

Student Engagement

**Using Social Media to Recruit for
International Education Opportunities**



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a smartphone. The hand is positioned in the lower right, with fingers touching the screen. The phone's screen is lit up, showing some colorful elements. The background is a soft-focus bokeh of warm, colorful lights in shades of yellow, orange, and pink, suggesting an indoor setting with decorative lighting.

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Preface



As international educators turn their efforts towards recruitment for 2021 and beyond, it's important that we are communicating to prospective students in a personalized and relevant manner.

With the massive evolution of social media and the increased ability to share content across time and space, efficiently using social media can play an important role in the expansion of global opportunities, both for incoming and outgoing students.

THE UPTICK IN

Social Media Usage

90%

OF U.S. ADULTS AGES 18-29 USE AT
LEAST ONE SOCIAL MEDIA SITE

3.8
BILLION

ACTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA
USERS GLOBALLY

According to **Pew Research Center**, 90% of U.S. adults ages 18-29 use at least one social media site, which has grown from the 7% recorded in 2005.

Usage rates are not just high in the United States. Globally, there are 3.8 billion active social media users according to the **2020 Global Digital Report**. This allows international education offices to reach a broad range of users—whether that’s prospective study abroad students or prospective international students and scholars.

According to Statista, the TOP 5 social networking sites for young adults ages 15-25 in the third quarter of 2020 were:



Youtube



Instagram



Facebook



Snapchat



Twitter

Each platform has different use purposes and ways of disseminating information that can be used to various advantages, and the content pushed out on chosen platforms should echo its best use case.



FACEBOOK has been suggested as a good platform to broadcast alerts and updates, and the platform has the ability to create groups to target a specific audience. Facebook groups could be used to allow students going on a study abroad trip to connect with each other prior to the trip and deliver trip-specific information.



TWITTER is commonly referred to as a micro-blogging site, with a maximum character count that often promotes a brief message. A good use case could be to share a student blog post or application deadline.



INSTAGRAM is utilized as a photo sharing platform and allows for visual engagement. By showing students where they can travel or by advertising a student story, prospective students can visualize their experience.

Social media can be used for a variety of purposes ranging from engagement with friends, sharing of information, and even for visual entertainment. Here are some content ideas for study abroad and international students.

Advertise Study Abroad



WHEN STUDENTS GO ABROAD, many will tout their experience online, but social media also offers the opportunity to engage with students who have yet to embark on their journey. As a method of ongoing communication, online posts offer a way to share information and offer a visual of the experience prospective students can have.

Here's some creative content ideas:

DEBUNK THE BARRIERS

[SITUATION] Some prospective students may think study abroad is not for them. They may not know of opportunities that pertain to their major or program, lack the language skills, believe it could delay graduation, or are worried about the cost.

[IDEA] *Create a series of posts that address common misconceptions when it comes to study abroad and offer appointment availability, so they know when and how to connect with an advisor and learn more.*

PROMOTE THE BENEFITS

[SITUATION] There are many benefits to studying abroad, whether that's expanding one's cultural literacy, learning a language, or embarking on an experiential learning opportunity, but not everyone knows the benefits.

[IDEA] *Create some posts that share the benefits of study abroad, it could resonate with prospective students.*

SHARE SUCCESS STORIES

[SITUATION] Prospective students will want an idea of what their experience could be like, so give them an idea.

[IDEA] *Reach out to your study abroad alumni and ask them to talk about their experience: What did they learn? What did they like most? Do they recommend studying abroad? More than likely, the answer will be yes. Make sure to share a variety of stories from a variety of places and programs, so prospective students can see a number of options.*

DAY IN THE LIFE

[SITUATION] Even with success stories, prospective students may be curious about what a day in the life is like.

[IDEA] *Utilize students currently on study abroad programs. Ask them to do a Social Media takeover where they highlight what a typical day is for them. When students normally post during study abroad, it's photos of popular sites or places, but the day-to-day life in study abroad can have just as much charm, if not more.*



Recruit International Students and Scholars

USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

In an AIEA paper by Dr. Rahul Choudaha, four unique advantages to social media in international student recruitment were outlined:

1 > RELEVANCE

Because the use of social media has grown exponentially, this is a great way to connect with prospective students through a communication medium that many use on a daily basis.

2 > SPEED

With time and geographic differences, social media can be one of the fastest ways to relay information.

3 > COST

Most social media platforms are free of charge and offer an easy way to build engagement and interest.

4 > PERSONALIZATION

Social media allows users to translate messages into their local language or language of preference, often making the experience more personalized.

Here are some ideas of ways to use your social media accounts for international recruitment:



Virtual Community

Create posts that spark conversation and incentivize students to meet and make friends.



Alumni Stories

Prospective international students and scholars will be curious about what life is like at your institution. What can they expect? What opportunities are there?



Mark Your Calendars

Social media is a great way to announce deadlines and upcoming events that may be important to both prospective and current students.



