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Social Media Trends for Community Colleges: A 2024 Q3 Guide

In partnership with Lumina Foundation

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The Power of Trend Surfing



The Power of Trend Surfing

Riding the Wave of Social Media Success

Staying alert to social media trends is more than just a way to stay connected with students — it's a strategic imperative. **Here are 15 reasons why embracing trends could significantly boost your social media presence.**



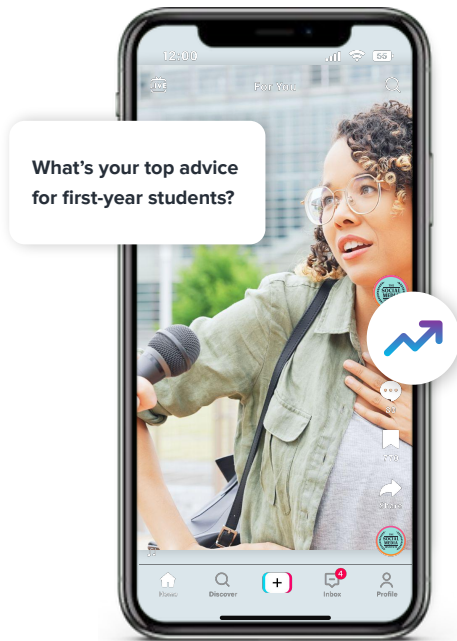
The Power of Trend Surfing

Increase brand visibility: Trending content often gains more exposure through algorithms and user sharing, amplifying your college's reach, and potentially driving enrollment inquiries.

Connect with your audience: Engaging with trends shows that your institution is current and relatable, fostering a stronger connection with prospective and current students.

Boost engagement: Trend-based content sees on average a 12% higher engagement than regular posts. (Social Media Today, 2024)

Demonstrate relevance: Participating in trends showcases your college's ability to stay current and adapt, which is crucial in the ever-evolving educational landscape.



Attract Gen Z and younger millennials: These demographics, which make up a significant portion of community college students, are particularly responsive to trend-driven content.

Improve organic reach: Trending content often receives preferential treatment from social media algorithms, potentially increasing your organic reach by 20-30% without additional ad spend. (Sprout Social, 2023.)

Foster community: Participating in trends can create a sense of shared experience and community among your followers, including alumni and donors. Strengthening their connection to your institution could lead to sponsorships and donations down the road.

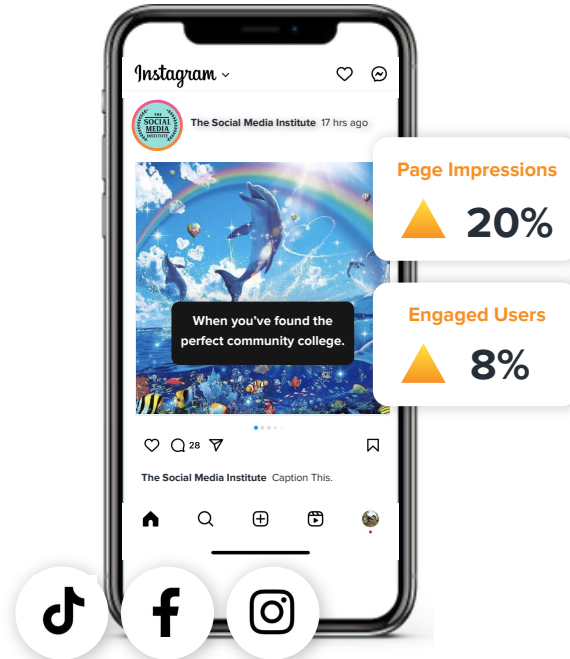
The Power of Trend Surfing

Showcase creativity: Adapting trends to fit your college's brand demonstrates creativity and can help you stand out from other educational institutions.

Provide social proof: When your content gains traction through trends, it serves as social proof of your institution's popularity and relevance.

Stay competitive: In a crowded educational market, staying on top of trends helps your college remain competitive and top-of-mind for potential students.

Gather insights: Engaging with trends can provide valuable insights into what resonates with your audience. Nuanced and targeted data can inform future content strategies.



Create opportunities for user-generated content: Many trends involve audience participation, which can lead to increased user-generated content featuring your college.

Enhance recruitment efforts: Trend-driven content can make your college more appealing to prospective students, potentially boosting enrollment.

Improve alumni engagement: Participating in nostalgic or current trends can re-engage alumni, potentially leading to increased support and networking opportunities.


Cross-platform amplification: Many trends work across multiple platforms, allowing you to create cohesive campaigns that reach a wider audience.

