

Florida State University

“David Perry left Florida State University in August 2019. The university has not used Social Sentinel since 2020. It did not perform to our standards.” – Amy Farnum-Patronis, Director of News and Digital Communications

University of North Carolina at Asheville

“UNC Asheville began a three-year subscription for the Social Sentinel service on July 1, 2019. The UNC Asheville Department of Public Safety explored Social Sentinel as a potential mechanism to improve its university risk mitigation strategies. The subscription agreement expired on June 30, 2022, and was not renewed.” — Crissa Sinkovic, Co-Interim Associate Director of Communication & Marketing

North Carolina State University

Why did the college purchase Social Sentinel?

To identify threats by monitoring public social media posts across a wide range of platforms.

Why did NC State stop using Social Sentinel?

The product did not function as expected.

Why did Chief Moorman seek to monitor individuals with Social Sentinel? Did he, or anyone else from NC State, ever actually use Social Sentinel to monitor individual social media users? If so, how many times and were these users students at the university?

Chief Moorman retired in October 2019 and the university cannot speak on his behalf. The product was used to identify possible threats to the university or a university-sponsored group/event through social media monitoring. The product was not used to target individuals or groups for enforcement and could not be used to access information that wasn't publicly available.

Did NC State ever use Geofeedia to monitor protests, or collaborate with NC SBI/ISAAC/FBI JTTF for this purpose?

The NC State Police Department never used Geofeedia to monitor protests. We communicate with law enforcement partners to share information about critical incidents which have potential impacts to the campus community and surrounding area.

Did the service ever identify an instance where a student was potentially suicidal or threatened to commit a school shooting? If so, please elaborate on this/these incident(s).

“Unknown.”

Roughly what percentage of alerts received by the service were irrelevant/false positives?

“Unknown.”

Was the service ever used to monitor protests/demonstrations? If so, which ones and why?

“No.”

Did Social Sentinel ever promote the ability to monitor for protests/demonstrations when pitching the service? Was this an attractive feature for the college?

“No. Social Sentinel only advertised to us that they could/would be able to monitor social media platforms.”

Did Social Sentinel ever promote their ability to monitor Gmail or Outlook to the school? Did the university ever use either of these services? If so, why and for how long?

“No. Social Sentinel only advertised to us that they could/would be able to monitor social media platforms.”

What (if any) policies did the university have governing how the Social Sentinel service could be used?

The university only monitors information in the public domain.

Were students ever informed about the use of the Social Sentinel service? If so, how and how often?

“Unknown” – Mick Kulikowski, Director of Strategic Communications and Media Relations

Shasta College

"We will not be responding at this time." – Peter Griggs, Director of Marketing, Communications, and Public Relations

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

"I did try to track down answers to your questions, but leadership of the relevant divisions and the University Police Department has changed. Decisions about Social Sentinel were made by individuals no longer affiliated with the university, and we don't have information regarding decisions about its use or discontinuation that would allow us to provide answers to the questions. For #3, no one here (*sic*) could recall a helpful notification from Social Sentinel." – Cynthia Peters, Senior Media Relations Specialist

University of Texas at Dallas

Why did UT Dallas purchase this technology?

The UT Dallas Police Department (UTDPD) had noticed an increase in mental health calls during the year prior in which callers had seen concerning social media posts and contacted the police department for assistance.

How much did/ does the university pay for this technology?

UTDPD purchased Social Sentinel in September 2018 with a three-year contract for \$12,750 per year.

Does the university still use Social Sentinel? If not, why did you stop? If so, why is it still worth it?

UTDPD will not be renewing the contract after it ends Sept. 1, 2021. UTDPD did not find it helpful. Social Sentinel scans public social media posts; private posts are not captured.

This excludes a significant amount of social media posts.

Were students ever informed about the use of Social Sentinel? If so, how exactly?

No.

How, if at all, did the university consider and address the potential privacy invasions caused by this technology?

Social Sentinel only scans social media posts users choose to make public; private posts are not captured.

Are/were there any policies governing the use of Social Sentinel technology? If so,

what were they?

No.

Who has/had access to reports from Social Sentinel?

Members of the UT Dallas Behavioral Assessment Intervention Team and staff members who assist in responding to emergencies. The Social Sentinel results were not shared outside of those groups.

Did/ Does the university use any other social media or email monitoring technology (Gaggle, Securly, Go Guardian, Geofeedia, Media Sonar, LightSpeed Relay etc.)?

No.

