University at Buffalo Faculty Senate (@UBFacultySenate) and Professional Staff Senate (@UBPSS) Enter the Social Media Universe: Is the University Faculty Senate (@SUNYUFS) Next?

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Social media is a powerful, efficient, and inexpensive tool for communication and education. These web-based applications allow you to create your own personal web content, acquire and exchange information, and create and maintain professional relationships. This article will focus specifically on Twitter—how to use it and how it can benefit you as a member of the State University of New York (SUNY) University Faculty Senate (UFS).

Twitter allows you to share messages of 140 characters or less with your followers in the form of a "tweet." You can mention another account in the tweet, add a picture, or even create a poll. You can conveniently access Twitter through an app on your smartphone or through the Twitter website on a computer. First, create an account by choosing a username, beginning with an @ symbol, that is 15 characters or less and unique to your account. After creating an account, you have the option of adding a profile picture to help others identify you and give credibility to your account. If you are having trouble setting up an account, you can access the Twitter Help Center at *https://support/twitter.com/*.

Twitter has a number of great features that help you actively engage with your followers. A few of these features are explained below so that you can easily adjust to the new Twitter environment:

- Retweet   : Clicking on this button gives you the option to "Retweet" or "Quote Retweet" Retweeting simply reposts another account's tweet on your profile page; your followers will be able to see the tweet. Quote Retweet allows you to post your own comments on top of the original tweet, and will be attached and on your profile page for all of your followers to see.

- Reply   : Clicking this button allows you to respond to a tweet with your own comments. The account you are responding to will be mentioned in the tweet at the beginning and all of your followers will be able to see this message.

- Like   : Each time you click this button on a tweet, that tweet goes into a category of tweets on your profile page called "Likes." The tweet you liked will not appear on your followers' timelines, but your followers can access these tweets by going to the "likes" category on your profile page.

- Hashtag #: Hashtags are a word or phrase preceded by a hash or pound sign (#) and used to identify messages on a specific topic. It is a key way to search for content on social media and it can help you to group conversations together and filter through millions of posts.

You can mention one of your followers in a tweet by mentioning their @username in your tweet, or you can privately message (commonly known as direct message) one of your followers using the messages component (envelope icon), or by putting a "DM" in front of their username.

An ideal tweet should have four essential features:

1. A username to reach your target audience (or their followers),
2. A succinct and cogent message in 140 characters or less (this is the hard part),

3. A URL to direct readers to more information, and

4. A photo from your camera roll or a relevant screen shot, perhaps from the URL you referenced above.

Figure 1. Examples of @SUNYUFS and @UBFacultySenate tweets.

Your goal is to create tweets that transmit salient information, in the hopes that your audience will "like" and even more importantly, "retweet" your tweets.

Once you have acclimated to the Twitter world, you will be ready to incorporate it into your professional life and, in particular, the UFS. To help you get started, we have provided this table of important accounts to follow on Twitter:

Figure 2. Table of Important Accounts to Follow on Twitter.

Following these accounts will provide you with quick and accurate snippets of information that might be of interest to you. Many tweets include pictures that you might not get to see otherwise and links to more information on relevant stories. You can also follow accounts of journals and newspapers that appeal to you as an easy and convenient way to obtain links to articles. Twitter is a great way to access news from all different sources in one place. Another benefit of Twitter is the ability to connect with others in your work place and across SUNY campuses to create and maintain professional relationships. After a meeting, event, or conference you can connect with those at the event by creating tweets with the hashtag #TTHM. TTHM stands for 'The Take Home Message;' there should be four key take home messages from the event.

The University at Buffalo Faculty Senate (@UBFacultySenate) and the University at Buffalo Professional Staff Senate (@UBPSS) have Twitter accounts, which we encourage all faculty and

professional staff to follow. This account provides faculty and professional staff with timely and relevant information about upcoming meetings and events, stories featuring UB that would be of interest to faculty, take home messages from meetings, and an opportunity for faculty and professional staff to provide feedback and voice their opinions. This is great way to get involved with the UB Faculty Senate and UB Professional Staff Senate and acquire and exchange information. The future is moving toward online social networking and Twitter is a valuable resource for news, ideas, and communication so be sure to actively engage on Twitter.

The question is, "Will faculty and professional staff adopt this new skill set or will it become extinct?"

Faculty, professional staff and UFS senators can use Twitter at least three different ways:

- The easiest and most common modality is an information gatherer or "listener;" this is informative and passive. Many different tweets will appear on your news feed and you can discover a great deal of information this way.

- Or you can be an information "sharer." Twitter makes it very easy to share things you have read or seen.

- And last, but perhaps best suited for faculty and professional staff, you can be an information creator. Twitter is more beneficial if you actively engage and participate. As faculty and professional staff, your job is to innovate and inspire. Twitter is another way to share your original ideas about your area of expertise (or not) and influence your institution.

Figure 3. Three categories of social media users.

The Supreme Court heard a case in February 2017 on the right of citizens to be blocked from Facebook or social media. You can access the article here. Justice Elena Kagan said during her remarks, "The president now uses twitter…everybody uses Twitter. All 50 governors, all 100 senators, every member of the House has a Twitter account.

"So this has become a…crucially important channel of political communication. These sites have become embedded in our culture as ways to communicate and ways to exercise our constitutional rights."
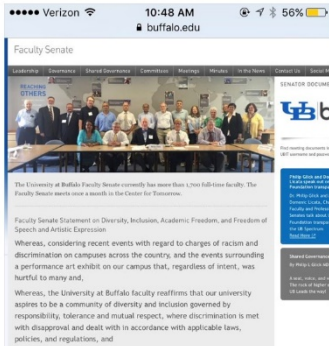
Who saw this coming?

As SUNY faculty and professional staff leaders it's time we all step up and accept Justice Kagan's challenge.

For more information on social media, access the presentation on social media presented at the UFS 175th Winter Plenary.

Figure 1.

Figure 2.

@SUNY
@SUNYUFS
Any specific SUNY campus account
Any specific SUNY campus Faculty Senate account
@nancyzimpher
@uupinfo
@AAUP
@NYGovCuomo
@SUNYSA

Figure 3

Three categories of social media users

Information gatherer "Listener"

Information sharer

Information creator