Project Proposal: IUTConnect - A Specialized Social Media Platform for IUTians

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Abstract

This document outlines the core and AI-powered features for "IUTConnect," a proposed social media application exclusively designed for the Islamic University of Technology (IUT) community. The primary goal is to foster a more focused, less distracting, and highly relevant digital environment for students, faculty, and alumni, differentiating itself from mainstream social platforms by emphasizing purposeful engagement and hyper-local relevance.

1 Introduction

IUTConnect aims to be the go-to digital hub for all IUTians. By leveraging strict exclusivity, dedicated community features, and intelligent AI integrations, the app seeks to provide a unique and invaluable platform for academic collaboration, social connection, and overall well-being within the university ecosystem. The core philosophy is to minimize "brainrot" content and distractions, promoting productive and meaningful interactions.

2 Core Features

The fundamental functionalities that form the backbone of IUTConnect are detailed below.

2.1 Exclusive IUTian Network

This is the strongest differentiator, ensuring a trusted and authentic community.

- **IUT Mail Verification (Core):** All user accounts *must* be created and verified using an official IUT email address, ensuring exclusivity and authenticity.

- **Alumni Integration:** Dedicated functionalities to allow IUT alumni to maintain profiles, fostering mentorship opportunities and networking between current students and graduates. A separate "Alumni Connect" section is envisioned.

- **Departmental & Batch Groups:** Upon sign-up, users are automatically categorized into their respective academic departments and batches. This facilitates easy creation of private groups for class discussions, project collaborations, and batch-specific announcements.

- **Faculty Profiles (Optional but valuable):** If faculty members opt-in, they could have specialized profiles for academic announcements, office hours, and even Q&A sessions, enhancing student-faculty interaction.

2.2 User Profiles & Customization

Comprehensive user profiles are essential for identity and networking within the community.

- **Verified Profiles:** Display basic verified university information such as Department, Batch, and Student ID (subject to user privacy settings).

- **Customizable Profile:** Users can personalize their profiles with:

  - Profile Picture & Cover Photo
  - Bio/About Me (interests, skills, aspirations)
  - Academic Information (e.g., major, minor, courses they're taking)
  - Club/Society Affiliations (with links to official club pages within the app)
  - Contact Preferences (e.g., "available for study groups," "seeking project partners")

- **Privacy Settings:** Granular control over who can view profile information, posts, and activities (e.g., "Everyone," "Friends," "My Department," "Only Verified IU-Tians").

2.3 Dedicated Event Hub: "IUT Pulse"

A dynamic and interactive system for managing and discovering university events.

- **Official University Calendar Integration:** Direct import and display of official university events, including academic deadlines, holidays, and examination schedules.

- **Student-Led Event Promotion & RSVP:** Students and registered clubs can create event pages, manage RSVPs, post updates, and integrate options for ticket sales if applicable.

- **Event-Specific Feeds:** Each event can have its own mini-feed for discussions, photo sharing, and real-time updates during the event.

- **Post-Event Highlights:** A feature to easily share photo albums, videos, and summaries after an event, creating a collective memory.

- **"Happening Now" Notifications:** Push notifications for major university-wide events to alert users when an event is starting or has significant updates.

2.4 Messaging & Communication

Core functionalities for seamless interaction among IUTians.

- **Direct Messaging (DM):** One-on-one and group chat functionality supporting text, photo/video sharing, and file sharing (e.g., for project documents).

- **Group Chats:** Dedicated chat spaces for clubs, departments, project teams, or ad-hoc study groups.

- **Announcements Channel (Read-Only):** A specific channel for official university or departmental announcements, designed for broad dissemination without open discussion.

2.5 The "Campus Cats" Sanctuary

A unique and endearing feature fostering community and compassion for campus animals.

- **Dedicated "Meow-ment" Feed:** A curated feed solely for photos and videos of the IUT campus cats. Users can virtually "adopt" a cat profile, post updates about its whereabouts, health, or even give it a name.

- **Cat Welfare & Info:** Sections for lost/found cat alerts, organized feeding schedules (if any), health updates (e.g., vet visits), and a dedicated way to report a cat in distress.

- **"Paws-itive" Community Initiatives:** Organize volunteer opportunities for cat care, fundraising for their food or medical needs, or even adoption drives for campus strays.

- **Interactive Campus Map:** Pin locations where specific cats are frequently sighted, or where feeding stations are located.

2.6 Minimizing Distractions & Fostering Productive Engagement

Key features designed to differentiate the app by promoting meaningful content and reducing "brainrot."

- **"Focus Mode" Toggle:** A feature that temporarily hides the main feed, allowing users to access only specific academic or group sections for focused work.

