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Latham Science Communication Project

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# Promoting STEM through Stem-O-Sphere social media!

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# Promoting STEM through Stem-O-Sphere social media!

Camille Jaime's Individual Project

## **Abstract**

For many of today's youth, online social platforms are their main form of communication and for staying informed. I built my project around that fact to take full advantage of the untapped power of social media. My project was to promote overall scientific literacy and improve awareness of STEM opportunities through the innovative use of all existing social media accounts for the Stem-o-sphere website which consist of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. In addition, I took the initiative to create an additional social media account to represent Stem-O-Sphere on the social media apps known as Snapchat and Tumblr. I focused on producing content through Snapchat and the other social media accounts for the students in the University of Iowa as my main audience to highlight information about STEM research both inside and outside of the university. Ultimately, I maintained all social media accounts and used them to endorse STEM research, other Latham fellows' projects, and promoted STEM majors by spotlighting certain current faculty and students.

## **Rationale**

Social media was something that has always fascinated me and the ability to keep my engagement longer than anything else. Through this project, I wanted to investigate how this held true for other people within this age demographic and how this could be utilized to inform this generation on relevant scientific research. Therefore, my desired audience needed to be of the age range 18-24 years old, so I made my target to be the University of Iowa students.

## **Goals**

My overall goals for this project were to improve awareness of STEM related events and opportunities to get involved, and of STEM professors and students within the University of Iowa. In addition, I wanted to help other Latham fellows promote their projects and bring appropriate attention and appreciation to them. Furthermore, I wanted my own original content to increase science literacy through a unique medium, which I chose to be Snapchat.

## **Planning**

To implement this project, I took time to observe how different users, specifically those who used social media for promoting businesses, took advantage

of the specific social platform's features to effectively reach their audiences. I started to question why I and other used certain social media platforms, and what are some things that are singular or best suited to that social platform, like hashtags for Twitter or time-sensitive media for Snapchat. The goals for my projects remained the same but instead of limiting myself to creating original content on Snapchat, I decided to shift my focus to using more platforms like Tumblr and Instagram to post my own content that didn't just promote other people's works.

## Project Overview

My project consisted of posting weekly on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and Snapchat accounts for Stem-O-Sphere. Weekly blog posts published on the Stem-O-Sphere website were promoted on all these accounts, as shown below.

**Stem-o-sphere**  
Published by Camille Marie [?] · April 27 at 6:39pm · 🌐

New post is up: How Much UV Is Too Much? UV tanning beds are used to prepare for vacations, school dances, and just to look good. Dermatologists almost always recommend against tanning bed usage, but is all UV light bad, and if so, how should we get our vitamin D?

STEM-O-SPHERE.ORG  
How Much UV Is Too Much? | Stemosphere ?  
How Much UV Is Too Much? Each spring break season sends millions...

**Stem-o-sphere** shared a Page.  
Published by Camille Marie [?] · April 23 at 10:37pm · 🌐

#LSEIchamps is back! Hannah Johnson's individual project is running her own podcast show! It involves portraying current research being done in the field of psychology in a new light. The main goal of her project is to promote more informed and diverse discussions of science to the public! Her first podcast episode is out featuring Dr. Bob McMurray and speech development and it does not disappoint, so check out her page here on Facebook and follow her journey on SoundCloud here: <https://soundcloud.com/user-524895802> ✓. Looking forward to the other episodes, as well!

**BrainLOQ**  
BrainLOQ is a podcast dedicated to the discussion of psychological research on the University of Iowa campus

✓ Liked ▾

In addition, other Latham fellows' works were highlighted on all the accounts but taking special focus on publishing them on Facebook. As a way to archive and create excitement for these posts, I created the hashtag #LSEIchamps.



