



Crafting a Social Media Strategy for Your Financial Aid Office

Learning Outcome

You will be able to craft a social media strategy for your financial aid office to improve customer service and communication with students

Let's Hear from You

How many of your aid offices currently use:

- Facebook?
- Twitter?
- YouTube?
- Other?

Or are you not there yet?

Why Are You Not There Yet?

- Time and resources?
- Open forum?
- FERPA?
- Value - is it worth it?

Reasons You Should Be There

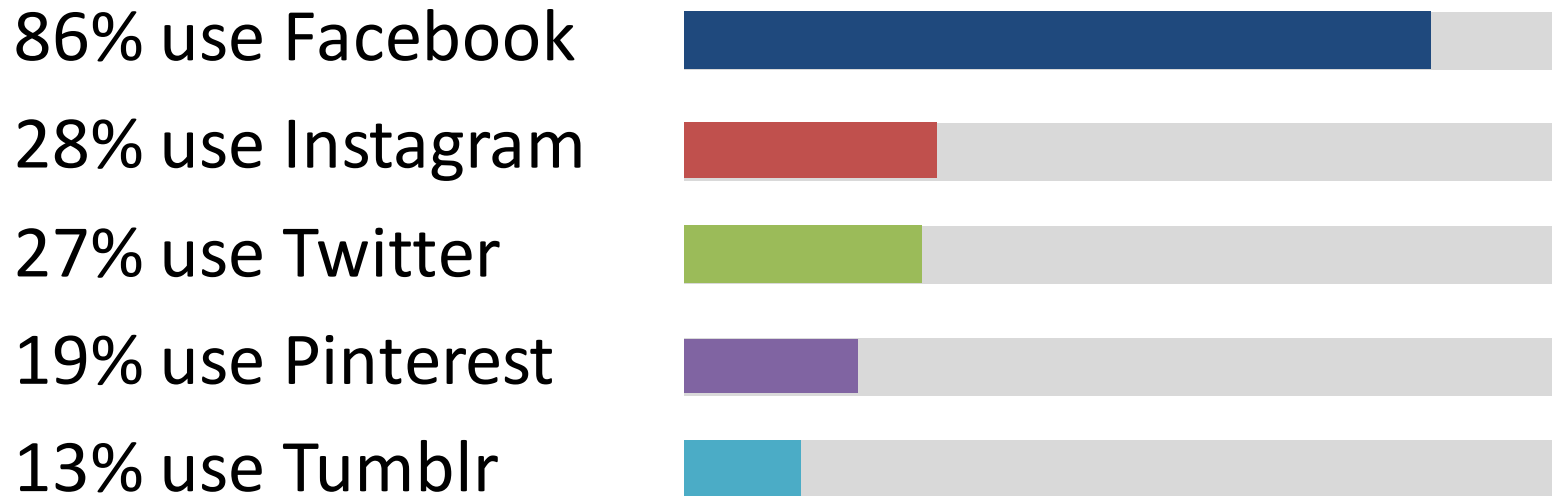
Social media allows you to:

- Improve customer service with minimal resources
- Improve communications without loss of privacy
- Enhance your reputation
 - Change perception from being too rigid to being proactive and student oriented
- Improve student outcomes by communicating with students “where they are” and at critical times

With less time and resources than you might expect

Young Adults and Social Media

According to a 2012 PEW Research Center study, among internet users ages 18-29:





Opportunities (and a few challenges) for Using Social Media in the Aid Office

Opportunities – Customer Service

Meet your students where they are most comfortable and decrease lines and phone calls

Opportunities – Customer Service


 11 Aug

@RU_FinAid hi! When do stafford and plus loans disburse and refunds deposit? Just waiting on them for books and living expenses #AskRUFinAid

Expand

 **Rutgers Fin Aid @RU_FinAid** 12 Aug

@ If you expect a refund, you may be eligible to participate in the RU Book Advance. Visit studentabc.rutgers.edu/book-advance for more info!

 Hide conversation  Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

1:46 PM - 12 Aug 13 · Details

Opportunities – Social Proof

Help your students in a public setting

Opportunities – Social Proof



UCCS Financial Aid

Yesterday near Colorado Springs, CO

The summer tuition charges have been applied. Anyone checking their account will see their summer charges. We continue to work thru summer awarding. If you are registered we will review your eligibility and notify you via email once your eligibility has been determined.