The Power of Trend Surfing

By strategically engaging with social media trends, community colleges can significantly enhance their online presence, connect more effectively with their target audience, and ultimately achieve their institutional goals more efficiently.



Social Media Trend Categories

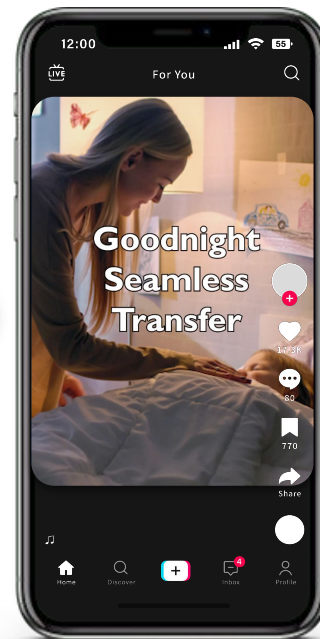
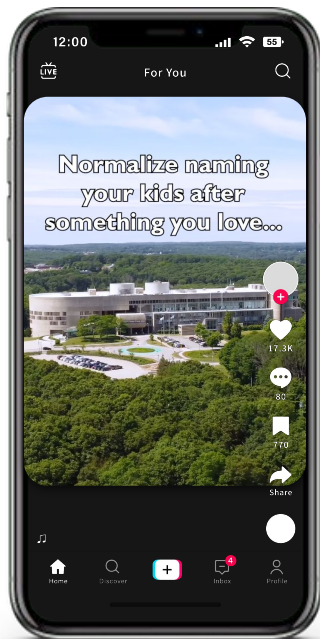
The background features a gradient from pink on the left to orange on the right. On the right side, there are several overlapping, nested white geometric shapes, including rectangles and lines, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Social Media Trend Categories

Memes

Adapt humorous images, videos, or text that spread rapidly across social media to your school.

Example: Use a meme to share a common sentiment like what it feels like waiting for test results, or use a meme carousel to share the benefits of your college.

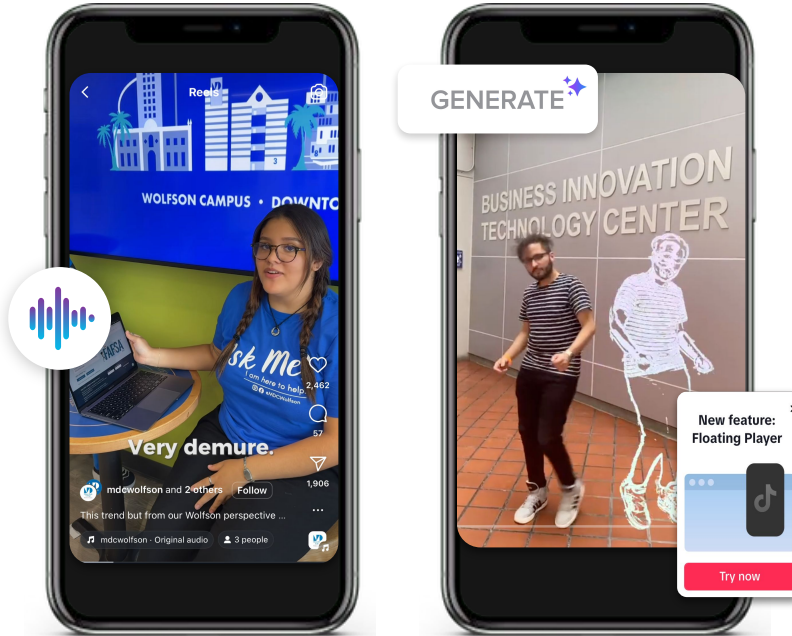


Social Media Trend Categories

Sounds

Leverage popular audio clips or music used in short-form video content.

Example: Choose a current sound or song and show off your campus in a unique way like this Instagram Reel from Austin Community College or this one from Miami Dade College, where students use a trending phrase to describe how going to MDC is “very demure, very mindful.”



AI features

Utilize AI-powered tools like filters, stickers, and editing features.

Example: Use trending AI filters on TikTok (like this Floating Player feature) to increase views. Or use AI-enhanced imagery to create an interactive virtual campus tour on Instagram.

Challenges/dances

Engage in participatory trends involving specific actions or dances, often set to music.

