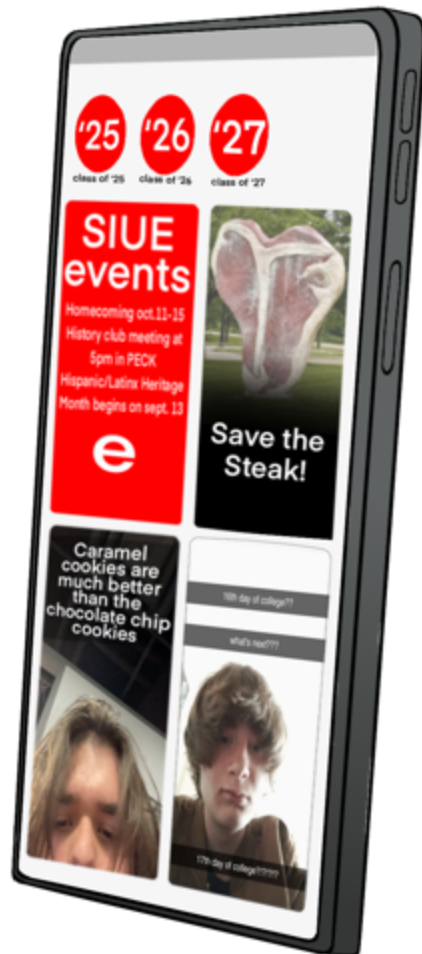


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Shared SIUE Snapchat stories are a double-edged sword of connection, drama

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Like any other form of social media, shared SIUE Snapchat stories bolster the ability for students to connect while simultaneously stirring up arguments and drama that have the potential to harm the campus community.

According to Snapchat, "Campus Stories" are shared public Snapchat stories on which anyone who has been on or near a college campus in the past 24 hours can post and view images and videos.

Snapchat first launched the feature in 2014 on a select few campuses and later expanded the feature in 2015 to include more campuses such as SIUE.

Since then, many SIUE students, such as sophomore art history major Virginia Shelton, have viewed and engaged with these stories to stay up to date with campus events, student organizations and gossip.

"I watch them daily," Shelton said. "This morning I saw someone posting about the SIUE disability club, and I didn't know that existed, so that was really cool. I think the drama is stupid but it's also entertaining. It's a drama I don't need to know about but I get to learn about it."

Junior geography major Dylan Stout also said he views the shared stories daily and had similar thoughts about both the negative and positive sides to this Snapchat feature.

"They're laughable a lot of the time, but people are helpful," Stout said. "Recently, I have been seeing a lot [of story posts] for the Change.org petition for the meat statue. For the most part, there is a lot of good. There are some people that will post on there just random things that don't make too much sense."

According to freshman English major Owen Lockett, who frequently posts on the stories under the username "Oven," it is all about how people use the stories that makes them either a positive or negative feature.

"I hate saying this word, but I'm kind of famous on the story. I post really dumb jokes on there every day. I've been recognized in person because of it — it's kind of weird," Lockett said. "It really depends on how you use it. Most of the time, if there is any kind of drama on there, people make fun of it. It's not taken that seriously. Obviously, any social media can be a proponent of drama and darkness, but it just depends on how people use it."

With such ease of access for students on campus, connectivity has become a lot easier. At any point, a student can make a story post asking for a study group or giving details to an event they're a part of.

Amanda Jane, a graduate student in sociology, said the stories are able to foster connections between students, but in a restricted capacity.

"I do think these stories are a good way for people to connect, but I think there's a limit to it," Jane said. "People get to see others' Snapchat stories, but are people genuinely making friends from these college stories or making plans? I'm not so sure."

Jane added that connecting with other students at SIUE is difficult, so the story does alleviate some of the problems students may have when interacting with others.

"There's not a huge or exciting student life on campus aside from fraternities, sororities and sports," Jane said. "So, I think a lot of people who attend SIUE end up going through it without ever talking to students outside their classes. These Snapchat stories are a good way to foster communication between students where you otherwise may not have it."

With the reintroduction of new students each year, the Snapchat stories may always remain a place where students can get acquainted with each other and settle into the new world around them. Jane said that the stories help students feel like they're a part of something.

"I think that Snapchat stories like these help students feel like they are one conglomerate society rather than a bunch of individuals that just so happen to be in the same place," Jane said.

Mackenzie Richards, a senior and Student Body President, similarly said the Snapchat stories can be a benefit when it comes to informing students about community events.

"I've seen a lot of people who will post events that are going on and I've seen ones that even I don't know about," Richards said. "I think it can be positive because it is a way you can promote events."

Richards also said that, since any student can post to the stories, it can often get derailed or become tangled up in pointless conversations.

"Sometimes people can be annoying with them," Richards said. "Some people post there unnecessarily. You're seeing people having full conversations; it's stuff that could be put in a group chat and not to everyone. When people keep it relevant and are genuinely asking good questions, it's a good tool."

Barrett Larkin, a junior and the Organization Relations Officer for student government, believes that organizations shouldn't use social media as much as they do to promote events.

"If an organization came to me looking to promote an event, I am going to be a little bearish on social media because I think it's oversaturated," Larkin said. "I just don't think a Snapchat story would be the best way to promote an event because they disappear after 24 hours."

Larkin said it would be best if student organizations on campus would use more official social media to promote their events.

"I don't mean to be controversial, but we have some organizations and Greek life [groups] that are not staying up to date on GetInvolved, which is a form of social media they should actually be using," Larkin said.

Larkin said that if the groups were to use any other form of social media, he would prefer it be Instagram over Snapchat, as the Snapchat stories are mixed when it comes to good and bad content.

Richards said student government will be looking into posting on the Snapchat stories, though not in an official manner.

"Posting things like open senate positions and promoting events could be really good," Richards said. "Even if we don't as an organization officially do that, I know that we've had

people on student government post those of their own volition.”

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