropriate Responsible Office website for a current name of the Vice President or other Responsible Officer.