WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA PUBLISHING BEST PRACTICES

ABOUT THE WEBSITE

The Pellissippi State website often serves as the first introduction to the College. A great college website leaves a positive first impression with visitors, including current and prospective students, parents, faculty and staff, institutional partners, and any others seeking information.

The College’s website, www.pstcc.edu, is an official publication of Pellissippi State. It is managed and maintained by the Marketing and Communications Office. Our print publications use a consistent style and feel, and our website should adhere to that same engaging, welcoming style.

While every department, office, unit, club and organization at Pellissippi State is separate and unique, and each has its own agenda, every area is also part of the College as a whole. Online, each unit needs to be clearly identified with Pellissippi State’s brand. (Accessibility is important not only to branding and image but also to legal requirements.)

Pellissippi State’s website is managed with a content management system suited to fit the needs of the College, and every academic and administrative unit uses the CMS. Pages that use the CMS fall under the College’s website address www.pstcc.edu.

This guide is a companion to Pellissippi State’s College-Related Web and Social Media Development and Use Policy 08:13:04.

INTRODUCTION TO THIS GUIDE

The Web and Social Media Publishing Best Practices Guide is designed to facilitate usability and consistency and promote a standardized brand across Pellissippi State’s Web and social media platforms. These guidelines cover style and accessibility as well as other helpful information.

The official version of this guide will be made available online and through the Marketing and Communications Office. Information included may change. Printed versions may be out of date and, therefore, should not be used to clarify procedures or guidelines related to Web standards for Pellissippi State.

All web pages that are part of the Pellissippi State CMS, at www.pstcc.edu, share a common template. The template is managed by the Marketing and Communications Office, and it cannot be altered or changed by web users. The template is identified below and in Addendum A. Other Pellissippi State web uses and third-party hosts that do not share this template are not part of the CMS.
Standard template

a. All pages affiliated with Pellissippi State’s website, www.pstcc.edu, must share a common template that includes the official College header and footer, the main navigation structure, and the official College logo.
   i. Official logo and link to home page
      1. The official logo, consisting of the Pellissippi State shield and the College’s full name, must be placed in the top left corner of each page.
      3. The logo must appear in its official Pantone 288 blue and Pantone 122 yellow color format, and it must appear against a light-colored background, providing high-contrast visibility.
      4. The size and proportions of the logo must not be changed.
   ii. Official header and menu bar
      1. The header (containing links to the home page, A-Z Index, Campus Maps, Directory, MyPellissippi and Webmail) must always be placed at the top of the page.
      2. The menu bar (containing links to About PSCC, Admissions, Academics, Students, Faculty & Staff, Alumni & Friends, and Continuing Education) must always be placed above the Web page content, below the header and Pellissippi State logo.
      3. No additions or changes to the header or menu bar can be made.
   iii. Search box
      The Search box must always appear at the top right corner of the page.
   iv. Discover and Apply buttons
      The buttons to “Discover: Learn More About Pellissippi State” and “Apply: Get Started With Your Application” must always appear on the right side of the page below the menu bar. The buttons must not change.
   v. Photos and images
      Standard on all pages is a collection of photos and images below the menu bar and above the page content. These photos and images can be changed to reflect each unit, department, office, or organization.
   vi. Footer
      The official Pellissippi State footer must be included in unmodified form to include the College’s contact information, privacy policy, AA/EEO statement, copyright and trademark terms of use, and other information.

b. All Web pages affiliated with www.pstcc.edu must use the College’s official blue and yellow colors and must be formatted in the Web font Arial.
All Web pages should include a brief but detailed description of the content or purpose of the page, for example, a description of the Natural and Behavioral Sciences Department or the Pellissippi State Foundation. Unique page information is suggested.

Do not display a “last updated” or “last published” date on your Web page. This dates websites for users. The last updated or last published date is available to administrators through the CMS.

Pages without information cannot use an “under construction” graphic or phrase. Pages without information should not be live.

WEB BEST PRACTICES

The overarching guideline of publishing information on the Web is to keep the end user in mind.

Organize the information on your Web page based upon users’ need, not necessarily by the area’s organization or hierarchy. Try to identify what items a user would most logically search for and the order of importance of those items. Make links and information easy to find.

Use a logical structure. Be aware of the website’s design structure, navigation and page layout. Page levels should be organized to provide increasing degrees of detail (from general to specific) so as not to overwhelm casual users but to provide relevant information to those searching for it.

ACCESSIBILITY

When designing Web page content, keep in mind that users may look at the website on traditional computers and mobile or tablet devices and may be using a number of different Web browsers. Users may employ screen reading software for written Web materials or need captioning to access audio portions of websites or use other assistive technology. Web page developers should be sure that pages provide access to all users by following current WCAG2.0 guidelines.

Also keep in mind that many users find Web pages through search engines, so be sure the content on your page can be indexed by search engines.

