

ICLA



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I'm sure almost all of us have been persuaded by a social media influencer to buy something, or to at least click on a link to a product that they are promoting. The world of social media influencing has dramatically grown over the last few years, and it will continue to be on the rise in the years to come. Influencers can charge tens of thousands of dollars for a single post or mention, and while I would love to say that we have the budget to spend that type of money regularly to promote licensed products, unfortunately we do not. That's where our "micro-influencers" have come into play.

The University of Cincinnati's (UC) Trademarks and Licensing Office began working with micro-influencers in the fall of 2021. We did not use a specific technique or system to find these micro-influencers; I simply spent a few hours scouring through the university's social media pages, searching for people who were engaging with the university's brand and who had a positive voice about the university. From there, it was a simple email or DM asking if they would like to be a part of the program and explaining the guidelines of the program. Every person responded with an enthusiastic YES (who wouldn't want free UC gear?!).

Our micro-influencer program is pretty straightforward – we keep the group up-to-date about new licensees and products, promotions at retail, and our social media campaigns. We also send the group various UC licensed products throughout the year to make sure they are able to represent the university on any occasion life calls for. The micro-influencers are not required to post anything on social media; we hope that they will love the products that are sent to them which will entice them to share the products or the link to the products on their pages. Since the inception of the program, we have seen a dramatic rise in social media engagement. In our first year of the

program, we estimated that our micro-influencers increased our social media impressions and link clicks by 15 percent. While it may not be an astounding number, the type of engagement that the micro-influencers have provided has been extraordinary.

The micro-influencer program has not only been a huge success for the Trademarks and Licensing Office, but we have seen great effects on the university and athletics social accounts as well as the micro-influencer's accounts. This program has given our university and athletics social teams even more content to share about licensed products and the micro-influencers have seen increased followers and engagement rates on their end. We know that it is not the most robust influencer program, but we are extremely proud of the engagement that the group has provided and the potential that our micro-influencer program has. We are excited to continue adding micro-influencers to this group and to continue to grow this program in the years to come!

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