

---

# SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIC PLAN



Created in April 2020  
By Sarah Dudinetz, Alumni Relations Student  
Social Media Assistant, with Susan Howard  
for the GVSU Alumni Association



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose/Introduction .....	01
Research .....	02
Where we're at: Analytics .....	03
Where we're going: Goals for FY 20-21 .....	03
What content performs well? .....	04
Content categories and examples	
Unifying Imagery .....	05
Pride Points .....	05
Relevance .....	06
Nostalgia .....	06
Informative .....	07
Miscellaneous .....	07
What content should we engage with? .....	08
Instagram takeovers .....	09
Covering events live .....	10
Audit of Club/Chapter Facebook pages .....	11
Sample week long social media schedule .....	12
Where to find news .....	13
Hashtags .....	13
Appendices .....	14
Research and sources .....	14

## PURPOSE

Alumni Relations exists to provide Grand Valley alumni with a sense of community and pride by engaging them in activities that build mutually beneficial relationships, inspire loyalty, and may lead to financial gifts.

Alumni Relations operates the Alumni Association to support alumni on their journeys as Lakers for a Lifetime, helping them stay informed, get involved, give back, and have Laker pride.

This Social Media Strategic Plan serves to:

- Clarify the communication goals of the Alumni Association's social media presence
- Create an actionable plan for achieving those communication goals
- Ensure consistency in our social media presence throughout student employee transitions
- Act as a guide for interacting with our audience on social media

### Social media's role

In a world where we can reach anybody at any time through social media, it's important that we maintain an active presence online in order to:

- Keep a consistent relationship with our alumni, helping to ensure that they are aware of the opportunities and benefits of staying engaged with their alma mater.
- Help alumni reflect on positive memories and remember their connection to the university.
- Promote the positive work, achievements, and advancements being made by Grand Valley, the Alumni Association, and our alumni.
- Answer any questions and clear up any confusion our alumni may have on a variety of topics including events, benefits, campus news, and more.



## RESEARCH

**"Time creates distance between graduates and their college experiences. How can these institutions reach out to alumni and make them interested in donating to their alma maters?"**

Research by Parsons and Wethington (1996) shows that when alumni perceive themselves as closer to their university, they are more likely to donate. The more we communicate with them, the stronger their relationship is - and when those communications are personalized, their relationship to Grand Valley grows stronger.

However, the problem with social media and mass communication is that it's highly impersonal. Our goal is to communicate in a way that is as personalized to our alumni audience as possible, being a trusted source for them to stay connected to Grand Valley after graduation.

**Research by Adam Peruta and Christina Helm identifies four main categories of content to utilize when communicating with alumni on social media.**



Unifying Imagery



Relevance



Pride Points



Nostalgia

## WHERE WE'RE AT: ANALYTICS

Platform	# of posts per week	Engagement	# of followers	Follower growth in past 12 mo.
Facebook	5	54.2	14,420	1.2%
Twitter	6.75	26.3	3,955	4.07%
Instagram	4.25	39.5	2,028	26.42%
LinkedIn	1.5	5.81%	656	-
Youtube	.5	1.175	96	5.2%

Collected 4/14/20. See pg. 15 for more information regarding how these analytics were gathered and how to gather/compare them in the future.

## WHERE WE'RE GOING: GOALS FOR FY 20-21

As one method of raising our overall communications touches, the following goals have been set for our social media.

### FACEBOOK

01

Increase followers by 5% to 15,155.  
Increase engagement by 20% to 34.6.

### INSTAGRAM

03

Increase followers by 45% to 3,520.  
Increase engagement by 20% to 45.

### YOUTUBE

05

Grow followers by 10% to 104.  
Increase engagement by 20% to 1.63.

### TWITTER

02

Increase followers by 8% to 4,260.  
Increase engagement by 20% to 31.3.

### LINKEDIN

04

Increase followers by 50% to 1,018.  
Increase engagement by 20% to 6.4%.

