The TikTok Professor: How To Use TikTok To Build Community And Connect With Students

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Goals for today’s workshop

- Provide basic understanding of
  - The world of TikTok
  - The student benefits of educator involvement
  - How to use the app
  - How you might approach your own TikTok account
“ProfessorBren”
Me and my TikTok journey

- Assistant Professor of Psychology (SUNY Albany, now at Colorado State University)
- Posted a few TikToks at the start of quarantine that I thought no one would see
- Currently: 52.7K followers, 1.5M video likes
- My audience
  - Graduate students
  - Undergraduate students interested in graduate school
  - Psychology students
  - Former graduate students
  - People in higher education
- My approach: Use humor and relatable experience to spread joy, empathize, make academia more accessible
What is TikTok?

- A community, and also many communities
- A place to be human
- Short videos (3-60 seconds, 5-13 seconds is common)
  - But what kinds of videos?
Relatable Experiences

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Telling stories

Hey professor, I'm here for our meeting to catch up.
Education

@drbradklontz
Mentorship
Dean: “Your office in the new building will only have three shelves for books”
Benefits

WHY SHOULD EDUCATORS USE TIKTOK?
Educate

Correct misinformation

@dr_inna
Educate

Bring attention to certain concepts
Fuel curiosity

@yourcellbioprof
Empower (e.g., through representation)
Validate students’ potential

@chelseaparlettpelleriti
Build Community

- Direct interaction

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Build Community

- “Planned” engagement

@drdre4000
Humanize Educators

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@drdre4000
Live mentorship

“Go Live”

- Talk directly to your audience
- Answer questions
- Show them “a day in the life”
- 1,000 followers
TikTok Formats

- Regular
- Duet
- Stitch
Regular video

- Not connected to any other TikTok user’s video

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Duet

- Film side-by-side with an existing video
- Great for community building
Duet

Original

@penelopedolce

Duet

Interviewing prospective PhD students

"Have you published any research yet?"

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Choose up to five seconds of an existing user’s video, then film yours
Trends

Audio, memes, ideas, etc can “trend” on TikTok, getting more views.

You can take trends and apply them to your educational context!
Trigger Warning: This video trend used a “Disco” effect with flashing lights. If you have a condition where this may cause a seizure, darken your screen or look away—I will also explain the trend so you can understand without watching the videos!
you think you can hurt my feelings? I was on dance moms.

You think you can hurt me? I used to use 3-in-1 body wash on my face.
you think you can hurt my feelings? i was on dance moms.

You think you can hurt me? I used to use 3-in-1 body wash on my face

You think you can hurt me? I teach middle schoolers
you think you can hurt my feelings? i was on dance moms.

You think you can hurt me? I used to use 3-in-1 body wash on my face.

You think you can hurt me? I teach middle schoolers.

You think you can hurt my feelings? I get anonymous teaching evaluations every semester.
Remember this?

Faculty meeting
Dean: “Your office in the new building will only have three shelves for books”

How my family reacts when mom pulls into the driveway after work

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@raylayraycray
Using the app
The FYP
Time to install the app!

- Optional! But we will use during this workshop
  - Create a profile—don’t worry you can change your username later! (also optional)
  - Once the app is installed, take a few minutes to start watching videos
- What did you notice? What did you enjoy?
“Finding Videos”

“WHERE DO YOU COME UP WITH THIS STUFF?”

“WHERE DO YOU FIND THE AUDIO CLIPS?”
Designing your TikTok!
Your first TikTok!

- In groups, we will go through the steps of designing a TikTok
- Can get input from your group or make one together
- Can use this audio or another
- After we watch this, take a couple of minutes to think of a half-baked idea of how you might use this
- Then we'll meet in groups
Let’s discuss!

- What ideas did you come up with?
Filming TikToks 101
Loading favorited audio
The Timer
The Timer
The app stops recording where you want.
The Timer

The app stops recording where you want
Give it a try!

Or, look through the app and discuss more ideas!

For more filming tips, follow @jera.bean
How to make a viral TikTok

- Hook instantly, or people move on
  - Call out your audience at the beginning
  - Share your credentials

- Don’t leave them waiting before grabbing their attention

- Use trending sounds, memes, hashtags etc.

- Good lighting: natural or ring light

- Captions

- Use the algorithm to your advantage

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The mysterious algorithm

- Keep ‘em watching
- Share-worthy
- Comments
- Likes
- Use relevant hashtags
  - 4-5 that help the algorithm know your audience
  - #college #gradstudents #professor
Broader lessons I have learned

- Students want access to educators
- Students need our help
- Representation matters
- What helps build connection?
  - Authenticity
  - Humor
  - Knowledge
Reflect

- How might you use TikTok?
- What messages do you want to send?
- What community do you want to create?
  - 3-5 key words
  - Audience
Questions?
Thank you!
References


