Science Communication through Social Media Outreach

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Introduction

During the Fall 2025 semester, I participated in the Mini Science Influencer program while serving the Research and Extension Experiences for Undergraduates- Education Coordinated Network. Through the Texas A&M University System, undergraduates were provided the opportunity to integrate science communication into their respective scientific disciplines through the USDA-funded Science Influencers program. While serving as a Mini Science Influencer, I focused on communication support for the REEU-ECN program. The six-month experience gave students the chance to communicate in food and agricultural sciences. My supervisors Dr. Holli Leggette and Abril Benitez aided me in the completion of my tasks and provided me the space to grow in science communications.

Background

With 56 programs under REEU, there was a need for better communication and outreach strategies. Working closely with Benitez Bonilla, we planned a social media schedule and engagement plan to better connect undergraduate research and extension programs across institutions. There was a need for consistent communication to increase connection and visibility on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and X. In addition, we aimed to better develop my professional skills in the area of science communication and digital strategy.

Procedures

While assisting in the management of the REEU-ECN social media platforms, I created and scheduled posts highlighting student projects and program updates. This required me to design graphics that aligned with all branding guidelines. To acquire more current program research, I collected quotes and content from students and program directors to turn into social media content. My final assignment as Science Influencer was to write and distribute a network-wide newsletter. This required me to use shared content on social media, in addition to acquiring content from each program's websites. The included content consisted of photo spotlights, REEU spotlights, highlights of the REEU-ECN podeo series, symposium content, and upcoming opportunities in the REEU-ECN program. To create this content, I maintained consistent messaging and tone across platforms, in addition to monitoring engagement and audience response to the content.

Findings

The analytics for these posts showed the best performance across higher education institutions. There is still room for improvement in reaching students involved in the REEU-ECN program and college students overall. Posts requiring a call to action received the highest engagement. Two examples of this are upcoming workshop announcements and links to program

sites included in the post. Overall, the engagement was satisfactory to accomplish the goals established at the beginning of this program.

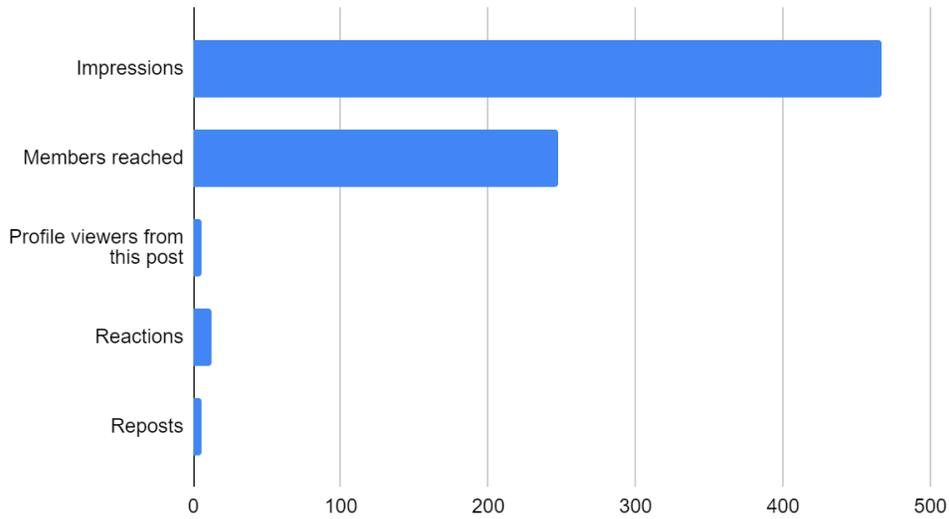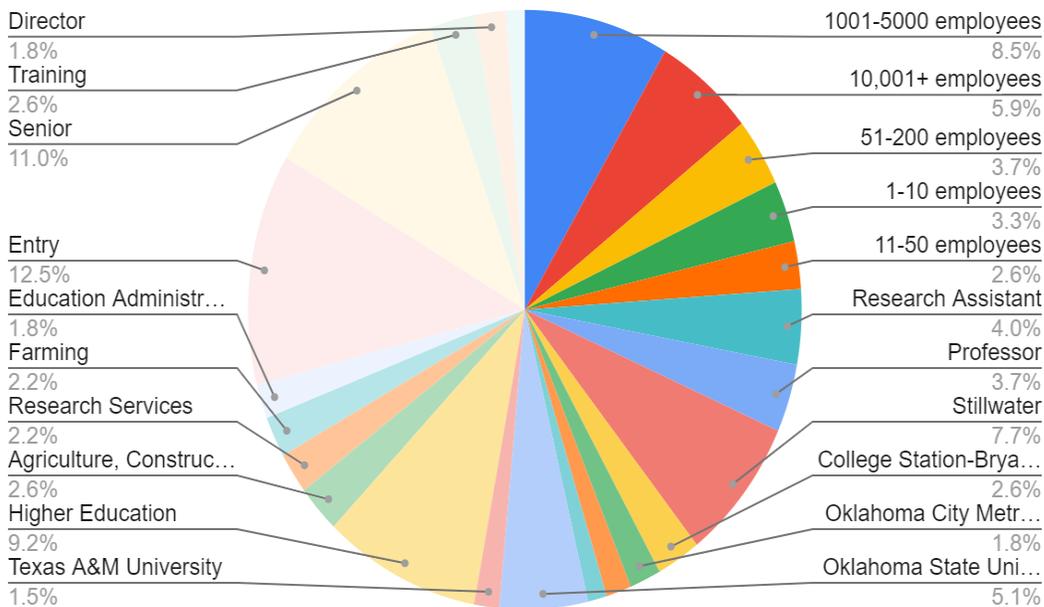**Figure 1**
Rural Renewal post from LinkedIn performance analytics

Figure 2
Rural Renewal post from LinkedIn demographics analytics

Implications and Application

As a senior agricultural communications and journalism student with a minor in graphic design, this program allowed me to better grasp the requirements necessary to produce content for a program's social media at this level. In addition, I gained experience in demonstrating the value of utilizing communication roles within undergraduate research networks. This program provided me with better insight into how storytelling enhances research impact and outreach. This integration of communication into undergraduate research helps me to further develop resources that will aid me in my future career path.

References

REEU-ECN. REEU programs. https://www.reeu.org/reeu-programs/