Like · Comment · Share

2 people like this.

Jennifer [redacted] If we are taking an early summer course when can we come get a book loan and buy our books? Tomorrow?

Yesterday at 11:28am via mobile · Like

Raechel [redacted] Is there a reason we can no enroll into the payment plan?

Yesterday at 11:39am · Like



UCCS Financial Aid Jennifer [redacted] - book loans for early starting classes are available the business day prior to the class starting. So if your class starts Tuesday, yes you could come in tomorrow for the book loan since the University is closed on Monday for Memorial Day. --Brooke Allen

Yesterday at 1:07pm · Like · 1



UCCS Financial Aid Raechel [redacted] - payment plans are administered by the Bursar's Office - <http://www.uccs.edu/bursar/calendar/summer-2013.html>. I called over and spoke with them and they said the plans should be turned on June 4th (to coincide with when Student Bills are generated). They can be reached at 719-255-3391 if you have additional questions. -- Brooke Allen

Yesterday at 1:16pm · Like

Jennifer [redacted] Thanks!

Yesterday at 1:46pm via mobile · Like

Raechel [redacted] Thank you

23 hours ago · Like

Opportunities – Timely Content

*Provide instant communications
and meaningful topics*

Opportunities – Timely Content



LMU Financial Aid

@LMUFinancialaid



Today is the last day to add/drop a class!
Make sure you are considered full time for
your LMU scholarships and grants. We're
open till 6pm!

Reply Retweet Favorite More

10:05 AM - 30 Aug 13

Opportunities – Credibility and Loyalty

*Prove you are not just that
“regulatory” person behind a desk*

Opportunities – Credibility and Loyalty



UCSC Financial Aid

It's been quite busy in our office for the past few weeks! We appreciate your patience! We are working hard to make sure everyone has their awards by no later than the end of next week =]. And with that, we hope everyone has a fantastic 3-Day weekend!!

Like · Comment · Share · 24 4 · August 30 at 5:39pm ·

24 people like this.



cant wait to accept my financial

Thank you for all the hard work 😊

August 30 at 6:02pm · Like · 3



UCSC Financial Aid Thank you [redacted] =]!

August 30 at 6:02pm · Like



Appreciate all the hard work! Have a restful weekend!

August 30 at 9:16pm via mobile · Like · 1



Danke schon! 😊

See Translation

August 30 at 10:38pm via mobile · Like · 1

Opportunities – Transparency and Access

*Communicate early and often
in a public setting*

Opportunities – Transparency and Access



UTAustin_FinAid

@UTAustin_FinAid



Follow

\$16M paid to univ debts last night. \$20M to students! Efforts continue tonight - Check here for updates. bit.ly/Lg1gom

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

1

RETWEET



10:32 AM - 27 Aug 13

Opportunities – Financial Literacy

Use it as an educational tool

Opportunities – Financial Literacy



Financial Aid, North Park University

Yes! It's trivia time! Once you've been offered a Stafford Loan, there are two documents that you must complete before that loan can be processed. Name the two documents.

about a week ago ✨


👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

 K [redacted] Direct Loan Master Promissory Note & Direct Loan Entrance Counseling.

August 27 at 2:46pm · Like

 [redacted] Master promissary note and complete entrance counseling.

August 27 at 2:47pm via mobile · Like

 [redacted] K [redacted]

August 27 at 2:48pm via mobile · Like · 👍 1



Financial Aid, North Park University Nice work, K [redacted]! You are correct! Stop by the FA Office to pick up your gift card. These two items only need to be completed one time during your entire tenure at NPU. If you're a new student, you must have them in by Friday, 8/30, or your loan will be cancelled. Check the My Documents section of Web Advisor to see if you're missing either one. Thanks for playing!

August 27 at 2:49pm · Edited · Like



A Few Challenges

Challenges

- Resources



Time



Personnel



Experts

- Reality of public discourse
- People are talking about you whether you like it or not
- Inform but do not control

Challenges

FERPA

- FERPA still matters on social media
 - It doesn't prohibit your office from interacting with students on social media
 - Some conversations should still be held privately
 - The distinction between office and student communication is important
 - FERPA issues should be addressed in your profile description

Challenges

FERPA



Great Lakes About ▼

We welcome your comments and hope that our conversations here will be polite. You are responsible for the content of your comments.

