



THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT ON INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

**Prepared for the Board of Governors
Nipissing University¹**



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Intercollegiate Athletics²

For more than 125 years, intercollegiate athletics have played a role in the cultural life of Canadian Universities. Institutions such as McGill, Queen's, and the University of Toronto played a significant role in organizing and promoting sport at elite levels in the last portion of the 19th century and the Canadian Intercollegiate Athletic Union formed in 1906. Presently in 2023, fielding competitive sports teams is a budgeted aspect of public university operations in Canada and is often rationalized within the framework of sustaining a campus atmosphere of holistic learning and cultural experiences. It is widely argued that beyond the thrill of competition and the pursuit of athletic excellence, these sports programs contribute significantly to the rounded development of students, foster a sense of identity and pride, and establish strong community bonds. In many respects, competitive sports, recreational sports, and fitness activities may be categorized similarly to programs which offer music, art, dance, and other non-academic activities of self-discovery and learning on our campuses, indeed, the broad experiences beyond the classroom.

These activities all require significant financial support and direct budgetary allocations, investments which compete for dollars with academic programs, research, and student services, the very core of every university's mission. At a time when academic programs and student services are being reviewed for relevance, efficiency, and student demand, when financial sustainability is at the forefront of planning, it is important to assess the value proposition of intercollegiate sport.

This report is by no means a comprehensive historical analysis of intercollegiate sport at Nipissing University over the past 30 years; rather, it is a snapshot – based on the most current, in-year data – which examines the qualitative and quantitative framework of athletics. This brief report frames the qualitative aspects of varsity sport that are impossible to measure in dollars and the quantitative elements best represented through our annual budget. The qualitative assets discussed here assume that these are environments and situations in which sports and sporting environments and staff are at their very best. It is a fact that sports environments can be toxic to experiences, relationships, and personal health and, while these issues are also of major concern, they are not explored in depth here.³

Nipissing University

Nipissing University received its Charter in 1992. In 1993, it joined the Ontario University Athletics Association, the Ontario Women's Intercollegiate Athletic Association, and the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association. That year, the university fielded a men's and women's cross-country team, a men's and women's Nordic ski team, and a women's volleyball team. The university added other teams as follows: men's volleyball (1995); men's soccer (1998); women's soccer (2000); men's hockey (2009); women's hockey (2013); men's and women's basketball (2014); men's lacrosse (2014); and men's and women's rowing (2016).

Immeasurable Assets

1) Student Benefits

- Recruitment and Persistence

Without question, for a high school athlete who is leaving home to attend university, being recruited to a particular varsity team is a tremendous advantage. Transitioning to a new environment, away from parents and family, is difficult at the best of times. In the first instance, the recruitment process draws attention to the individual value of the student-athlete: at Nipissing University, we want students to commit, to attend, and to succeed. In the second instance, it is the coach's role to make players feel welcome and to create an environment of easy transition, and in fact, some excitement. Third, it is a fundamental role of team members

to ensure that new players feel welcome and to provide assistance when new players arrive and, sometimes, to look out for fellow teammates. Finally, being part of a team provides opportunities for group studying, study hall – and, on behalf of the university, coaches have an interest in ensuring each athlete attends class, completes assignments, and maintains an appropriate grade point average. Because of the significant amounts of time spent together, teammates recognize when fellow students are having problems or exhibiting behaviours of concern. As such, a team can have a direct influence on persistence from year to year.

- camaraderie and shared experiences

Athletes are drawn to fellow athletes to share experiences on and off the field. Teams by their nature provide opportunities to develop and maintain long term relationships.

- connection between success on the field and success in the classroom – not just results but experience

Immeasurable aspects of success occur in a range of positive experiences that stem directly from camps, practices, and games but also in the corollary social experiences on campus with teammates.

- Loneliness

Recent research⁴ reports that student loneliness is a significant public health issue on Canadian campuses. Those who belong to teams have an advantage here as they are required to interact meaningfully with others on a daily basis and coaches monitor their athletes' attendance, as do their teammates more informally.

- Health and exercise

Intercollegiate sports promote the importance of physical activity and a healthy lifestyle. As communities rally around their university teams, there is often an associated emphasis on wellness and fitness, encouraging residents to participate in sports and recreational activities (although there is very little evidence demonstrating that watching sports translates to exercising).

