

Social Media Guide for Higher Education



Table of contents

The benefits of social media in higher education	2
Increase enrolment rates	3
Enhance student engagement	3
Stay in touch with your alumni	3
Boost donations	4
The best social media networks for higher education marketing	5
Instagram for higher education	6
Facebook for higher education	7
YouTube for higher education	8
Twitter for higher education	9
Pinterest for higher education	10
Snapchat for higher education	11
Social media as part of your multi-channel approach	12
The right social media channels for your school	13
Test and see what works best	14
How to run a successful hashtag marketing campaign	15
How to use hashtags on different social platforms	16
What are hashtag marketing campaigns	19
How to find the perfect hashtag for your campaign	19
The 4-step process of creating a new hashtag	20
Running your campaign: The PEPE Formula	22
Analytics: determining if your campaign was successful	24
Add some oomph to your hashtag campaign with a social media wall	25
Reach your goals with user-generated content	27
Understanding why people create and share content	27
Use social media and user-generated content as a bridge between offline and online	35
Display social media at events	35
Set up permanent displays	37
Display it on your website	38
Checklist for getting started quickly	41
Cheat sheet: social media image sizes	42

The benefits of social media in higher education

The benefits of social media in higher education marketing are extensive. All of a sudden, you have the opportunity to connect with multiple audiences at once. Everybody, from students to parents, potential students, campus staff, alumni, etc. are present on social media. This is your chance to represent your university in the best possible way. You can update your followers on university matters but also have a conversation with them.

Why educational institutions leverage social media



of students are active on social media.



of prospects use social media to research potential colleges and universities.



of students base their school choice on its social media presence

 **WALLS.IO** Source: NACAC and Higher Education Marketing

Social media plays an important role in higher education marketing. One of the key resources for information and communication for students is social media. This is not surprising since [98% of students are active on social media](#). It is even one of their most trusted sources when it comes to choosing their educational institution. At the same time, social media is one of the most effective ways for universities to engage with students and share information.

There are multiple benefits to using social media for your school:

- Connect with students in their comfort zone
- Stay in touch with alumni
- Amplify your reach using authentic content shared by your students
- Efficiently promote events
- Reach potential students and convince them to enrol
- Easily connect departments and university staff
- Spread information and get feedback in real-time
- Align social media with your school's brand and marketing focus

Increase enrolment rates

[2 out of 5 students choose their school](#) based on a school's social media appearance alone. Show your future students how innovative your university is by not only creating a great campus community but also by fostering a social campus online. By creating a social place online where all students can share their daily experiences, you generate trust in those who are just getting to know you.

Enhance student engagement

Many universities like to use hashtag campaigns and social media walls to create a sense of community for their students, alumni, and staff. The social walls are displayed in public places, giving everyone a great view of what everyone else is posting.

You can use a social wall and various hashtags to bring together content from multiple university departments, students, alumni, and staff. Display it on a prominent screen at a central building of your university. The social wall keeps people informed, but it also helps everyone feel that they're a part of something bigger.

Stay in touch with your alumni

Keep in touch with your alumni long after graduation and show how proud you are of them by sharing their successes on your social media accounts. A social wall helps you keep alumni in the loop, but it also allows former students to share their own stories and where they are in their lives right now. Those stories are also great testimonials for why students should enrol in your school. Just like consumers trust other consumers and user-generated content, students will also put more trust in alumni speaking well about your university rather than you tooting your own horn.

Boost donations

Facebook refers [29.4% of traffic to donations on #GivingTuesday](#). That means that almost one-third of donations are directly linked to Facebook. [84% of donors even share to show their support](#) for their university on Facebook. That means they don't just donate money but motivate others to do the same. It's a multiplying cycle that will lead your fundraising campaign to success.

