

ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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DEVELOPING A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

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If you could find a cost-effective way to expand your visibility to targeted audiences while promoting your institutional brand, would you take advantage of it?

Social media allow you to do this and more, yet only about 175 of some 3,500 college presidents nationwide actively use Twitter or Facebook; approximately 900 use LinkedIn, YouTube and other tools. Those who do not employ social media are missing out on opportunities to enhance their message.

Here are some proven reasons we think you will “like” social media applications for your institution.

When Scott Miller was appointed president of Bethany College in 2007, we created and tested a long-term social media strategy. The strategy focused on reinforcing the brand of a nationally ranked liberal arts college in a rural section of West Virginia, and further engaging an already loyal base of alumni and friends.

The results have been astonishing. In just seven years, with minimal cost, start-up and maintenance, we now have more than 1,500

followers on Twitter (including 93 lists that penetrate over 100,000 contacts), over 3,000 LinkedIn connections and 2,000 Facebook followers. This is in addition to visibility through regular e-cards, e-blasts, blogs, opinion pieces, monthly presidential e-letters, a weekly online newsletter and monthly online commentaries for *The Huffington Post* and a statewide business newspaper.

Bethany’s audience continues to grow with interaction by those connected through social media. For example, a recent post to 2,000 people on Facebook was quickly viewed by more than 20,000 followers as a result of the “share” function. Entire new audiences have become instant constituents

Relatively few presidents and senior administrators have embraced social media. Notable exceptions include E. Gordon Gee, president of West Virginia University; Santo Ono, the University of Cincinnati; Christopher Kimball, California Lutheran University; David Rowe, Centenary College; Jeff Abernathy, Alma College; Roger Casey of McDaniel College; John Maeda, the Rhode Island School of Design; Angel Cabrera, George Mason University (who tweets and blogs in both English and Spanish); and Walter Kimbrough, Dillard University.

In January Scott Miller was one of 22 presidents of colleges and universities in the United States and Canada profiled in “#FollowTheLeader: Lessons in Social Media Success from #HigherEd CEOs.” In February he was named in a national study (by Roland H. King of PhairAdvantage Communications) as one of the

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THIS NEWSLETTER IS
PRINTED ON 100% RE-
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DEVELOPING A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY CONTINUED:

“Top 14 Presidents Publishing Op-eds” in 2014. He ranked third in the survey behind Dr. Michael Roth of Wesleyan University.

Here’s what we have learned from Bethany College’s social media strategy:

Social media quickly and effectively allow you to send disparate, relevant messages to diverse audiences.

As an active college president who is closely identified with the Bethany brand, Scott controls eight different platforms from his desktop, iPhone, iPad or Netbook. All content reinforces the branding message of Bethany. LinkedIn allows Scott to advertise position openings to colleagues and to repost College media releases, while Twitter allows the president to reach alumni and students personally.

Social media also permit you to control the frequency and distribution of your message.

Electronic distribution services at nominal cost allow us to time-deliver messages to balance distribution. These might include campus news, reports and interesting articles from outside organizations that reinforce your institution’s message and image. Messages can be scheduled at ideal times in the day and can be as frequent as the sender would like.

Finally, in times of crisis, social media are essential in distributing timely alerts, messages and updates. While social media reinforce that the administration is focusing on communications 24-7, it’s also important to keep content fresh and concise. The impact of this strategy has far outweighed the time needed to create and implement it. The social media initiative for Bethany College has been an unqualified success, exceeding expectations and widening the reach of Bethany’s marketing strategy.

In the late 19th century, when electricity was in its infancy, President and Mrs. Rutherford B. Hayes, among others, are said to have so feared this new technology that they preferred not to touch the light switches. Like electricity, social media are here to stay. We urge you and your colleagues to harness this vast potential.

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Dr. Scott D. Miller is President and M.M. Cochran Professor of Leadership Studies at Bethany College. He was previously President of Wesley College and Lincoln Memorial University. He is Chair of the Board of Directors of Academic Search, Inc.

Dr. Marylouise Fennell, RSM, a former president of Carlow University, is senior counsel for the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) and principal of Hyatt Fennell, a higher education search firm.

They have collaborated on 11 books, including “President to President: Views on Technology in Higher Education” (Volumes I to III) and “Presidential Perspectives” (Volumes I to IX). They edit the popular higher education thought series “Presidential Perspectives” (Aramark Higher Education), now in its ninth year (www.presidentialperspectives.org).

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES TO BOOST ENROLLMENT

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group

Social media outlets are becoming a standard tool for college and university recruitment. A recent study indicated that 95% of institutions utilize social media as an element of the recruitment plan.

There are a variety of available mechanisms for social media being used by admission offices. Among the most popular are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and to a lesser extent Pinterest and Ning. Facebook is still the most popular outlook for schools followed by YouTube and then Twitter. Regardless of the outlets you are using, there are a number of effective strategies used by colleges and universities to make the most of social media.

