



TIKTOK: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RCMUN XIII
FEBRUARY 3, 2024



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RCMUN NOTICES

Committee Content Warning

While RCMUN values the discussion and awareness of most topics and a delegate's obligation to accurately represent their assigned role, all participants who engage in any bigoted, racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist, fatphobic, xenophobic, or other such comments or sentiments will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action at the discretion of RCMUN's Secretariat. Additionally, in all things, RCMUN pledges its Secretariat and staff to maintain approachability and inclusivity; if any participant has any questions, comments, or concerns they are encouraged to contact RCMUN's Secretariat or, in the case of delegates, its staff. If you have questions or concerns regarding this, please reach out to your committee's senior staff before conference weekend.

Red Cedar University Model United Nations (RCMUN) is committed to fostering a safe and secure environment for all delegates, staff, and advisors. In this, RCMUN operates with a zero-tolerance policy concerning any and all instances of harassment and discrimination. Further, RCMUN is committed to promoting the mental health of its participants and requires all participants to act with compassion, grace, and understanding. RCMUN encourages participants to step out of their committee room and/or speak with a trusted individual if they are feeling overwhelmed or are otherwise uncomfortable.

All participants should be aware that RCMUN's Secretariat and staff are designated mandatory reporters with MSU's Office of Institutional Equity while operating within their roles before and during the conference.

RCMUN Statement on Mental Health

Red Cedar Model United Nations is committed to fostering a safe and secure environment for all delegates, staff, and advisors. In this, RCMUN operates with a zero tolerance policy with regard to any and all instances of harassment and discrimination. Further, RCMUN is committed to promoting the mental health of its participants and requires all participants to act with compassion, grace, and understanding. RCMUN encourages participants to step out of their committee room and/or speak with a trusted individual if they are feeling overwhelmed or are otherwise uncomfortable.

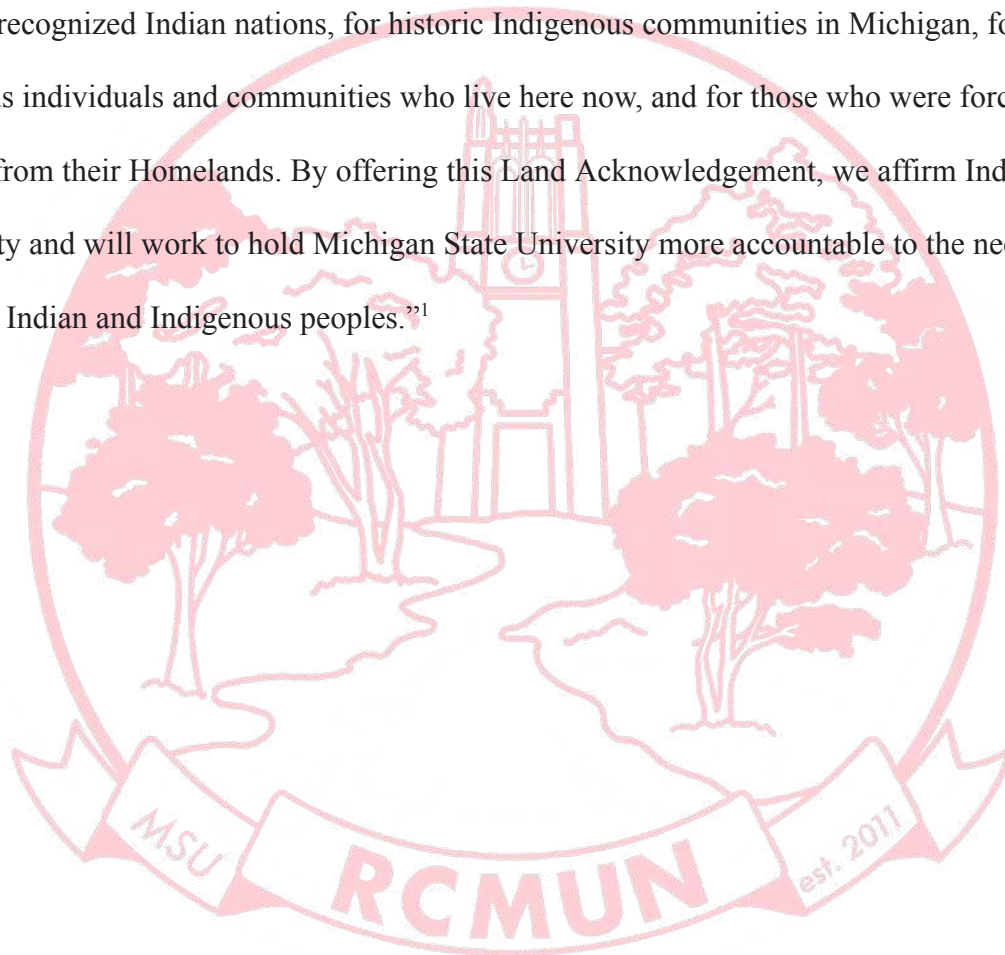
Moreover, RCMUN recognizes that some of its committees may include references to or discussions of sensitive topics. While RCMU values the discussion and awareness of these topics and a delegate's obligation to accurately represent their assigned role, all participants who engage in any bigoted, racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist, or other such comments or sentiments will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action at the discretion of RCMUN's Secretariat. Additionally, in all things, RCMUN pledges its Secretariat and staff to maintain approachability and inclusivity; if any participant has any questions, comments, or concerns they are encouraged to contact RCMUN's Secretariat or, in the case of delegates, its staff.

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MSU Provisional Land Acknowledgement

“We collectively acknowledge that Michigan State University occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Anishinaabeg – Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples. In particular, the University resides on Land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw. We recognize, support, and advocate for the sovereignty of Michigan’s twelve federally-recognized Indian nations, for historic Indigenous communities in Michigan, for Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and for those who were forcibly removed from their Homelands. By offering this Land Acknowledgement, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold Michigan State University more accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.”¹



¹ “Land Acknowledgement,” American Indian and Indigenous Studies, accessed December 5, 2021, <https://aiis.msu.edu/land/>.

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Article I: General Rules

1. Delegates are expected to adhere to all regular RCMUN XIII rules and standards of decorum.
2. In the event of a dispute over the Rules of Procedure, either those of RCMUN generally or the TikTok committee, the RCMUN Secretariat will be the ultimate authority of appeal.

Article II: Meetings

1. All of the TikTok committee meetings shall be attended by all specified members of the committee, unless otherwise authorized by the RCMUN Secretariat.
2. Unless otherwise indicated by the RCMUN Secretariat or the TikTok committee staff, all meetings of the committee will be held in the specified the TikTok committee room as designated by RCMUN.

Article III: Agenda

1. Items for debate may be pulled from the background guide, but are not limited to what is explicitly mentioned. Staff would like to see well-rounded and well-researched delegates bring new and relevant topics to the table.
2. Any Committee member may make a motion to restrict debate to one topic. If this motion passes, debate shall be limited to the topic specified until such time as another motion is made to either change the topic under consideration or return to general debate.

3. The Agenda is to be set at the beginning of committee, formal debate on committee topics may not begin until the Agenda has been set.
4. A Speaker's List may be opened at any time when motions are being entertained. Additionally, a delegate may request to be added to the Speaker's List at any time. If the Chair is not actively calling for speakers to be added, a delegate may send a note to the dias.

Article IV: Conduct of Business

1. The TikTok committee Aftermath proceedings shall be conducted in the form of a permanent Moderated Caucus until such a time that a committee member makes a motion to change this.

