

Promotion, engagement and service: *The Shorthorn's* Approach to Social Media

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The Shorthorn Newspaper ✓

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According to a 2019 Pew Research Center report, 55% of U.S. adults get their news from social media. That's why *The Shorthorn* has taken a holistic approach to social media and the strategies we employ. We have a team of three dedicated to our social feed and newsletters, but really, the entire newsroom is involved. From live tweeting, to pitching social projects to promoting each other's work — our newsroom knows the power of social. *The Shorthorn* already surpassed our goal of 1,830,000 page views for 2019-20, in large part due to social media promotion. We especially focused on increasing our visual presence and leveraging our Instagram audience more — both efforts which paid off with increased views, engagement and more.

Scroll down for examples and case studies of how we put social to use.



Social Highlights since June 1, 2019

- Facebook likers/subscribers grew **8%** from 11,707 to 12,640.
- Twitter followers grew **9%** from 8,600 to 9,367.
- Instagram followers grew **54%** from 2,597 to 4,012.
- The Shorthorn has four newsletters with 64,000 subscribers.

A cross-platform approach

In addition to our daily newsletters, *The Shorthorn* primarily uses three social networks to promote our content and engage with our readers. These are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Each of the three have their own social calendar organized by the engagement team. Facebook — the account that yields the highest amount of traffic — favors a less frequent distribution and captions tend to be a little longer. Twitter actually lends itself to frequent or constant updates, so we push the highest volume of content there. We also require our reporters to live tweet events they're covering, and the brand account retweets them. These tweets bring our readers with us to the events and add context when embedded in articles later. Instagram is our highly visual platform and favors one to two posts daily.

Instagram — an opportunity for news publications

Headed by our engagement editor Edward Medeles, *The Shorthorn* has worked hard to create a marriage between visual journalism and our social media feed. This can be especially seen on Instagram, a primarily visual platform, as well as our other social accounts. Edward created *The Shorthorn's* style for what is known as “head on photo” posts, which simply mean photos with a headline and additional contextual information added. I've included a few examples below.



Our research showed that posting one to two photos a day on Instagram would increase engagement and allow our posts to break through the notorious algorithm — meaning there would be more eyes on our content and more clicks on our links.

However, Instagram does limit who can share links on the story function. Therefore, we had to get creative with how we redirected Instagram traffic to our homepage. To do this, our engagement editor set up a mini Link Tree website that houses links for every post we make — allowing our Instagram audience to navigate to the right part of our website without closing the app.

But we also aim to provide standalone value to our readers on Instagram — through weekly features such as a print flip through, “Fresh Music Fridays” and user-friendly information broken down in just a few images and a description. Our efforts have paid off — we have higher engagement, more followers and more Instagram referrals than ever.

We also often hand the “keys” to the account to editors or reporters to do a takeover of the accounts story, sharing photos and videos from large scale events, high-stakes athletic games or other updates.

Not just sharing — how *The Shorthorn* engages its readers

Engagement is a term used a lot in the industry and can refer to many things. For us, we simply define it as a way to connect with our audience in conversation, not a one-way lecture. We want to be transparent, timely, professional, interactive and human. A message to us will receive a reply. We read the comments. And when possible, we go above and beyond to answer reader questions, direct them to other stories and note their feedback.

We often use social media to break information down into digestible chunks. This can be done with Twitter threads or Instagram galleries/stories. Threads have broken down topics such as a lawsuit against the university, an investigation into the former president’s actions, resources for COVID-19 and more. Example screenshots can be found at the end of this packet.