We do not discriminate against any views but may delete any of the following:

- Violent, obscene, profane, hateful, or racist comments
- Comments that threaten or harm the reputation of any person or organization
- Endorsements, advertisements, or solicitations of any kind
- Comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity
- Multiple off-topic posts or repetitive posts that are copied and pasted
- Personal information including but not limited to e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, mailing addresses, or identification numbers

In short: be nice and add to the discussion. If you continually violate this policy, we may limit your ability to comment in the future.

Challenges

FERPA



MSU Financial Aid @msufinaid

29 Aug

We're live this morning until 11am answering any financial aid questions you might have. #msufinaid #TeamMSU

Expand



Jon @Jon

29 Aug

@msufinaid I have a scholarship that hadn't dispersed yet.

Expand



MSU Financial Aid @msufinaid

29 Aug

@Jon I would need to look up your account to see why. Due to privacy issues we may need to assist you via phone or email.

Hide conversation

Reply

Retweet

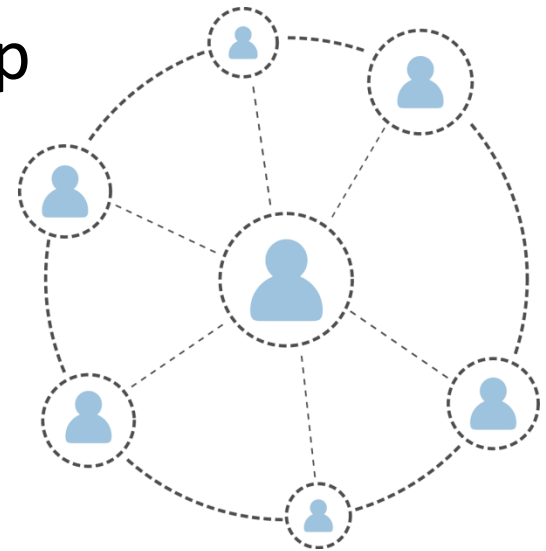
Favorite

More

9:33 AM - 29 Aug 13 - Details

Challenges

- Fan acquisition and building the momentum
 - Invite fans
 - Build momentum by posting useful, shareable content frequently and consistently
 - Once you build it, you have to work it – fans don't just show up



Challenges

- Content filtering and having a non-biased voice for the office
 - Public space
 - Not everything should be posted (even if it's interesting)
 - Posting policy should mirror your standard communications policy
 - Loans
 - Other school aid policies
 - Etc.



Strategy

Start With Your Goals

- Revert to your department's mission and vision
- Consider how social media can support the work you're already doing
- Remember, this is just a new tool to reach your customers, not a new departmental objective

Choose Your Platforms

Three questions

1. Why social media and what are the goals?
2. Who is the target demographic?
3. How will your customer service and interaction change as result of social media use?



Consider Your Editorial Policy

- Who will have administration rights to your accounts?
- Who creates content?
- Is there an approval process?
- Who monitors the conversation?

Social media is a two-way street



Content

Finding and Writing Effective Content

- Remember, you don't have to write everything from scratch!
- Repurpose what you can from other sources
- Think about how the audience receives your social media content
 - Short
 - Conversational voice

Finding Content

- Potential third party sources
 - Federal Student Aid (FSA)
 - Scholarship announcements
 - News outlets
 - Other aid offices and servicers on social media
- Curation is key!
 - Google Alerts
 - Google Reader

Effective Content

Content forms

- Blogs
- Facebook posts – standalone
- Facebook posts to introduce link
- Facebook photo captions
- Videos
- Tweets

Effective Content – Research

What is your audience looking for and when do they want to know about it?

Effective Content – Research



Great Lakes



Choosing to work in public service can provide an option to have your federal student loans forgiven after 120 payments.

Wipe Out Student Loan Debt With This Trick

The Department of Education offers the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program to individuals who qualify. The PSLF program allows for student loan forgiveness for borrowers who work in the area of public service full time.