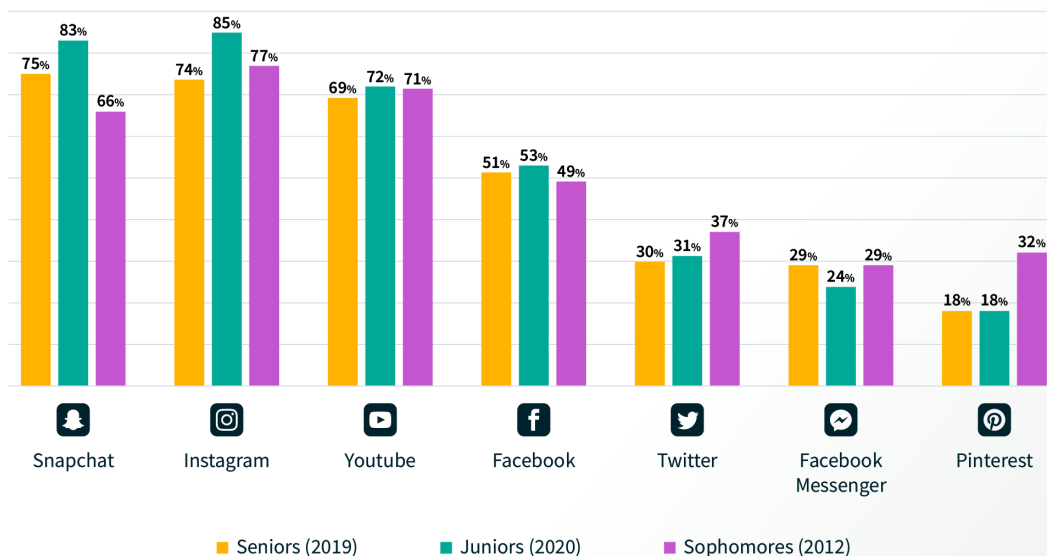
The best social media networks for higher education marketing

The average user has an account on [more than eight different social media platforms](#). There are eight different ways to reach your target audience. Eight different chances to connect with them, to engage with them and to communicate the message you want them to receive.

Studies show that the preferred choice of network varies according to age. Keep in mind whom you want to address with your higher education marketing. Different networks also have different focuses, advantages and even preferences for media types. It's crucial to understand the differences of the individual networks so you can fully leverage them.