Article V: Types of Proposals

1. Directive: A directive requires only one sponsor, though it may have more. The number of required signatories is up to the discretion of the Chair. A committee member need only move to introduce a directive in order for it to be considered by the entire committee.
2. Press Releases: A press release is usually passed in lieu of a directive if doing so is more likely to make the committee's intentions clear. A press release is written either in the form of a directive or a press release; it requires the same number of sponsors and signatories as a directive.
3. Communiques: A communique is an external communication from the entire committee with a non-committee member. Such a communication can include anything from a

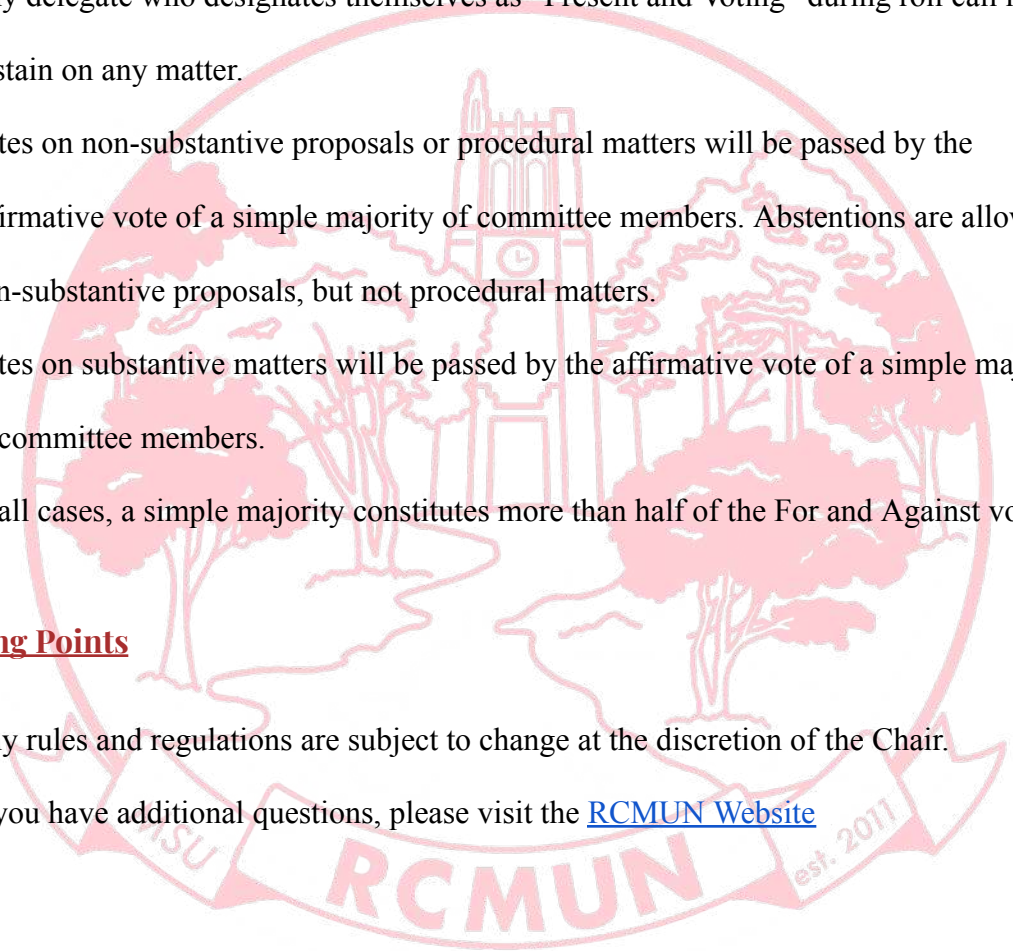
request of support to negotiations to even a threat. Passing this type of document can also result in the person being contacted meeting with the committee if requested.

Article VI: Voting

1. Votes may be entered as For, Against, or Abstentions.
2. Any delegate who designates themselves as “Present and Voting” during roll call may not abstain on any matter.
3. Votes on non-substantive proposals or procedural matters will be passed by the affirmative vote of a simple majority of committee members. Abstentions are allowed on non-substantive proposals, but not procedural matters.
4. Votes on substantive matters will be passed by the affirmative vote of a simple majority of committee members.
5. In all cases, a simple majority constitutes more than half of the For and Against votes.

Remaining Points

1. Any rules and regulations are subject to change at the discretion of the Chair.
2. If you have additional questions, please visit the [RCMUN Website](#)



Letter from the Crisis Director

Hello Delegates,

I hope that you are doing well and getting excited for RCMUN! On behalf of all of the lovely staffers here at TikTok: Board of Directors, I assure you that we are very excited to host you all in a few weeks. We have been preparing for this committee for several months now and are so excited to see how you all interpret our ideas.

My name is Malerie Birkel and I am your Crisis Director for TikTok: Board of Directors. I am a sophomore here at Michigan State University and am double majoring in History and Finance, with a minor in Spanish. Last year, I have worked in the backroom for the Republic of Pirates committee. This is my first year as a senior staff member and I am so excited to explore the complex digital world of TikTok with everyone. I am looking forward to seeing what crazy backroom arcs you all come up with and how you use that creativity to push forward with your front room goals. In addition to scheming in my own backroom arcs, I am also involved in MSU's Mock Trial team. My hobbies include hiking, playing card games and thinking lovingly of my home state: Nebraska.

My favorite thing about any crisis committee are the unique backroom arcs. If you are unsure of what a backroom arc or crisis note is, please take a look at our online resources available at this [link](#). In real life, TikTok is such a fast-paced, high-stakes environment and I'm looking forward to seeing that reflected in the committee. You all will need to be able to think on your feet and come up with creative solutions that benefit both the company and yourselves. In frontroom, we ask that your characters behave professionally and ethically. Backroom, however, is a bit of a different story. Be ready to scheme, plot, and manipulate your way into power and

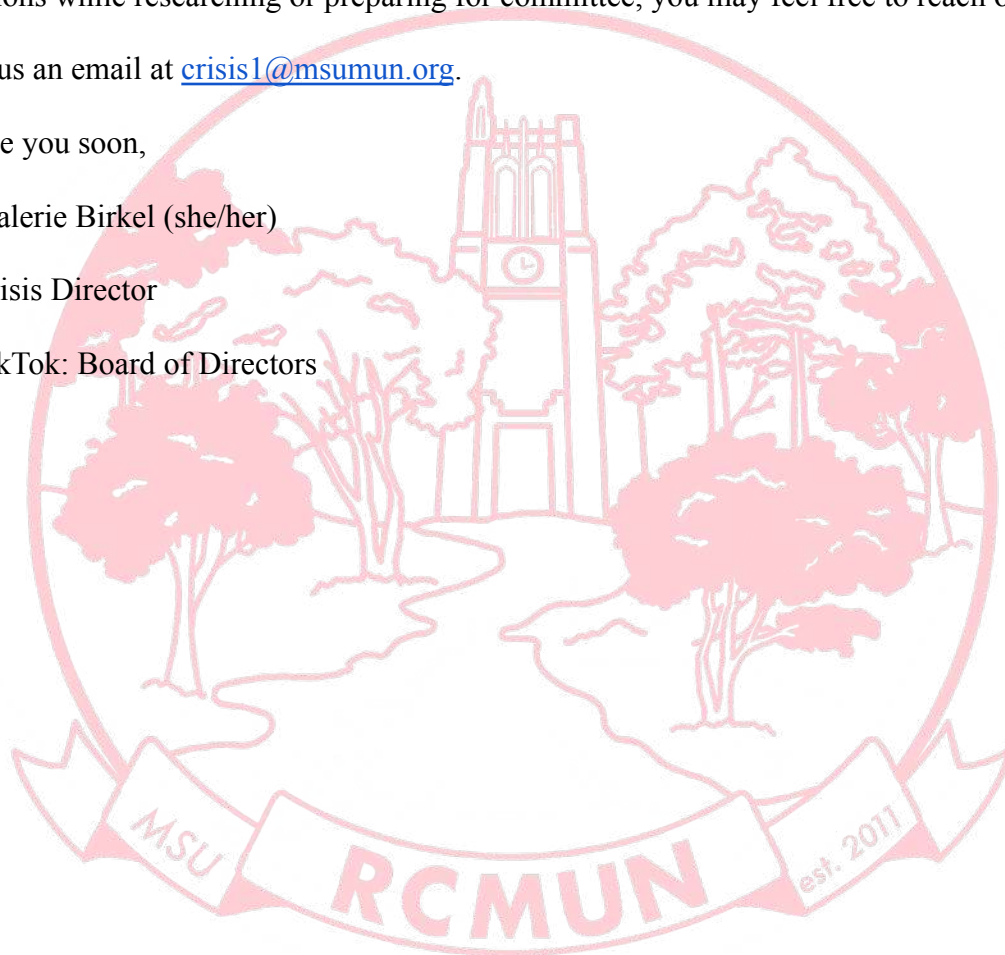
influence!² Also, please note that some of the characters are fictional. You may not be able to find any information about them as a person, instead read their bios and research what their job would typically be. While this may be daunting to some, please remember that this gives you a little bit more creative freedom over the character. This only applies for Members of the Board (as opposed to Consultants) as there is less information about them readily available. If you have any questions while researching or preparing for committee, you may feel free to reach out to us. Just send us an email at crisis1@msumun.org.

