



LAS

2023 MARCOM ANNUAL REPORT

Welcome

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The LAS Office of Communications & Marketing is focused on helping the college achieve its strategic goals. We're passionate about bringing new students into our programs, telling stories that highlight our people and work, and supporting our advancement colleagues in their efforts to engage alumni and garner support for our people and initiatives. The College of LAS community is unique and special, and we're proud to help connect people from all corners of our college.

We deeply value the investments the college makes in our work and take seriously our role in supporting our instructors, researchers, and fellow staff members. Read on to see how our efforts had an impact on the college this year.

Thanks for working with us to make LAS an exceptional place.



Brad Petergen

ASSISTANT DEAN OF
COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

The MarCom Team

The Office of Communications & Marketing (MarCom) includes professional and student staff with expertise in marketing, websites, creative, and communications. In addition to supporting college-level initiatives, the team is also home to three unit communicators who are embedded in and support Illinois Global Institute, Department of English, Department of Communication, and School of Literatures, Cultures & Linguistics. To contact the team, email las-news@illinois.edu.

Back row (L-R): Maggie Jarvis, web services specialist; Tyler Rubach, associate director for web services; Keith Sutterfield, digital media specialist; Kayleigh Rahn, editorial specialist; Dave Evensen, lead editorial specialist; Brad Petersen, assistant dean of communications and marketing

Middle row (L-R): Carly Conway, senior graphic design specialist; Trish Barker, director of communications; Terri Gitler, communications coordinator; Elayne Banner, office manager; Melissa Kuhl, assistant director of marketing

Front row (L-R): Heidi Gnad, senior project manager; Heather Gillett, senior graphic design specialist

Not pictured: Dania De La Hoya Rojas, communications coordinator; Felipe De La Guerra, communications coordinator; Henry Pleas, web services specialist

Student Recruitment

With more than 70 majors across a vast array of disciplines, LAS provides incredible opportunity for students and more options than any other college on campus. Last year alone, the college received more than 20,000 applications, with 11,000 students admitted. In an ever-expanding and increasingly competitive marketplace, it is critically important that we market our majors in a strategic and cohesive manner.

Marketing work for LAS majors is done at the college level on behalf of all units across LAS. Strategies are created and implemented by the Communications and Marketing team in close partnership with the LAS Student Academic Affairs Office and the campus Office of Undergraduate Admissions. LAS department communicators, advisors, and executive officers provide input and feedback throughout the process.

STRATEGY

Reaching prospective students requires a well-planned marketing strategy that targets students through a multitude of channels. Our team does this through emails, websites, direct mail, social media, campus visits, and more, with a specific emphasis on reaching students through digital platforms.

With the collegiate landscape growing more competitive than ever, it is vital for higher education marketers to break through competitor noise in a way that is engaging and creative. As such, we strive to incorporate innovative and strategic content in all of our student recruitment work.



Recruitment
Tactics geared toward increasing prospective student's applications.

Yield
Tactics geared toward admitted students to accept their admission.

Summer Melt
Tactics geared toward encouraging accepted students to enroll in the fall.



RECRUITMENT FUNNEL

PROSPECTS

INQUIRIES

APPLICANTS

ADMITS

ENROLLEES

EMAILS

163

EMAILS SENT
for recruitment

74%

AVERAGE
OPEN RATE
Industry standard: 35%

8%

AVERAGE
CLICK RATE
Industry standard: 3%

MAIL

5,500 mailers to admitted students
in 31 majors

- » This is nearly half our admits and half our majors
- » Most majors that received brochures saw a higher domestic acceptance rate than those that did not



5,500

MAILERS
to admitted students

WEBSITES

Current/prospective students (18-24 age range) account for 38% of site users and 43% of sessions. During the recruitment cycle:

- » Our “Admissions” tab had over 92,000 pageviews
- » LAS Insider blog posts were viewed 12,000 times and 20 new posts were produced



92,000

PAGEVIEWS
for “Admissions” tab



20 NEW

LAS Insider blog posts
WITH 12K VIEWS

SOCIAL MEDIA

Instagram is our prominent social media platform for reaching prospective students. We have made many conscious efforts to grow this platform, and this intention continues to pay off with impressive growth.

