



DARTMOUTH

How Dartmouth College Cultivates Community, Supports Successful Strategy Using Sprout Social



Cultivating a community on social media is a goal for many organizations, but fewer are more suited to it than universities.

Students live their lives on college campuses, learning, eating, sleeping and playing as part of a tight-knit community for years at a time. Once they leave, they remain a part of the collective, often meeting other alumni in the wider world—a constant reminder of their connection to their alma mater.

Fostering that sense of community is a primary objective for Erin Supinka, Assistant Director of Digital Engagement in the Office of Communications at **Dartmouth College**. And since signing up with Sprout Social, the private Ivy League research university has succeeded in doing just that and so much more, including increasing engagements across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram by nearly 4,000%.

Rebooting Social Strategy

When Supinka first started at Dartmouth, she was tasked with rebooting the university's social program.

“I needed to identify a tool that helped me manage all of our social channels more efficiently,” she said. “It also needed to support collaboration between my position and someone in the admissions office. Sprout was one of the only options that made sense with our workflow.”

Two factors immediately stood out to Supinka: **Sprout's price** and its scalability.

"The price was small yet the package was robust enough to handle what we were looking for," she said. "It also had a clear and manageable roadmap to build out as our team and number of users grew."

And then there was Sprout's **Smart Inbox**.

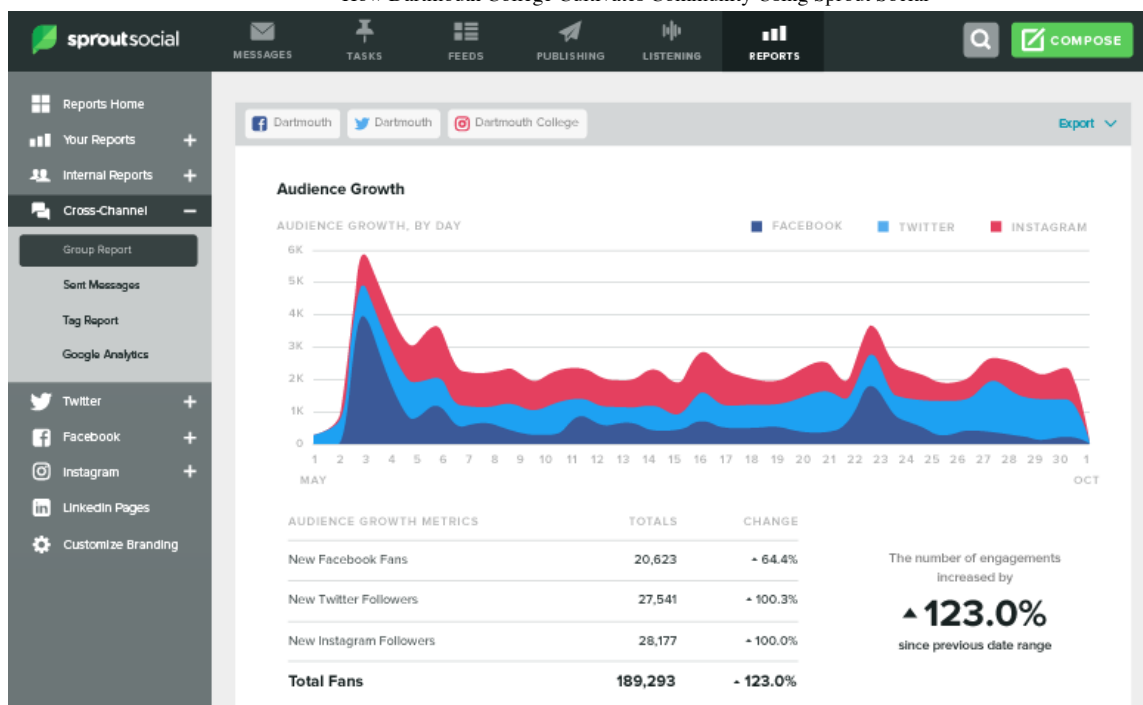
"Our No. 1 used feature is the Smart Inbox," Supinka said. "It's the way I start and end every day. I don't think I could ever express how incredibly useful it is. Through that, I'm tasking messages to other Sprout users, responding and engaging with content and our followers."

Like other universities, Dartmouth's social strategy is comprised of many disparate elements, from maintaining and developing the university's brand, to engaging with current and former students, to answering questions and collecting feedback.

"Sprout is helping me keep tabs on all the notifications and messages our social channels receive so I can stay on top of what our community needs and wants," Supinka said. "I'm growing less and less worried about missing something thanks to the Smart Inbox. Social never sleeps, so staying on top of what's happening around the clock is impossible for small teams. Sprout has really helped me maintain a healthy and responsive strategy."

And while "customer service" may not be the first thing that comes to mind when higher learning is mentioned, Sprout enables Supinka and others to provide assistance quickly to students and other members of the Dartmouth community.

"Customer service in higher ed is making sure your audience members feel heard and can see actual results," Supinka said. "This could mean making sure someone tweeting about our admissions or financial aid process is given the right resources to learn more or passing along their particular request to the right people or just allowing them to be heard. We may not be able to help or provide answers to everyone on every topic, but by making sure we're taking note and making an effort to really provide support to our audience, we only strengthen our brand and community."



Ensuring Return on Investment

From Fortune 500 corporations to Ivy League schools, no social team wants to put time, energy and money into a strategy without seeing return on investment.

“Currently how we calculate ROI is post-dependent,” Supinka said. “If a post is meant to drive people to our website, I’m taking a look at how many people we get there and then how they move next. If it’s to tell a story, are they clicking to learn more anywhere?”

Using Sprout’s **Sent Messages Report**, Supinka is able to determine what’s working and update the school’s social strategy accordingly.

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Erin Supinka

Assistant Director of Digital Engagement, Dartmouth

“I like to go into each platform and look at what posts performed really well and which ones didn’t,” she said. “Directly from here, I’ll schedule out new posts with similar content or test different times—another great way to beef up our editorial calendar!”

In terms of hard numbers, it’s hard to argue with Dartmouth’s results. Since coming on board with Sprout in May 2015, the university has seen a 3,803% increase in engagements across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, with Instagram alone seeing more than half a million engagements.

Still, Sprout’s greatest feature may just be its ability to streamline social operations between different team members and departments.

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From publishing to engagement to ease of use, Sprout remains head of the class.