



Oklahoma State University

2020

Social Media Influencer
Program Implementation

INTRODUCTION

Many universities and college campuses around the U.S. have implemented programs that allow students to represent them on social media platforms such as ambassador and brand representative programs.

Some campuses are partnering with or showcasing social media influencers who are, or will be attending their schools. This has the potential to gain schools immediate publicity. While effective in gaining social media attention, it also has some drawbacks. These influencers could post negative or derogatory content concerning the school. It would be difficult for the university to monitor the publicity they were receiving and the audiences these influencers were reaching.

On the other hand, some campuses have social media ambassadors and brand programs for students to take part in. While these programs work to provide positive publicity for campuses, most don't provide effective content or have the follower base it requires to gain much attention.

After researching different plans for social media visibility, I decided to focus on creating a concrete social media influencer program. Implementing this program would utilize a combination of the above tactics from both the brand programs and individual influencers, specifically recruiting students with a certain number of followers and knowledge per platform to form a large group that will be held to certain standards and guidelines, rewarded with incentives, which will allow schools a greater say in content produced by the student influencers.

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Program Implementation

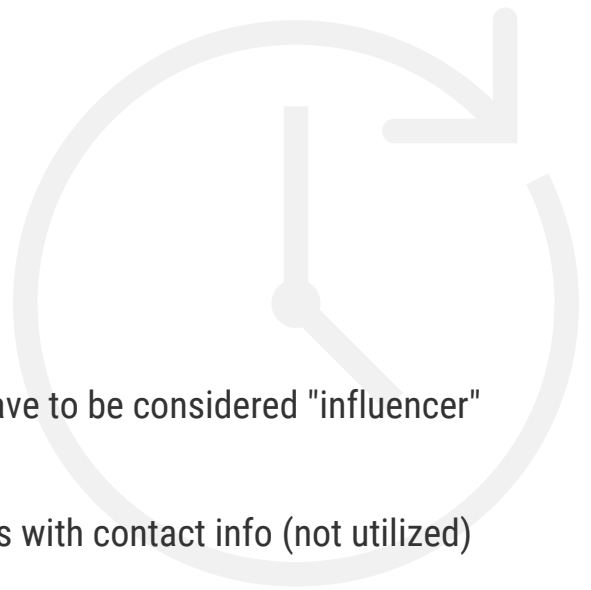
This project consisted of researching and creating a plan to implement a social media influencer program at Oklahoma State University. Due to Covid-19 closures, we were unable to completely implement the program this semester, but the guidelines, in this case, can be used for future reference and reflects recent research and documentation.

This social media influencer program consists of students who will represent campus life to current students, alumni, parents and, primarily, future students via social media. All content will depict Oklahoma State in a fun and honest way while remaining appropriate and positive.

To begin my research and planning process, I stayed in close contact with Megan Horton, director of branding and digital strategy at Oklahoma State. Ms. Horton has been researching how to implement a program like this one on campus. We were able to discuss our research and plans in order to come up with an effective solution.

This portfolio outlines the specific steps that were taken in order to create a social media influencer program on campus. The goal for the end of this project is to create a list of 30-40 people who would be prime influencers for the campus. The project came to a halt before applications were sent out. Therefore, we were unable to implement our program this semester. The steps following the creation of the application are relevant to those that should be followed in order to create a group in the future.

Project Timeline



February 14 -

- Research finished
- Determine platforms to be used
- Determine how many followers a person should have to be considered "influencer"

February 22 -

- List of major organizations and groups on campus with contact info (not utilized)

February 28 -

- Survey of what people would like to see as incentives for program. (not utilized)

March 6 -

- Create application

March 13 -

- Send out application to groups
- Post on various online platforms
- Email sent to students

March 27 -

- Create specific guidelines for new group

April 3 -

- Social media calendar

April 10 -

- Go through applications, stalk profiles, background info to make sure student is a good match
- Create list of 50 people

April 17 -

- Send out emails notifying and confirming these individuals

April 24 -

- Review portfolio/guide

May 1 -

- Full plan portfolio/guide due (dead week)

Research

While conducting research for this project, I decided to look into other schools who have already implemented social media influencer programs and/or individual social media influencers. Some of these schools include Baylor, UCLA, the University of Delaware and Kent State University.

The universities listed above don't have technical social media influencer groups. Rather, they have individual students attending their universities who are social media influencers in their own right, with large followings on their platforms.

Baylor's class of 2022 will include not one, but two YouTube influencers, Brooklyn and Bailey McKnight. The twins are from the Dallas area and have over five million YouTube subscribers. They also have more than a million followers on Instagram. Baylor has already released an article announcing that the young influencers will be joining the Baylor family.

While Baylor doesn't have a concrete social media influencer group, they are using their students to their advantage. These twins will document their college journey at Baylor with their five million YouTube fans watching closely. Not only are these students representing themselves, they are also representing the university. Depending on the influencer, this could be an opportunity for Baylor to receive a multitude of positive, or negative, publicity.

