UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

March 17, 2015
Jessica Fenton

Future Gauchos

No sooner had the UCSB admissions office released acceptance notices, but the future Gauchos took to social media — Instagram, Twitter and Facebook — to share their happy news. Hours later, the #futuregaucho hashtag continued to swarm social media channels. Refreshing their social media feeds every few seconds, admissions staff — indeed, the entire campus — personally responded to prospective students gleefully sharing their good news.

"We decided to be proactive on social media because if these students get a personal response it might help them in the decision process," Chelsea Brandt, communications coordinator in the admissions office, commented with nary a pause in responding to the constant wave of tweets.

"Our goal is to show students that we care about them beyond just making an admission decision," said Lisa Przekop, director of admissions. "We want them to join our UCSB community and the UCSB family. Once you become a Gaucho, you are a Gaucho for life. Most of the staff within our office are alumni so we take community building very seriously."

Acceptance notices were released via email at 3 p.m. March 16, and for the first time, people were given the opportunity to share their reactions online. A direct link embedded in the letter navigated people to the admissions website where pre-designed badges were ready for them to post. A total of 688 badges were downloaded by those accepted into the university.

“We think about what sets UCSB apart from other schools, especially because the UCs are so competitive, and we focus on our strong community and that people are welcoming,” Brandt continued. “We are collaborative rather than competitive. Although everyone wants to know the statistics, we are finding that the environment and what people are going to get during their four years here is equally important.”

Five freshman admissions counselors were tasked with managing each social media account, but due to the overwhelming response on Twitter, additional staff members joined the effort to reply personally. To Brandt’s surprise, current Gauchos and faculty members, with no prior arrangements, made a strong presence on social media, welcoming the future students, as did various UC Santa Barbara departments.

“In the UCSB Office of Admissions, we have always taken pride in the fact that this is a very personal process,” said Przekop. “Students put great effort into their applications and writing their personal statements. We want them to know that people who care about them are reviewing the applications and take our work very seriously.”

The social media campaign began with a countdown to the March 16 release date. By late afternoon of the release date, UCSB was trending on Twitter in the Los Angeles area. The day ended with a total of 800 re-tweets, nearly 1,000 favorited tweets, and hundreds of thousands of impressions stemming from UC Santa Barbara's Twitter activity alone — all in celebration of #futuregauchos.

“In our office I hear a lot people say that this is the most exciting time of the year in admissions because we are actually seeing the excitement from students which is the most fun part,” noted Brandt. “Everything we did, all the high schools we visited and applications we read, all lead to this.”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the

edge of the Pacific Ocean.