See you soon,

Malerie Birkel (she/her)

Crisis Director

TikTok: Board of Directors



²Again, within reason. Please read the content warning contained in this background guide and reach out if you are worried your idea might take things ‘too far’. We want to create a safe environment that welcomes everyone.

Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

Hello! My name is Cassidy Lynn and I am your chair for TikTok: Board of Directors. I am a junior in James Madison College studying Social Relations and Policy with a minor in history. I have previously been Assistant Chair for the Daily Gavel at MSUMUN last year.

I am also a member of the executive board of MSUMUN's sister organization, MSUIRO, where I am Vice President of Development. MSUIRO is a competitive collegiate team where we discuss issues we are passionate about in incredible cities like Boston or Montreal. I found Model United Nations my freshman year of college, and absolutely fell in love with it. I am very interested in politics and more specifically how policies impact everyday people, which I think really shines through in crisis style committees. TikTok is a super interesting topic to tackle because it is very relevant to our everyday lives, and what happens with it has real life consequences, not only on the people that use it, but also our political system. I am addicted to TikTok and love the creativity and craziness that comes with it. When I am not scrolling TikTok, you can find me playing Pokemon games and watching period dramas. Very excited to meet you all and discuss all the fun details of TikTok at RCMUN!

If you have any questions about our committee or anything else, feel free to reach out to us at crisiscommittee1@msumun.org!

Cassidy Lynn (she/her)

Chair

TikTok: Board of Directors

Additional Staff:

Varoon Patel, Assistant Crisis Director

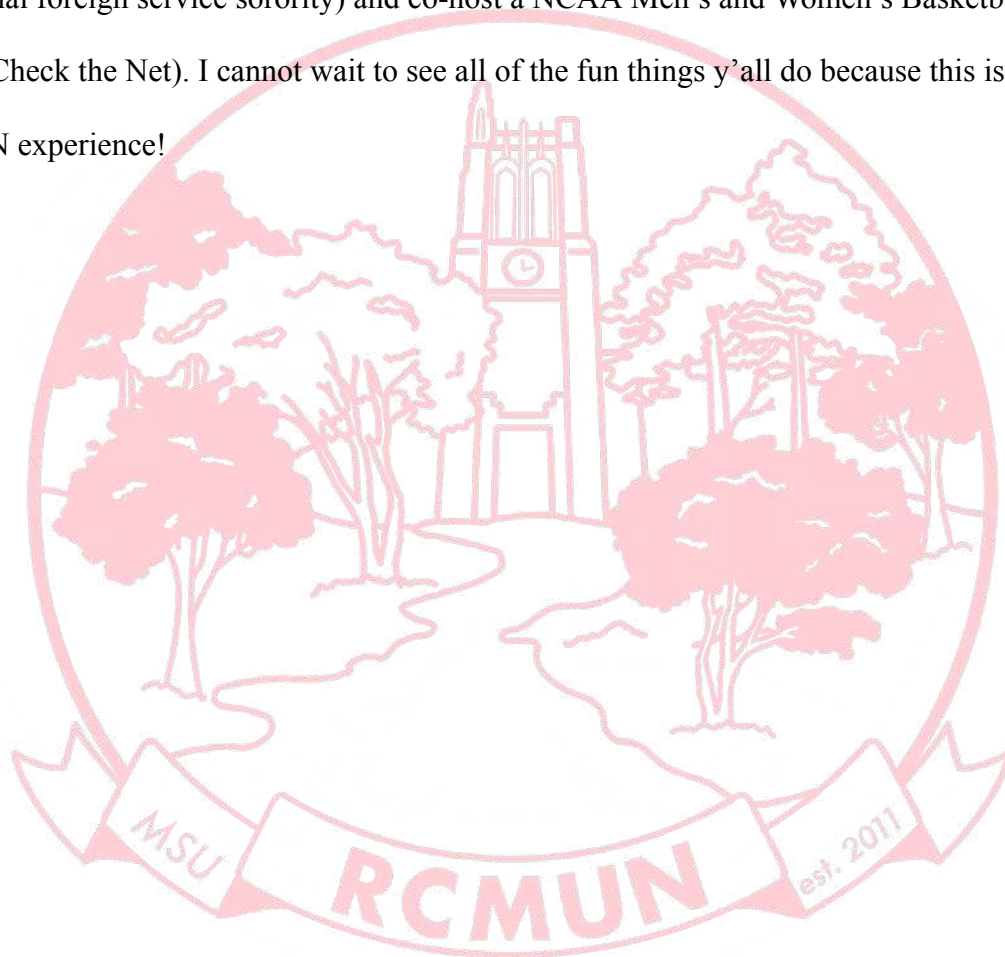
Hi everyone! My name is Varoon Patel (he/him), and I am currently a junior staffer for the Tik Tok Committee. I am a sophomore in the College of Social Science as a Political Science/Pre-Law major. I come from Portage, MI and in my free time I like to go to the gym, go hiking and kayaking, and on the other hand, I love playing video games. In high school my mom forced me to do competitive public speaking and oddly enough I fell in love with it. So as soon as I got to MSU I decided to join as many clubs as I could that involved public speaking such as: Mock Trial, Spartan Speech, MSUMUN, MSUIRO, as well as MMA Club as an instructor. I take a lot of inspiration from my friends whom I view very highly and as such I try to join a lot of clubs and do a lot with my free time just like they do! Anyways, I am really excited to be on this committee and I'm really looking forward to meeting you all and seeing you at MSUMUN!

Izzy Ruoff, Assistant Crisis Director

My name is Izzy (she/her), and I am a freshman at James Madison College. I'm thinking about majoring in Social Relations and Policy and minoring in Urban planning. I hail from Meridian, Idaho (make all the potato jokes you want I promise I've heard them all) and I love consuming any type of media and analyzing them, like movies, TV shows, anime and animation. I also am a big fan of 90s punk rock and have an unhealthy parasocial relationship with Kurt Cobain. I love being on this TikTok committee because I find it so interesting how Gen Z's culture surrounds the platform. I am so excited to see what y'all do with it!!

Kylee Tabler, Assistant Chair

Hello everyone! My name is Kylee Tabler (she/they) and I am a sophomore at Michigan State. I am double majoring in Social Relations and Policy and International Relations. I typically reside in Oregon, Ohio (I know being from Ohio is unfortunate) where I've worked making a mean ice cream cone. In my free time at MSU I am a part of Delta Phi Epsilon (a professional foreign service sorority) and co-host a NCAA Men's and Women's Basketball podcast (Check the Net). I cannot wait to see all of the fun things y'all do because this is my first Model UN experience!



OVERVIEW OF TIKTOK

In the fast-paced world of social media, TikTok has emerged as a cultural phenomenon, captivating audiences with its short-form videos and innovative content creation tools. The history of TikTok is a tale of evolution, from its early days as Musical.ly to its global dominance as a platform for creativity and self-expression.

TikTok's origin can be traced back to an app called Musical.ly, founded by Alex Zhu and Luyu Yang in 2014. Initially, Musical.ly allowed users to create and share short videos, primarily lip-syncing to popular songs. The app gained traction, particularly among teenagers, amassing millions of users worldwide by 2016. In a strategic move, Chinese tech giant ByteDance acquired Musical.ly in 2017 for approximately \$1 billion. This acquisition marked a crucial turning point, setting the stage for the integration of Musical.ly into ByteDance's own short-form video app, TikTok.

TikTok, as we know it today, was officially launched in September 2018 for the international market. The merger with Musical.ly brought a new dimension to the app, blending lip-syncing with a broader range of creative content. TikTok's interface was intuitive, making it easy for users to shoot, edit, and share engaging videos. TikTok quickly gained momentum, captivating users with its "For You" page – an algorithm-driven feed tailored to individual preferences. This feature proved instrumental in keeping users hooked by presenting them with a curated selection of content. The app's popularity skyrocketed, reaching over 2 billion downloads globally by 2020. Despite its success, TikTok faced challenges on multiple fronts. Privacy concerns related to user data, combined with the app's Chinese ownership, led to scrutiny from various governments. The United States and India, among other countries, contemplated or

implemented bans on TikTok. These challenges underscored the complex relationship between technology, privacy, and geopolitics.

