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 governed by the University of South Florida Board of Trustees (“USF”). 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 USF 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 USF messaging is consistent with the university’s branding and communication strategy.

III. APPLICABILITY & AUTHORITY

The following Policy applies to all campuses and their respective; departments; colleges; schools; centers; institutes; and programs (“USF Units”) that are communicating, either directly or indirectly, and formally or informally, on behalf of USF.
IV. METHODS OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

A. Official External USF Websites

Websites produced in direct support of and sponsored by USF Units with a primary audience of external users are considered Official USF Websites (“USF 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 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.

For the purposes of this Policy, the following sites are not considered USF 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 Unit.
4. Employees websites used for internal business purposes only.

B. Official Internal USF Websites

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

All USF Portal Sites must be managed through the USF 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 Unit to communicate on behalf of USF shall be considered an Official USF Social Media Account and requires a faculty or administrative sponsor. For reference, general guidelines for Official USF Social Media Accounts include the following:

1. USF 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 USF or USF Unit, or present a social media account as an official USF account unless authorized to do so.

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

4. New Accounts: If a USF Unit would like to establish an Official USF 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 Social Media Accounts in which the employee manages and do not purport to communicate on behalf of USF.

6. USF Unit social media accounts shall not post emergency notifications, communications, or instructions except as authorized in accordance with *Policy 6-010 USF 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 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 Internet Websites, Official USF Portal Sites, and Official USF Social Media Accounts (“USF Digital Resources”) are those of USF. 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 Digital Resources and associated IT Resources shall not be used to advertise or sell non-USF products or services. Only USF 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 USF are the official symbols and registered trademarks of USF and may only be used in compliance with [Policy 0-215 Use of USF 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 Digital Resources in violation of [Policy 0-501 Information Technology Resources – Use and Protection](#).
Use of USF Digital Resources must be in compliance with Policy 0-502 Appropriate Use of Information Technology Resources.

E. Personal Use of Official Websites/Accounts
USF Digital Resources shall be used to support the mission of USF 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 USF or any third party. All third party content distributed through USF 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 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 communication must be authorized by UCM at ucm@usf.edu.

H. Domain Naming
USF is the sole owner of the usf.edu domain name and governs the use of the domain name for its academic, communication and research missions. Information related to the Tampa campus is hosted on www.usf.edu. USF uses two sub-domains of usf.edu, “stpetersburg” and “sarasotamanatee,” to reference specific information related to the St. Petersburg and the Sarasota-Manatee campuses respectively (i.e. stpetersburg.usf.edu and sarasotamanatee.usf.edu).

1. Standard Addressing
Standard addressing for USF External Websites will be: www.usf.edu/<keyword> or www.<stpetersburg/sarasotamanatee>.usf.edu/<keyword>, as applicable. UCM will work with applicable parties to establish the most appropriate keyword for each specific USF Unit.

It is understood that there may be other specific technical or business needs which require the use of third-level domain names that include a sub-domain (i.e.
For these exceptions, USF Units may submit a request for non-standard addressing to UCM for consideration.

2. Third-Party Vendors

It is recognized that USF regularly enters agreements with third-parties who host websites and applications for USF. USF 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 USF branding standards as provided on the UCM Site [http://www.usf.edu/ucm/marketing/brand.aspx].
   ii. USF has a properly executed contract with the service provider.
   iii. The third party adheres to all USF privacy policies.
   iv. The third party adheres to all USF security practices and policies.

3. Use of Top-Level Domain Extensions Other Than .edu:

   i. **com Addresses**: In order to protect USF’s identity and the public’s association with USF 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 USF’s academic and research mission occasionally calls for the use of .org or other non-standard usf.edu or other domain addressing. USF 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 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, USF Resources shall implement available technology within the CMS, the Portal, and social media platform(s) for all USF Resources as applicable. USF 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 Digital Resources in violation of USF Regulations and Policies or as determined by USF 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 logos on any website or social media account by anyone, including USF Units, in violation of USF Policy and/or the rights of USF is strictly prohibited. All use of USF 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 USF to enforce its rights does not constitute a waiver of such rights. USF 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](http://guides.lib.usf.edu/content.php?pid=56649&sid=419978)
- USF Policy 0-105 Copyright Materials- Use and General Principles
- USF Policy 0-108 Disability Accommodations (Public/Employees/Students)
- USF CMS Website Migration Process: [http://www.usf.edu/ucm/marketing/content-migration-process.aspx](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

Consolidation Amendments Effective: 7-1-20.