Chapter/Network Social Media Policy and Guidelines

The Texas Exes would like to encourage our chapters and networks to engage with the online community through social media. The following policy statements and guidelines are meant to assist you in your social media efforts, while protecting the interests and reputation of the Texas Exes. By posting on these sites as a chapter or network of the Texas Exes, you represent the Texas Exes and volunteers are expected to adhere to these guidelines and policies when using the Texas Exes name or brand.

Section 1: Policies for all Social Media Sites

• **Inform us of your accounts:** when creating a new account for your chapter/network on any of the social media sites, email the Texas Exes Staff letting them know the URL of your group, page, channel or other account. The Texas Exes will link to these sites from our website and this will allow us to publicize your presence on these sites.

• **Naming and logo use:** all chapter/network social media sites should include Texas Exes and your specific chapter or network name in the site. Please use the format “Texas Exes CITY Chapter/Network” to ensure consistency. To be consistent with our brand, you need to use your official chapter logo on the site. If you need a copy of your chapter/network logo, please contact the Texas Exes Staff. When setting up a Twitter background, you may contact us for the Texas Exes chapter Twitter background we have created for chapters who would like to use it.

• **Transferring administrative status:** we know that chapter leaders change positions and sometimes rotate off the board each summer. The current president should have administrative capabilities on your social media sites and other board members should be given administrative capabilities as the chapter/network board sees fit. The current president should add incoming presidents to administrator status, and/or give them account login information before they take office. The board can determine if the past president will remain an administrator, but it is recommended that you remove the past presidents’ administrator status after one year if they no longer have an active role in the chapter.

• **Respect copyright and fair use:** when posting, be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others. Do not use the Texas Exes logo or name to promote a product, cause, political candidate or any other endorsement.

• **Terms of service:** social media sites have their own terms of service. Make sure you obey these terms of service or your account with the site may be suspended.

Section 2: Guidelines for Social Media Use

• **Respect and Ethics:** we encourage different viewpoints and opinions, and as a participant in social media, you should, too. Be respectful of others’ viewpoints. If you disagree and would like to engage in a conversation, do so cordially, logically and ethically.

• **Accuracy and Honesty:** double check facts and details before you post – remember, once you post, it is out there. If there is a Web site you used to gather facts, provide the link for your readers to show accountability. Also, always write in the first person. If you make a mistake, admit it. Your followers will be more willing to forgive and forget if you are up front and quick with your correction. Maintain a high level of quality that exhibits superior grammar, punctuation and spelling.

• **Transparency and Disclosure:** when communicating using social media or blogs on behalf of the Texas Exes, make sure you identify yourself as a volunteer of the Texas Exes. It should be clear when posting opinions of any sort that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the Texas Exes.
Section 3: Best Practices for Social Media

- **Value and Interest**: when posting to your blog, Twitter or Facebook, ask yourself if your content adds value and interest to the discussion. Make sure your comment, post or tweet is a valued piece of information. There are millions of people, companies and universities on the Web. If you want to stand above the clutter, make sure you provide content that is exciting, engaging and stimulating.

- **Personality**: in the social media realm, you are encouraged to use your own voice and bring your personality to the forefront. The Web is a venue that is relaxed, open and diverse—embrace it. A voice that is over-institutionalized and rehearsed can repel your audience. Make sure your site is not a place for self-promotion. Some social media sites, such as Twitter, close down such sites.

- **Planning**: putting in place a social media calendar of sorts for the year can help to organize you on how to cross promote your material and the times of year when you know you will have big events and may want to do extra posts. Also think about who on your board would be the best person to handle your social media needs and whether that is one person or multiple people. Make sure you are consistently contributing content. You don’t want to let your followers down by only posting a couple times a year.

- **Join the conversation**: listening and responding to your constituents through social media sites is just as important as posting information. Make sure you are responding to posts and questions from your followers and fans. Being a part of the conversation already happening about your chapter shows you care and creates community. Also realize that it isn’t just about what you are saying, it is also about the connections your fans and followers are making to other chapter members through the site.

- **Be brief and link when possible**: ideally, posts should be very brief; redirecting visitors to content that resides on another site. Whenever possible, link back to your chapter Website or the Texas Exes Website.

Section 4: Social Media Tips by platform

[BLOG]

Of all the social media tools available to Texas Exes chapters, a dynamic blog is one of the most important and underutilized resources. Think about your blog as a relationship-builder within your community—in many ways it your chapter’s media outlet (think of it like a “Dallas Texas Exes” newspaper) and the best way to approach it is to consider how you can provide value to both current membership and others in your local area. The best sign that you are providing value is when people want to share the link to your blog with others in their network. So, how should you approach your blog?

- Work with the leadership team in your chapter to create an editorial calendar that allows you to plan ahead for upcoming posts and keep the blog fresh. If possible, assign one person as the blog’s editor.