TikTok transcended being merely a social media platform and became a cultural force. It influenced trends in music, fashion, and even political activism. Content creators, known as "TikTokers," gained immense popularity, with some crossing over into mainstream entertainment. TikTok became a launchpad for viral challenges, dance trends, and internet sensations, shaping online culture in unprecedented ways.

The history of TikTok is a testament to the dynamic nature of social media. From its humble beginnings as Musical.ly to its evolution into a global cultural juggernaut, TikTok has redefined the way we engage with content and express ourselves online. Its impact goes beyond entertainment, leaving an indelible mark on the digital landscape and influencing the future trajectory of social media platforms. As TikTok continues to evolve, one thing remains clear – its journey is far from over, and it will undoubtedly continue to shape the digital era for years to come.

TikTok, a social media phenomenon, has transformed the digital landscape with its innovative approach to short-form video content. The platform has become a global sensation, especially among younger audiences. TikTok is a social media platform designed for creating, sharing, and discovering short-form videos. Its primary focus is on user-generated content, with a strong emphasis on creativity, music, and engagement. Users, often referred to as "TikTokers," produce a wide array of content ranging from lip-syncing to original dances, comedy sketches, and educational content.

Central to TikTok's operation is the For You Page (FYP), an algorithmically curated feed that surfaces content tailored to each user's preferences. The FYP introduces users to a mix of

popular and personalized videos, keeping the content discovery experience dynamic. TikTok also provides an extensive set of creative tools that empower users to produce captivating content. These tools include filters, effects, text overlays, and a diverse music library. The platform's intuitive editing features enable users to seamlessly edit and enhance their videos. Newer additions such as TikTok's collaborative features, such as Duet and Stitch, allow users to interact with and respond to each other's content. Duet enables side-by-side video collaborations, while Stitch allows users to incorporate segments of another user's video into their own.

A defining feature of TikTok is its integration of music. Users can choose from a vast library of licensed songs, sound effects, and snippets from popular culture. The ease of adding music to videos has contributed significantly to the platform's appeal, fostering the creation of viral dance challenges and trends. TikTok has implemented robust privacy and safety measures. Users can set their accounts to private, control who can comment on their videos, and restrict interactions. The platform employs a combination of automated systems and human moderation to detect and remove content that violates community guidelines.

TikTok's success lies in its ability to transcend cultural and geographical boundaries. The platform has been influential in shaping internet culture, spawning trends that extend beyond the app itself. TikTok challenges and dances, for instance, often gain popularity in mainstream media. In addition to its global reach and cultural impact, TikTok has introduced various features for content creators to monetize their efforts. The TikTok Creator Fund, live gifts, and brand partnerships provide avenues for users to earn income. This has led to the emergence of TikTok influencers and a vibrant ecosystem of content creation.

TikTok's success can be attributed to its user-friendly interface, algorithmic content discovery, and a focus on creative expression. By seamlessly blending music, video creation

tools, and a diverse community, TikTok has redefined social media. As it continues to evolve, TikTok remains a cultural force, setting trends and influencing the digital landscape in unprecedented ways.

Social Media Addiction

Addiction to social media plagues children and adults alike. TikTok took the world by storm, amassing a huge following within a short seven years. The app has been downloaded over 2 billion times³. There are around one billion monthly users that actively use TikTok. Their average usage across the app is 10.85 minutes per session, which is the highest amount of usage time on any social media platform. Also, TikTok has experienced a tremendous amount of scrolling since 2020, seeing Americans ages 18 and over spending a total of 1.43 billion hours on the app⁴.

The numbers easily show just how addictive the app has become for people, especially young adults and children. The teenage population suffers the most from the “doom scroll” and TikTok addiction. Doom scrolling is the act of continuously using TikTok for excessive amounts of time without realizing how long someone has been on the app. It leads to losing minutes and even hours of the day or it prevents focus on more important activities. Doom scrolling tends to be a symptom of TikTok addiction.

Due to the pandemic, teens looked to new options of entertainment and different social media platforms. TikTok became the easiest way for teens to occupy themselves. A study done during the peak of quarantine, June 2020, showed that adolescents ranging from ages 4 to 15 spent over 80 minutes per day on TikTok. Once activities started to open up again, teens realized

³ “Is TikTok taking over the lives of teenagers?” 2021. The Westwind. <https://awestnews.com/features/2021/04/21/is-tiktok-taking-over-the-lives-of-teenagers/>.

⁴ Dean, Brian. 2023. “TikTok User Statistics (2023).” Backlinko. <https://backlinko.com/tiktok-users>.

they had become addicted and some took preventative measures. One teen, Yency Alvino, made the decision to delete the app. He realized that it was taking over his life and had negative effects on his school work⁵. Many students feel similar to Alvino and question the addictive nature of Tiktok.

Many different factors explain why Tiktok is extremely addictive. One of the biggest is the mechanism of the “like button.” The like button gains information about a user's preferences and uses the algorithm to tailor content to the user. This allows Tiktok to keep people on the app more engaged without specifically asking about their preferences. Another interesting aspect of “likes” is the reward-based mechanisms. Likes affirm the enjoyment of something and an MRI study showed that the act of liking something caused neural activity in the sections of the brain associated with rewards. Likes satisfy the human desire to be accepted and praised by other people. The more people post and the more they like, the more time users spend on Tiktok . Another aspect of the reward system revolves around follower count. The more “friends” or followers a person collects, the better they feel about themselves. When a person gets a jolt of dopamine, they search for more, which encourages them to use Tiktok more often. Also, liking videos acts as an investment in an app. More likes equate to a larger investment and a larger amount of time on an app. A very interesting aspect of the app layout helps to aid its addictive nature. The refresh feature requires users to slide down on the app, which simulates a slot machine. The reward that users receive: a new set of entertaining and enticing videos⁶. Overall, Tiktok possesses major power over the users of the app. However, many of the addictive factors

⁵ “Is Tiktok taking over the lives of teenagers?” 2021

⁶ Petrillo, Sophia. 2021. “What Makes TikTok so Addictive?: An Analysis of the Mechanisms Underlying the World’s Latest Social Media Craze.” *Brown Undergraduate Journal of Public Health*, (December). <https://sites.brown.edu/publichealthjournal/2021/12/13/tiktok/>.

work in tandem with personal behaviors. Setting good limits for oneself is the best way to combat addiction and, if necessary, deleting the app.

Interestingly enough, there are identifiable symptoms of Tiktok addiction that people can look out for. Different symptoms can include nervousness, irritability, anxiety, or sadness when not using the app. They can differ as well, but these are the ones most consistent with social media addiction. Also, there has been a stark increase in the number of patients being treated for social media addiction. People begin to access social media platforms at a younger age, which puts them at a higher risk for developing addiction. Specialists have found that abstinence-based treatment has not been effective because of society's general reliance on the Internet. They lean towards identifying a person's triggers, setting certain boundaries and limits, and encouraging interacting with the outside world on a more consistent basis⁷. Healthy moderation is the best way to handle social media usage.

The Mental Health Impact of Tiktok

The prevalence of social media in everyday life has had a mass impact on society. The mental health of adolescence has suffered due to increased amounts of social media addiction. Tiktok, in particular, shows children a filtered and tailored version of reality, which takes an extreme toll on their mental health. Many experts believe that Tiktok can lead to an increase in the chance of developing depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. In 2021, the Wall Street Journal conducted a study to investigate the algorithm promoting content related to depression, anxiety, etc... They created 100 different bots consisting of different ages, genders, and interests. They were programmed to linger on their specific programmed content interests. One of the bots

⁷ Smith, Adam. 2022. "New study identifies 'TikTok addiction' and the symptoms that show when users have it." The Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/tech/tiktok-addiction-symptoms-study-users-b2072116.html>.

had an interest in depression-related content, so it lingered. The algorithm learned of the bots specific interests and promoted that specific content within thirty six minutes of using the Tiktok. After a little while, the bots For You Page was over ninety three percent depression and sadness content⁸. Also, two different studies involving adolescents and social media showed that increases in social media usage directly correlated with increases in anxiety. Along with that, many professionals and studies have shown direct connections between social media usage and eating habits or disorders⁹.