Social Used Daily by Prospective Students

Snapchat, Instagram, Youtube & Facebook



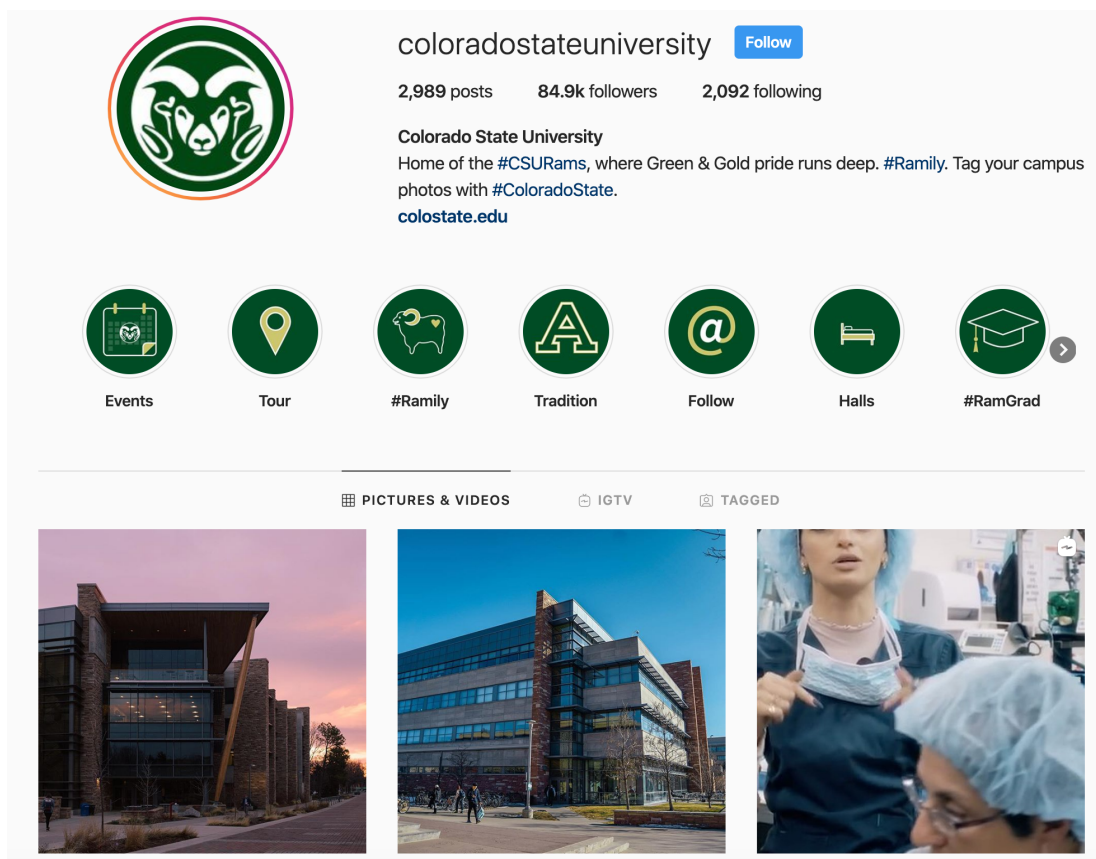
 WALLS.IO Source: E-Expectations Survey

Instagram for higher education

Instagram, which is part of Facebook, focuses on visual content, including videos in addition to photos. Unlike Facebook, Instagram is designed as a mobile app and is particularly suitable for schools that can visually present their campus life and course information.

Best practice example – Colorado State University

[Colorado State University](#) is a great example of how to fully leverage Instagram for a university. Right away, they give instructions on how to communicate with them and which hashtags to use. Users are specifically encouraged to interact with the university on Instagram.



Colorado State University divides Instagram Stories up thematically. Therefore, they can provide targeted (visual) answers to specific questions. They are also using a media mix of videos, pictures and IGTV (Instagram TV).



Images and videos are fantastic eye-catchers — both on social media and elsewhere — and many social media platforms now give you the option to publish native video. Use bold images, GIFs, infographics and short clips to tease events and disseminate information in interesting and entertaining ways.

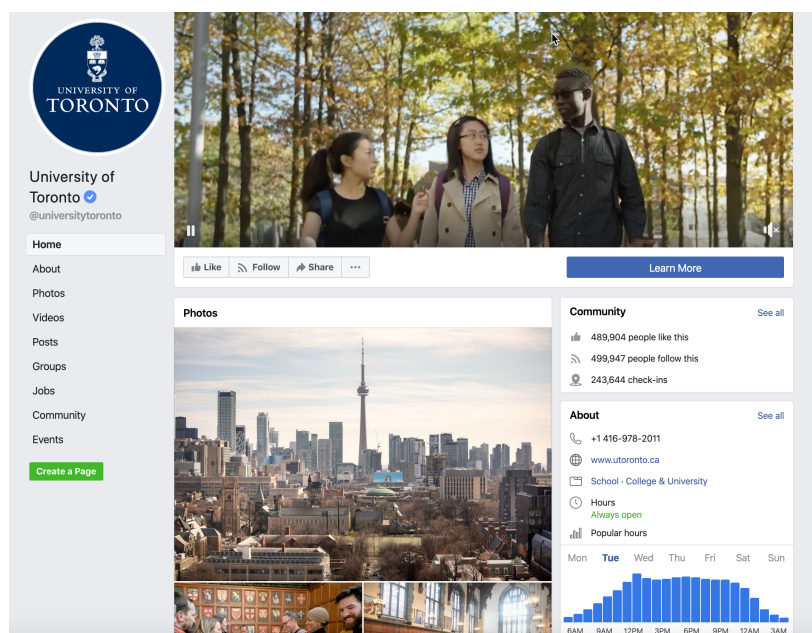
Facebook for higher education

Facebook is the world’s largest social network, with around 2.27 billion active users every month. It also occupies a top position in corporate social media marketing. As the “mother of all social networks”, it offers a wide range of opportunities to communicate and interact with your target group. In addition to content marketing using school profiles, stories are becoming increasingly important.

