



# INSTAGRAM OUTREACH

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One of our desires as a BCNet Evangelism Committee is to provide collegiate directors with ideas for evangelism on their campus. We have provided ideas in four categories: First Contact, Conversational Outreach, Community Integration, and Gospel Proclamation. We hope that the following First Contact event will be useful to you and your students!

## BEFORE YOU SEND MESSAGES: PREPARATION

Our collegiate ministry world is always changing, especially in regards to technology and the ways that students are comfortable communicating. How can we use technology, specifically Instagram, to reach new students? Our staff and student leader team has been utilizing Instagram to reach hundreds of students this summer before classes have even begun! We've had multiple gospel appointments, already, where students have heard the gospel for the very first time! Incoming believers have connected to summer Bible study, and we've enjoyed getting to know new students at fun, digital events that they can attend from their hometowns far before they arrive on campus. They have been making friends amongst each other, and we are celebrating the community that is forming little by little! And we don't even start school for another month!

Here's what we do (feel free to modify sample messages, etc to fit your campus culture):

### 1. Prepare your Instagram account!

- Create a Instastory of upcoming events. To the right is a sample of one a PSU student leader created for our summer events. If you need help understanding how to create an Instagram story, find more information at this link:  
<https://help.instagram.com/1257341144298972>.
- Save this Instastory to a highlight (if you don't know how to do this, check out the information at this link:  
[https://help.instagram.com/813938898787367?helpref=search&sr1&query=how%20to%20create%20a%20highlight&search\\_session\\_id=67386055a21597774c08403835a15ad9](https://help.instagram.com/813938898787367?helpref=search&sr1&query=how%20to%20create%20a%20highlight&search_session_id=67386055a21597774c08403835a15ad9).
- Make sure your main page has posts of past events and some posts explaining who you are. This will help students verify that you are not spam and encourage them to want to respond to you!



### 2. Prepare the message that you wish to send to students.

- The following is what I have been sending to students this year:  
"Hi, \*insert student's name\*! My name is Miriam (@livingtheoregondream), and I serve as a campus director for Northwest Collegiate Ministries at PSU (@portlandstatencm). I saw



that you are coming to PSU in the fall, and I wanted to reach out and welcome you to our community! We are a Christian organization, but students of all backgrounds and faiths are a part of our campus community, and we count it a privilege to live life together! Campus can be lonely at times; we hope to welcome everyone to have a place to belong and thrive in campus family! We will be hosting events throughout the summer via Zoom to help facilitate friendships moving toward Fall Term. Check out these images for Summer events!”

- Make sure that you include your personal Instagram account handle when you introduce yourself, as this also allows them to look you up and verify that you are not a robot and gives you credibility with them.
3. Prepare your Google Form to learn more about students and connect with them to send a care package, set up conversations with current students (which oftentimes lead to gospel appointments!), etc.
    - Include photos in your Google form, as it helps verify that you are some random spammer, as well as communicates so much more of what you are about. I highly encourage you to consider what message you are sending by the photos that you choose. You want a mixture of fun and spiritual; you also need to make sure that students can see themselves in the photos you choose. (e.g., if you desire to be a diverse student group [which you should as much as your campus context allows!] but you only have pictures of white students, students of color are not going to be comfortable coming to your group. If you have all girls in your photos, guys may not feel that your group is the best for them, etc.) Make sure that the pictures you choose for this form reflect your purpose and your campus population! This is crucial for your first digital impression!
    - For an example of our form this year, see this link: <https://forms.gle/LgsqRAyyDC75D8ZDA>
  4. Search on Instagram to find out if there is a page for this year’s class. Generally, this is called something like @portlandstate24 or @uoclassof2024 or @osuclassof2024. There are likely hundreds to thousands of Freshmen who are excited about connecting with potential friends and roommates through these types of accounts. You are going to send them all messages inviting them to community!
  5. Look up your state’s list of schools by school district. Start at the top and work your way to the bottom collecting the names of all of the high schools, private or public. After you have gathered these, begin searching for these high school’s Instagram accounts. Many of them post photos of each of their graduating seniors, often announcing where they are headed for college and typically tagging the student in the post. You are going to sort through every high school’s account you can find for the students headed to the university that you serve at and send them messages inviting them to community!
    - Tip 1: Sometimes the high school posts these senior highlights on their main page, sometimes it is saved as a highlight, and sometimes the school has created a specific Instagram for that year’s graduating class. Sometimes it takes a little sleuthing to find what you need. Some (especially more rural) high schools don’t have accounts, but at least try to find their page and see whether there are students to invite!