MAINSTREET.COM

about 3 weeks ago 

 Like  Comment  Share

43 Likes 7 Comments 1 Share




Effective Content – Research



Great Lakes

Tip: If you sign up for Auto Pay for your federal student loans, you'll receive a .25% interest rate reduction. Have you signed up yet?

about a month ago 

 Like  Comment  Share

84 Likes 11 Comments 16 Shares

Effective Content – Headlines and Killer Openings

- Headlines
 - Make them want to click on it!
- Killer Openings
 - Be exciting
(Yes, even when the topic is financial aid)

Effective Content – Headlines



Great Lakes shared a link.

July 8 



Want to pay off your loans early? Here are some tips.



Smart ways to tackle student loan debt

www.usatodayeducate.com

It doesn't have to take you 10 years to pay off student loans. You may be able to tackle it quicker and more efficiently by following this advice.

Like · Comment · Share

 23  1  2

Effective Content – Killer Openings

WAYS TO SIDE-STEP THE SHORTAGE OF FINANCIAL AID



Although nearly every college student wants a scholarship to help pay tuition, only about 50 percent of college students are expected to receive free money each year. But there are some steps students can take right now to improve their odds of being in the lucky 50 percent:

Apply Early for Financial Aid: It's wise to start applying for financial aid (both private and college/university grants) at least a year in advance. This gives you enough time to understand the terms and apply accordingly. In addition, due to the economy, competition for securing financial aid is increasing each year. Sometimes, some colleges and universities work on "first come first basis." You wouldn't want to miss out on the financial aid you need so badly just because you applied late.

Scholarships, Financial Awards And Grants: There's no shortage of scholarships, grants and financial awards given by private donors, colleges and universities. Unlike private student loans, these grants, awards and scholarships are not to be repaid. But remember, you should be eligible or your application will be rejected and it will be a wasted effort. Don't forget to check with colleges' financial aid office about their policy on third-party scholarships.

Effective Content – Tone

Use conversational tone



UAOSFA
@UAOSFA



I like big SCHOLARSHIPS and I cannot lie.
You other brothers can't deny. Apply and
get... free money! bit.ly/16Nqtk6

Reply Retweet Favorite More

2
FAVORITES



4:01 PM - 28 Aug 13

Effective Content – Resource



Bill Gatton College of Pharmacy Financial Aid

Back to the grindstone after a three-day weekend. Today's tips are for all the single ladies (and gentlemen):



Money-management Tips For Singles

It is vital that single people practice common sense money-management skills just as much as a married couple. Here are some practical tips for your budget.

BY DAVE RAMSEY WEB SERVICES, MONEY, BUDGETING AND D...

on Tuesday 🌐

Effective Content – Short and to the Point

- Make your point quickly
 - Facebook cuts off posts and adds a “see more” link after five lines
- Use lists, bullets, numbers, and visuals
- Remove URLs or unrelated link descriptions
- Break up content over multiple posts

Effective Content – Multiple Posts

Federal Stafford Loan Repayment Options – Pay As Your Earn Repayment

May 9, 2013 by Northeastern University Student Financial Services

Federal Stafford Loan Repayment Options – Pay As Your Earn Repayment

Just a reminder, this is the fifth blog in the series focusing on Stafford Loan Repayment. Last week we discussed the [Income-Based Repayment](#). This week we will talk about the Pay as Your Earn Repayment, which is very similar to last week's topic.

Borrowers who took out loans after 2008 and have a financial hardship are eligible to apply for this repayment plan. The monthly payments will be based on 10% of the borrower's discretionary income, which is the difference between the borrower's adjusted gross income and 150% of the federal poverty guideline. Similarly to the [Income-Based Repayment](#), the typical monthly payments will be lower than with the [Standard Repayment](#), and will not exceed the amount that a person would pay if they had chosen the [Standard Repayment plan](#). After 20 years in repayment, any remaining principal or interest will be forgiven (borrowers

Effective Content – Multiple Posts

Federal Stafford Loan Repayment Options – Income-Based Repayment

May 2, 2013 by Northeastern University Student Financial Services

We are continuing with our weekly blog series. In the first installment, we discussed Income-Based Repayment. In the second installment, we discussed Income-Based Repayment for borrowers who took out loans prior to 2008.