Can you name a specific instance where this technology helped prevent an instance of violence or self-harm?

No.

Has the university ever used Social Sentinel for purposes other than preventing self-harm or violence? More specifically, have you ever used this technology to monitor activists or protestors?

“No.”

Did the use of Social Sentinel ever result in a student being disciplined in any way, including but not limited to being arrested, suspended, expelled or put on academic probation?

“No.” – Brittany Magelssen, Media Manager

The University of Oregon

"The University of Oregon Police Department used Social Sentinel from 2017 to 2019. The UOPD staff person who worked to acquire and then managed this service is no longer with the university. The police chief from that time also has left the UO." — Kay Jarvis, Director of Public Affairs & Issues Management

Palm Beach State College

"The College has not utilized the services of Social Sentinel since 2020, following a three-year engagement with the company to monitor campus safety. The College works with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to monitor any potential threats to campus safety." — Angela Harrington, Chief Communications and Public Affairs Officer

Indian River State College

“Indian River State College’s initial use of Social Sentinel began in September 2018. The service started under a past college administration. College administration changed, and we discontinued the use of Social Sentinel.” – Suzanne Seldes, Associate Vice President of Communications and Public Information Officer

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University

The college used Social Sentinel's Local+ List feature in 2019 to surface tweets critical of Chancellor Martin, after a cheerleader reported that her rape complaint was ignored by her coaches.

“A&T did not purchase or use Social Sentinel’s Local + List feature. We used the basic Social Sentinel service as a brand/reputation management tool.”

Mr. Simmons wrote in a July 2019 email that Social Sentinel was “of little value” and called for the universities contract to be canceled. He also wrote “Over the course of the past year, we can only point to a couple of situations that Social Sentinel reported to us on social media that we were not already aware of...On the flip side, the platform generated scores of useless alerts over posts that were not problematic and had no potential of becoming problematic. We estimate that 90 percent of what it alerted us to were false positives.”

“We found the technology used by the service was not sophisticated enough (for our purposes) to differentiate social media slang from traditional use of similar phrasing.”

Why did the college purchase Social Sentinel?

“To monitor social media activity that might have an impact on the A&T brand, particularly activity we were not aware of.”

Why did the college feel like it needed to use Social Sentinel to monitor tweets critical of Chancellor Martin, in response to the cheerleader's allegations?

“The premise of the question is false, as explained in no. 1 in the section above.”

Were any students' names and/or social media usernames inputted into the service? If so, whose names/usernames and why?

“No.”

Was the service ever used to monitor any other protests/demonstrations? If so, which ones and why?

“No.”

Did the service ever identify an instance where a student was potentially suicidal or threatened to commit a school shooting? If so, please elaborate on this/these incident(s).

“Potentially suicidal, yes. Threatening a school shooting, no.”

Did Social Sentinel ever promote their ability to monitor Gmail or Outlook to the school? Did the university ever use either of these services? If so, why and for how long?

“A&T did not use Social Sentinel to monitor e-mail of any kind.”

What (if any) policies did the university have governing how the Social Sentinel service could be used?

“Social Sentinel was only used to monitor information readily available to any social media user. A policy to govern this limited use of the platform was not needed.”

Were students ever informed about the use of the Social Sentinel service? If so, how and how often?

“We were not using Social Sentinel to monitor e-mail or any individual social media users, and so had no reason to inform students about its use.”

Thank you for your response. Attached below is a screenshot of an email we received as part of a public records request we received, which lists all of the words and phrases that were added to the Local+ list regarding Chancellor Martin and the cheerleader's allegation.

From: [Tonya D. Dixon](#)
To: [Blair Stephenson](#)
Subject: RE: Social Sentinel Introduction
Date: Tuesday, February 19, 2019 12:19:00 PM

Hi Blair,

Yes, please add these in.

Tonya D. Dixon

University Social Media Manager & Staff Writer

From: Blair Stephenson <bstephenson@socialsentinel.com>

Sent: Tuesday, February 19, 2019 7:48 AM

To: Tonya D. Dixon <tdixon1@ncat.edu>

Subject: Re: Social Sentinel Introduction

Hi Tonya,

Thanks for getting back to me so quickly. Let's go with Friday at 2 PM Eastern. In the meantime I would like to get your approval to add in below terms to **local** plus (something we will discuss further on our call). Please reply with your approval when you have a moment so that I can have the team get these added in.

