College of ACES Communicators and the #askACES Twitter Series
May’s featured guests were Jennifer Shike, ACES Director of Communications and Marketing, and Stephanie Henry, ACES Media Communications Specialist who covers Human Development and Family studies, Food Science & Human Nutrition, and the Division of Nutritional Sciences. Jennifer and Stephanie discussed #askACES, a monthly Twitter chat featuring ACES researchers talking about relevant topics such as nutrition labeling or the science behind relationships.

Some of the things discussed included:

- #askACES started with a problem and a question:
  - Misconceptions about research were being shared on social media
  - Few people were talking about real science
  - University researchers weren’t joining the conversation
  - People weren’t sure who to believe
  - With limited financial support, the question became, “How can you make an impact with limited support?”

- Goals of #askACES Twitter chats:
  - Connect ACES researchers to media members
  - Provide opportunities for researchers to have conversations with the public
  - Provide accuracy and clarity concerning the science
  - Distill complex research into easily accessible content
  - Feature current topics on social media and in the news that connect to research taking place in ACES, and show the breadth of research throughout ACES

- Challenges of hosting a Twitter chat:
  - Condensing complex research into 140 characters can be difficult
  - Multiple answers may be needed to respond to one complicated question
  - Helping researchers who are unfamiliar with social media feel comfortable

- Things learned through previous Twitter chats:
  - Develop a media plan to promote the event and disseminate the post-chat deliverables
  - Work with researchers to prepare approximately 10 questions/answers, promotion resources, social media graphics, etc.
  - In no one asks questions, wait...don’t panic
  - Just say no to some questions, particularly if they’ll lead to conversations outside the focus of the chat
  - Consider saving some of the complex questions for the follow-up podcast
  - Don’t worry about not getting through every question
  - Great way to build relationships with researchers that may result in content/story ideas down the road
People may be afraid to ask questions, so it’s a good idea to get the conversation going with preplanned questions.

To help the conversation, it’s important not to allow too much time between questions and answers.

Important to have a team helping you (someone to manage the tweets, someone to help the researcher translate answers into tweets, etc.)

TweetChat’s free version may be a valuable tool to help manage the twitter conversation.

Try to plan a year’s worth of chats, and begin scheduling with researchers about six months in advance.

Things aren’t finished when the chat is over:

- Podcasts hosted through SoundCloud and the iTunes store
- News release
- Facebook posts with links to podcast
- Twitter follow-ups
- Speaker survey

Benefits of #askACES so far:

- Brand development
- #askACES is the most popular content on Twitter for the group
- 53% increase of followers on Twitter since starting December 2015
- Podcasts have averaged more than 650 downloads
- Lots of positive feedback from faculty
- Relationship and trust building with researchers
- Source of education and awareness with community members
- A library of content to repurpose
- Awareness of fresh topics that our constituents care about

Updates from the OVCR

- No RCC meetings will take place during the summer. Meetings will resume on Friday, August 11.
- The OVCR’s New Research Communications Coordinator, Tyler Wolpert, started on Thursday, April 20. Please send him any communications requests or issues that were previously sent to Andy Blacker.
- CCOs should have received an email containing information about the new Illinois logo and informational sessions on Wednesday, May 17, and Thursday, May 18.
- Crowdsourcing for research projects with VCIA meetings scheduled. Melissa will update the group.
- The NCSA’s Blue Waters project released its economic impact study on Wednesday, May 10. The study found that the project has provided a $1.08 billion return to the Illinois’ economy. Share this story as you are able.
- Searches are ongoing for leadership roles within the OVCR.
• RCC topic ideas are always welcome, so please share any question, topic, or issue you’d like to discuss at future meetings.
• NPR has an excellent resource for content creators that features advice and best practices for audio, visual, digital, and social storytelling.

Updates from the Group

Beckman Institute
• Jeffrey Moore, the Murchison-Mallory Professor of Chemistry, a professor of materials science and engineering, and a long-time Beckman faculty member, has been named director of the Beckman Institute.

Extension
• The 2017 Illinois 4-H State Robotics Competition featuring nearly 500 youths and 75 teams was a success. Visit the competition’s webpage for event photos and to see list of winners.

IGB
• Explore the World of Genomics at The Field Museum in Chicago during a special two-day event presented by the IGB. The exhibit is free with Basic admission on Friday, May 19, and Saturday, May 20, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The World of Genomics will also be on display during the Members’ Nights celebration the evening of May 18 and May 19.

News Bureau
• A media interview is a great opportunity to deliver your story. The News Bureau media relations experts can teach you the essentials to achieving good press. Schedule media training with Liz Touchstone.

OCR
• OCR will be moving in their new office in 528 E Green St. (Chipotle Building) during the first week of July.

Technology Services
• The Technology Services Amazon Web Services (AWS) team is positioned to assist you with the AWS Cloud Credits for Research Program. Through this program, Amazon directly awards researchers credits for the use of AWS to enhance cloud-based research.