This past cycle, we also increased our paid social media advertising with the intention of driving applications and accepts. We focused these efforts where prospective students actively are—on Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Google.

Instagram

- » 115 newsfeed posts received 375,000 views; 175 story slides received 215,000 views
- » Over the past four years, we’ve had 142% growth in our followers on the platform (from 3,000 in June 2020 to 7,250 in June 2023)

PAID SOCIAL ADS	SPENT	CLICKS
INSTAGRAM	\$4,765	700
GOOGLE	\$1,270	1,900
YOUTUBE	\$700	170
TIKTOK	\$500	1,050

\$6,500
TOTAL SPENT

310,000
IMPRESSIONS

3,850
CLICKS

1.2%
CLICK-THROUGH RATE
Industry standard: 0.53%

APPLICATIONS

Applications continue to increase; we expect this number to remain high in the future.

+1,000
APPLICATIONS
OVER LAST YEAR

+40%
APPLICATIONS
OVER FIVE YEARS

LAS FRESHMEN	2023	2022*	2021	2020	2019
APPLICATIONS	20,919	19,759	16,427	15,076	14,812
ADMITS	11,087	10,930	11,073	10,758	9,743
ACCEPTS	3,010	2,924	2,945	2,712	2,771
10-DAY ENROLLMENT	TBD	2,627	2,680	2,359	2,411

* Introduction of U of I on the Common App

TARGETED AUDIENCES

Each summer, the marketing team partners with SAAO to create a robust recruitment plan for the upcoming cycle. Within that plan, special audiences are marked as key targets; these audiences will receive increased tactics throughout the cycle.

This past cycle we set a goal of increasing underrepresented minority (URM) accepts. Additionally, eight majors were targeted for increasing applications, and twelve majors were targeted for increasing yield. These majors were selected through a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis as units that had room to grow and/or concerns with students enrolling in the majors.

URM GROUP	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
AFRICAN AMERICAN	135	176	129	192	160
HISPANIC/LATINX	400	346	381	346	360
MULTI-RACE/UNKNOWN	169	148	158	123	119
TOTAL ACCEPTS	704	666	663	667	677
PERCENT CHANGE	+5.7%	+0.5%	-0.6%	-1.5%	-2.2%

Increasing applications

Of the majors we flagged with application concerns, each of the eight had an increase in applications over last year.

- » Sociology: +167 applications
- » Earth, society, & environmental sustainability: +52
- » Anthropology: +36
- » Linguistics: +16
- » Religion: +16
- » Geography and geographic information science: +12
- » Germanic studies: +3
- » East Asian languages and cultures: +2

Increasing yield

Of the majors we flagged with yield concerns, 11 of 12 had an increase or equal number of accepts compared to last year.

- » History: +25 accepts
- » Sociology: +23
- » Earth, society, and environmental sustainability: +16
- » Communication: +12
- » Classics: +4
- » Gender and women's studies: +4
- » East Asian languages and cultures: +3
- » French: +3
- » History of art: +3
- » Anthropology: +1
- » Asian American studies: +0
- » Germanic studies: -1

Supporting Advancement

Our team works closely with the Office of Advancement, supporting alumni and corporate relations, fundraising, and stewardship. Alumni are a key audience for our storytelling about the excellence and achievements of the LAS community (faculty, staff, students, and alumni) as well as the transformative impact of donors' gifts. In FY23, the MarCom team completed more than 70 projects in partnership with Advancement and college units.



180,000+
ALUMNI
AROUND THE WORLD

2
MAGAZINES
THE QUADRANGLE



70+
PROJECTS
WITH ADVANCEMENT

40%+
OPEN RATE
FOR MONTHLY ENEWS



STEWARDSHIP

In addition to smaller acknowledgement and thank you pieces, MarCom and the stewardship team partnered on three printed stewardship reports to spotlight the impact of donors' contributions to scholarships and fellowships and the Lincoln Scholars initiative and the generosity and vision of deferred gifts.

ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

LAS resumed in-person alumni engagement events in FY24, with the MarCom team supporting both a recent alumni night out in Chicago in February and the LAS alumni awards in April. This included email and print invitations, programs and signs, feature stories and videos about the honorees, and remarks for the awards ceremony.