#aggiecollective #aggiesdo #mentionmartin sexual violence ++N.C. A&T sexual violence ++North Carolina A&T sexual violence ++NC A&T sexual violence ++A&T sexual assault survivors ++N.C. A&T sexual assault survivors ++North Carolina A&T sexual assault survivors ++NC A&T sexual assault survivors ++A&T Rape ++N.C. A&T Rape ++North Carolina A&T Rape ++NC A&T Rape ++A&T Chancellor Harold Martin @WholsHLM support rape survivors ++N.C. A&T support rape survivors ++North Carolina A&T support rape survivors ++NC A&T support rape survivors ++A&T sexual violence ++N.C. A&T sexual violence ++North Carolina A&T sexual violence ++NC A&T sexual violence ++A&T improving A&T's policies protect rape survivors from harassment ++N.C. A&T protect rape survivors from harassment ++North Carolina A&T protect rape survivors from harassment ++NC A&T protect rape survivors from harassment ++A&T protect rape survivors from bullying ++N.C. A&T protect rape survivors from bullying ++North Carolina A&T protect rape survivors from bullying ++NC A&T protect rape survivors from bullying ++A&T A&T cheerleaders coaches be fired ++N.C. A&T coaches be fired ++North Carolina A&T coaches be fired ++NC A&T coaches be fired ++A&T A&T acted slowly I don't pay \$ to be raped Protect women ++N.C. A&T Protect women ++North Carolina A&T Protect women ++NC A&T Protect women ++A&T A&T residence halls Nicole Pride interim vice provost for academic strategy and operations

Thanks!

Blair

Would you like to stand by your statement?

"What you see in that e-mail is an effort to upsell us to the Local Plus product. We declined the offer. My responses stand." – Todd Simmons, Associate Vice Chancellor for University Relations.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

"The University uses Social Sentinel to identify threatening or concerning public social media posts surrounding events and campus activities that require campus public safety. The resource is an industry best practice, only uses public information and does not collect private personal information. The University coordinates with and relies on assistance from state and federal law enforcement agencies when appropriate in order to ensure campus safety."

Texas State University

"The University Police Department has an invoice and purchase authorization from using Social Sentinel for one year in fiscal year 2017. The staff communicating with the vendor are no longer at Texas State. The university does not currently have a contract with the vendor." – Jayme Blaschke, Senior Media Relations Manager

Arizona State University

"We do not currently use Social Sentinel. The university does use various processes and procedures to protect our campuses, and we take all threats to the ASU community seriously." – Veronica Sanchez, Media Relations Director

Collin College

Did the service ever identify an instance where a student was potentially suicidal or threatened to commit a school shooting? If so, please elaborate on this/these incident(s).

"No."

Roughly what percentage of alerts received by the service were irrelevant/false positives?

Percentages are not available. Information was evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Was the service ever used to monitor protests/demonstrations? If so, which ones and why?

"No."

Did Social Sentinel ever promote the ability to monitor for protests/demonstrations when pitching the service? Was this an attractive feature for the college?

"No."

Were any students' names and/or social media usernames inputted into the service? If so, whose names/usernames and why?

"No. The college would not have allowed that to take place."

Did Social Sentinel ever promote their ability to monitor Gmail or Outlook to the school? Did the university ever use either of these services? If so, why and for how long?

"No."

What (if any) policies did the university have governing how the Social Sentinel service could be used?

"Yes. The college has cybersecurity policies in place."

Were students ever informed about the use of the Social Sentinel service? If so, how and how often?

"Based on the information available, we cannot determine whether students were informed in writing in 2018." – Marisela Cadena-Smith, Director of Marketing & Communications

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University

1. Why did the college purchase Social Sentinel?

"We purchased a subscription to Social Sentinel to assist our work with our behavioral intervention team – the FAMU Assessment and Care Team (ACT)."

2. When did you first start using it? If you stopped using the service, when did you stop and why?

"We discontinued our contract in 2020. Our primary focus at that time was to address the COVID-19 pandemic."

3. *How much did the university pay for Social Sentinel?*

“\$12,500 annually from 2018 - 2020.”

4. *Did the service ever identify an instance where a student was potentially suicidal or threatened to commit a school shooting? If so, please elaborate on this/these incident(s).*

“Yes. The service notified us regarding troubling messages posted by several students and we were able to follow up with them. There were no serious consequences (suicides or school shootings) that arose from any of those cases.”