Unfortunately, adolescents find their sense of community and identity from Tiktok. The idea of the “culture of comparison” proves harmful for the self-image and mental health of young people. They compare themselves with the number of followers, likes, and shares they have on social media. If adolescents do not believe they have enough, their mental health takes a huge hit. They continuously have the idea that they will never be as good as the people they see on social media platforms, like Tiktok. For kids who are already predisposed to issues with self image, they will exacerbate their problems¹⁰.

Tiktok not only creates mental health issues, it also has the ability to intensify established issues as well. Studies have shown that children with existing conditions have shown increasing or worsening symptoms after spending time watching Tiktok content. There is also research showing that adolescents with different stressors can experience temporary declines in mental health and increases in aggression¹¹.

⁸ Nash, Ashley. 2022. “Investigation: Is TikTok dangerous for the mental health of children?” Deseret News. <https://www.deseret.com/2022/3/3/22959801/investigation-tiktok-a-bad-effect-on-kids-mental-health-depression-anxiety-eating-disorder>.

⁹ Petrillo 2021

¹⁰ “TikTok and Youth Mental Health: Weighing the Pros and Cons.” n.d. Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance. Accessed November 10, 2023. <https://www.dbsalliance.org/education/newsletters/tiktok-and-youth-mental-health/>.

¹¹ “Tiktok and Youth Mental Health: Weighing the Pros and Cons” n.d.

How Tiktok Curves the Crisis

Although the outlook might be bleak, Tiktok offers many resources for adolescents to learn about mental health and how to seek help. One of the biggest programs Tiktok has is healthy reminders to stop scrolling after an extended period of time on the app. They have well known Tiktokers make announcements and suggestions to take a break or grab some water. It is extremely beneficial and can interrupt the doom scrolling.

Tiktok exposes users to many different aspects and types of mental health issues. Their content helps to show compassion and make audiences aware of the effects of mental conditions. Tiktok also encourages working with therapists and other mental health professionals¹². One of the best things about Tiktok is the community it provides for its users. Many adolescents have the resources to find people who share similar struggles, experiences, and interests. Mental health has been a rather taboo subject and Tiktok has helped to open the door for more constructive discussions¹³.

CONTENT MODERATION

The Algorithm: Into the Rabbit Hole

TikTok is unlike many other social media platforms, because users use the app to stream content, rather than create it. For platforms, like Instagram or X (formerly known as Twitter) users are often the ones creating the content through posts or tweets. Apps like Snapchat, are used primarily for communication. Although anyone can create content on TikTok, the vast

¹² “Tiktok and Youth Mental Health: Weighing the Pros and Cons” n.d.

¹³ “Tiktok and Youth Mental Health: Weighing the Pros and Cons” n.d.

majority of the content made on the platform is made by a small number of creators. This makes it much more similar to YouTube or Netflix, than more traditional social media apps. Studies estimate that 90-95% of the content viewed on TikTok, comes from the 'For You Page'.¹⁴ When users scroll through the 'For You Page', they are not searching for any specific content, instead the TikTok algorithm is feeding them recommendations. As a person spends more and more time on TikTok, the algorithm begins to learn their preferences and can become much more accurate in its predictions of which videos a user would be interested in. This secretive, yet powerful algorithm has been a key component to TikTok's success by creating long-term users who invest more and more time into the app.

According to their website, TikTok officially describes their algorithm as a recommendation system "designed to help people have a more personalized experience". The three factors they claim to use are: user interactions (like, share, follow, etc), video information (caption, hashtags, song), and device settings (language and country setting).¹⁵ By measuring these individual data points for each user, they are able to find similar videos to recommend and continue to add onto the endless scroll of content available. They work to keep updated on a user's interests, by adding in different types of videos every so often in order to see if that will pique their interest. A leaked internal document, titled "TikTok Algo101" revealed TikTok explains their algorithm to non-technical employees using four tenets: user value, long-term user value, creator value, and platform value.¹⁶ On the whole, TikTok is very private when it comes to how exactly their algorithm works. While all social media networks use algorithms in order to

¹⁴ WSJ. "Investigation: How Tiktok's Algorithm Figures out Your Deepest Desires." July 21, 2021. https://www.wsj.com/video/series/inside-tiktoks-highly-secretive-algorithm/investigation-how-tiktok-algorithm-figures-out-your-deepest-desires/6C0C2040-FF25-4827-8528-2BD6612E3796?mod=hp_lead_pos5&mod=article_inline

¹⁵ Newsroom | TikTok. "How TikTok Recommends Videos #ForYou," August 16, 2019. <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/how-tiktok-recommends-videos-for-you>.

¹⁶ Smith, Ben. "How TikTok Reads Your Mind.," December 6, 2021, sec. Business. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/05/business/media/tiktok-algorithm.html>.

recommend content, none are as strong as TikTok's which has the power to change how we think.¹⁷

The Wall Street Journal set up an experiment where they created 100 bot accounts with programmed 'interests', unbeknownst to the algorithm. They then had these accounts scroll through their 'For You Pages'. Instead of liking or commenting on videos that piqued their interests, these accounts were trained to linger on the videos longer or even rewatch them.¹⁸ After about thirty minutes, the algorithm began to rapidly increase the number of recommended videos that fell within the pre-programmed interests. This type of aggressive predication can lead to a Rabbit-Hole effect, where users are fed videos about a narrow topic.¹⁹ As these niches get more and more narrow, videos that are not moderated as closely are then recommended to users. These unmoderated videos can potentially be dangerous and promote harmful behaviors, which is why TikTok must be careful when determining the relative strength of their algorithm. TikTok's unique algorithm has been credited to its rise in popularity. Because TikTok collects so much data on its users and is able to accurately predict content that will engage them, they are able to retain long-term users.²⁰ The combination of short, attention-grabbing videos and a powerful algorithm recommending them, means that users become more and more addicted to the app. This can be detrimental to the user's health, but very beneficial to TikTok's massive profits.

¹⁷ Smith, 2021.

¹⁸ WSJ, 2021.

¹⁹ Staff, W. S. J. "Inside TikTok's Algorithm: A WSJ Video Investigation.", July 21, 2021, sec. Tech. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/tiktok-algorithm-video-investigation-11626877477>.

²⁰ Williams, Tracy. "Why Is Tiktok So Addictive? Experts Weigh in Amid New Safety Feature."(blog), April 13, 2023. <https://www.healthtechdigital.com/why-is-tiktok-so-addictive-experts-weigh-in-amid-new-safety-feature/>.

Shadow Banning

While ‘shadow banning’ is not an official part of TikTok’s content moderation process, it is a phenomenon that has been observed by various creators and users alike. Because TikTok controls the algorithm, they are able to pull certain videos from the ‘For You Page’ without banning them entirely. This can cause creators to have much lower views than expected on certain videos, which can negatively impact sponsorship deals and their share of the creator fund. While there is no official guideline for what types of videos will typically be shadow banned, observers have noticed that videos containing adult content, bullying or harassment, and/or copyright infringement are more likely to be shadow banned.²¹ These shadow bans are largely automated which is why creators will typically shy away from violent or suggestive words that could potentially have their video flagged and shadow banned.