How we leveraged social media to serve and engage readers in the age of COVID-19

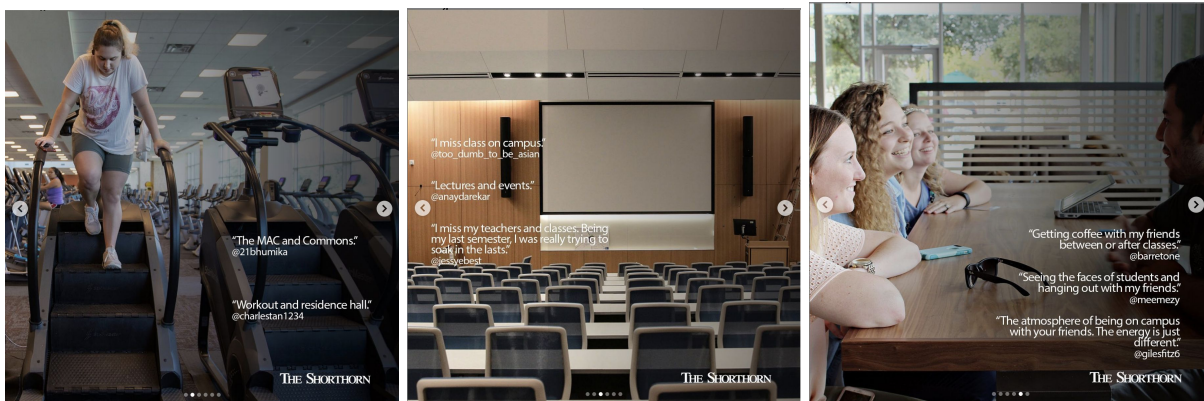
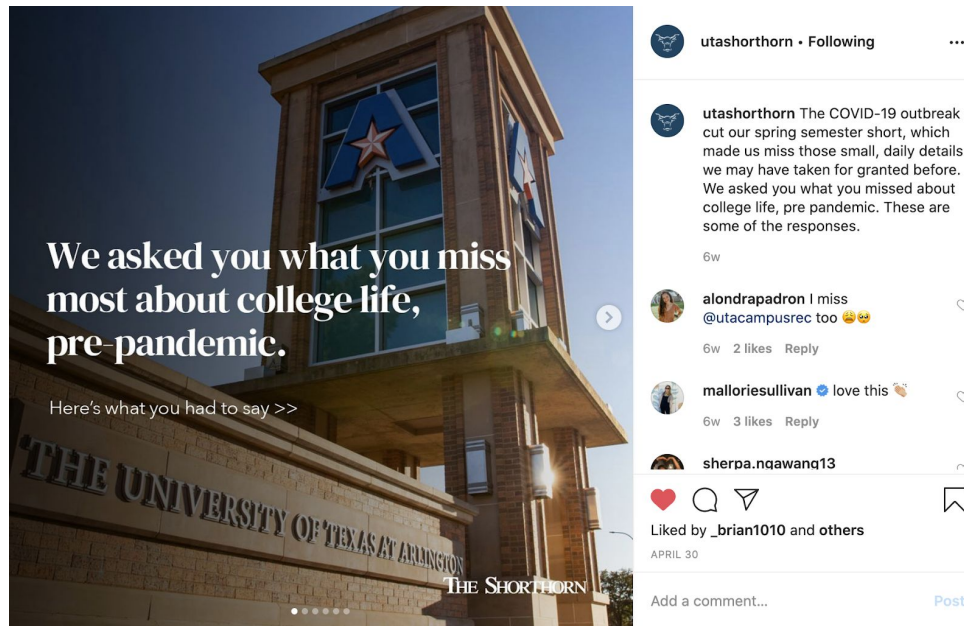
The COVID-19 pandemic had ripple effects across the country, and UT Arlington was not excluded. Soon after students left for spring break, we found out that we wouldn’t be returning, for classes at least.

As the university scrambled to address the new normal, *The Shorthorn* realized our role was to provide information as clearly and directly to students as possible. Our social media team did this in a variety of ways, but namely, we launched an initiative designed to answer the most common questions asked by students. Branded as UTA Unfolded, our existing Q&A platform, we launched the form on social media and the questions began to pour in. We received over 100, which resulted in FAQ articles like [this one](#), a [coronavirus wrap-up article with all of the latest](#)

[information](#), our team sharing links with readers and more. We also used the questions to guide our overall coverage, as well as contact students who [wanted to share their experiences](#).