Develop a Plan with Objectives

You should have an idea of what you hope to accomplish using social media and how you hope to meet your goals. Posting random activities and comments is unlikely to be sufficient. For example, you may wish to target your content to share the important aspects of student life on campus. Perhaps you want to focus your message on the quality of your faculty and academic programs. You may wish your

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES CONTINUED:

content to tout the advantages of your location or attractive experiences available for students in the local community. After establishing your objective(s), you need to decide upon a strategy for educating prospective students. Your approach may emphasize photographs and videos. You may wish to rely on the testimonials of current students or graduates. Many schools use a combination.

Update Content Frequently

It is very important that you have a way to update your content often. A prospective student might visit your Facebook page once. If the student visits a second time and there is nothing new to see, the student is unlikely to visit a third time. You need to make sure that a particular office or individual is charged with updating content. Currently, admission offices provide content for most colleges and universities, marketing departments are charged with the task second most frequently and students provide content at the rest.

Despite the importance of updating content frequently, the majority of institutions do *not* report adding content frequently. Only 14% of schools update daily, less than a third of colleges and universities update social media content 2-3 times a week. Approximately 16% update sites at least once per week. The rest update social media content less frequently and sometimes only once every three months!

Consider Evening Coverage

While it may not be practical at many institutions, you should consider assigning an individual for evening work to respond rapidly via social media. This is particularly important if your school is using Twitter as a primary outlet.

Solicit Content Across Campus

It is common when beginning to utilize a social media outlet to send out a campus-wide email message to encourage faculty and staff to provide content. Often, campus colleagues are encouraged to notify a particular individual if they are planning an event or have accomplished a milestone that warrants coverage. The problem is that faculty, staff and administrators get busy and will not always re-

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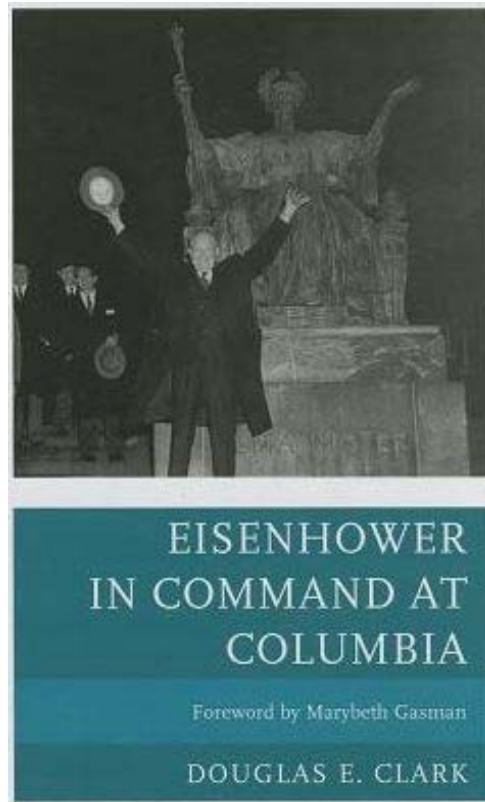
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member that content has been solicited.

- The individual in charge of content must communicate systematically with faculty, staff and administrators to solicit content throughout the year.
- Develop a relationship with the editor of the student newspaper on campus for content.
- If your college or university publishes a quarterly or annual magazine or newsletter for alums, this can be a good source for social media content.
- Telephone the chief academic officer monthly to find out if faculty have made any interesting presentations at conferences or published books or articles recently.
- Make sure you have a relationship with a student or two on the social activities committee on campus to stay informed about campus co-curricular offerings.

This book by Dr. Douglas E. Clark is a must-read for college administrators interested in history, higher education, the politics of the college presidential search process and/or the challenges of college administration for individuals from outside the academy.



Douglas Clark's Eisenhower in Command at Columbia shows by example that the history of higher education in the United States is for the curious, not the faint hearted. Historian Clark has rescued from neglect and institutional amnesia the unusual yet important story of how a great national leader in one sphere (World War II military) fared as a selected leader in another, wholly different setting—the great American university. Far better than a mystery novel, Clark's archival research and oral histories, combined with sound secondary sources for historical and national context, brings a long needed spotlight to illuminate the complexities of universities and their presidents. Best of all, his over-arching interpretation of presidential candidates, trustees, and university professors imbues his book with significance for all contemporary universities in their questing and sorting for leaders, past and present. (John R. Thelin, University of Kentucky)

Douglas Clark has produced a clearly written and superb study of the Eisenhower years at Columbia University. The strength of Eisenhower in Command at Columbia is Clark's brilliant analysis of the difficulties that may occur when a military vision of leadership encounters a highly charged academic environment. The work also provides an insightful portrayal of American higher education in the immediate postwar era. Scholars of both history and education will enjoy the perspectives offered in this book. (Daniel Métraux, Mary Baldwin College)

Available at www.amazon.com and www.barnesandnoble.com

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES CONTINUED:

Tailor Content to Specific Audiences

You should think about particular audiences when posting content on social media sites. Content to influence traditional-aged students may not be appropriate for the adult market, transfer students or prospective graduate students. Some schools even have different sites dependent on the audience to better target content.