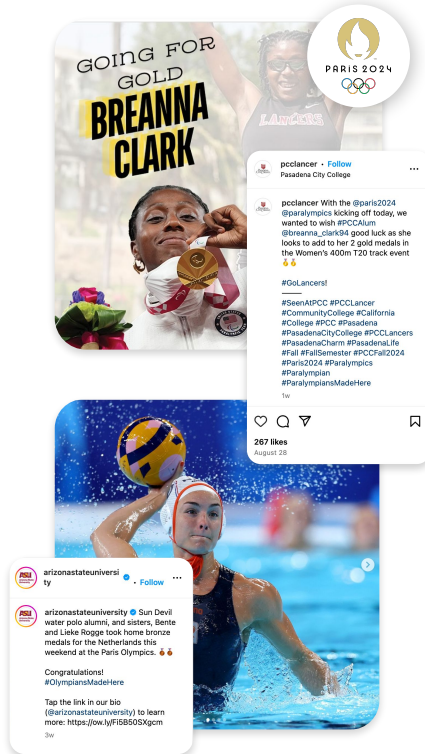
Example: Get your school mascot to dance to a trending sound, use a trending sound to show off your different programs, or ask several students to use a filter to complete a challenge.

Social Media Trend Categories

Newsjacking

Capitalize on current events or pop culture moments.

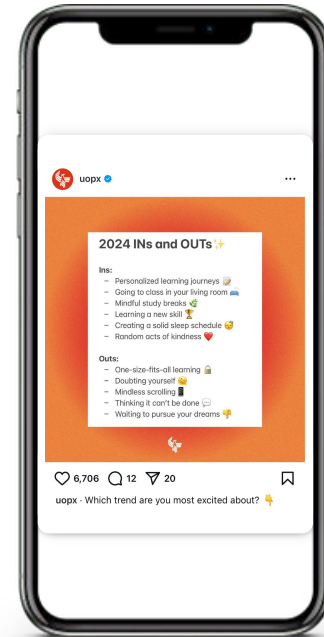
Example: During major sporting events like the Olympics, create posts celebrating student-athletes or relate academic programs to various Olympic sports.



Interactive content

Posts that encourage audience participation through questions, polls, or sharing.

Examples: Hold a Facebook Live workshop with real-time streams of skill-building sessions or campus tours. Run an Instagram poll series called "What's Your Major?" featuring different academic programs and encouraging students to vote and comment on their chosen fields of study. Ask students to share their own Student Life Hacks.



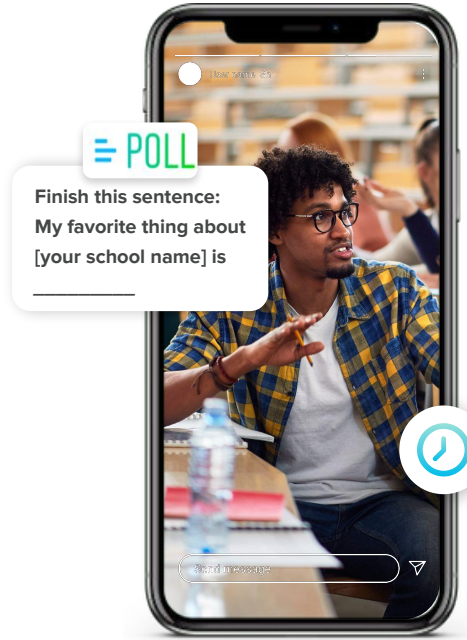
BONUS

Navigating the Pitfalls and Risks of Trend Adoption

Navigating the Pitfalls and Risks of Trend Adoption

Timing

- How old is the trend? Niche trends last about 3-5 days, with viral trends lasting up to a few weeks. If it's a trend that will take a long time to produce, it's not worth it.
- Using outdated memes could make your institution seem out of touch.
- Be careful with newsjacking — rapid response times could lead to poorly thought-out content or messaging, and there's potential backlash if your stance on a current event is controversial.



Relevance

- Who is using this trend? Students? Other colleges? How are they responding to the trend?
- Certain trends could alienate older or more serious prospective students who might view memes as immature.
- To ensure you get good engagement, stay relevant with interactive content like polls. Just watch out for low participation rates which can make your institution appear unpopular.