- Mentorship

As mentioned above, it is a coach's responsibility to mentor good behaviour, compassion, empathy, and to provide opportunity for success and to mentor leadership skills through drills, strategy, and situation- based learning. Athletes will also have opportunities to mentor younger teammates or to model for high school athletes.

- Leadership training, educational and personal development

In the best sporting environments, every athlete has the opportunity to learn leadership skills. Good coaches enable players to learn from their successes and their mistakes or lost opportunities. Athletics opens up many opportunities for personal growth.

- Service to the university and the community

Athletes make a tremendous service contribution to a university's reputation at many levels. Most of our teams create opportunities for activities in the North Bay community, whether it's garbage pickup, fundraising, visiting hospitals, or volunteering to help with younger athletes. Athletes understand that they are ambassadors for the university but, at the same time, their four to five years of service is of high value on their

resumes when they graduate.

Total number of volunteer hours in the North Bay community by Nipissing University athletes: 5,180

Total number of community-focused events (example anti-bullying, anti-racism): 6

- Transferable skills

There are many employers who value the skill sets and personal traits that athletes develop during their careers. Coachability, teamwork, leadership, effort, and comradery are all learned assets that athletes carry beyond their university years.

- Identity and pride

Being a Laker encourages a current and life-long affiliation with the university and a certain degree of pride.

Total Number of Laker Alums: 2,755 Total

Number of alums who donate: 32

2) University Benefits

- Brand recognition

There is no doubt that Nipissing University is recognized nationally in Canada because of its athletics program. Various sports teams and particular athletes have created significant visibility for the university through news stories, social media, and word-of-mouth (See Appendix A). A telling example is the Nipissing Women's Hockey Team, whose performance at National Championships continues to draw acclaim across the country. Recently, Nipissing University has established formal relationships with North Bay minor sports in soccer, volleyball, and hockey. The University has direct affiliations with organizations and the community through the Jr Lakers Soccer, Jr Lakers Volleyball, and Jr Lakers Hockey. This has provided an incredible surge in brand identification and recognition as hundreds of North Bay athletes wear Nipissing Lakers colours to compete. Additionally, there is a direct coordination of events between our varsity athletes and the community athletes and their parents.

- Civic boosterism

North Bay is decidedly a "sports town." A significant portion of the news media is dedicated to sports culture and performance. The local media dedicates a great deal of airtime to Nipissing athletics.

- Celebrating diversity

The Nipissing University athletics program attracts a diverse range of student athletes, having a direct influence on the diversity of the campus and the City of North Bay. We are all better for understanding, appreciating, and celebrating diversity in experiences, cultures, opinions, and languages.

- Community connections

Local residents often develop a strong attachment to their university's teams, considering them representative of the community's spirit and values.

Total attendance for events annually: 32,000

- Inspiration for youth

The presence of university sports teams can inspire local youth. Young athletes may look up to university players as role models, fostering a sense of aspiration and motivating them to pursue sports and higher education. This can contribute to positive youth development and community well-being. It is very common for North Bay parents to bring their children to Lakers' games.

- Cohesion

Sporting events provide opportunities for community members to come together, fostering social cohesion, which is valued by some. Whether it's a basketball or hockey game, these events create a shared experience that brings people of different ages, backgrounds, and other demographics together, promoting a sense of community.

- Teams to the community

Schools, organizations, and individuals value the interaction of Nipissing athletes with their students and employees.

Total volunteer hours in the community by coaches and staff: 2,430

- Community engagement

Nipissing games and camps welcome members of the North Bay and surrounding region to the campus, fostering and sustaining connections between the university and the wider public. Sporting events become cultural touchstones for communities, creating traditions that are passed down through generations. Whether it's a rivalry game or a championship celebration, these events become part of the local cultural fabric, contributing to a sense of continuity and shared history. Local residents often attend games, not only to support their teams but also to connect with neighbors and friends. Attendees at intercollegiate sports events have the opportunity to network and socialize. Community members, local businesses, and university alumni often come together, fostering connections that extend beyond the immediate sporting context. This networking can have positive implications for both the university and the community.

- Connections between students, staff, and faculty

Nipissing University faculty and staff members enjoy watching students perform, outside of the normal context of academic and student services. It is a healthy pathway to get to know students better.