HOW **CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY** USES SOCIAL MEDIA AND TERRA DOTTA TO RECRUIT IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

With the widespread use of virtual delivery for day-to-day campus operations, international opportunities must be marketed appropriately and effectively. No longer can flyers be posted on campus for passing eyes to see, nor can in-person information sessions be hosted. Marketing global opportunities has taken a virtual turn. At Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), they have embraced the virtual switch, ramped up their social media, and even saved some money by not printing their marketing materials.

PHOTO CONTEST

One way in which CWRU has utilized social media and their Terra Dotta site is through a **photo contest** with the intention of highlighting global experiences and encouraging other students to pursue international opportunities. Students submit photos, their name, major, location of study, and a comment about the photo.

The photo contest has several different categories—each with their own prize.

- Overall Winner: \$75
- The World is Your Classroom: \$75
- Cultural Experience: \$50
- Spartans Abroad: \$50
- Scenery: \$50
- Facebook's Most Likes: \$50

WINNERS FROM THE MOST RECENT PHOTO CONTEST

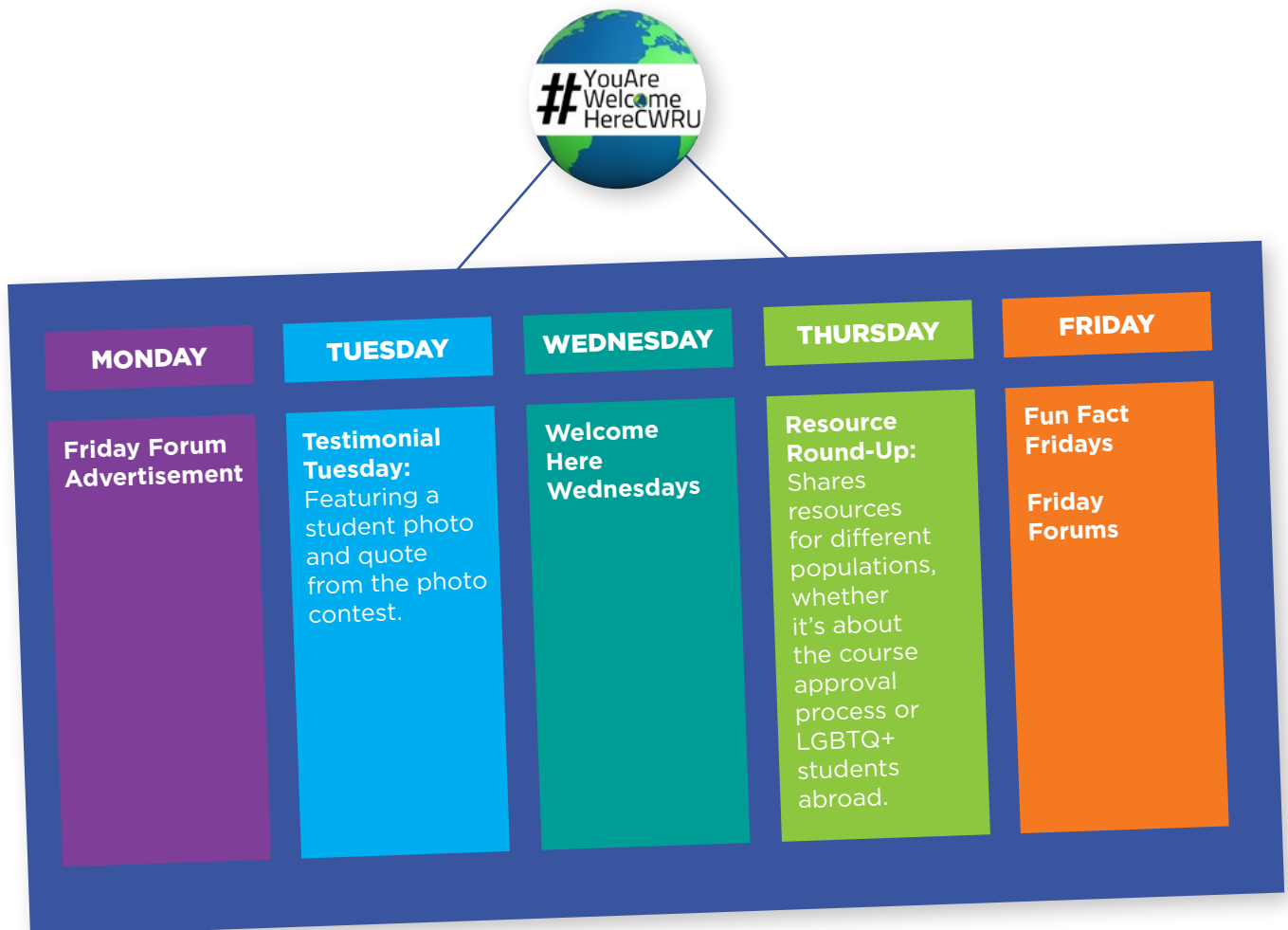


Left to right: Facebook's Most Likes, Cultural Experience, Scenery, Spartans Abroad

CWRU's Center for International Affairs can easily access these photos later on for marketing purposes with all of the information populated into their Terra Dotta platform. Autumn Beechler Stebing, Assistant Director of Education Abroad, said, "If I need to find a mechanical engineering student who studied abroad, I can easily search Terra Dotta and find what I need. The photo contest really helps us advertise just how many education abroad opportunities we offer."