QUADRANGLE & MONTHLY E-NEWS

Our alumni are one of our most important constituent groups, and we communicate with them frequently to maintain this important relationship.

- » Our monthly e-newsletter now reaches more than 100,000 inboxes and maintains an open rate above 40% (much better than the 21% industry average and an increase from our FY22 open rate of 35%).
- » Our magazine, The Quadrangle, is distributed twice each year to alumni, donors, and other constituents. In spring 2023, we experimented with a digital magazine, which enabled us to capture email addresses for more than 400 recipients and provided a wealth of data on how readers interacted with our content.

Reputation Building

The MarCom team works to build and maintain a positive reputation for the College of LAS among prospective and current students and their families; university administrators, faculty, and staff; peers at other institutions; funding agencies, foundations, and corporations; alumni and donors; and other constituents.

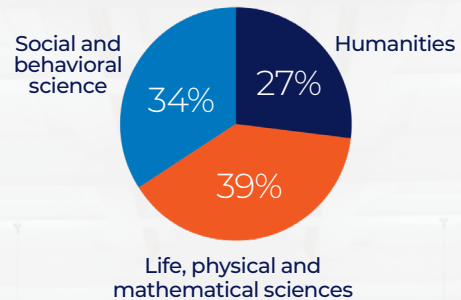
NEWS

Sharing stories about the expertise and impact of the LAS community and the power of an LAS education through owned media channels, including our magazine and newsletters, is an important part of our reputation building efforts.

Fortunately, there are endless LAS stories to tell. In FY23, we published almost 150 news and feature stories to the LAS website, including news items from units and the News Bureau. Most of these stories also appeared in our e-newsletters or magazine.

We also assist with crisis communications, pitch LAS stories and experts to the media, and respond to media inquiries. We logged more than 300 media mentions of LAS faculty, facilities, programs, and people in FY23.

2023 MEDIA STORIES BY DISCIPLINE



WEBSITE

The MarCom team manages the functionality, content, and design of the college website in close partnership with staff across the Office of the Dean, Office of Advancement, and Student Academic Affairs Office. We also support the LAS and Illinois frameworks, which now host 58 websites for units across the college. Unit support includes regular training, troubleshooting, and some content assistance. Major updates in 2022-23 include:

- » Worked closely with SAAO leadership to restructure and redesign their section of the website to better serve their audiences of current and prospective students
- » Implemented a rotating homepage content plan to ensure the college homepage remains fresh and relevant
- » Created a new program explorer tool to make the experience of searching for potential majors easier for prospective students
- » Migrated the School of Molecular & Cellular Biology to the Illinois framework
- » Began work on transitioning unit sites to the Illinois framework—this migration is part of a campus-wide effort to ensure cohesion across university websites and reflect the most current campus branding

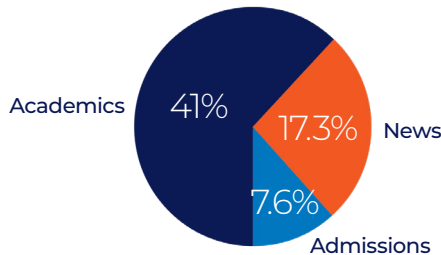


1,122,000
PAGE VIEWS



380,500
VISITORS

MOST VISITED SECTIONS OF THE WEBSITE



PARTNERSHIPS

This past year, the college continued to expand on efforts to create visibility through outside promotional partnerships.

DIA

Now in year three of our partnership with the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics (DIA), LAS advertising included:

- » Football and basketball radio ads in Chicago, featuring LAS alumni Martin O'Donnell for football and Deon Thomas for basketball
- » Football drop-ins during game broadcasts—these drop-ins reached nearly a million unique listeners
- » Banner ads at FightingIllini.com throughout the year; we received more than 250,000 impressions on these ads
- » LAS branding was included in the replay rotation during the football and basketball season, with tags appearing an average of four times per game

Smile Politely & Pygmalion

This is the second year LAS partnered with Smile Politely, a local online news source, and PYGMALION, a local arts festival.

- » Ads on Smile Politely highlighted LAS faculty experts and received nearly 800 clicks from members of the Champaign-Urbana community
- » Our sponsorship at PYGMALION provided visibility during an important community event

Community Building

The MarCom team helps foster pride and a sense of community among LAS faculty, staff, students, and alumni by celebrating successes, spotlighting individuals, sharing information on services, resources, and opportunities, and demonstrating our global impact.

SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

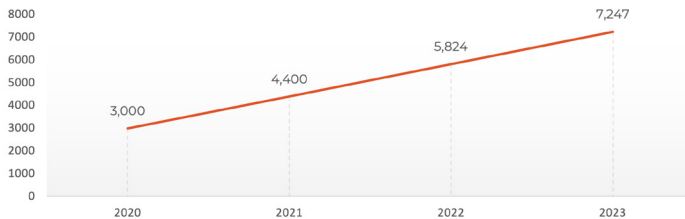
With more than 80% of the U.S. population holding active accounts, social media has become one of the top ways people communicate digitally with organizations. We have invested in our social media channels to extend our reach to our community, and it has seen consistent growth across the board.

In what has been a particularly chaotic year for social media (Elon's acquisition of Twitter and uncertainty of TikTok legislation are two examples), we have remained nimble in our approach. This can be seen most through our growth on Instagram and LinkedIn, where we are strategically creating content to best reach our audiences where they are active.



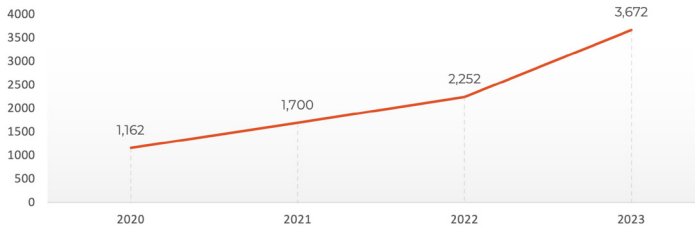
+142%

INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS



+216%

LINKEDIN FOLLOWERS IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS



VIDEO

In 2022-2023, we produced 36 videos that spanned all four of our team priorities and, on YouTube alone, amassed over 55,000 views. Nearly all our videos contribute to our goal of community building; this includes showcasing the amazing people of LAS through a few established series.

Day in My Life

Viewers follow current LAS students through a typical day in their life, getting a behind-the-scenes look at classes, RSOs, dorm rooms, and more. This past year we added three videos to this incredibly popular series and have already received nearly 1,500 views.

- » Corinne – atmospheric sciences
- » Maaz – biology
- » Skylar – psychology, sociology

940 Feet

In the 940 Feet series, students interview noteworthy professors while walking along the Main Quad. Professors interviewed this year include:

- » Nikolai Alvarado - GIS, global studies
- » Steward Coles - communication
- » Laurie Johnson – Germanic languages & literatures, comparative & world literature
- » Robert Kanter – ESES
- » Korinta Maldonado – anthropology
- » Felisa Vergara Reynolds – French

Sights and Sounds

Quick videos that showcase the excitement of events and beauty of campus, our sights and sounds videos are well-received by our audiences. This past year, we produced five new videos within this series:

- » A perfect day on the UIUC Quad
- » LAS Liftoff 2022
- » A snowy day on the Main Quad
- » School of Earth, Society & Environment at Engineering Open House
- » 2023 graduates around the Quad



SUPPORTING STUDENTS

The LAS MarCom team partners closely with the Student Academic Affairs Office to communicate their programs to students. This past year, in addition to assisting the office with 100 projects, MarCom oversaw promotional strategy for a handful of major SAAO initiatives.



LAS Career Services

As LAS Career Services has built itself up over the past year, MarCom has been involved with website support, signage, design of marketing materials, creation of promotional items, and much more.

Paul M. Lisnek LAS Hub

As the Hub rolled out services this past year, MarCom has been involved in a variety of projects to promote the space, including signage in Lincoln Hall, digital displays, informational cards, promotional items, and advertising in Lineup and on social media.



We Got Each Other

This weekly program provides a safe space for men of color to discuss their lives at U of I. Darrell Hunter, who oversees the program, stated: “Students expressed gratitude for the initiative, which allowed them to observe and learn from other successful Black and Latino males on campus.” MarCom support included the creation of flyers, digital signs, web content, emails, and news stories to help promote the program.