## WHAT CONTENT PERFORMS WELL?



*Some of our most successful posts include President Emeritus Haas or President Mantella.*

Researchers Adam Peruta and Christina Helm found that different categories of content performed differently with an audience of alumni. These categories, in order of highest-performing to lowest, are:

- Unifying Imagery
- Pride Points
- Relevance
- Nostalgia

While not all of the content we post is going to fit into one of these categories, we can make a conscious effort to balance these four categories in a way that best engages our alumni. After analyzing content from the GVSU Alumni Association social media accounts, I added two content categories:

- Informative
- Miscellaneous

The following pages have more in-depth descriptions of content categories, as well as examples from our social media accounts and other successful alumni accounts, including the University of Michigan, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Boston University alumni accounts.

# UNIFYING IMAGERY

Unifying imagery is visual content that represents GVSU, such as iconic campus locations. Typically, this content has a short caption, with the goal being to help alumni reconnect with campus.



*Some of the most iconic GVSU locations are the clocktower, entry archway, the Transformational Link, Zumberge pond, and Mary Idema Pew Library.*



*While not always part of campus, downtown Grand Rapids is a shared memory that alumni can appreciate. Feel free to repost photos from local photographers, giving credit.*

[View Insights](#) [Promote](#)

13 likes  
 alumnigvsu The snow can be a hassle, but it sure does make for a beautiful campus ❄️ #GVSU #LakerForALifetime

2,938 likes  
 michiganalumni Ann Arbor is ready for the holidays. #GoBlue 📷: @e\_ro\_ro  
[View all 17 comments](#)

# PRIDE POINTS

Pride points intend to inspire pride in our alumni. Examples include impressive research news, sports wins, or university achievements. Be careful to avoid generic 'university news' that would only be applicable to those currently at the university.



*The investiture of President Mantella in 2019 was our most successful Instagram post of all time.*



*Many alumni have a strong connection to athletics. Highlighting athletic achievements makes them feel a sense of pride.*

[View Insights](#) [Promote](#)

Liked by gvsu and 247 others  
 alumnigvsu Join us in giving a warm welcome to our newest #LakerforALifetime, President Philomena V. Mantella, as she begins her first day on campus! 🎉👏

Liked by campo\_alpaca and others  
 wisalumni Bye-bye, Baylor: After advancing to the Final Four last Saturday (above) Badger volleyball beat the top-seeded Bears in last night's set to advance to tomorrow's National Championship against the Stanford Cardinal (but we know who wears red best). Photo by Jeff Miller/ University Communications #UWFlamingle #Badgers #Volleyball #OnWisconsin 🇺🇸🇨🇦

# RELEVANCE

Relevance content features GVSU somewhere exciting. Content may overlap with Pride Points. Examples include impressive rankings or features in news publications. The key is for this content to be from outside of the university and part of a relevant and timely issue.



*GVSU was part of a relevant and timely issue with our new accelerated online degree program, which is in line with an initiative set by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.*

View Insights Promote

Liked by gvsu and 54 others

alumnigvsu Have you heard about Grand Valley's new accelerated online degree program? This program will help enhance Michigan's productivity and supports Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's initiative to have more Michigan residents complete their degrees. Read more at [gvsu.edu/gvnext](http://gvsu.edu/gvnext)!



*Columbia College capitalized on their relevance with this #tbt of soon-to-be President of the U.S. visiting their campus.*

264 likes

alumniofcolumbiacollege Jan. 16, 1953. Columbia President Dwight D. Eisenhower bids farewell to the school before assuming the office of President of the United States four days later.

# NOSTALGIA

Nostalgic content allows alumni to reconnect with memories of GV through throwback photos, traditions, events, anniversaries, historically significant alumni, 'on this day', etc.