A WEEK AT A GLANCE

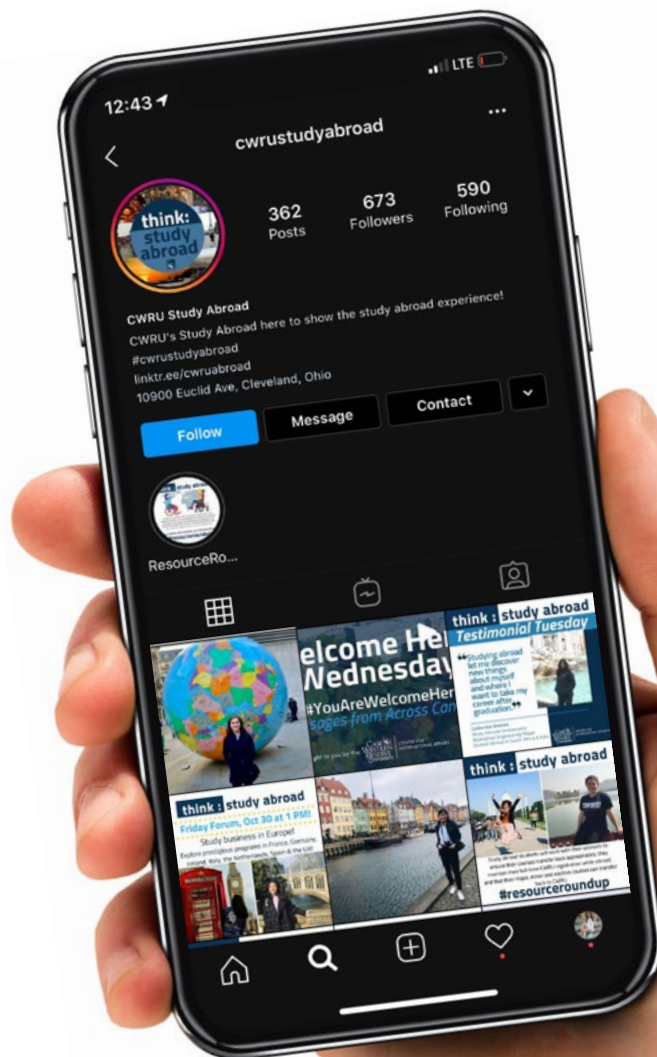
Aside from the photo contest, they have a variety of posts for their weekly content:



“Fun Fact Fridays” are the most popular day of the week on social media for study abroad marketing, but the most shared posts of the week for both study abroad and ISS are “Welcome Here Wednesdays.” These posts showcase a video created by another member of the CWRU campus community to promote the **#YouAreWelcomeHereCWRU** campaign. Business Systems Analyst, Alec Jokubaitis, was the individual to spearhead this campaign. As a spin off the hashtag **#YouAreWelcomeHere**, the posts in the campaign both show and value different walks of life at the university. Whether it’s international students on campus or departmental staff, the idea is to show that Case Western Reserve University is a welcoming space for everyone.

On Fridays, CWRU'S Center for International Affairs also hosts forums. Right now these are information sessions on Zoom and Facebook Live. By hosting the forum on Facebook, students who have liked their page will receive a notification that they are live, which is just another notification method to reach students. And with their Facebook's Most Likes Photo Contest category, more than 1,000 people have liked the **page!**

The Friday Forum sessions cover locations in which students can study like Oceania and Europe, but more of them are on specific majors and identities of students, like how to study abroad as a pre-med, an alumni panel with the engineering peer advisors or diverse students. With an individualized approach, students will know that there is an opportunity for them.



RECRUITING FOR THE RETURN OF GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES

Although 2020 has limited international experiences, Beechler Stebing predicts that the return of study abroad will be strong.

“First-year students still want to study abroad. Students who did not embark on their journeys this year may still be able to fit a global opportunity in their academic plans. Now is the perfect time to market to prospective students.”

While using social media as their main marketing platform is new to CWRU's Center for International Affairs, in just six months of actively focusing on social media marketing efforts, they have seen around a 37% increase in followers across all social media. As they continue to prepare for upcoming global opportunities, they are currently using the advising application in their Terra Dotta site to gain accurate data on where students have heard about study abroad opportunities. With this set of data, they can advise future marketing communication strategies and fully prepare for the return of education abroad.



Want to learn more about how Terra Dotta can help you recruit for the return to travel?

 www.terradotta.com  info@terradotta.com