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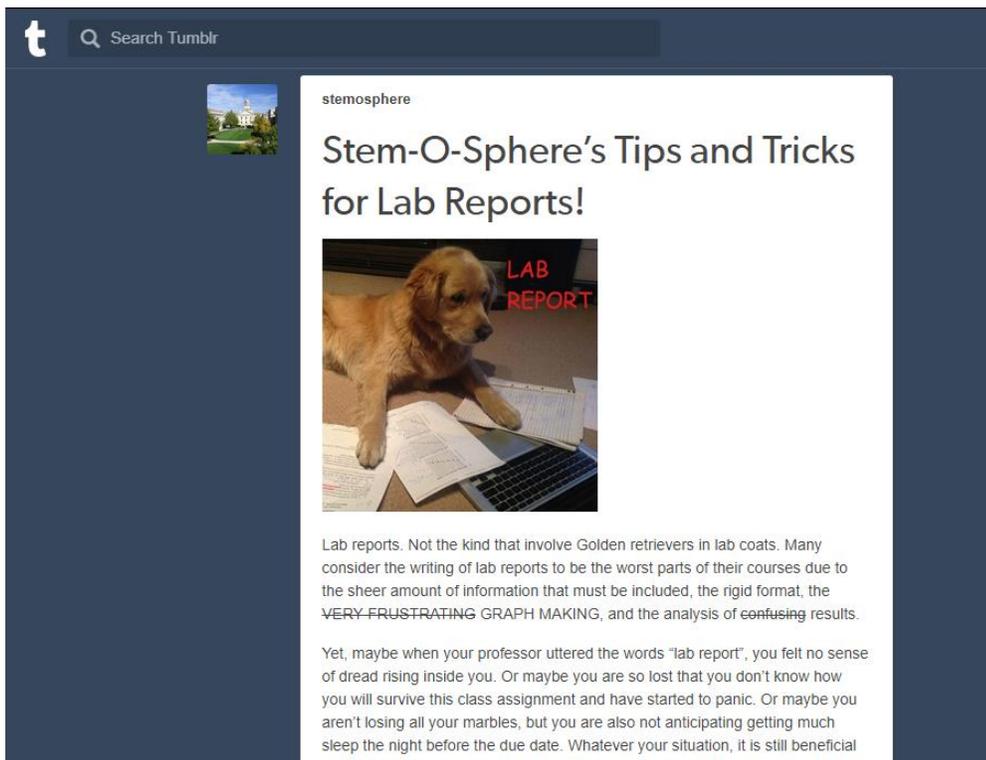
stemosphere This friendly little banana slug is helping resolve one of the toughest human diseases in world! By examining the mucus that these slugs make and comparing to mucus from patients with cystic fibrosis, scientists at Ulowa are investigating how mucus production affects the severity of the disease! 🐌 They're actually quite cute, aren't they? 🐌 This research is being carried out at the Welsh lab, and just to let you all know, there will be a lab tour Snapchat story featuring more of this lab along with other labs that have formed a collaborative effort against CF! Stay tuned and check us out @uiowastem on Snapchat!!! #STEMsundays is not over just yet!!! 🐌 🐌 🐌

48 views

APRIL 22

Add a comment...

Specific to Instagram, I created another hashtag on this platform called #STEMsundays. In this platform, I used this hashtag to highlight some interesting thing I had done or found for the week related to a STEM field and explain some of the science behind it. An example of this kind of post is presented above.



I used Tumblr to explore how to use gifs and integrate them with something science related. I wrote a post exclusive to this site about how to write lab reports, and made sure to use memes and gifs to get my points across.

In regards to Snapchat content, I posted a “story”, which is a compilation of videos and pictures that create a single continuous interactive video, once a week. I made my stories of different themes, including doing lab tours and discussing current research findings. Videos are attached to show how this looked like.

## **Impact**

The main partner for this project was the Office of Strategic Communications, through Bruce Heintz, whom helped me get experience in designing and carrying out Snapchat stories. The analytics for the effect that this project had on the Stem-O-Sphere website and the amount of people reached in general is as described below.

- Our social media accounted for over 42% of website visits made to Stem-O-Sphere! This is an increase from last semester’s numbers.
  - Bounce rate also decreased by 7% in this semester (indicates less single page sessions, therefore users clicked on more than one page on the site).
  - Session duration time increased by 94%.
- For Facebook:
  - Almost 9,000 impressions since the beginning of this semester!
  - 20 new followers on our page.
  - Over 30% of the follower demographic is of the 18-24 age group.
- For Twitter:
  - 15 new followers gained.
  - Over 7,000 impressions made over the past semester!
- For Snapchat:
  - Acquired 20-30 followers!
  - Viewership was about 15-20 people per story.
  - Completion rate was 70-80% for each story.

## **Future Directions and Lessons Learned**

In the future, I think it’d be great to post more often on these accounts and continue using the hashtags I developed. But also, I think it’d be good to create more original content on these websites, which what will draw in more followers. I also think that using the interactive features of these social media apps would increase engagement, through the usage of polls, Q&A’s, and contests.

One of the biggest lessons learned for this project is the value of versatility. While these social media platforms are popular and will continue to be popular for some time, the content within these platforms evolve constantly and reflect current trends that have short expiration dates. It is important to always stay in the loop and stay alert to create content to reflect what is currently engaging the most people. While it is frustrating to keep changing, opportunities arise that allow for your content to be boosted and reach more people, but this is only when you learn the value of being aware. The Latham program was a definite factor in me learning this valuable skill of flexibility, and it is one that I will make sure to use to my full advantage.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to Bruce Heintz, Dr. Lori Adams, Dr. Brinda Shetty, Cassandra Poulos, and all the people I collaborated with for social media stories/posts. In addition, many thanks to Drs. Bob and Sue Latham for funding the Latham Science Engagement Initiative and promoting the values of science communication.

Want to follow and support Stem-O-Sphere? Follow us  
on all our social media:

On Facebook, Instagram, and Tumblr we are  
Stemosphere

On Snapchat, we are uiowastem

And on Twitter, we are @ScienceEngage!