- Specialized Expertise

Our varsity coaches often teach courses in our academic programs, particularly physical activity courses offered to undergraduates in our Physical Education and Health program and to our Education programs. Their specific and specialized expertise is applied at the highest levels of coaching and professional instruction in the North Bay region. Our academic programs and our students derive significant benefits from this expertise.

- Economic impact

Hosting intercollegiate events has a positive economic impact on the university and on local communities. Visitors attending games contribute to local businesses, including restaurants, hotels, and shops. This influx of

people stimulates economic growth and supports local businesses.

Total number of games hosted for all sports: 87 regular season

Total number of clinics hosted on campus (officials, coaches): 6

Estimated total of attendees to community-based programs: 1200

Estimated total of participants in other non OUA events on campus: 2000

Total number of hotel rooms booked by visiting teams: 522

Quantitative Analysis Measurable

Assets 2023-2024 Individual

- Recruitment - currently there are 259 (M 143; W 116) varsity athletes who compete for Nipissing University, approximately 5% of the onsite student population.

It is a fact that the majority of these students would not be attending Nipissing University if not for athletics. They would have selected another university and played there. It is also possible (we do not track) that students who were attracted to Nipissing and recruited by the coaching staff but were cut from the team will remain at the university.

- Persistence and Graduation

Based on several studies (United States),⁵ the NCAA reports that varsity athletes have higher persistence rates, tend to drop out at lower rates, have higher grades, and higher rates of graduation. Nipissing University is just beginning to collect data on the academic performance, rates of graduation, and rates of persistence, in general and on a per team basis. The preliminary and cursory results demonstrate that the findings from the United States to be accurate to a certain extent. For example, in 2020, at Nipissing University, athletes graduated at rates of 1.2% higher than the rest of the student population and in 2022 graduated at rates 2% higher. For those years respectively, athletes had rates of persistence that were 1.7% and 2.5% higher. The literature speculates that sports teach time management skills, organizational skills, competitiveness in the classroom, goal setting, striving for achievement, with some suggesting increased cognitive abilities because of fitness and blood flow. Academic success at Nipissing University is also directly reflected in the awarding of the status of Academic All Canadians. The Academic All Canadians program was initiated nationally by *U Sports* in 1988 to recognize those exceptional student- athletes who achieve an academic standing of 80 per cent or better while playing on one of their university's varsity teams. In 2020-21, 98 Nipissing University athletes were recognized, 42% of total athletes at the institution; in 2021-22, 88 or 41% of athletes were recognized; and, in 2022-23, 90 or 41% of Nipissing University athletes achieved at least 80 percent or better in academic standing. Student athletes bring levels of academic standing and unique life experiences which have an impact on enhancing the classroom experiences of their peers, particularly the latter. Athletes have significant levels of experience in competitive sport: training, nutrition, receiving coaching, awards, and living knowledge of the structural aspects of winning, losing, honour, injury, and prestige - what we refer to as the sports process. These life experiences add both content, reflection and, therefore, unique contributions to the classroom setting in related academic fields such as Physical Education and Health, Sport Management, and elementary and secondary school teaching and education, in which they participate. Further, our academic programs provide unique experiential learning and student placement opportunities in North Bay

and the surrounding region of the highest professional quality in such areas as coaching, athletic therapy, and sports marketing. And, finally, the research and data collection opportunities created for faculty and students which are made possible by the competitive sport environment through athletics and our sport participant population present a valuable resource for the university.

Financial Information Revenues

Student Fees: \$1.12m

Government Grants (estimated based on an average of \$8,647 per FTE): ~\$2.24m (approximate) Tuition from intercollegiate athletes (\$7,000 to \$8,000): \$1.9m (approximate)

Residence revenues for athletes living in residence: \$360,000-\$500,000 (approximate) Other: \$153,271

Donations: \$26,740

Expenditures

As is the case for *every* student attending Nipissing University, tuition revenues are utilized to offset the costs of instruction, student services, entrance scholarships, and infrastructural overhead. We cannot, therefore, assert a direct relationship between the number of athletes and net revenues to the University, independent of the overall costs of education.

Specific Expenditures Related to Athletics:

1) Salaries & Benefits

This includes salaries & benefit costs for all coaches, assistant coaches, and any direct administrative support (Director – Athletics, Manager – Intercollegiate Sport, Support Staff, student employment).

