



## Developing a Chinese Social Media Program

Due to internet censorship, many popular social media sites, such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube, are blocked in China. To better serve our Chinese students, who make up the largest group of international students at Boston University, we launched a Chinese Social Media Program in 2013.

Our Chinese social media channels connect with diverse audiences both in China and the United States, including parents, alumni, current and prospective students, and the media. They seek to share information about the University and individual schools and colleges, as well as help students transition to studying in Boston. Most content posted on Chinese social channels is translated into Simplified Chinese.

### Boston University's Presence on Chinese Social Media

We've built our presence on Sina Weibo, WeChat, Red (also known as Xiaohongshu, or Little Red Book), and Zhihu to engage Chinese audiences. While each Chinese social channel has a specific focus, there is engagement and cross-sharing when appropriate and strategic.

[Sina Weibo](#), a hybrid of Twitter and Facebook, serves as a main source of information for the Chinese community. We use Weibo to distribute BU Today content and share institutional news, student stories, research excellence, campus events, and more.

[WeChat](#), a closed all-in-one mobile communication app for messaging, voice and video calls, news feeds, social communication, and wealth management, is an essential platform for brands seeking to connect with Chinese audiences. For Chinese students studying in the U.S., it's also a lifeline to friends, family, and professional networks in China. There are [three types of official accounts](#) offered by WeChat: Subscription Account, Service Account, and Corporate Account. In addition, brands and individuals can also leverage [Channels](#), a designated space for video content within the WeChat ecosystem, to further engage Chinese audiences via video storytelling.

Boston University's WeChat account is an information-oriented subscription account, which allows us to broadcast one newsletter per day to our subscribers. This account serves as a key information hub, providing campus news updates, "how-to" tips and guidelines, and student-centric stories. Connected with our WeChat Subscription account, our Channels account distributes student-centric video content. We use Channels to elevate brand awareness and enhance community engagement through creative video storytelling.



[Red](#), a fast-growing photo and video-sharing platform that [Lemon8](#) draws inspiration from, is designed to inspire users to create and explore reviews, recommendations, helpful tips, and daily life stories. Like TikTok, Red serves as an alternative search engine for young people in China, with an algorithm rewarding authentic content rooted in genuine experience. With a celebratory, approachable, and peer-to-peer tone, we use BU's Red channel to highlight visual content, including photos, graphics, and student-centric short-form videos, to embrace student lifestyle and to bolster student-driven conversations. Our Chinese social media interns spearhead content creation and curation, leveraging a first-person narrative to cultivate trust with our intended audience.

[Zhihu](#), China's Quora, serves as a community listening tool. We crosspost social content to this channel and monitor the conversations on Zhihu to generate topic ideas.

### **Working with BU's Chinese Social Media Program**

We use our Chinese social media channels to represent the University as a whole, as well as to shine a light on individual schools, colleges, and departments. Our team works closely with the University's editorial team and video production team to translate and repurpose engaging stories for our Chinese social media channels. We also create original content, such as student interviews, pre-arrival readiness information, and listicles of BU fun facts. And, we are always looking for interesting stories and events to highlight. We are here to help you expand your audience and reach on Chinese social media.

Here are several ways to work with our Chinese Social Media Program:

- Flag content targeting Chinese audiences or international students developed by your department, school, center, or program
- Recommend members of the BU Chinese community to be featured on or create content for our Chinese social channels
- Share events for international students hosted by your department, school, center, or program
- Share compelling visual assets focusing on student life
- Co-host Q&A event on Chinese social platforms
- Create a one-pager on the program, course, or service you'd like to promote on Chinese social media for translation

### **Leveraging WeChat Groups for Community Building**

Like WhatsApp, WeChat allows users with personal accounts to set up groups and share information in group chats. If your department wants to leverage WeChat groups to connect with Chinese students, alumni, or parents, you can follow [this step-by-step guide](#) to apply for a personal WeChat account using a valid mobile number. We suggest using a business cell phone, instead of using a personal mobile number to set up the account.



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Once the account is created, you can update your profile information and get your account QR code in the “Me” section in the app. We highly recommend sharing this QR code via email and on your other social channels to help people find you on WeChat. You’ll need at least two contacts on WeChat to set up a group. You can find the step-by-step instructions [here](#) on how to create or join a group chat.

We recommend [setting up a group notice](#) for each group. We encourage you to include our [community guidelines](#) in your group notice.

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Our team can offer guidance regarding the specific social platforms that might best fit your needs and discuss the ways you can amplify your message via those platforms. If you’d like to have a further discussion on developing communication strategy for Chinese audience, please send an email to Carol Duan at [duanr@bu.edu](mailto:duanr@bu.edu).