EMAIL TO FACULTY & STAFF

DEAN'S E-NEWS

5
ISSUES

18%
AVERAGE
CLICK RATE

71%
AVERAGE
OPEN RATE

DEI UPDATE

2
ISSUES

5%
AVERAGE
CLICK RATE

71%
AVERAGE
OPEN RATE

EMAIL TO STUDENTS

LAS LINEUP

30
ISSUES

12%
HIGHEST
CLICK RATE

42%
AVERAGE
OPEN RATE

In spring 2023, we redesigned Lineup, produced in partnership with the Student Academic Affairs Office, to better spotlight resources available to support undergraduate students' academic, career, health and wellness, and social and community needs.

STUDENT EVENTS

Liftoff

Liftoff is a welcome event for all incoming College of LAS freshmen and transfer students held right before the start of the fall semester. This past year more than 2,600 students heard from the dean, connected with their academic advisors, and participated in activities in the "Fun Zone." LAS MarCom partners closely with the Student Academic Affairs Office to plan and advertise this event.

Cookies with the Dean

MarCom plans six "Cookies with the Dean" events through the year to help the dean get feedback directly from students—the good and the bad. Our team invites students and helps produce questions for Dean Patton to ask during the event. This past year, almost 50 students from majors all across the college participated in the events.

Convocation

Each year, the LAS MarCom team makes a concentrated effort to engage and celebrate our graduates. This typically consists of a combination of email campaigns, social media posts, and assisting with unit convocation ceremonies and LAS Winter Convocation.

- » Congratulations message sent to 2,890 graduates in the spring and 851 graduates in the fall
- » Social media posts celebrating grads seen almost 50,000 times by followers across our platforms
- » Unit support included design and printing of 16 programs and management of eight webpages

Unit Communications

Communicators working in LAS units are an important part of our communication efforts. The college has developed a strategy for “embedding” communicators in units; these embedded communication coordinators work closely with unit stakeholders to develop strategic communication plans and carry out identified strategic communication activities, such as storytelling, social media, and newsletters.

The embedded communication coordinators are part of the college team, which means the college helps define the parameters of their roles and provides significant support in their efforts. The embedded communicators also meet regularly to share information and best practices, identify common challenges, and collaborate.

3
COORDINATORS

26
UNITS
REPRESENTED



SCHOOL OF LITERATURES, CULTURES & LINGUISTICS

(and its 12 departments and programs)

With a strategic communication plan in place, Dania De La Hoya Rojas focused on implementation and evaluation of the plan in FY23.

- » Created and distributed two issues of an e-newsletter for alumni, donors, and other constituents, with an average open rate of 43%
- » Created and distributed an eight-page print newsletter for alumni, donors, and other constituents in fall 2022
- » Created and distributed two issues of an internal e-newsletter for SLCL faculty, staff, and students, with an average open rate of 65%
- » Supported executive communication, including a building name change and crisis communications



ILLINOIS GLOBAL INSTITUTE

(and its 10 centers and programs)

Terri Gitler came onboard as the new communications coordinator for IGI in September 2022.

- » After meeting with many IGI stakeholders, as well as advancement and marketing colleagues to gather input, developed a detailed strategic plan for communicating effectively with IGI audiences.
- » Created and distributed two issues of the IGI e-newsletter, intended primarily for colleagues and collaborators across campus, with an average open rate of 49%
- » Supported IGI events and programs, including Career Day, the Midwest Transitional Justice Network, the Series on Global Responsibilities, and coordinating with the Office of the Provost to launch Illinois' participation in the Scholars at Risk Program
- » Compiled content for a print newsletter, to be distributed early in FY24



COMMUNICATION AND ENGLISH

Felipe De La Guerra joined the MarCom team in April 2023. He currently is meeting with stakeholders in both departments, as well as with advancement and marketing colleagues, to gather input. He is on track to have a strategic communication plan in place for each department by early FY24.

OTHER LAS UNITS

Other LAS unit communicators do not have a reporting line to the college but still benefit from information, tools, resources, and collaboration with the college team to help align their work with the LAS brand and strategy and amplify their communication efforts. The MarCom team routinely assists units by facilitating access to alumni and donor mailing lists, designing print and digital pieces and promotional items, and offering web and social media training and support.



OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

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