In 2019, UGA focused on refining our social media footprint as a brand while continuing to grow and reach new audiences. The growth and popularity of private social groups has led to a decline in organic reach and intensified the use of peer-to-peer sharing and influencer marketing. To keep the UGA brand ahead of these trends, we turned to innovative engagement tactics that we laid the groundwork for in 2018 — from leveraging user-generated content to activating our Digital Dawgs to public exchanges with other large national brands.

For the second year in a row, Instagram stood out as the clear leader this year with unprecedented growth. It outpaced Twitter and Facebook throughout 2019, adding about 71 followers a day. By the end of 2019, we had 533,909 followers across our three largest social media platforms.

UGA’s Twitter following grew by 7.4%, which was above average compared to 7.1% growth across aspirant schools and 5.2% growth across comparator schools.

UGA’s Instagram following grew by 25.6% compared to 26.6% growth across aspirant schools and 26.1% growth across comparator schools. We surpassed Indiana University in Instagram followers.

UGA’s Facebook following grew by 4.9%, which was above average compared to 2.8% growth across aspirant schools and 1.9% growth across comparator schools. We surpassed Indiana University in Facebook followers.

For the second year in a row, Instagram stood out as the clear leader this year with unprecedented growth. It outpaced Twitter and Facebook throughout 2019, adding about 71 followers a day. By the end of 2019, we had 533,909 followers across our three largest social media platforms.
A post’s average organic reach on Facebook is only around 6.4%. So when Facebook changed its algorithm in 2018 to favor human interactions and private group content, we adjusted our strategy to ignite more conversation on our threads. In 2019, we used more conversational posts to motivate response from our followers — like asking a question or giving them a statement to complete. We also adjusted our post-text and video styles to offer more fun facts or takeaways that would get people talking and sharing our content forward.

With 321 million active monthly users, Twitter may not be the largest social channel, but its real-time news feed makes it the go-to social platform for emerging news and trends. We post our breaking research and major announcements to Twitter. In 2019, we continued to prioritize engagement posts that encouraged followers to answer a question or vote on a poll and identifying trending topics or memes we could participate in while staying on brand. These interactions, along with strategic messaging, helped us grow 7.4% year over year and surpass 110,000 followers in October.
With 1 billion active monthly users—71% of whom are under 35 years old—Instagram is our fastest growing platform and the preferred platform for reaching current students and younger audiences. UGA posts typically feature campus life, behind-the-scenes stories and highly visual branding opportunities as the platform functions primarily on lifestyle photography. This year we focused on developing more strategic Instagram Highlights to help answer some of our most frequently asked questions and showcase strategic university initiatives.

In 2019, Instagram enabled cross-promotion of IGTV videos into the main Instagram feed and as a result, we saw a spike in IGTV views. To capitalize on this, we focused on telling “short doc” stories (2-3 minute videos) about our students, which resonated with our audience.

In 2019, we added 26,074 net followers, averaging 71 new followers per day. Our largest follower growth occurred in September.

**Total Followers**

127,759

**Total Impressions**

13,299,528

**Total Engagements**

977,476

UGA averaged 56,594 impressions per post. Our biggest month for impressions was August.

UGA averaged 4,159 engagements per post. We saw the most engagements in November.

**LinkedIn**

A social network for working professionals, LinkedIn averages 303 million active monthly users. The basis of LinkedIn’s networking requires all users to list their education and work history in profiles, so we see substantial activity with our alumni and faculty on this channel, adding 9,956 new followers this year. Given the professional focus of LinkedIn, we partner with the Alumni Association, Public Service and Outreach and the UGA Career Center to tailor our content programming for alumni. Research, service and alumni success stories resonate the most on LinkedIn, and we see a 2.54% engagement rate on our posts.

**LinkedIn Engagements**

In 2019, we added 9,956 followers

**LinkedIn Total Followers**

212,228

**LinkedIn Total Engagements**

148,773

**YouTube**

YouTube is the new Google when it comes to prospective students and has replaced television for many Gen Z’ers. With more than 2 billion users every month, it became clear in 2019 that YouTube needed to become less of a repository for videos and more of an active social and advertising platform. This year, we continued to refine our playlist structure, video titles and descriptions, and strategically redesign our video thumbnails to make our channel more aesthetically pleasing and most importantly—branded. We also began diving into the world of paid advertising on YouTube and look forward to growing that initiative in 2020.

**YouTube Subscribers**

12,996

**YouTube Uploads**

43

**YouTube Views**

41,419
In spring 2018, we launched a social media ambassador program for undergraduate students. These 30+ Digital Dawgs represent UGA and present an authentic behind-the-scenes look at the student experience on campus and in Athens from official UGA branded Instagram accounts. While their content is not dictated by the Division of Marketing & Communications, our team is in frequent communication with the students and offers suggestions of events on campus to cover or initiatives to highlight.

In 2019, we focused on refining our onboarding and exit process and worked with our graduating students to help identify their replacements to ensure a smoother transition for their followers.

Hashtags link posts and conversations together on Twitter and Instagram by topic and trends. In 2018, we launched the use of #CommitTo, a flexible and active brand hashtag that embraced the social equity of the previously used #CommitToTheG that had been used by Athletics. In 2019, we continued to encourage the use of #CommitTo and saw increased adoption by our campus partners.

After developing a new user-generated content campaign, which involved new social media swag (pins, stickers and T-shirts), we were able to make the hashtag more visible to students on campus. In 2019, we’ve seen 1,078 uses across Twitter and Instagram and look forward to watching that number continue to grow year over year.

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We created a brand channel on Giphy to host UGA-themed GIFs. During 2019, we continued to focus on the importance of maintaining just one UGA parent channel and offered to host GIFs for a number of units across campus, including UGA Athletics. Keeping all the UGA GIFs under one account improves our visibility when users are searching for GIFs and keeps us from competing against ourselves in the search algorithm. Since creating our Giphy channel in 2018, we have uploaded a total of 545 GIFs which have garnered 154.4M views — with 222 GIFs uploaded and viewed 120.2M times in 2019 alone.

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Incoming students favor diverse and hyper-personal social media experiences. While we're not trying to make clear conversions from all social media networks, it's important for UGA to have a presence in these spaces — to meet these new audiences where they are — and subtly build awareness of our brand.

TikTok, the fastest growing social media platform in 2019, is a video-sharing social networking service popular with Gen Z, which makes it ideal for staying front-of-mind with high school students as they begin to research colleges. According to the Chronicle of Higher Education, the audience for TikTok skews young, with most users falling between the ages of 16-24, which makes it particularly appealing to higher education. The University of Florida’s Todd Sanders, who was an early adopter of TikTok among higher-ed peers, says that success on emerging platforms shows that your school is innovative and not resting on the standard platforms, like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Aside from in-app views, TikTok’s unique video editing features make it the perfect place to create content and jump to Instagram Stories, another platform which skews toward a younger audience.

The UGA Today daily e-newspaper for the University of Georgia community is delivered to subscribers’ email inboxes every weekday morning to keep them informed about Bulldog Nation. It includes In the News links to mentions about UGA in the news media — from breaking campus news to research and innovation to public service and outreach — and all the latest news from the UGA Today news center (news.uga.edu).