- Tip 2: Most of the time the school tags a student in each post, which does make your task much easier. However, if they do not, try searching the pages' followers for the students name. Sometimes you have to do this extra step!
- Tip 3: Follow these accounts from your campus Instagram account so that you'll have them all for next year! Or at least keep a Google sheet with them all.
- Tip 4: Share! If you have to do all of this work, why not share it with all of the campus ministries in your state? I have done a search of all of Oregon, and I'm working on Washington, and all of the campus directors in the region have access to my growing list of high school Instagram accounts! This multiplies time and allows even more students to be reached with an invitation to community and the gospel!

## MESSAGING STUDENT CONTACTS

1. Find an incoming student through one of the ways listed above.
  2. Follow the student's account (or at least request to follow if it is private). This will encourage them to consider following you back.
  3. Send a direct message to the student from your campus ministry Instagram account introducing yourself and your ministry. (This is what you crafted in Step 2 above.)
  4. Go to your main page and find the Instastory that you saved as a highlight. (This is what you crafted in Step 1 above.) Send it in a private message to the student, as well. (If you don't know how to do this, click on the highlight, click on "more", and then click on "send to..." and type in the student's instagram handle.) This sends them back to your page to see the upcoming events they are invited to.
  5. Go back to the private message and include your Google Form link. (This is what you completed in Step 3 above.) Our message says: "We are also sending out welcome care packages to new students to help you transition to campus! We'd love to send you one! Fill out this Google form by \*insert deadline date\* if you'd like to receive one. \*insert link\*"
  6. Take the time to pray individually for this student!
  7. Start over with Step 1 and repeat for every contact!
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- Tip 1: You will want one person to be in charge of this process from your team. Follow-up involves everyone, but to involve everyone in the process of messaging will lead to confusion, frustration, and extra work.
  - Tip 2: I find that this process is much easier from the phone app than from the computer. It is easier to copy and paste and move between the various pages you need.
  - Tip 3: If you are not familiar with Instagram, ask one of your students to teach you. You need to know how to use Instagram, no matter how old you are! This is an important ministry skill in this generation for you to at least know the basics of. Be a humble learner as an example for those who are watching you!



- NOTE: Instagram will block you randomly each day that you do this, only allowing you to send between 25-40 messages each day because it thinks you may be spam. Still, it will most likely take you 2-3 hours each work day, depending on how much sleuthing is required each day and how much time you spend in prayer for each student. This is work worthy of investment! Every student who is currently serving on has served on our Lead Team in the past three years has connected to our campus ministry through Instagram. We've had over a hundred gospel appointments because of this work. This process can take weeks to complete, so I recommend starting it in the summer each year looking forward to fall. But if it is already fall when you are reading this, it is not too late! Just begin!

## FOLLOWUP

- Once you have messaged students, some will begin filling out the form. Be prepared as a ministry team to personally follow up with each contact. Text them to invite them to a personal Zoom meeting (or if possible/appropriate a coffee meeting). Text them personally to invite them to an upcoming event. Include your students leaders and any other committed students who are willing in this process; don't just let this stop at staff only! Mobilize your students to reach their harvest field!
- For those students who do not fill out the form--give them two weeks or so but after that send a follow up reminder. Something simple like "Don't forget to fill out the form to get a care package!" Some of them may have purposely decided to not fill it out, but others may have opened it at a time where they couldn't and simply forgotten. You will get a few more each time you follow up with a group.
- Make sure you engage any students who message back via direct message.
- Make sure you actually send your care packages!

Lastly, consider asking student leaders and financial partners to pray for students who you contact each day. There is power in our prayers! At the same time, be considerate in how you do this (only share the students' first names, post in a private message or group, etc.). If we believe God cares about each of these students, let's make our requests known to Him to fill their lives with the Goodness of His unchanging character and Presence!