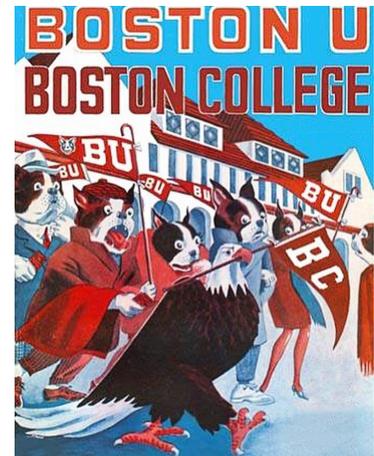


*While it's also a giveaway post, this photo of a football game reminds alumni of their fond memories at GVSU.*

View Insights Promote

Liked by veterans\_upward\_bound\_mi and 113 others

alumnigvsu 🎁 GIVEAWAY 🎁 Who's excited for #GVHomecoming? We are! We're giving away some AWESOME prize packages this week! Want a chance to win? It's easy! All you have to do is comment on this post with your favorite memory from a #GVHomecoming



*This Boston University poster from the 1960's resonates well with older audiences and instills a sense of pride.*

814 likes

bualumni This poster from 1961 is 🍷 Head to our stories to help us choose the donor giveaway for the BU vs BC hockey game on Feb 29.

# INFORMATIVE

Posts in the informative category might not fit in 'pride points', but are still of interest to alumni and help build the Alumni Association's credibility. This includes alumni spotlights, event promotions, photo galleries, donation appeals, showcasing impressive numbers, etc.



Content for alumni spotlights can include Alumni in 10 articles and Laker Landings.

## GVSU Alumni Volunteer Program LAKERS HELPING LAKERS

**1741**  
Total Volunteers



2018/2019

[View Insights](#) [Promote](#)



13 likes  
alumnigvsu Dana Calloway, '07, describes her experience at #GVSU as "Educational, interactive, unforgettable," and says that Grand Valley equipped her with the knowledge to be successful in her role as an educator. Read more of Dana's story and submit your own at: [gvsu.edu/alumni/10](http://gvsu.edu/alumni/10)  
#Alumni10 #LakerForALifetime

Showcasing infographics regarding volunteer numbers builds our credibility and shows that we're working to achieve our goals.

[View Insights](#) [Promote](#)



Liked by gvsu and 41 others  
alumnigvsu Thank you to our almost 2,000 volunteers who dedicated their time to our community this past year. You are what makes this university great! Want to know more about how you can help? Visit [gvsu.edu/alumni/volunteer](http://gvsu.edu/alumni/volunteer).  
#LakerforALifetime #GVSU #GVLakerEffect

# MISCELLANEOUS

Some posts don't fall into a certain category. Sometimes we post regarding holidays or run specific campaigns, like Homecoming 2019's #WheresLouie, or others.



On major national holidays, we typically put out a graphic on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

[View Insights](#) [Promote](#)



48 likes  
alumnigvsu Happy Halloween, Lakers! 🍂  
October 31, 2019

The #WheresLouie campaign was successful because alumni resonate with Louie and the iconic campus spots he was pictured at.



[View Insights](#) [Promote](#)



Liked by gvsu.housing and 54 others  
alumnigvsu The #WheresLouie contest begins now! Think you know where Louie is? 🍂 Leave your guesses in the comments below for a chance to win a #GVHomecoming prize package! Winner will be announced in 24 hours 🍂

# WHAT CONTENT SHOULD WE ENGAGE WITH?

It's easy to fall into the habit of just putting out posts on social media. However, if we want to engage with our audience effectively, we can't just be talking at them. It's imperative that we also engage with our audience on social media by retweeting, sharing, commenting, and favoriting content from others.

Alumni come to us on social media with questions about events, benefits, and GVSU as a whole. If we're not able to answer their question, it's important that we point them in the direction of someone who can.



*Just like in a face-to-face conversation, you can't just talk at your audience. Listening and responding are just as important.*

To find content to engage with:

- Take 15-30 minutes every day to check notifications/feeds on alumni social media accounts. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter interactions can be checked through Loomly's 'Interactions' feature, but LinkedIn has to be checked manually.
- Has anyone tried to message us or ask a question? Are alumni tagging us in any content that we can be sharing or interacting with?
- If we're tagged in any content that fits in our six categories, consider reposting it.
- If you receive comments that are inappropriate or are about a GVSU crisis, make a staff member aware so that they can address them accordingly.
  - Who to consult for comments: Assistant Director of Communications. If they're unavailable, consult the Director of Alumni Relations. If they're unavailable, consult any available staff member.