Age Restrictions

An important aspect of content moderation are the age restrictions put in place to ensure that mature content is not distributed to younger viewers. The official age limit to have a TikTok account is 13 years old, but there are no formal age verification measures put into place.²² Because of this, there are many underage children using TikTok. As mentioned above, doom scrolling and social media can be extremely harmful for teens and adults alike. That harm is compounded for those under the age 13. While research on the long-term effects of social media is still in its infancy, it is believed that excessive exposure to social media can negatively impact a child’s self-esteem and body image. TikTok’s official position is to ban accounts they learn are

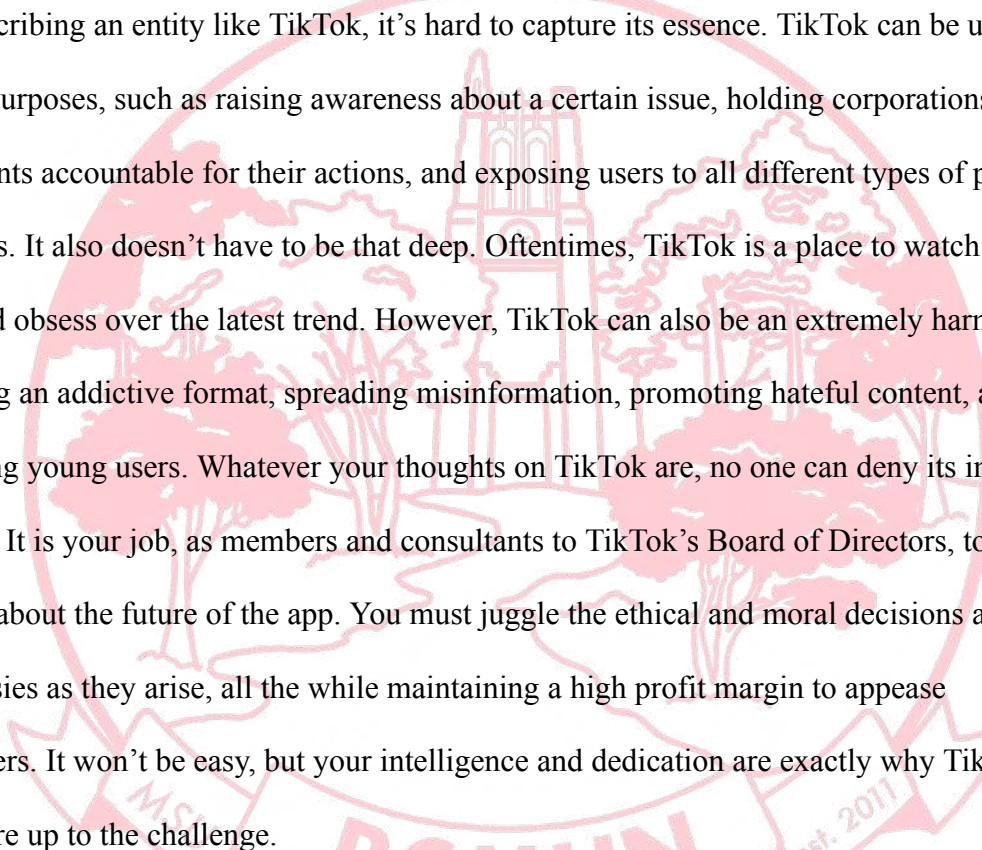
²¹ “TikTok Shadow Ban: What It Is & How It Happens.” Accessed November 8, 2023. <https://later.com/blog/tiktok-shadowban/>.

²² “5 Things Parents Need to Know about Tik-Tok (Updated 2024).” Accessed January 7, 2024. <https://kidmatterscounseling.com/blog/5-things-parents-need-to-know-about-tik-tok/>.

owned by those under the age of 13, but in reality this is very difficult to enforce. Because these account users lie about their age, they can be exposed to material that is inappropriate which leads to the aforementioned harm.

CONCLUSION

When describing an entity like TikTok, it's hard to capture its essence. TikTok can be used for amazing purposes, such as raising awareness about a certain issue, holding corporations and governments accountable for their actions, and exposing users to all different types of people and viewpoints. It also doesn't have to be that deep. Oftentimes, TikTok is a place to watch funny videos and obsess over the latest trend. However, TikTok can also be an extremely harmful place by creating an addictive format, spreading misinformation, promoting hateful content, and even radicalizing young users. Whatever your thoughts on TikTok are, no one can deny its impact on the world. It is your job, as members and consultants to TikTok's Board of Directors, to make decisions about the future of the app. You must juggle the ethical and moral decisions and controversies as they arise, all the while maintaining a high profit margin to appease shareholders. It won't be easy, but your intelligence and dedication are exactly why TikTok feels that you are up to the challenge.



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https://www.wsj.com/video/series/inside-tiktoks-highly-secretive-algorithm/investigation-how-tiktok-algorithm-figures-out-your-deepest-desires/6C0C2040-FF25-4827-8528-2BD6612E3796?mod=hp_lead_pos5&mod=article_inline



CHARACTERS

Members of the Board of Directors

Hilary McQuaide (Head Spokesperson for TikTok) - Hilary McQuaide, the Head Spokesperson for TikTok, has worked with the company since 2017.²³ She has the extremely difficult job of speaking on behalf of the company in times of crisis. This has made her a critical asset in the company's fight against US TikTok bans and other global controversies. This job requires the ability to 'spin positive' when talking to the media or governmental agencies about TikTok's practices. While she is not responsible for all of the sometimes shady business dealings behind TikTok, she is responsible for controlling the public's reaction to it. When done correctly, McQuaide has the ability to soothe over any controversies and strengthen relationships with media outlets and governments alike.

Michael Beckerman (VP and Head of Public Policy) - Michael Beckerman is the current Vice President of TikTok and he began his tenure in 2020. Beckerman received his business degree from George Washington University. He heads TikTok's government relations office and works as a lobbyist in Washington D.C. Before joining the TikTok company, Beckerman served as the president and CEO of the Internet Association for eight years. His expertise has made him pivotal in the fight against security breaches and public outcry. He was hired in 2020, after immense pressure from Washington because of the security concerns in the U.S.²⁴ He works

²³Provoke Media. "Hilary McQuaide." Accessed January 7, 2024.
<https://www.provokemedia.com/ranking-and-data/influence-100/the-influence-100-2021/profiles/hilary-mcquaide>.

²⁴ "Michael Beckerman." In *Wikipedia*, May 2, 2023.
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Michael_Beckerman&oldid=1152820804.

closely with federal agents and congress members to ensure that TikTok's success is not hindered by their political aspirations.

Vanessa Pappas (Chief Operating Officer) - Vanessa Pappas is the Chief Operating Officer of TikTok and has been since 2021. Vanessa Pappas has a long history in entertainment media, who has worked for TikTok since 2018, and before that worked for a company known as Next New Media which was later bought out by YouTube. Pappas manages and handles the daily business operations of the company, she coordinates with department heads and supervises day-to-day operations. Pappas is commonly known as the right-hand person of the CEO, Shouzi Chew, and aims to keep the business side of things running smoothly while the CEO focuses on bigger term projects for the company. As the COO, Pappas is involved with all internal issues within TikTok. If employees are dissatisfied, there are security breaches or anything else of that nature, Pappas is the designated 'fixer'.

Kim Albarella (Head of Global Security) - Kim Albarella is TikTok's Head of Global Security that has been working with the company since July of 2022. Based in New York City she specializes in mitigating risk against information threat vectors (a way for hackers to enter the TikTok network), leading a global team of security professionals, and helping to ensure compliance with global security regulations for TikTok. Externally she has a responsibility for maintaining cyber security education and TikTok's reputation regarding the security and privacy of their platform. Internally she has to develop and implement security policy, standards,

guidelines and procedures as well as third party security management mostly present within the apps functions and privacy policy.²⁵

Julie Gao (Chief Financial Officer) - Appointed in 2022, Julie Gao is the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for TikTok. Her job is to ensure that TikTok is behaving in a fiscally responsible way.²⁶ Although TikTok is rapidly expanding, the CFO must ensure that they budget their resources in a sustainable manner. This can come in many forms, from creating new revenue streams such as TikTok shop and working to broker deals between influencers and sponsors. One potential way to cut costs is to lay off employees and reduce the overall overhead expenses for the company. While unpopular, sometimes a CFO has to make the hard decisions. A key aspect of the CFO's position is to maximize profits and ensure that enough revenue is brought in to cover the expenses of maintaining the global phenomenon that is TikTok.

Nicky Raghavan (Head of Global HR) - Nicky Raghavan is the current Global Head of HR at TikTok. As the head of HR her responsibilities are to manage the employee's wellbeing, as well as developing and executing the global HR strategy, driving HR initiatives, and ensuring alignment with business goals. TikTok's global strategy is to build trust, find new and better ways to connect with candidates, and help everyone in the organization feel heard and seen. In furtherance of these efforts she is also part of the diversity and inclusion council. Thus, Raghavan wants to ensure that there is diversity both within the organization and on the app, for instance by discouraging biases in content moderators. Nicky Raghavan has a rich history of

²⁵ "Kim Albarella - TikTok | LinkedIn." Accessed December 10, 2023. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kimalbarella>.