Use language that is as simple and clear as possible.

a. Text, graphics and color

1. Provide a description of all images and elements in an ALT tag. ALT tags allow for text readers to provide a description of visual and graphic elements so that they can still convey the content and meaning of the page. In Pellissippi State’s CMS, all images require an ALT tag. Additionally, all online videos are required to be captioned for accessibility.
2. View your pages as “text only” before publishing to ensure that the content flows logically without images or graphics.
3. Avoid image maps. Navigation of image maps requires a mouse, which renders the page inaccessible to most visually impaired users and most mobile devices.
4. Make sure that both text and graphics make sense without color. People who are visually impaired or who cannot differentiate between colors will not be able to understand information that relies on color to convey its main message. Choose backgrounds with high contrast that don’t interfere with content.

b. Searching and links
1. Do not place information within frames. Content in frames is generally not indexed by search engines.
2. Do not use tables unless you’re conveying tabular data.
3. Avoid using “click here” or similar phrases for links. Be descriptive when providing links. Link titles and other pertinent information within the flow of content.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram and others have gained popularity as a means for individuals and institutions to engage each other in more personal conversations. For Pellissippi State, social networks are another opportunity to reach out to prospective and current students, alumni, faculty and staff, and other friends and supporters.

Social media sites are excellent channels for building relationships, communicating and receiving information, fielding questions, and monitoring the College’s reputation online. The social media communication vehicle is constantly changing. On a social media site, you are never an observer. You are a participant. The nature of social media is two-way communication. It’s not a megaphone; it’s a telephone.

Pellissippi State’s Marketing and Communications Office is responsible for the College’s official social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Tumblr and Pinterest; however, other departments, offices, organizations and units maintain their own presence on social media sites.

If you start a social media account for your area or unit, contact Marketing and Communications so we can help you promote it.

By design, social media communication is intended to be fast, personal, open, casual and friendly. Administrators of social media accounts affiliated with the College should be personal, open, casual and friendly as well. However, as representatives of the College, they should still
comply with Pellissippi State’s privacy, confidentiality and Web policies, and all federal requirements such as FERPA and HIPAA.

For more information, see Pellissippi State’s College-Related Web and Social Media Development and Use Policy 08:13:04. Employees who do not comply with these policies on social media risk disciplinary action.

Before you start a social media site for your department, office, organization or unit, have a plan. Consider who your audience is, what social media site that audience is most likely to use and how (or whether) social media will help you reach your goals. Also keep in mind that participation on a social media site requires work and near-constant upkeep. Social media is not like a Web page. It is not a stand-alone, create-and-forget-it medium. Provide frequent updates. Correspond with your followers.

In addition, remember that few people consider social media to be their final stop for information. Most users will trust information on an official College Web page or in the digital Catalog more than they will trust information presented on a social media site.

It’s generally a good idea to be sure multiple staff members have access to your social media accounts. Staying active in social media takes a lot of work, and providing others with access divides the job. It also allows for easy changes during vacations or staff changes.

SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES

1. Don’t tell secrets. As a representative of Pellissippi State, it can be fine to discuss work and it’s good to interact with the community, but it is never OK to publish confidential information—e.g., personal or personnel information, financial information, details of current projects, and proprietary research.

2. Think about the consequences of what you post.

3. Protect your own privacy. Privacy settings should be configured so profile information does not show personal, account administrator information. Social media sites are public and largely permanent. Be mindful of posting information, whether in your content or on your profile, that you wouldn’t want your mother to read … or that you wouldn’t want to see on the evening news.

4. Be friendly. Respect your audience, the College and your coworkers. Don’t be afraid to be yourself, but do so respectfully. Never engage in discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, disability, age, or status as a covered veteran. Don’t use offensive language or obscenities, and avoid offensive and defamatory comments.

5. Avoid arguments. If you see misrepresentations of the College in social media, you may point them out. But always do so with respect and with facts. Don’t troll. Don’t argue.
Don’t try to settle scores or goad competitors in inflammatory debates. Always make sure that what you’re saying is factually correct.

6. Be aware of potentially dangerous comments. If someone else posts something inflammatory, threatening to others or to him- or herself, or otherwise of serious concern, notify the proper authorities on campus. Take screenshots before deleting anything, and forward the screenshots to campus authorities. Also keep a copy for your own records.

7. Protect Pellissippi State students, alumni, employees and friends. Students, prospective students, donors, alumni, faculty, staff, business partners, suppliers and others should not be cited or referenced without their prior approval. Never discuss confidential details of a customer engagement. Avoid pseudonyms and indirect references; they’re confusing and can still violate non-disclosure agreements. If you’re in doubt, just don’t say anything at all.

8. Admit when you’re wrong. Be the first to respond to your mistakes. If you make an error, be upfront about it and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, declare that you have done so. If you post something improper, or if you are accused of posting something improper, deal with it immediately. It might be best to remove the post to lessen the possibility of legal action.

9. Make a disclaimer. Many social media users include a prominent disclaimer saying who they work for and that they are not speaking officially. It is good practice in general to make it clear that the views you express are yours and yours alone. However, don’t count on disclaimers to keep you out of trouble. They might not have much of a legal effect.