With this plan, the borrower can make payments based on his/her discretionary income, which is the borrower's adjusted gross income and 150% of the borrower's family size. The typical monthly payments will be lower than the typical monthly payments on a [Standard Repayment plan](#).

After 25 years in repayment, any remaining loan balance will be forgiven. However, the borrower may have to pay taxes on the forgiven amount. With Income-Based Repayment, borrowers may qualify for loan forgiveness after 10 years.

Federal Stafford Loan Repayment Options – Extended Repayment

April 25, 2013 by Northeastern University Student Financial Services

In the third installment of our series of blogs discussing Stafford Loan Repayment, we will focus on the Extended Repayment plan. This option is available to Stafford Loan borrowers whose total loan balance is higher than \$30,000. With this plan, the borrowers will pay off their Stafford Loan debt in 25 years by making either fixed or graduated payments throughout their repayment period. This is what the repayment may look like with fixed monthly payment amounts:

Loan Amount	Interest Rate	Number of Payments	Amount Each Month	Total Repaid Amount
\$45,000	6.8%	300	\$312.33	\$93,699.73

Alternatively, an Extended Repayment plan with graduated monthly payments would look like this:

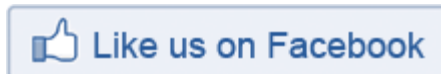
Content Tips

- Learn how to write picture captions
- Give a quick synopsis
- Sound personal
- Avoid jargon

Content Tips

- Build the momentum
 - Create word of mouth
 - Use student employees to spread the word
 - Link to your page whenever you can
 - Connect all your online vehicles

Sincerely,
Anya Morozkina MBA, MS
Assistant Director, Communications and Administration
Northeastern University
354 Richards Hall
360 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115



Content Creation

Let's practice!

You Want to Say:

“The Financial Aid Office will notify students who are coded non-compliant with the SAP Policy after grades are posted for the spring 2014 semester.”

You Could Say:

“Did you know that federal rules require you to complete 67% of your attempted credits and maintain a satisfactory GPA to remain eligible for financial aid? If you’re struggling to pass a course, here are some campus resources you can use to get help:”

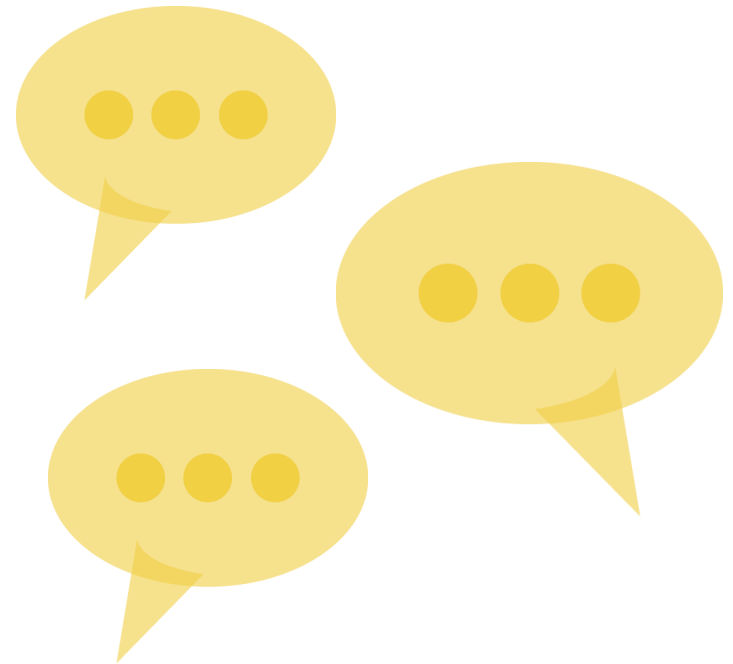
You Want to Say:

“The Office of Student Financial Services is required by federal statute to recalculate federal financial aid eligibility for students who withdraw, drop out, are dismissed, or take a leave of absence prior to completing 60 percent of the term. Recalculation is based on the percentage of earned aid using the Federal Return of Title IV funds formula.”

Suggestions from the Audience:

What are some better ways to communicate about R2T4 regulations in the social media space?

Please use the chat box to post your responses



You Want to Say:

“If an applicant selected for verification has not successfully transferred information from the IRS, or did transfer the information but then changed it, the Department expects the institution to require the applicant, and if necessary the applicant's parents, to provide an official IRS transcript of their Federal income tax information.”