²⁶Yang, Yingzhi, Brenda Goh, and Brenda Goh. "TikTok Owner ByteDance Appoints Lawyer Julie Gao as New CFO." *Reuters*, April 25, 2022, sec. Business. <https://www.reuters.com/business/tiktok-owner-bytedance-appoints-lawyer-julie-gao-new-cfo-2022-04-25/>.

experience with HR working in a managerial position for Target, Red Bull, and Snapchat before moving to TikTok.

Matt Penarczyk (Head of Legal Department) - Matt Penarczyk is the current Global Head of TikTok's Legal Department. He works to protect the TikTok company from legal trouble, and will fight against any legal action taken by the government or other entities. Penarczyk has extensive experience in dealing with the business law of large corporations, as he worked for Microsoft for almost two decades before TikTok.²⁷ Thus, he is very familiar with modern technology and its implications for law both internationally and domestically. With TikTok falling into deeper and deeper legal trouble over issues of privacy, data storage, and misinformation, Matt Penarczyk must figure out how to fend off legal issues and maintain TikTok's prominence in the U.S.

Sarah Gorman (Head Algorithm Engineer) - Sarah Gorman acts as the current Head Algorithm Engineer for TikTok. As such, her responsibilities include overseeing the TikTok algorithm and increasing viewership on TikTok. The goal of the TikTok algorithm is to keep users attached to their phones. As head algorithm engineer, Gorman can alter exactly how the algorithm curates a user's 'For You Page'. If it favors showing users only content they have previously shown interest in, it can lead them down a rabbit hole of radicalization or simply fail to retain their attention if they get bored. If it favors showing users too wide of a variety of content, users may become less attentive to TikTok and choose to consume their content

²⁷ "Matt Penarczyk - TikTok | LinkedIn." Accessed January 7, 2024.
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/matt-penarczyk-61b8968>.

elsewhere. While her job is a balancing act, it holds immense power when it comes to content consumed and spread on TikTok.

Amari Shahid (Head of the Creativity Program) - Amari Shahid is the creator and manager of the TikTok Creator Fund. He launched the fund in 2020 and has been helping many TikTokers grow their platform. Shahid's product rewards creators for having engaging content. The more followers someone earns, the more money they can earn. Shahid said he came up with the idea very shortly after joining the TikTok media empire.²⁸ He attends numerous events all over the country in search of donations. However, the Creator Fund disbanded at the end of 2023, but Shahid created a new program known as the Creativity Program.²⁹ After Shahid's input on the project, the Creativity Program emphasizes longer videos instead of the extremely short, viral-type videos the Creator Fund rewarded. The Creativity Program has the potential to pay out creators even more, if they can keep their audiences engaged for longer.

Shannon Ebi (VP of Advertising Management) - Shannon Ebi is the current Vice President of Advertising. As such, she works closely with advertising partners to maintain their continued support that serves as the cash flow that allows the app to operate. Her job is to ensure that TikTok remains a place where companies want to advertise and works to make sure that advertisements become as targeted as possible. Ebi also is in charge of maintaining the newly created: TikTok Shop. This relatively new project has seen little success so far, but that is something Ebi is hoping to turn around. By balancing the needs/wants of advertisers and the

²⁸ Sato, Mia. "TikTok's \$1 Billion Creator Fund Is Shutting down." The Verge, November 6, 2023. <https://www.theverge.com/2023/11/6/23949290/tiktok-creator-fund-discontinued-monetization-creativity-program>.

²⁹ "What Is The TikTok Creator Fund? | Dash Hudson." Accessed December 10, 2023. <https://www.dashhudson.com/blog/tiktok-creator-fund>.

financial demands of fellow board members, Ebi serves as an important connection for the both of them and is vital for fattening TikTok's bottom line.

Outside Consultants to the Board of Directors

Charli D'amelio - Charli D'amelio is a 19 year old TikTok content creator that amassed a massive following due to her dancing videos to viral sounds. Currently with 151.6 million followers and 11.5 billion likes, she was the most followed person on the platform before being surpassed by Khaby Lame in late 2022. Her most notable dance - the "Renegade" - was incorrectly credited to her and made her open to more forms of criticism. Both dubbed the "face of TikTok" as well as being criticized for being "cringe" or "overhyped" she became a meme for other creators to react to. Due to her popularity on TikTok she found many avenues into mainstream media. Appearing in a super bowl commercial, amassing a following on her Youtube channel, having a reality TV show, as well as competing on the popular competition dance show *Dancing with the Stars*.

Hank Green - Hank Green is a content creator centered on making educational, humorous and social commentary videos on the TikTok platform. He started creating social media content in 2007 with his older brother, author John Green, in the popular YouTube channel VlogBrothers. Additionally, the pair created and hosted other YouTube channels such as Crash Course and Sci-Show. Amassing over 8 million followers and 603 million likes he gained massive popularity after posting easy to understand educational content in early 2019. In April of 2021 Green announced that he would donate his Creator Fund revenue of about \$35,000 to the First Nations Development Institute. In January 2022, Green released a YouTube video

criticizing TikTok for how it pays its creators, pointing out that due to the set value of the Creator Fund, as TikTok becomes more popular, creators earn less.³⁰

Dylan Mulvaney - Dylan Mulvaney is a TikTok star who has used her platform to detail her gender transition and bring transgender rights issues to the forefront of the public consciousness. She came out as a trans woman in 2021.³¹ She then began to document her transition on TikTok in March of 2022, known as “Days of Girlhood” where once a day she would give a glimpse into her daily life as a woman going through a gender transition.³² Her “Days of Girlhood” videos have now gained over one billion views and she has over 10 million followers on TikTok.³³ Dylan would go on to gain many sponsorships from brands such as Ulta, Maybelline, and Bud Light. Her work with Bud Light caused a backlash with far-right and anti-trans groups, which led to a swath of hate speech towards Dylan, as well as a boycott of the brand.³⁴ Following this event, Dylan has continued to flourish, winning a Streamy Award for breakout creator, Woman of the Year from the magazine *Attitude*, and named on Forbes 30 Under 30 list, all in 2023.³⁵

³⁰ Ovide, Shira. “Why Not Copy YouTube’s Good Idea?” *The New York Times*, January 25, 2022, sec. Technology. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/25/technology/youtube-online-creators.html>.

³¹ Julius Miller June 1, 2022, <https://lamag.com/theindustry/dylan-mulvaney-on-transitioning-and-becoming-a-tiktok-trailblazer>

³² Shannon McLellan, April 15, 2022 <https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/living/story/trans-tiktokker-shares-transition-journey-millions-vulnerability-power-83940893>

³³ Ellise Shafer, 2022 <https://variety.com/lists/tiktok-discover-list-2022/dylan-mulvaney-dylanmulvaney-california-usa/>

³⁴ Kim Bellware, April 6 2023 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2023/04/06/dylan-mulvaney-transgender-influencer-tiktok/>

³⁵ Taijuan Moorman, Novembe 28, 2023, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/celebrities/2023/11/28/forbes-30-under-30-kendall-jenner-latto-dylan-mulvaney/71730005007/>

Representative Jeff Jackson - Representative Jeff Jackson is a Democrat and currently serving as the Congressperson from the 14th district of North Carolina. He first joined TikTok in 2021 and was relatively unheard of. Since then, he has gained notoriety through his unique TikTok page. He promotes transparency in government by using TikTok as a platform to engage with voters across the country and inform them of what actually happens in Congress.³⁶ His page is reminiscent of FDR's fireside chats in which he speaks in a plain voice and does not overtly attempt to persuade viewers in one direction or another. His down-to-earth style attempts to rebuild trust between the general public and politicians. While he may disagree with fellow legislators seeking to ban TikTok, he is working to prove it can work as an effective political engagement tool. He currently has over 2.5 million followers and 32.2 million likes.³⁷

The Washington Post - The Washington Post is a newspaper that is over 100 years old and committed to covering national news in America as well as international news. They began the account in May 2019 under the direction of Dave Jorgenson who often appears in their videos. They are certainly not the only traditional news media active on TikTok, they are among the most popular and are unique in the way they choose to present their content. Instead of cutting clips from a news broadcast, the team behind the account are the ones to analyze the stories. Occasionally they will act out figures or situations from the articles in a shortened, often comedic form. This works to keep a younger generation informed on important issues. While misinformation is rampant on TikTok it is the goal of the Washington Post to fight

³⁶ Walerius, Randolph. "Rep. Jeff Jackson, Congress' Biggest TikTok Star, Sees the App as a Tool for Transparency." Roll Call, April 5, 2023. <https://rollcall.com/2023/04/05/rep-jeff-jackson-congress-biggest-tiktok-star-sees-the-app-as-a-tool-for-transparency/>.