2) Scholarship Expenses

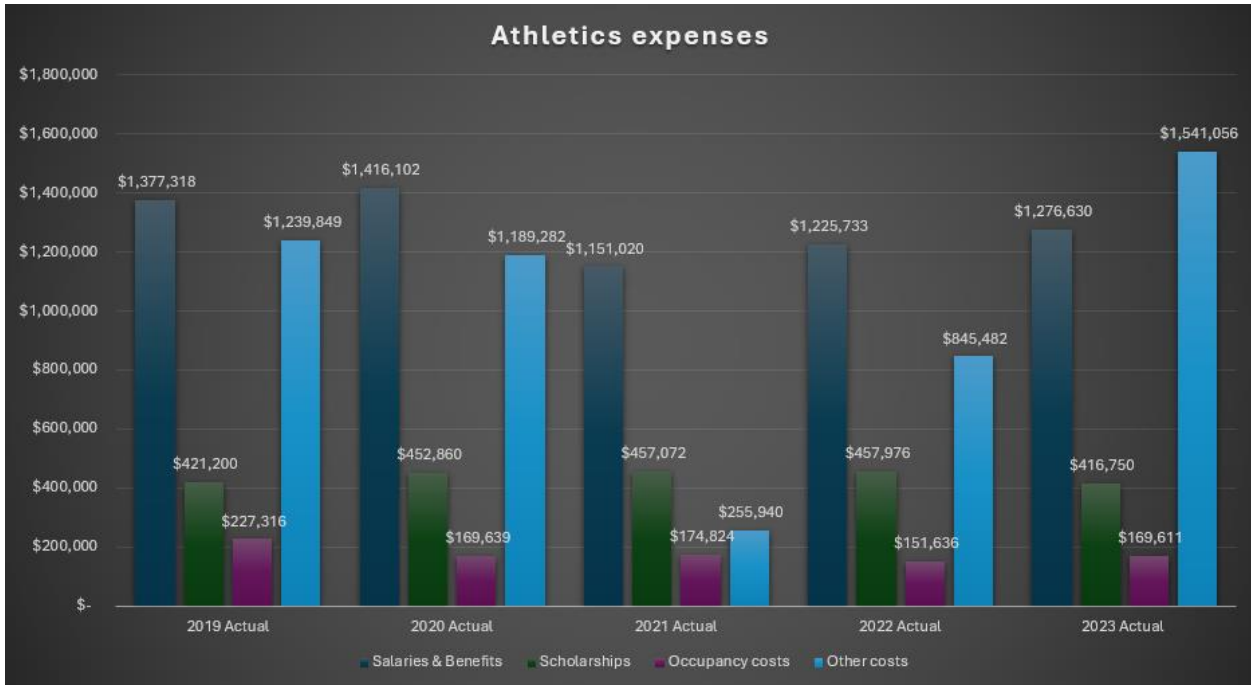
Athletics Financial Awards (AFA) expenses are included in this category. Athletes receiving entrance scholarships, or other donor funded awards are not included in this analysis.

3) Occupancy Costs

Occupancy costs include utilities, renovations, maintenance, insurance, and interest on long-term debt.