# INSTAGRAM TAKEOVERS

For some events, we invite an alumni to 'take over' our Instagram account. This helps highlight alumni who are involved, and helps promote our content to a wider audience.

Under Comm Team Folder > Social Media > Instagram Takeovers, you'll find a template titled 'Instagram Story Template,' which we share with the person who's doing the takeover several days beforehand. Additionally, our graphic designer will create a fill-in-the-blank style picture for them to start off with, so you can send this to them as well.

## A few things to keep in mind:

- Don't send them the Instagram Story Takeover document until, at the earliest, a few days before. The document contains our password, and while we are careful to select alumni that we trust, we don't want anyone having the password longer than necessary.
- The information in the document can be adjusted depending on:
  - If it's an all-ages event, be sure they know to get parental consent before posting pictures of children. If it's an alumni-only event, this isn't necessary to include. Alumni sign a photo agreement when they sign up for the event, but we still need permission to post pictures of children.
  - Whether or not you will be present at the event to assist them. Sometimes it's nice for them to have an extra social media-savvy person there to help them create content, so be sure to give them a heads up if you'll be there.

## When the takeover is over...

- Change the password to the Instagram account, update on the login document, and let Susan know.
- Add the takeover to our "takeover highlight". If they posted a lot, select the most interesting highlights of the takeover.
- Email whoever did the takeover a thank you:
  - Let them know that you appreciated them taking the time to do this
  - Tell them it's on our "takeover highlight"
  - Ask if they have any feedback regarding the takeover process (since this is relatively new)



*Taken from Rachel LePoudre's Takeover for the Detroit Red Wings GVSU Day in February 2020.*

## COVERING EVENTS LIVE

Covering events live can provide fun opportunities to hone your social media skills. Events you might cover could include sporting events (Griffins games, Detroit Red Wings games), on-campus events (Convocation, MLK Day), and more.

### Preparation is everything!

- Do your research on the event and speakers/notable attendees.
  - Are there any fun facts you could post?
  - Is there a hashtag or account for the event, or the speakers?
  - What are their names? (Be sure to get correct spelling!)
- Draft copy for different social media posts beforehand and keep them in a note on your phone. This will save you so much time during the event.
- Create any graphics that you might be able to post throughout the day.

### During the event

- If you're able, get there early so you have a good seat. Think about angles, lighting, etc. for picture-taking.
  - Take more pictures than you think you'll need. Sometimes it takes a few shots to get clear, well-lit, interesting pictures.
  - If pictures don't turn out great, use a photo editing app you feel comfortable with (Adobe Lightroom, VSCO, or even Apple's editing abilities can work) to brighten dark images and make them look nice.
- Be listening for any quotes from speakers that would make for good captions. Write them down immediately so you get the wording right, and be sure to give them credit.
- Be interacting, not just posting! Share other departments' or people's content on the event, reply to comments, etc.



[View Insights](#)

[Promote](#)



Liked by [gvsuarchives](#) and 81 others

[alumnigvsu](#) "True peace is not merely the absence of tension. It is the presence of justice." -Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Today, hundreds of Grand Valley faculty, staff, students, and community members joined for a silent march through campus. [#NowIsTheTime](#)

*This MLK Day post was drafted beforehand and posted during the event. The day's hashtag, [#NowIsTheTime](#), as well as a quote from Martin Luther King, Jr. are utilized. Pictures were edited using Adobe Lightroom.*

# AUDIT OF CLUB/CHAPTER FACEBOOK PAGES

Collected 4/15/20

You'll help manage and communicate with our clubs and chapters through their Facebook pages from time to time. See pg. 16 for more information regarding this audit.