³⁷ "Jeff Jackson's TikTok Page." Accessed December 5, 2023. <https://www.tiktok.com/@jeffjacksonnc?lang=en>.

misinformation in politics, health, and news coverage in general. Their account boasts over 1.7 million followers and 84.8 million likes.³⁸

Mikayla Nogueira - Mikayla Nogueira is a TikTok Influencer well known for posting makeup tutorials and reviews. Nogueira has been posting about makeup for over a decade as she began posting beauty content on Tumblr in 2013. She joined TikTok in 2020, and within eight months of the creation of her account she had 2.8 million followers. Throughout her time on TikTok she has been through several controversies. One of these controversies surrounds her iconic New England accent, as older videos resurfaced in which she spoke without an accent, leading people to accuse her of faking her accent, which she has denied. Nogueira also has been accused of faking the results of a makeup review, specifically that she used false eyelashes to show the results of a mascara. She wants to promote brand deals and sponsorships as she relies on these to make money and promote her account. Despite these controversies, Mikayla Nogueira remains popular, with 14.6 million followers and 1.3 billion likes on her page.

Gordon Ramsey - Like many traditional celebrities, Gordon Ramsey has a TikTok account. Unlike many traditional celebrities, his TikTok account is a successful one. He primarily creates comedic TikToks in the form of duets, where he will critique another chef's recipe TikTok in his signature over-the-top personality. His videos often go viral and receive millions of views. These videos also affect the creators he is dueting as they will typically see much more traffic on their page, post-Ramsey duet. This can be good or bad, as sometimes Ramsey's blunt nature can be viewed as 'bullying' smaller and/or younger creators. Overall, Ramsey has amassed over 39.7 million followers and 647.6 million likes which puts him in the Top 100 TikTokers. While he

³⁸ "The Washington Post's TikTok Page." Accessed December 5, 2023.
<https://www.tiktok.com/@washingtonpost?lang=en>.

will occasionally promote his own restaurants and recipes, Ramsey will also use his account to promote certain kitchen utensils which has been extremely profitable.³⁹

Max Lodwick (Axe Body Spray) - Axe Body spray is one of the most popular men's fragrances in the world. Their company was established in 1983, in France, then, after large amounts of success, the product was launched in the U.S. in 2002. Over time, their production expanded to antiperspirants, shower gels, and facial care products. Axe joined TikTok in 2021, and in 2023, they reached peak popularity on the app by joining in on the "Alpha Wolf" trend. Popular among the younger generations active on TikTok, Axe Body Spray seems to have found their niche on TikTok. They can advertise directly to their target demographic, even if many of them are likely under the 13-year old age limit set by TikTok. The account has 259.8 thousand followers, 5.8 million likes, and continues to grow.⁴⁰

Sammuel Orssaud (Duolingo) - Duolingo is a popular app that helps users learn new languages, launched by Carnegie Mellon University professor Luis von Ahn and his student Severin Hacker in 2011.⁴¹ Duolingo features a bright green owl mascot named Duo that became an internet meme in 2017 on the blog website Tumblr.⁴² Duolingo then capitalized on this meme on the TikTok platform under the direction of Zaria Parvez, where videos on their page featured the mascot Duo participating in TikTok trends and using popular sounds to not only reference previous memes but to promote the app. Duolingo's TikTok page has further cemented Duo's meme status and stardom, garnering 8.3 million TikTok followers and 180 million views on their

³⁹ "Gordan Ramsey's TikTok Page." Accessed December 5, 2023.

<https://www.tiktok.com/@gordonramsayofficial?lang=en>.

⁴⁰ Unilever. "Axe." Accessed December 10, 2023. <https://www.unileverusa.com/brands/personal-care/axe/>.

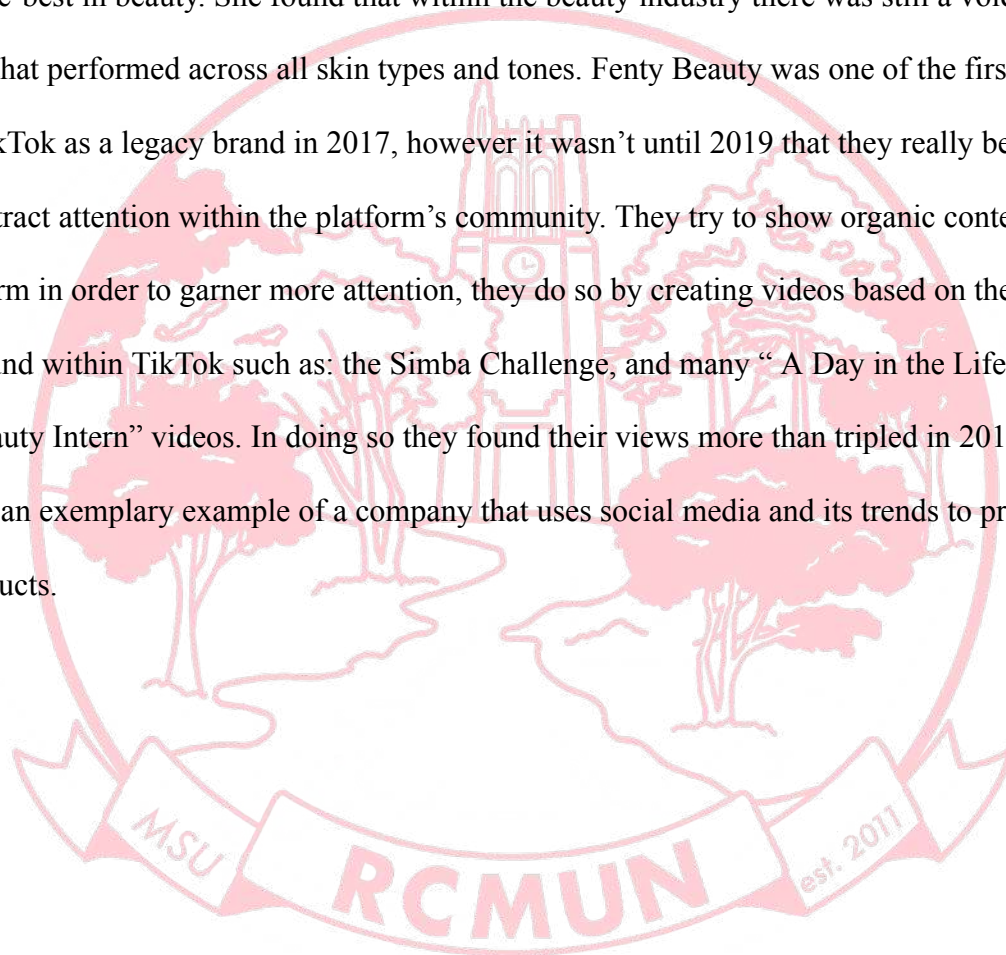
⁴¹ <https://university.duolingo.com/our-story-1#:~:text=Everyone%20can%20Duolingo.&text=For%20many%20people%20around%20the,than%20500%20million%20learners%20worldwide>

⁴² <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/evil-duolingo-owl>

page.⁴³ Duolingo is able to access an entirely different demographic by creating TikToks, and encourages more people to use their educational app.

Noelle Wong (Fenty) - Fenty Beauty is a company founded and run by Rihanna.

Rihanna was inspired to create Fenty Beauty after years of experimenting with the best-of-the-best in beauty. She found that within the beauty industry there was still a void for products that performed across all skin types and tones. Fenty Beauty was one of the first brands to join TikTok as a legacy brand in 2017, however it wasn't until 2019 that they really began to try and attract attention within the platform's community. They try to show organic content on the platform in order to garner more attention, they do so by creating videos based on the current trends found within TikTok such as: the Simba Challenge, and many "A Day in the Life of a Fenty Beauty Intern" videos. In doing so they found their views more than tripled in 2019. Fenty Beauty is an exemplary example of a company that uses social media and its trends to promote their products.



⁴³ <https://www.tiktok.com/@duolingo?lang=en>