Kent State has implemented a social media ambassador program. A student must first apply to join this program and then must be accepted. There are certain requirements and a list of guidelines for each ambassador to take into account before posting or creating any social media content. This allows the university to play a larger role in controlling the publicity they receive from their social media ambassadors.

(Cont.)

Research Cont.

According to Forbes, "Over 70% of social media users hit the college sweet spot: individuals between the ages of 18-29." As a college student social media platforms are how I choose to receive the majority of information I take in on a daily basis. The first thing I do in the morning is check my Twitter feed.



Platforms

Below, I have included the multiple platforms we will be utilizing throughout the social media influencer program. To determine which platforms we would use, Megan and I sat down to discuss how we wanted to reach our chosen audience, most importantly potential new students. Because our audience is broad, we will be using various platforms to reach multiple generations.

I've included how many followers each platform should have to be considered an "influencer" from a normative viewpoint. The term influencer is a broad title that can be subjective. After looking at various articles, blogs and real-life influencers, these numbers fell in the median rang of what is considered normal for a college-aged social media influencer, (18-24)

Megan and I also discussed the presumed difficulty levels of each platform and included those below. These levels were determined by articles and from our own knowledge and experience.

YouTube (*difficult*) - 5,000 <

Instagram (*easy*) - 1,500 <

Twitter (*moderate*) - 2,000 <

TikTok (*difficult; new platform*) - 2,500 <

Facebook (*easy; older generation*) - 1,500 <

Snapchat (*easy*) - 2,000<



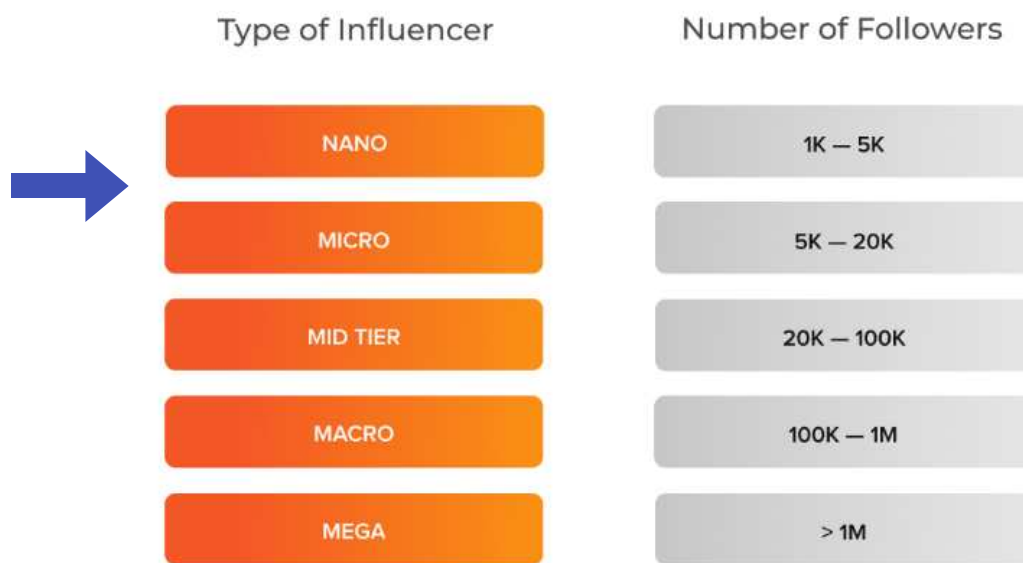
Group Capacity

Oklahoma State University's Stillwater campus has almost 25,000 students. Luckily, before I began this project, Megan had already talked to her department about how many students this particular program would be able to accommodate. We decided to cap the social media influencer group at 50 students. When taking this number into account, we kept in mind that most group participants should have **at least 1,000** followers on social media platforms. With 50 students, at a 1,000+ social media following rate, overall, our influencers should normatively be able to **reach 50,000+ people**.

Group Total = **50 students**

Type of Influencer

All social media platforms have different criteria when considering who qualifies as a social media influencer. Individuals with a social media following of 1,000 - 5,000 followers on any social media platform can be considered Nano influencers. These types of influencers have been in high demand due to the personal relationships they have with their followers. There are many types of influencers depending on the platform and the reach that an organization is trying to achieve.



We've decided to focus on Nano and Micro influencers. These specific influencers will have smaller followings but will also have a more loyal follower base. We'll use these numbers on our application criteria and to determine exactly which students would be a good fit for the program. With that being said, if a student with a larger follower base applies for the position, they won't be disqualified from the application process. We will take into account each applicant's current social media content and standing on their personal platforms, looking at creativity, consistency and interaction with followers.

Application Process

Applications and information about the new group will be posted on social media sites and sent via email to students. After all applications are received, we will sift through and determine which meet our specific criteria.

While determining who would fit our team criteria, it's important to keep in mind that this person will be representing the university. After narrowing down the applications to those who meet the criteria, we'll look into each potential member's current social media activity.