We shared resources, answered questions and promoted stories through social media.

We later created a [quarantine questionnaire](#) to highlight experiences gathered from our social audience, as well as sharing some of those experiences on Instagram.



Bring the readers with you — live updates that live on social

During *The Shorthorn's* week long orientation, every single reporter is trained to live tweet at events. We also train them on how to promote their own work and the work of their peers. This allows them to develop transferable skills, provide live updates to our readers and later, embed multimedia elements in their own stories.

This can be seen in one of our reporter's live tweets (a sample of which are displayed to the right) throughout the day of Arlington's first protest related to the death of George Floyd. Her updates served those in the city community and university community alike.

We also utilize Facebook Live and Instagram Live to bring readers into events as they happen. Notable examples include the university's bimonthly Q&A Pizza with the President event, where we livestream the event and ask questions on behalf of virtual attendees (back when we were all still on campus). Secondly, we tried a new virtual recruitment campaign, where our Editor-in-Chief Brian Lopez talked about opportunities and answered questions regarding working at *The Shorthorn*.



Examples of threads The Shorthorn has put together:

Thread

The Shorthorn @UTKShorthorn · Mar 20

1/ A report was released to media outlets yesterday which alleged that UTA violated UT System, UTA rules and state laws. Shortly after, President Karibhari resigned effective immediately.

Here's what we know about the investigation



Karibhari steps down after UT System releases investigation alleging violation ...
Violations included using a "direct admission" program that allegedly allowed "potentially underqualified students" to enroll in an online nursing program ...
-J The Shorthorn.com

5:58 PM · Mar 20, 2020 · Twitter Web App

23 Retweets · 31 Likes

The Shorthorn @UTKShorthorn · Mar 20

Replying to @UTKShorthorn

2/ In January 2019, the state auditor released a comprehensive report regarding UTA's online education recruiting and enrollment practices to the UT System.

An outside firm, ProPublica, independently investigated allegations against UTA.




Karibhari steps down after UT System releases investigation alleging ...
Violations included using a "direct admission" program that allegedly allowed "potentially underqualified students" to enroll in an online ...
-J The Shorthorn.com

The Shorthorn @UTKShorthorn · Mar 20

3/ ProPublica found 3 substantiated allegations:


- An unlawful admissions process for online students through direct admission
- UTA officials inappropriately influenced by a vendor
- An improper financial relationship between an administrator and the vendor



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Violations included using a "direct admission" program that allegedly allowed "potentially underqualified students" to enroll in an online ...
-J The Shorthorn.com

The Shorthorn @UTKShorthorn · Mar 20


4/ One violation included using a "direct admission" program that allegedly allowed "potentially underqualified students" to enroll in an online nursing program.



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Violations included using a "direct admission" program that allegedly allowed "potentially underqualified students" to enroll in an online ...
-J The Shorthorn.com

The Shorthorn @UTKShorthorn · Mar 20

5/ UTA paid the online program management company contracted for the direct admission program more than \$100 million over five years.




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-J The Shorthorn.com

The Shorthorn @UTKShorthorn · Mar 20

6/ The report alleges there was an improper financial relationship between the company and Beth Mancini, College of Nursing and Health Innovation senior associate dean.

Mancini received \$40,000 in compensation from the company through university payroll.



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-J The Shorthorn.com

The Shorthorn @UTKShorthorn · Mar 20

7/ The report also concluded that two trips made by Karibhari with the company's chairman to Bogotá, Colombia and Morocco were not pre-authorized and violated UT System rules.



Karibhari steps down after UT System releases investigation alleging ...
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-J The Shorthorn.com

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8/ Before this report was finalized, Karibhari wrote a letter to the UT System chief audit executive, saying "UTA categorically denies the allegations made in the report," calling it flawed and lacking in evidence.