Club/Chapter	Page type	Likes/Mem.	Last active	Notes
<b>Austin</b>	Page	79	3/25/20	
<b>Chicago</b>	Page	458	3/11/20	
<b>Dallas</b>	Page	54	3/19/20	
<b>Detroit</b>	Page	1039	4/2/20	
<b>Kalamazoo</b>	Page	50	2/18/20	
<b>Lansing</b>	Page	290	3/25/20	
<b>New York City</b>	Page	136	4/14/20	
<b>Phoenix</b>	Page	114	3/6/20	
<b>Seattle</b>	Page	46	10/15/19	
<b>Tampa</b>	Page	120	1/14/20	
<b>Traverse City</b>	Page	209	3/6/20	
<b>Washington D.C</b>	Public Group	314	3/25/20	
<b>Baseball</b>	Page	107	9/16/20	Not branded
<b>Basketball (M)</b>	Page	137	3/10/19	Not branded
<b>Basketball (W)</b>	Page	73	11/25/19	Not branded
<b>XC/Track (M/W)</b>	Page	491	3/1/20	Not branded
<b>Football</b>	Page	67	8/26/19	
<b>Golf (M)</b>	X	X	X	X
<b>Golf (W)</b>	X	X	X	X
<b>Lacrosse</b>	Public Group	76	3/5/19	Not branded
<b>Soccer</b>	Private Group	118	?	Private = won't let me see content. Not branded

# AUDIT OF CLUB/CHAPTER FACEBOOK PAGES

<b>Softball</b>	Public Group	87	10/9/19	Not branded
<b>Swim/Dive (M/W)</b>	Page	230	2/7/20	Not branded
<b>Tennis (M/W)</b>	Private Group	81	?	Private = won't let me see content. Not branded
<b>Volleyball</b>	Page	131	12/2/19	Not branded
<b>Accounting</b>	Page	322	3/31/20	Not branded
<b>College of Ed</b>	Page	434	4/10/20	Not branded
<b>Liberal Arts and Sciences</b>	Page	93	3/20/20	Not branded
<b>Film and Video</b>	Public Group	822	4/14/20	Not branded
<b>Global Laker</b>	Public Group	599	3/25/20	Not branded
<b>Hospitality and Tourism</b>	Private Group	504	?	Private = won't let me see content.
<b>Kirkhof College of Nursing</b>	Public Group	519	4/13/20	Not branded
<b>Laker Alumni Marching Band</b>	Public Group	439	4/13/20	Not branded
<b>Latin@</b>	Page	190	11/26/19	Not branded
<b>Rowing</b>	X	X	X	X
<b>Public, Nonprofit &amp; Health Admin.</b>	X	X	X	X
<b>Seidman College of Business</b>	X	X	X	X
<b>Social Work</b>	Page	630	8/5/19	Not branded
<b>Veterans</b>	Public Group	407	4/14/20	Not branded

# SAMPLE WEEK-LONG SOCIAL MEDIA SCHEDULE

## MONDAY



Happy Monday, Lakers! Be sure to get outside and enjoy the sunshine ☀️

## TUESDAY

As Lakers, we know that we're stronger together. Alumni volunteers all over the country are always working to connect and empower Lakers - past, current, and future. Find your next volunteer opportunity at [gvsu.edu/alumni/volunteer](https://gvsu.edu/alumni/volunteer) ❤️



## WEDNESDAY



It's not too late to sign up for Arcade Night with the Young Alumni Council! Relive your childhood through arcade games with fellow alumni. Visit [gvsu.edu/alumni/yac](https://gvsu.edu/alumni/yac) to sign up!

## THURSDAY

Football alumnus, Michael McFadden, '06, credits his #GVSU experience for much of his success in life. Learn more about why he decided to give back to the program in the Summer 2019 issue of GV Magazine 🏈  
#LakerforaLifetime #GVLakerEffect



## FRIDAY



Did you hear about President Mantella's new lifetime educational resource for ALL GVSU alumni? Find out more at: [gvsu.edu/gvnext](https://gvsu.edu/gvnext)

## WHERE TO FIND NEWS

### GVSU.EDU/GVNEXT

Stories from GV Next are often used in eNews. Use the same ones or find different alumni-relevant stories to share on social.



### GVSULAKERS.COM

For athletics stories, navigate to gvsulakers.com, click 'Fans', then click 'News Releases'.



### STORY BANK, ALUMNI SITE

Stories from larger publications are compiled in our story bank: Comm Team folder > Story Bank > Stories. Alumni in 10 stories or Laker Landings are also great social media content.