Best practice example — University of Toronto

The [University of Toronto uses its Facebook](#) page to inform about campus life, events and the educational body. They regularly share interesting articles from the news section on their website, that provides insight into different departments and study programmes.

They mix it up with short videos about successful alumni, student projects and interesting stories about lecturers. Content like that gives a great overview of the spirit, the atmosphere and the daily student life at the University of Toronto.



YouTube for higher education

As a video channel, YouTube, owned by Google since 2006, is the number two most used social media platform worldwide. It offers schools, for example, the opportunity to publish video instructions and course presentations, and to give insights behind the scenes in video clips.

Best practice example – The Massachusetts Institute of Technology

[The Massachusetts Institute of Technology \(MIT\) uses YouTube](#) to the fullest extent. They have many playlists that group the videos by topics that are interesting for (potential) students. For example, they show what life is like at the university or showcase exciting student projects.

In addition to playlists, they also have multiple YouTube channels. They use one channel to stream lectures and courses so students from around the world can attend. MIT is hosting a very strong Alumni channel which is a great opportunity to let alumni shine and gives potential new students insights into the MIT community.

MIT Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) ✓
569K subscribers

HOME VIDEOS PLAYLISTS COMMUNITY CHANNELS ABOUT

Minds and Hands at Work
11,220 views • 1 month ago

Possibility, ingenuity, artistry, continuous learning—making is in MIT's DNA. Take a look inside some of MIT's makerspaces, where students get access to the tools they need to build on MIT's long history of inventiveness. And learn how the forthcoming Metropolitan Warehouse makerspace will forge a new maker community at MIT.

READ MORE

MIT News ▶ PLAY ALL

3:25 2:39 2:00 2:58 3:02

Twitter for higher education

Twitter is one of the primary social media channels. The short message service is limited to messages with a maximum length of 280 characters. While Twitter is less common than Facebook, YouTube or Instagram, it is a good way to reach opinion leaders and communicate directly with students.

Best practice example – Princeton University

[Princeton University uses Twitter](#) to keep students in the loop and to keep the communication lines wide open. They share their latest news articles about student achievements and faculty events. They are actively encouraging people to engage with their posts and to interact with them. But it's not all just about the good times on campus.



Princeton University ✓
@Princeton

The official Twitter account of Princeton University. Use [#PrincetonU](#) to join the conversation.

📍 Princeton, NJ [princeton.edu](#) 📅 Joined May 2007

1,579 Following **381.7K** Followers

Not followed by anyone you're following

They also leverage their Twitter account for crisis communication. During the Corona Virus outbreak, they used Twitter to inform, update and help their students, taking advantage of the fast communication speed Twitter offers.



Pinterest for higher education

Similar to Instagram, Pinterest focuses on visual content. Posts are arranged as pins on pinboards. Pinterest is still used by comparatively few schools, despite the fact that it has so much potential.

Prospective students want to learn as much as possible about your school without getting on a phone or visiting the campus. You can create a “Campus Tour” Pinterest board allowing students to take a virtual tour of the campus. The board can have photos of all the important parts of your school you want to show off to potential students. This can help turn a prospective student to an enrolled student.