Karibhari steps down after UT System releases investigation alleging ...
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9/ The investigation resulted in a reformed and changes in policy and practice at the university, according to a UT System public information officer.



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-J The Shorthorn.com

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10/ For more details, read the story reported by @dallas_ia, @newsobserver and @longhornsnews.

This story is developing.



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-J The Shorthorn.com

Thread



The Shorthorn
@UTAShorthorn

1/ The Shorthorn reporter [@colby_farr](#) is covering the murder trial for [#AmberGuyger](#), after she shot and killed 26-year-old Botham Jean last September.

We've been following the trial since day one and you can access our stories in order here.



Coverage of the former Dallas Police Officer Amber Guyger's trial for murder
The Shorthorn is covering the murder trial for Amber Guyger, after she shot and killed 26-year-old Botham Jean. Guyger was a student at UTA, although she d...
[theshorthorn.com](#)

11:02 AM - Sep 30, 2019 from Arlington, TX · Twitter Web Client

13 Retweets 11 Likes



The Shorthorn
@UTAShorthorn · Sep 30, 2019

Replying to [@UTAShorthorn](#)

2/ On Sept. 6, 2018, after getting off of work, Guyger entered Jean's apartment, which she claims she believed was hers. Guyger said she thought a burglar was inside the apartment, so she drew her firearm and shot her gun twice.



Former UTA student Amber Guyger indicted on mu...
Former Dallas Police officer Amber Guyger was indicted on a murder charge Friday, according to ...
[theshorthorn.com](#)

1



The Shorthorn
@UTAShorthorn · Sep 30, 2019

3/ Guyger called 911 from her cell phone after the incident. One bullet struck Jean in the torso, and he was taken to Baylor Hospital where he died.



Former UTA student Amber Guyger indicted on mu...
Former Dallas Police officer Amber Guyger was indicted on a murder charge Friday, according to ...
[theshorthorn.com](#)

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The Shorthorn
@UTAShorthorn · Sep 30, 2019

4/ She was arrested Sept. 9, 2018 on a manslaughter charge, but a grand jury later indicted her with a murder charge. This month, on Sept. 23, her trial began in the Dallas County 204th District Court.



Former UTA student Amber Guyger goes on trial for the murder of Bo...
Guyger fatally shot Jean on Sept. 6, 2018, and was arrested Sept. 9, 2018, on a manslaughter charge before getting indicted on a murder ...
[theshorthorn.com](#)

1



The Shorthorn
@UTAShorthorn · Sep 30, 2019

5/ On day one, Dallas County prosecutor Jason Hermus said Guyger ignored clear signs that she was on the wrong floor before entering Jean's apartment.



Former UTA student Amber Guyger goes on trial for the murder of Bo...
Guyger fatally shot Jean on Sept. 6, 2018, and was arrested Sept. 9, 2018, on a manslaughter charge before getting indicted on a murder ...
[theshorthorn.com](#)

1



The Shorthorn
@UTAShorthorn · Sep 30, 2019

6/ Jurors were presented body-camera footage on day two from officers who were on the scene that night that showed them performing CPR on Jean.



Body camera footage, neighbor testimonies shown...
Day two of former Dallas Police officer Amber Guyger's trial featured body camera footage and ...
[theshorthorn.com](#)

1



The Shorthorn
@UTAShorthorn · Sep 30, 2019

7/ On Friday, the fifth day, Guyger was called to the stand. She spoke about walking to apartment 1478's door, putting her key fob into the lock and hearing shuffling behind the door.



Alumna Amber Guyger takes the stand during the ...
Guyger described her account of the events that transpired before being cross-examined by ...
[theshorthorn.com](#)

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The Shorthorn
@UTAShorthorn · Sep 30, 2019

8/ The trial continues today in Dallas. Stay updated here and on [theshorthorn.com](#) for a full story on the 7th day of the trial from reporter [@colby_farr](#).

If you need to be caught up, check out our timeline of coverage here.