Be Prepared to Deal with Negative Postings

By definition, social media solicits sharing of content, ideas and opinions and all of the postings to your sites will not be positive. Here are a few things to keep in mind regarding negative postings:

- You have to take the initiative to monitor your sites. You must make sure an individual is charged with monitoring all content on your social media sites. It is not enough to just provide content. Someone needs to be viewing what others are posting.
- Consider establishing written guidelines for your sites and don't be afraid to publish them.
- You should definitely address any inaccurate postings to your site and provide corrections.
- It's important not to overreact and respond to every negative comment. It is okay to encourage constructive discussion. Monitor the sites, but be selective in your responses.
- Delete negative or offensive posts when necessary. Immediately delete any posts that are particularly problematic or offensive. You can even consider restricting posts from individuals with a history of offensive postings.

The effective use of social media can enhance recruitment efforts. Colleges and universities with specific content plans, clearly outlined objectives, appropriate staffing and a mechanism for daily tracking of outside postings are likely to be most successful.

RECRUITING OUT-OF-STATE STUDENTS

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group

As colleges and universities seek to increase enrollments, many are attempting to expand their geographic reach by trying to recruit more out-of-state students. There are real challenges for schools seeking to grow the pool of out-of-state students:

- Studies show that 72% of high school graduates attend college in their home state and that only 14% leave their home geographic region to enroll in college.
- Out-of-state students usually are not eligible for state grants and this can increase the financial aid costs for the institution.
- There can be new expenses associated with dedicated out-of-state recruitment activities.
- Conversion rates throughout the admission funnel tend to be lower for out-of-state students.
- The extra costs for students and families such as travel, housing charges and higher tuition rates (at public colleges and universities) can be real barriers.

Despite the obstacles, there are a number of advantages to increasing out-of-state student counts:

- For public institutions there are significant tuition differentials to be realized. This is becoming even more attractive as many states continue to cut support and subsidies.
- Recruiting more out-of-state students can help under-enrolled colleges and universities fill excess capacity in the residence halls.
- American College Testing reports that there are correlations between higher test scores and increased family experience with higher education for students who attend geographically distant institutions.

RECRUITING OUT-OF-STATE STUDENTS CONTINUED:

There are a number of cost-effective tactics available for colleges to increase the number of out-of-state students:

- Expand your geographic search parameters from providers such as The College Board, American College Testing and NRCCUA.
- Focus communication with these students using electronic outlets such as text messaging and social media.
- Ensure your website addresses specific concerns of out-of-state students.
- Utilize skype as a personal form of communication that does not require the expense of travel.
- Add virtual tours of your campus to your website.
- Include compelling messages such as the opportunity to graduate in four years; tout any specialized academic programs; sell the benefits of new experiences for students and boast of the unique characteristics of your geographic region.
- Emphasize outreach to state systems reducing available seats such as Texas and California and geographic regions with a history of exporting students such as New England. Consider the following states where fewer than 70% of students stay at home for college:
 - Massachusetts 44%
 - Rhode Island 51%
 - Pennsylvania 55%
 - New York 55%
 - New Hampshire 59%
 - Vermont 60%
 - Connecticut 64%
 - Missouri 58%
 - Iowa 49%
 - Minnesota 61%
 - Illinois 56%
 - Arizona 58%

There are also several tactics that may not be as cost-effective:

- Hiring part-time, out-of-state recruiters may not be the best option since their efforts are difficult to track and monitor.
- Spending more money to increase travel for admission counselors can be expensive. In addition, the effectiveness of most high schools visits and many college fairs is dubious.

As demographic changes cause drops in the number of high school graduates in many states, initiating recruitment activities that will increase the number of out-of-state students may be a viable option for some colleges and universities.

IT'S THE FOURTH QUARTER: LAST MINUTE TACTICS FOR FALL ENROLLMENT

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group

We are rapidly approaching the end of another recruitment cycle. If you are still hoping to improve your outcomes or at least maintain your current trends, you should make sure your enrollment division administrators are doing the following:

Aggressively encourage new and returning students to apply for financial aid. Send written reminders, email messages and text messages to encourage completion of the FAFSA. Don't hesitate to get on the telephone and call students who have not applied for financial aid.

Make sure all of the students who have applied for financial aid have been packaged. There is no reason to wait for Spring grades or verification. Show all of your students how they can afford to attend as quickly as possible.

How many applicants for admission have not completed their admission folders? Immediately implement a plan to encourage folder completion in order to increase the number of accepted students.

IT'S THE FOURTH QUARTER CONT'D:

Think about conducting a late SAT or ACT search to pick up students who may have tested late in the cycle.

Telephone any returning students who have not completed the course selection process for the coming term. Be prepared to address any problems such as financial holds, academic issues or financial aid problems.

Its not too late to schedule a late Spring visit day to bring prospective students to campus. Late visit dates for transfer students can be particularly effective.

Send a last-minute postcard mailing to inquiries in your database who have not applied for admission. Let them know it is not too late to apply.

There are still five months remaining in the cycle. It is not too late to initiate a fourth quarter plan.

Congratulations to Dr. Scott Miller on his recent appointment as the new President of Virginia Wesleyan College.





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