### PERSONAL REFERRALS

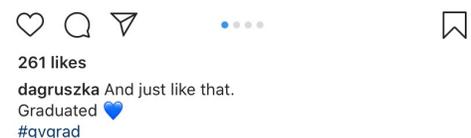
People tag us in content on social media - For example, some departments highlight their own alumni and tag us. Sometimes, Alumni Relations staff will let you know of anything worth sharing.

## HASHTAGS

On every post:

- Facebook: Hashtags are not as popular on Facebook as on other platforms. Use #GVSU, #LakerforaLifetime, or #GVSUAlumni when appropriate.
- Twitter, Instagram: Use #GVSU, #LakerforaLifetime, and #GVSUAlumni. When possible, work hashtags into the copy of the post instead of putting them all at the end.
- LinkedIn: Utilize #GVSU, #LakerforaLifetime, and #GVSUAlumni, as well as broader or professional hashtags including #WestMichigan, #HigherEd, or other appropriate hashtags for the post.

In some cases, event-specific hashtags will be provided for you. Be sure to use and monitor them, engaging with others who utilize them.



*For example, #GVGrad is a high-engagement hashtag during commencement season.*

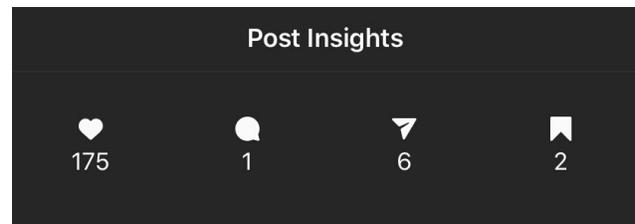
## APPENDIX A: ENGAGEMENT FORMULAS

1) Select 4 full weeks from the last four months to take averages from. The weeks of Jan. 5-11, Feb. 2-8, Mar. 1-7, and Apr. 5-11 of 2020 were used for these calculations.

- Avg. # of posts: Add all posts on each platform between these dates. This can include retweets/shares from other accounts.

### Engagement

- Facebook: Under every post is a number labeled "Engagement". Add engagement numbers for all posts and take the average.
- Twitter: Under every post on the right is a button for analytics. On this screen is a number labeled "Total engagements". Add engagement numbers for all posts and take the average.
- Instagram: Can only be taken from the mobile app, not on a computer. Under each post, tap "view insights". On this screen, add the four numbers in the top row (likes, comments, shares, and saves).
  - Once these numbers have been added to get a 'total engagements' number for each post, add each post together and take the average.
- LinkedIn: Under every post on the right is a button that says "Show Stats". Clicking this will show a percentage labeled "Engagement Rate". Collect engagement rates for each post, and take the average.
- YouTube: Open YouTube studio, and select Analytics. Update the date range to one of the weeks you're collecting from, and collect the average watch time in hours. Repeat for each week.



### Followers

- Taken on April 14, 2020.

### Follower growth

- $(\text{Current \# of followers}) - (\text{\# of followers one year ago}) = \text{\# of followers gained in the last year.}$
- $(\text{\# of followers gained in the last year}) / (\text{current \# of followers}) = \text{follower growth percentage.}$

---

## APPENDIX B: CLUB FB PAGE AUDIT

Last active

- Does not include posts by Susan, Sarah, or other Communications team members. Activity by club/chapter leaders or members only.

Red: There is no page for this club/chapter.

Yellow: There is a page, but it's a private group that I don't have access to.

## RESEARCH AND SOURCES

Parsons, P. & Wethington, D. (1996). Fund-raising appeals to alumni: Two experiments. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, 51(1), 44.

Peruta, A., & Helm, C. (2018). Engaging University Alumni Through Social Media: Strategies for Creating Community. *The Journal of Social Media in Society*, 7(1), 123-150. Retrieved from <https://www.thejsms.org/tsmri/index.php/TSMRI/article/viewFile/222/156>

Ponisciak, T. (n.d.). Engaging Alumni on Social Media: What Works. *Academic Impressions*. Retrieved from <https://www.academicimpressions.com/sites/default/files/engaging-alumni-social-media.pdf>