We will also be looking for multiple individuals who have advanced knowledge of at least one of the social media platforms. They will be labeled as the "**expert**" for that particular platform and should be able to answer any questions and give tips/advice to others who aren't as advanced.

We would also like to include students from diverse backgrounds and different clubs and organizations on campus. This will make sure that our students aren't targeting the same demographic of potential students.

It's also important to include students from different years/classes (senior, junior, etc.) and majors. Freshmen applying for the group most likely have stronger ties to their high schools and hometowns than graduating seniors, implying that they may have greater potential to recruit incoming students.

Application Questions

1. How many followers do you have on each of these platforms?

	Handles:	N/A:
• YouTube _____	_____	
• Twitter _____	_____	
• Instagram _____	_____	
• Facebook _____	_____	
• TikTok _____	_____	
• Snapchat _____	_____	

2. Which of these platforms do you use the most?

3. Which of these do you feel the most confident/comfortable using?

4. What is your major?

5. What year are you?

6. What are you involved in on campus? (extracurricular, jobs, organizations)

7. Hometown?

8. What would you like to see as an incentive?

9. Contact Info:

Full Name: _____

Email: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Incentives

Members of the group will receive incentives for their participation. After discussing with her department, Megan and I brainstormed different possibilities including gift cards from various stores and restaurants in Stillwater such as Eskimo Joes and the Student Union store. We also discussed a welcome package that would consist of OSU merchandise and memorabilia, gift cards and guidelines for the new program.

Seeing that gift incentives may not be enough for some, we've also looked into the idea of creating something of an "elite" group setting, creating something that students want to be a part of. TikTok, a new platform that has taken the place of Vine, allows users to create short, funny videos. The Hype House, not necessarily sponsored by TikTok, is a mansion in L.A. where 20 of the most famous TikTok stars hang out with each other and film. Four of these stars live in the house full time. The mastermind behind the hype? Chase Hudson, better known as Lil Huddy. Lil Huddy has 3.5 million TikTok followers and attended Oklahoma State University his freshman year of college. Creating a group that seems prestigious and important will appeal to students and encourage accountability.

Because we were unable to implement the program this semester, we were unable to survey what student participants would like to see as incentives. Our original plan was to offer a base incentive and then reassess after our team was built. We would then survey our chosen influencers to assess which incentives would work best for our program.

Guidelines

Because Oklahoma State already has a brand ambassador program, there are already a set of social media guidelines in place that we would like to implement into our program.

Some of these guidelines include:

- transparency
- offering value through content
- clean and tasteful content
- no alcohol or drugs

Click here for a full list of these most recent guidelines:
<https://social.okstate.edu/digital-media-guidelines.html>

Social Media Calendar

A social media calendar will be used to encourage consistent content. This calendar will be bi-weekly or bi-monthly, depending on group dynamic, need and circumstance. For each influencer, a number of posts per platform will be required each week/month, depending on that person's area of expertise. At the beginning of each week/month, influencers will turn in a social media calendar with planned content for that period which will hold them accountable. Here is a template of the calendar that will be used.

Week 1:				
Monday		Time	Content	Body Copy
Facebook				
Twitter				
Instagram				
TikTok				
Snapchat				
YouTube				

Accountability

To hold members of the social media influencer group accountable, we will implement tactics such as the social media calendar. Our clear and specific guidelines provided to the group members will act as a rule book and will express our expectations to the members. If not followed, our guidelines state that membership can be terminated. Our incentives provide a reason for the members to avoid that possibility. On top of this, we will implement a tool such as Hootsuite to track follower engagement and reach.

On top of this, we will require hashtags to be used with all content. This allows us to watch and keep track of the content members are posting, making sure it is effective and appropriate content.

The current digital media guidelines give specific guidelines for ambassadors to use. Here are a few official university hashtags:

- #okstate
- #GoPokes
- #AmericasBrightestOrange
- #AmericasHealthiestCampus
- #OrangeFriday

* This group will be assessed each semester, allowing new students to apply and previous members to leave. While past members will be eligible to reapply for the group, their past content and work for the group will be taken into account.

Outcome

The outcome we hope to achieve is a fully functioning team of social media influencers who are capable of producing effective content. To do this, we will diligently follow the steps we have recorded so far and make amends as issues arise. By combining the idea of a brand ambassador program and the concept of using social media influencers to represent campus, the end outcome is a large group of qualified social media influencers, governed by strict guidelines.

In this project, we are actively seeking out qualified and capable influencers who are willing to follow these guidelines. This will hopefully give us an edge, compared to other campuses, in the social media department.

This project was meant to be hands-on, documenting each step of the process. I met with Megan Horton every Friday to discuss how we would move forward and we've continued to email about our plans for the organization. Although Covid-19 has delayed our progress so far, we are confident in the steps we have researched and documented, and hope to implement the social media influencer program next semester.