- As you create your editorial calendar, think about the following ideas as potential posts:
  - **Interviews**. Never underestimate the power of interviews as a relationship builder. Are there local community leaders (business, political, sports, etc.) you could interview as part of a Texas Exes interview series? The topics could focus on higher education and a look back at their time at UT. These interviewees could be members or not—the important thing is that you target those who the chapter wants a better relationship with. Think about it...how many times have you been asked to do an interview for a blog? It doesn’t happen very often and, when it does, we are very appreciative and look for ways to reciprocate. Another way to target interviewees is to think about upcoming events in your local area and interview those putting on the events—from bands coming to town...
to a big high school football game. The more frequently you update your blog, the better search engine optimization it will have. The higher profile the people you interview have, the more traffic you will drive to your blog. The better the interviews are, the more likely people are to share them. It works on so many levels and, best of all, these interviews are a great networking tool for whoever heads them up for your chapter.

- **Texas Exes Spotlight.** Ever read *Esquire*? Aside from “The Answer Man,” the “what I’ve learned” series is one of the best parts of the magazine. Think about having each member of your chapter write a “what I’ve learned” post, which would essentially be a look back at their life since graduating and what they have learned since. One post could hit the blog a week (would be a nice series) and each time someone’s “what I’ve learned” piece posts, they are going to paste the link in an email or add it to their Facebook page and share it with their entire network. Again, because most people don’t get a lot of blog coverage, this provides great value and visibility for your members.

- **Think local.** Sure, it’s great to talk Texas football on your blog, but is that really going to outrank other sports-focused websites in a search? Your goal is not to rank highly on a national level, it is to build better visibility within your local community. A great community-focused blog expands the reach of your chapter beyond simply a networking group into a community resource. Be a place local citizens can go to see a rundown of local events, read tips on preparing their teenager for college, see pictures of local events, etc.

  - **Be interesting. Be different. Have fun.**

**[Twitter]**

On the surface Twitter seems superficial, crass and even silly and we know that while many of you may have set up a chapter Twitter account, few seem to view it as a viable channel. Here’s the thing with Twitter—if used correctly, it is the second best resource for building relationships on behalf of your chapter (behind your blog). So, how should you approach your Twitter feed?

- If you haven’t yet signed up for Twitter, please go with a username consistent with most Texas Exes chapters. If you have not created it already, it’s best to go with “TexasExesCHAPTER” format so that it’s easily searchable for people in your area (for example, “TexasExesSA”)

- Your Twitter feed should have both a local and national content strategy. Nationally, it makes sense to connect with other Texas Exes chapters (share ideas), higher education resources and perhaps even UT football players. Locally, you’re looking to use the Twitter account as a chance to create and build relationships with local political leaders, companies, leaders and citizens. Unlike Facebook, where people go to interact with people they already know, Twitter is all about meeting new people and it can be a great way to connect with both current members and others you want to know.

- Twitter has its own language to it. Spend your first two weeks “listening” before you begin pushing out content. Learn how to use @ replies to your advantage and make key connections along the way.
[Facebook]
Most of our chapters are well-versed on the benefits that Facebook can provide, both in terms of communicating with current members and giving those who visit chapter events a place to connect with the chapter over the long-term. Here are a few quick ideas for Facebook:

- If you currently have a page (of course you do), make sure it is frequently updated and not static (if you don’t have a page, go to http://Facebook.com/pages).
- To avoid frustrating your community, don’t connect Facebook with Twitter—what works in one doesn’t always work in the other.
- Get visual—add pictures, videos and other content outside of just text to up your rankings. People love images and fly right by long text.
- Grab a custom URL. Once your page has 25 ‘likes,’ you can go to http://Facebook.com/username and grab a custom URL (for example: http://Facebook.com/texasexesdallas).
- Use “tagging” to your advantage. If you are writing something about a member, other chapter or local business, tag them in your post by putting “@” before their name (Facebook should auto-populate). This will post your post to that person or business’s wall and increase impressions for your page.

[LinkedIn]
Many who join Texas Exes do so for the networking opportunities that come along with it and no social media site is more focused on business networking than LinkedIn. If your chapter doesn’t have a LinkedIn group established, this can be a great way to connect your members to each other in a more professional environment.

[Misc.]
Social media is constantly evolving and it’s important to try to stay as well-versed as you can with the latest trends and best practices. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you get more active within social media:

- **Google.** While a lot was expected from Google+ it has yet to become a leader in the social media world. It continues to grow, though, so it would not be to your disadvantage to check it out and possibly start a page. [www.plus.google.com](http://www.plus.google.com).
- **Online brand audit.** Ever searched “Texas Exes Denver” or “Texas Exes Tyler” on Google? If not, type in your chapter’s name on Google and as you review the results, think about a potential member doing the same search and ask yourself “how easy are we making it to connect with us online?” If you don’t dominate page one, the tips in this sheet will help.
- **Video?** Video is as easy as breaking out an iPhone during a chapter event, so don’t underestimate how effective great video (coupled with a bit of editing) can be in raising your chapter’s profile.

Feel free to email the Texas Exes Staff at any time for social media advice or suggestions. We are here to help!