

# Plan & Conquer

In a world where our daily lives are driven by technology and staying connected online, it is sometimes difficult to build meaningful and engaging relationships with even our closest friends, let alone a university with upwards of 30,000 students. With Texas Tech University reaching record-breaking attendance this past fall, what is a college to do to keep up with its busy scholars and curious prospective students? You need a plan. A social media plan, that is.

Holly Cogdell, the graduate assistant in the Dr. Bill Bennett Student Success Center, spent the summer working to increase the effectiveness of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources's (CASNR) social media outreach to engage current and prospective students through connection and interaction.

According to the plan, the ultimate goal of CASNR's social media platforms is to increase overall awareness of the college and agriculture, as well as build and maintain an interactive relationship with their various audiences.

"It's not just us being engaged, we want to be engaged with them," she said. "And have that two-way relationship."

Cogdell said the college is conscious of what information resonates with their audience, and have focused on posting relevant information in regard to what students are seeking to know. The college has a strong presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram where a variety of topics are promoted, including upcoming events and deadlines for current and prospective students alike.

CASNR's coordinator of student development, Lori Dudley, said the office is working to not only bring overall awareness of what the college is doing, but also of upcoming events.

This past fall, the Dr. Bill Bennett Student Success Center had its first official Popcorn Pop-In of the semester, an event designed to give students the opportunity to pop into the office for freshly popped popcorn and friendly conversation. Besides a short email, Dudley said they chose to reach out to students solely through online media platforms and were able to connect with them.

"Social media was our main form of telling people when that was going on, and it was probably one of our most highly attended ones," Dudley said. "So, definitely, we are seeing a big response."

Darby Sullivan, a sophomore agricultural communications major from Canyon, Texas, said she is connected with CASNR for just that reason, staying informed. While keeping up with upcoming events is her main focus, she said she enjoys the recent updates involving interesting pictures, collegiate history and agricultural facts. Most of all, she said she has noticed the changes being implemented and feels information is being shared more efficiently.

"It is more effective because the information is a little more clear," Sullivan said, "and it gets to you sooner."

Whitney Conner, CASNR's coordinator of student programs, said she thinks interactions with students have increased, which is crucial to the success of the plan. She said the more their audience interacts through comments, likes, retweets and the like, the more friends and followers are going to see the content the college is promoting.

"That will not only help build our following," Conner said, "but our interactions."

As the plan moves forward, Dudley said she thinks it will become a main form of communication with students and a way to illustrate the unique opportunities our students are involved in.

Cogdell said she is especially excited to see what opportunities Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms will unveil for the college. She said she does know, however, having a plan has contributed to the current improved interaction from students.

"The further we go along, with hashing out details, getting into a routine," she said, "I just think the interaction will continue to increase."

As Texas Tech and the college continue to grow, CASNR is prepared to conquer the digital age. Through their well-planned strategy, the college is successfully engaging and socializing online to ensure each student feels connected to the college and Texas Tech. While some may be unsure of how to foster meaningful online relationships, CASNR has the plan. **T**

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