5. *Roughly what percentage of alerts received by the service were irrelevant/false positives?*

“I cannot remember specific numbers. After our staff review there were a fair number of messages that were not actionable. This was mainly due to staff being able to put the messages in context with their knowledge of current campus activities, popular songs and tv programs.”

6. *Was the service ever used to monitor protests/demonstrations? If so, which ones and why?*

“No, the service was not used for that purpose.”

7. *Did Social Sentinel ever promote the ability to monitor for protests/demonstrations when pitching the service? Was this an attractive feature for the college?*

“This was not promoted to us nor was it how we intended to utilize the platform. Our interest was to utilize available tools to help identify students that may be at risk of mental health or safety issues.”

8. *Were any students’ names and/or social media usernames inputted into the service? If so, whose names/usernames and why?*

“We did not input any student names into the service.”

9. *Did Social Sentinel ever promote their ability to monitor Gmail or Outlook to the school? Did the university ever use either of these services? If so, why and for how long?*

“Only publicly available social media accounts were scanned by Social Sentinel for FAMU.”

10. *What (if any) policies did the university have governing how the Social Sentinel service could be used?*

“Access to Social Sentinel was limited to several members of the intervention team who monitored reports.”

11. *Were students ever informed about the use of the Social Sentinel service? If so, how and how often?*

“There was no formal notice to students about the use of Social Sentinel. The service surveilled only publicly accessible information on social media.” — Tanya Tatum, Director of Student Health Services

Florida Atlantic University

"FAU does not comment on the security plans and techniques in place to protect the safety of the University community. As a result, we are unable to confirm or deny the existence of the systems and information referenced in your request." — Joshua Glanzer, Associate Vice President of Media Relations and Public Affairs

Anne Arundel Community College

"The college does not wish to comment." — Angie Hamlet, Public Relations Manager

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

"No one is available for an interview, but I can confirm that a small handful of MIT Police and Emergency Management personnel had access to Social Sentinel from 2015 to 2018 as one tool to identify public threats, and only publicly accessible content was scanned. We discontinued when the initial contract ended." — Sarah McDonnell, Deputy Director of Media Relations

Oakland University

The Oakland University Police Department utilized the services of Social Sentinel from August of 2016 through July of 2019. During that time, a geofence was established which included the entire campus as well as 1/2 mile radius around the University. We had established key words for the system to monitor, filter, and forward pre-identified words or phrases to my email so I could determine if the posting was threatening in nature or if police intervention was needed. I felt the University needed this type of service because many universities across the country had experienced active shooter incidents and Social Sentinel offered a service that could perhaps provide indicators that a student, staff, or faculty member was planning such an attack on Oakland's campus.

When the service was first introduced, there was a period of time where the filtering process had to be modified. There was a fine line between receiving many irrelevant messages and capturing posts that were truly concerning. After some time, I felt we had tweaked the system as well as we could, however, the percentage of irrelevant posts were still relatively high. I do remember receiving a few posts during the three year period that were concerning and we did involve either the OUPD in intervention efforts or we forwarded the information to the appropriate jurisdiction for their follow up. We did use the service to monitor social media posts with regard to large events on campus, especially if we had a VIP or dignitary protection detail.

Social Sentinel never promoted their ability to monitor Gmail or Outlook, only specific social media services (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) I remember being told that Social Sentinel had to establish an agreement with individual social media service providers and that not all services were monitored.

All in all, I found their service helpful. We paid \$20,500 annually for their service and after the three year contract, I decided there were better uses of that money as the police budget is limited and other demands surfaced that needed funding." - Mark Gordon, Chief of Police

Duke University

"We wouldn't comment on this." – Erin Duggan Kramer, Associate Vice President of University Communications

Virginia Commonwealth University

"VCU Police entered into a contract with Social Sentinel beginning in September 2015 solely to assess publicly available social media streams for potential threats to security, public safety, harm, self-harm or acts of violence. The contract ended in August 2017. VCU Police paid \$9,999 the first year and \$15,000 the second year. VCU Police did not use Social Sentinel for email monitoring, only to find publicly accessible information related to potential threats to security, public safety, harm, self-harm or acts of violence posted on publicly accessible accounts, which were on Internet-based, social media platforms." -Corey Byers, Public Information Officer

Grand Rapids Community College

"Grand Rapids Community College no longer uses Social Sentinel, and has not for some time. We used it only for security purposes as part of an effort to be proactive and keep our campus community safe. The software looked for keywords and phrases that might indicate a threat to our campus. We would only receive alerts if one of those keywords or phrases were used, and would only see the Tweets that were in the alert."