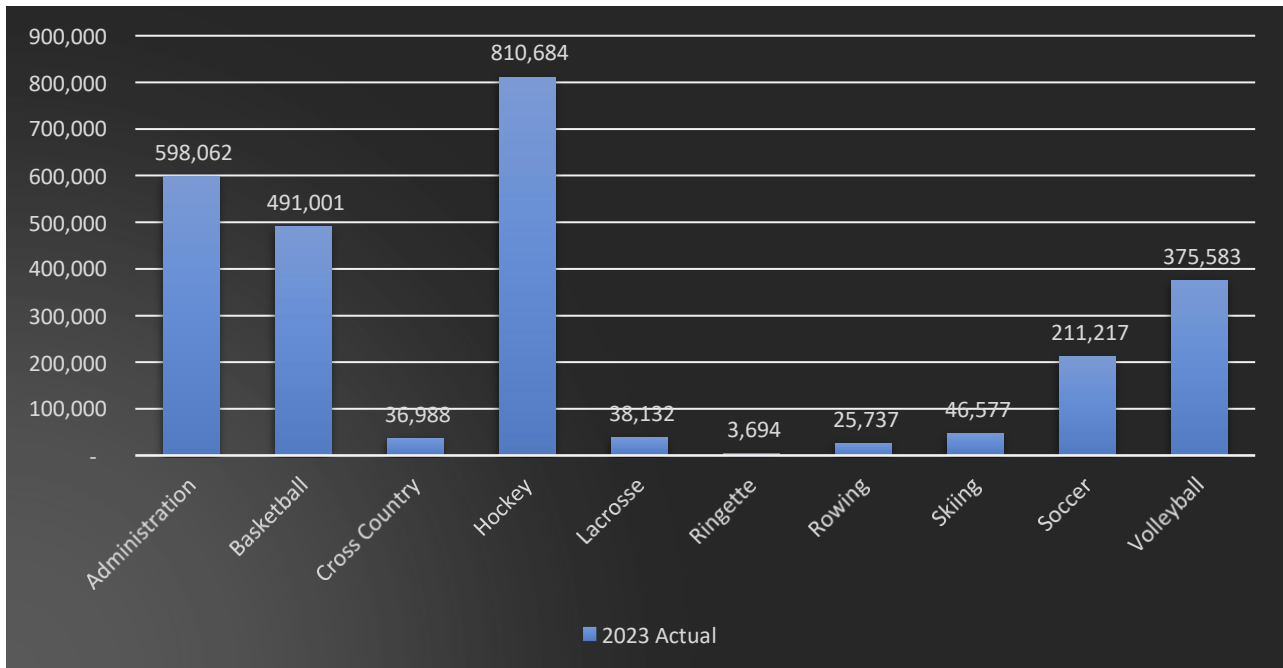
4) Other Costs

Other costs include any direct operating costs for athletics, such as team travel, recruitment travel, supplies, uniforms, and food expenses.



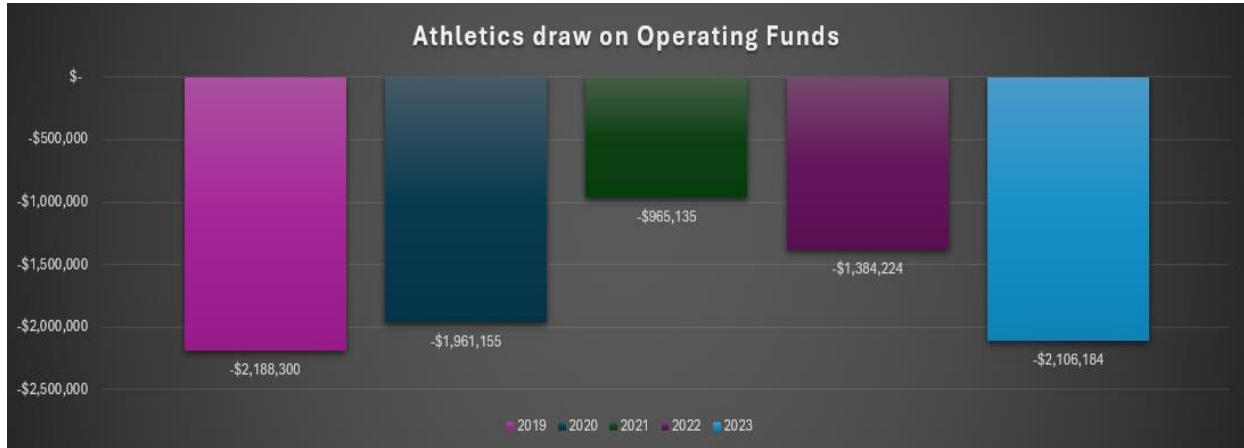
Net Expenditure by Sport

Nipissing currently fields teams in the following sports: basketball (m/w); cross country (m/w); hockey (m/w); lacrosse (m); ringette (w); rowing (m/w); Nordic skiing (m/w); soccer (m/w); volleyball (m/w).



Impact on Operating Fund

Nipissing University's operating fund covers approximately 60% of overall Athletics expenses, with the remaining 40% covered by other revenue sources. Some universities do not have significant structural deficits in their athletics programs. However, it is more common at smaller universities.