- **Curated Content Algorithms (Not Engagement-Driven):** Content prioritization based on relevance (e.g., departmental announcements, events, posts from user's followed groups) rather than controversial or sensational topics.

- **"Skill Exchange" Marketplace:** A section where students can offer tutoring in subjects they excel at or seek help from peers, fostering collaborative learning.

- **Project Collaboration Hubs:** Integrated tools for group projects, including shared files, task management, and discussion boards directly within the app.

- **"Lost & Found" Board:** A dedicated section for lost items on campus and found items, facilitating reunions.

- **Study Buddy Finder:** Users can post requests for study partners for specific courses or exam preparations.

- **"Buy/Sell/Exchange" for IUTians:** A verified marketplace for textbooks, electronics, and other student-relevant items, ensuring trusted transactions within the IUT community.

- **No Public "Likes" Count:** To reduce comparison and validation-seeking behavior, public like counts on posts are hidden, though reactions are visible privately to the poster.

- **Time-Limited Stories/Updates (Optional):** If implemented, these features will be short, relevant to campus life, and disappear to discourage mindless consumption.

- **Health Feature:** Students can post health-related queries. Doctors from IUT Medical can answer them or suggest relatable medicines, providing a dedicated channel for health consultation.

2.7 Campus Utilities & Practical Tools

Essential tools for daily university life.

- **Lost & Found Portal:**

  - **Report Lost Item:** Form to submit details (item type, description, last seen location, date, contact info, photo).
  - **Report Found Item:** Form to submit details (item type, description, found location, date, photo, contact info).
  - **Browse Listings:** Searchable database of lost and found items.
  - **Private Messaging for Item Claim:** Secure communication between finder and owner.

- **Student Marketplace / Buy & Sell:**

  - **Item Listing:** Students can post items for sale (textbooks, electronics, furniture, etc.) with photos, price, description, and condition.
  - **Categories:** Organized by type (Books, Electronics, Accommodation, Services).
  - **In-app Messaging for Deals:** Secure communication between buyers and sellers.
  - **User Ratings/Reviews (Optional):** For sellers to build trust. **University-Specific Items:** Focus on items relevant to campus life (e.g., course materials, hostel necessities).

- **IUT Directory (Controlled Access):** A searchable directory of verified students, faculty, and university departments. Users can control their visibility (e.g., find a classmate from a specific course).

- **Quick Polls:** Simple, lightweight polls for quick opinions on campus matters (e.g., "Which canteen do you prefer today?").

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3 AI Features

Artificial Intelligence will be integrated to enhance user experience, efficiency, and community well-being.

3.1 Enhanced Communication & Support

- **AI-Powered Campus Chatbot (Virtual Assistant):**

  - **How AI works:** A chatbot trained on IUT's FAQs, academic calendar, administrative procedures, and general campus information. It can answer common questions such as "When is the last date to add a course?", "Where is the registrar's office?", or "What's for lunch at the cafeteria today?".
  - **Stakeholder Demand:** Provides students with quick answers to common questions, reducing the burden on administrative staff and improving 24/7 accessibility to information.
  - **Realism:** Highly feasible, can be developed with varying levels of sophistication, starting with basic FAQs.

3.2 Community Moderation & Sentiment Analysis

- **Automated Content Flagging for "Brain Rot" (or inappropriate content):**

  - **How AI works:** Utilizes Natural Language Processing (NLP) to identify keywords, phrases, or patterns in posts that may indicate low-value content, negativity, harassment, or spam. These posts are then flagged for human review.
  - **Stakeholder Demand:** Directly supports the core principle of "less brain-rot," ensuring a safe and positive community environment.
  - **Realism:** Sentiment analysis and content moderation AI are standard in social platforms; this feature requires ongoing training and refinement.

3.3 Personalized Content Experience

- **Personalized "IUTian Memory Lane" (Generative AI):**

  - **How AI works:** Using generative AI for text summarization and image/video analysis, the app can periodically (e.g., end of semester, end of year) generate a personalized "Memory Lane" for each user. This includes a short, engaging recap of their activities:
    * Key events attended (with associated photos).

* Milestones within their groups (e.g., "Your 'CSE 20th Batch' group had 500 new posts!").
* Highlights from the "Campus Cats" section (e.g., "Remember when [Cat's Name] was spotted napping on the library roof?").
* Top posts they interacted with or posted themselves.
* A summary of their engagement with different app sections.

– **Leverages:** User Activity (posts, comments, event RSVPs, photo uploads), Event Hub, Campus Cat section.

– **Why it's unique:** Creates a highly personalized and nostalgic experience, fostering a deeper emotional connection to the IUT community and the app itself, by focusing on positive shared memories.

– **Stakeholder Demand:** Enhances user retention and engagement, and cultivates a stronger sense of belonging and shared history.