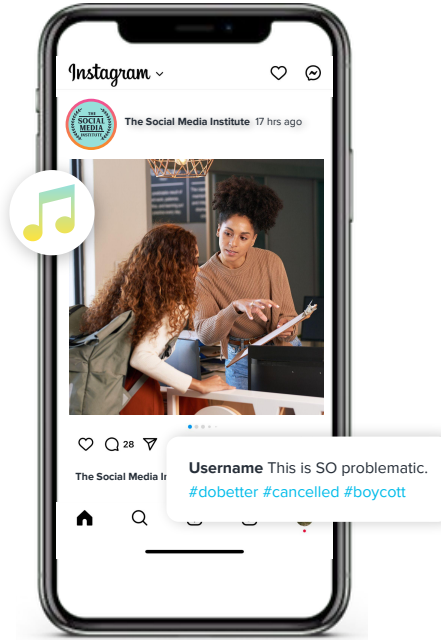
Navigating the Pitfalls and Risks of Trend Adoption

Authenticity

- Sounds, memes, and other trends should stay consistent with your institution's brand voice and values.
- Don't force it. If your brand doesn't usually discuss this topic, don't try to relate to it just to hop on a trend.
- There's always the risk of appearing inauthentic or trying too hard to be "cool".

Legal Considerations

- Brands should exercise caution when trend-hopping to avoid infringing on copyrights, trademarks, or other intellectual property rights.
- Be aware of the risk of injury or liability issues if promoting physical challenges.



Sensitivity

- Be aware of the trend's context. If it stems from something inappropriate, harmful, or sensitive — avoid it.
- There is potential for miscommunication, misinterpretation, or accidentally sharing memes with hidden offensive meanings or associations across diverse audience segments.
- With interactive content like questions and polls, there's a risk of receiving inappropriate or offensive responses to open-ended questions.

The Power of Trend Surfing

Community college marketing teams aware of these pitfalls can approach trend adoption more strategically, minimizing risks while maximizing the benefits of audience engagement.



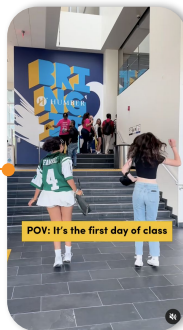
2024 Q3 Social Media Trends



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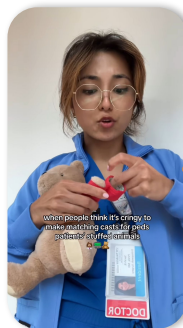
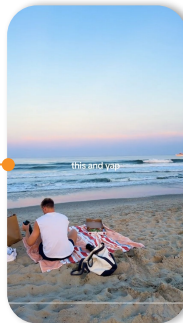
Trend #1: Came Here for Love

- Campus tours
- Faculty spotlight



Trend #2: This and yap.

- Facility spotlights
- Study reminders
- Career prep



Trend #3: Do You Know You Have 30 Minutes?

- Remind applicants of approaching deadlines

Trend #4: You're Not Fun

- Extracurriculars and events



Trend #5: One Step at a Time

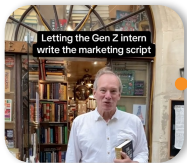
- "Walking into fall semester like"

More Trends



"Can you sign this?"

Ask faculty or student athletes to sign old photos of themselves. Record their reactions.



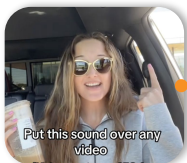
Letting our Gen Z Intern Write the Script

Write a script for a faculty member and ask them to show a tour of their classroom. The script should be "written by Gen Z" so that it's in relatable language.



CapCut Countdown

Show something that students love and have it countdown to show the release of stress once they have it. Could even be bringing dogs on campus during exam week to help with stress relief.



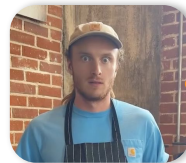
Still Into You

JUST HAVE FUN! Show students doing something fun with a club.



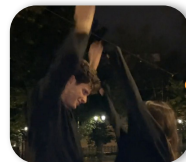
"I don't think I'm liking... Actually I think I'm liking..."

Show a freshman saying that they don't like something such as studying, but then show how they do enjoy it after being incentivized with a great study space, snacks and a study group.



Zipline

"I feel like you're just here for the free pizza." Used to show off free food at a campus event.



Disco

"Just two friends with completely different majors"

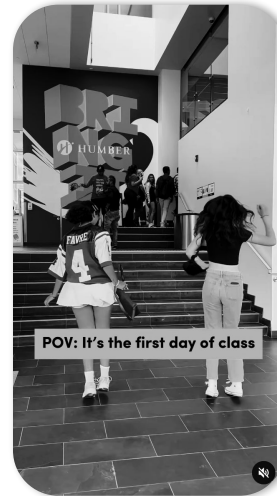


Dolphins symphony

Say something that's tragically funny like "I'm just a social media intern, I can't build parking lots."

2024 Q3 Social Media Trends

Staying attuned to trends and adapting them to your community college's unique voice and audience allows you to create a vibrant, engaging social presence that resonates with your community and beyond.



THANK YOU

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