Other Statistics:

Total number of coaches: 12

Total number of assistant coaches: 40

Total number of volunteers: 4

Total number of employees who service athletes (athletic therapists, counsellors, trainers): 20

Total away games: 87 + competitions in Cross Country, Rowing, Nordic

Total number of hotel rooms away: 1,171

The Sustainability of Intercollegiate Athletics

There is no doubt that intercollegiate athletics plays a crucial role in shaping educational experiences, personal enrichment, campus culture, building strong alumni and community ties, and creating a national reputation for the university. However, it must be recognized that offering an athletics program is particularly financially challenging to smaller universities. Indeed, the costs of athletics are disproportionately represented in the budgets of these institutions. Universities collect fees from their student populations to cover the salaries and operational expenses of their programs. A university with a student population of 60,000, for example, could collect fees totalling \$6m – potentially not encumbering *any* expenditures in the university operating budget, while having the capacity to offer an athletics program that is twice the size of Nipissing's athletics program.

Intercollegiate athletics attracts students to Nipissing University who would not otherwise attend. It is accurate to state that this brings significant revenues to the University. However, just as in the case of all students, these revenues must be distributed beyond the costs of the athletics program to the costs of providing an education to the athletes; the costs of instruction, the costs of student services, academic scholarships and bursaries, the costs of overhead for the university's facilities, including the library,

classrooms, labs, utilities and maintenance must be accounted for. If we assume that all tuition dollars, residence revenues, and government grants are absorbed into the general revenues of Nipissing University as the costs of education, then the net cost of Athletics to operating is \$2.1m.

At this time, we are unable to estimate the value of the assets within intercollegiate athletics at Nipissing University, but we understand that there is significant value in brand, identity, reputation, affinity, product sales, and in fundraising and donation potential, and in the naming of physical assets such as the stadium and the sports complex. We believe that we are not yet realizing a modest percentage of the revenue generating potential of these assets. Given the potential reputational harm, at this time, we do not recommend cutting any sports from the current roster. We do recognize that the program's overall draw on the Operating Fund places the University at financial risk and we propose to enact a series of activities to substantially decrease the draw on the University's Operating Fund on an annual basis and to realize the revenue potential of the program's assets on a short and long term basis.

Over the next five years, we propose to:

- reduce the Operational Fund draw from \$2.1 to \$1m - \$1.5m
- continue to address cost efficiencies across all sport teams and facilities
- establish and sustain accurate budgets to better reflect a sustainable, comprehensive program
- determine the market value of our assets
- consolidate and maximize our fundraising efforts and donor contributions
- maximize our sales and revenue generating activities

These initiatives will be specifically outlined in the University's Operational Plan.

Notes

¹The President is grateful for the assistance of Intercollegiate Athletics, and the offices of Institutional Planning, Finance and Administration, and the Provost in the preparation of this report.

²Intercollegiate athletics, varsity athletics, Athletics, intercollegiate sport are terms used interchangeably.

³See Jane Crossman, ed., *Canadian Sport Sociology*, 2nd Ed., Thomson: 2008; Jay Coakley, *Sport in Society*, 4th Ed., Mosby, 1994; Don Morrow and Kevin Wamsley, *Sport in Canada: A History*, 4th Ed., Oxford: 2017.

⁴Matthew James Fagan et al, "Lonely but not alone: Examining correlates of loneliness among Canadian post-secondary students," *Journal of American College Health*, 2023.

⁵<https://www.ncaa.org/news/2021/12/2/general-college-athletes-continue-to-graduate-at-record-highs.aspx>;
https://www.lsureveille.com/daily/university-athletes-graduate-at-higher-rates-than-non-athletes/article_65e7313c-6a0e-11e4-86b7-73b3dd1cc1a7.html;
<https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=jur>;
<https://www.csus.edu/faculty/m/fred.molitor/docs/sports%20and%20academic%20performance.pdf>;
<https://gmtm.com/articles/ncaa-graduation-rates-student-athletes>;
<https://www3.uwsp.edu/ucm/news/Pages/StudentAthleteSuccess.aspx>;

Appendix A

Social Media Impact

Website Total Users: 88,000+

Website Total Sessions: 147,000+

Website Total Page Views: 450,000+

Twitter Followers: 3,425

Twitter Impressions: 60,200 per day average

Facebook Followers: 3,400+

Facebook Post Engagement: 7,328 per month, per post (reactions, comments)

Facebook Post Reach: 47,916 per month, per post

Instagram Followers: 4,500+

Instagram Impressions: 128,344 per month

Profile Visits: 7,061 per month

Total Number of Social Media Followers: 11,325