Suggestions from the Audience:

What are some better ways to communicate verification requirements in the social media space?

Please use the chat box to post your responses



How Often Should You Post and When?

As a general rule:

- Facebook: three to five times a week (two times a day is fine if you have an important announcement)
- Twitter: one to three times a day
- Blog: once a week

Planning Your Communications Calendar

- Look at current communication pieces (newsletters, handouts, presentations)
- Know what **MUST** be posted during certain time periods
- Plan for some “filler” to encourage student interaction
- Start searching now for third party content you can use at a later date

Monitoring the Conversation

- Make use of notifications
 - Email
 - Mobile Apps
- Respond timely
- Know that sometimes, a “like” is enough

What About Negative Comments?

- Keep in mind that negative comments are not always a bad thing
- Take the high road
- Be honest
- Contact the person directly
- Feel free to delete if:

Your staff or community is threatened

Profanity is used

Statements are blatantly false



What About Negative Comments?



I hate Great Lakes loan company. Like who told direct student loans to give them my loan balance ??????

[← Reply](#) [↻ Retweet](#) [★ Favorite](#) [⋮ More](#)

12:35 PM - 20 May 13



What About Negative Comments?



Great Lakes @MyGreatLakes

@_____ You sound frustrated. Is there anything I can do to help? -Liz

[Details](#)



Great Lakes @MyGreatLakes

@_____ ...unless an individual is applying for consumer credit and we receive a request for account status. (2/2)

[Details](#)



@_____

@MyGreatLakes the late payment policy even if it is your first late payment it gets reported to the credit bureau? That's ridiculous

[Details](#)



@_____

@MyGreatLakes ok. The rep made it seem like it gets reported immediately. Thanks.

[Details](#)



Great Lakes @MyGreatLakes

@_____ It's unlikely that the account would be reported to the credit bureau when it is less than 30 days.... (1 of 2)

[Details](#)



Great Lakes @MyGreatLakes

@_____ you're welcome. Have a great day!

[Details](#)



@_____

@MyGreatLakes thanks. You too

[Details](#)

A Note About Assessment

You'll be asked to provide data about your progress

- Facebook Insights
- Analytics
- Anecdotes

Assessment – Facebook Insights

Overview Likes Reach Talking About This Check-Ins

All dates and times are in Pacific Time

Export Data

Total Likes? 725 ↑1.68% Friends of Fans? 312,762 ↑1.35% People Talking About This? 71 ↑373.33% Weekly Total Reach? 739 ↑32.44%

Posts? People Talking About This? Weekly Total Reach?



In Summary

- Align your strategy with your mission
- Choose your platforms wisely
- Embrace the "rules of the road"
- Have a plan
- Learn how to create and curate content for social media
- Assess your results using both hard data and anecdotes
- Don't be afraid to experiment!

Additional Social Media Resources

Basic How-To

- [Facebook Timeline Page Layout Guide](#)
- [Social Media Sizing Cheat Sheet](#)
- [A Student Affairs Social Media Plan](#)
- [One Simple Way To Improve Your Content](#)
- [Sharing on Facebook](#)
- [Set Up Your YouTube Videos for Success](#)
- [Guidelines for Facebook Cover Images & Text](#)

Developing Content

- [Resources from FSA](#)
- [3 Easy Steps to Finding Great Content](#)
- [Set a Posting Schedule That Encourages](#)
- [Shares & Pageviews](#)

For Review & Discussion

- [Stop Using FERPA as a Social Media Banhammer](#)
- [Student Affairs Live: Legal Perspective of Social Media Use on College Campuses](#)
- [Missouri Baptist University FAFSA Video](#)
- [Utah Higher Education Authority's High School Film Festival Submissions](#)
- [Customer Service Is Going Social](#)
- [Leveraging Social Media to Drive Awareness & Increase Engagement with Students](#) – presentation from the FSA new media team at the 2012 FSA Conference.

Great Lakes is including this third-party content related to social media planning and implementation to provide some follow-up resources for you. Inclusion in this list does not imply endorsement of the material or guarantee the accuracy of information presented.



Thanks for Attending