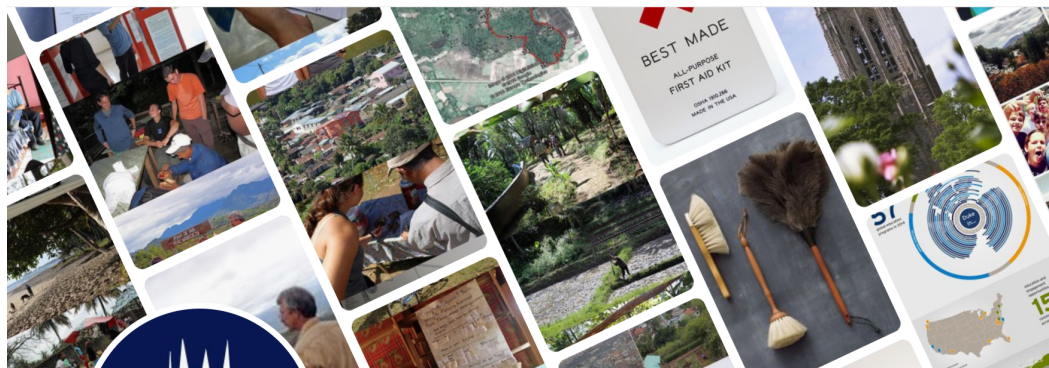
Just like the “Campus Tour” board, you can create many other kinds of Pinterest boards:

- boards for prospective students to explore your school
- boards for students to check in with the admissions department to make things much easier
- boards to highlight your school’s history
- boards for fun activities
- boards for sports teams

Best practice example — Duke University

[Duke University uses Pinterest](#) in a very engaging way. They motivate users to share images about the university spirit. Based on that content created by their students, they create the boards on Pinterest. This way, they give their students a community and platform to express what is important to them.

For potential students, these Pinterest boards provide great insights into how and what the Duke Spirit really is. The university itself doesn't need to produce the content but takes advantage of the pictures that already exist — a win-win situation for everyone.



Duke University

631.4k monthly unique viewers



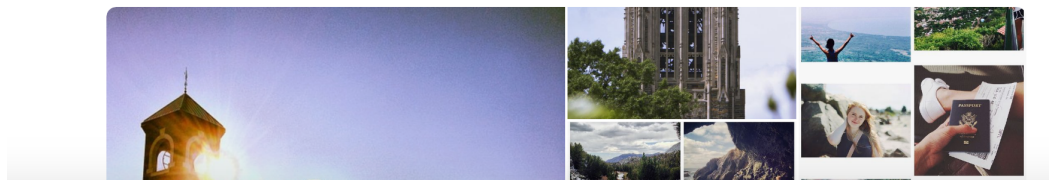
 duke.edu

Duke University's Pinterest account. We pin things that are fun and showcase life as a Blue Devil. Tell us what you want to see here using #PictureDuke.

Activity Community

Featured

See all boards



Snapchat for higher education

The instant messaging service Snapchat recorded 190 million daily active users worldwide in the first quarter of 2019. [Most of these are people under 35](#). You can use the platform to send photos or videos to friends. The special thing about it is that the content, which can be overlaid with effects, disappears after a short time. Stories are an exception to this. They last longer.

Best practice example — University of Michigan

At first, [The University of Michigan used Snapchat](#) as an experiment. But very soon, they had great success with t-shirt giveaways, [crowdsourcing to create a fun story](#), and #selfie contests. By taking a look at their followers' snaps and stories, they gathered that the majority consists of current Umich students and high school students.

They wanted to utilize Snapchat in a creative way that made a lasting impression on their new students and would keep them as loyal fans throughout their four years here and after graduation. With Snapchat's chat, they quickly answer questions and provide advice.



Social media as part of your multi-channel approach

Social media can be a university's best friend, helping to increase student loyalty and improve campus recognition. When paired with other marketing channels such as email, chat apps and advertising, the power of social media is amplified. We're talking about multichannel marketing here.

It's no longer a valid marketing strategy to separate channels. Students expect that schools use an integrated marketing approach. "Choice" is one of the keywords of today's marketing world. Students are getting more used to having the power of choice, including the ability to choose on which channels they prefer to engage with your university or college.

When students are on the go, they'll be using their phone to look up information on your school and schedules. If you don't offer quality mobile marketing (poor mobile website, slow loading with heavy images and cumbersome checkout) the (potential) student is likely to find this information from a college that is performing better on their favourite channel.

If they're at home on their laptop or desktop, users are more likely to spend more time on a website and more of that time will be spent doing detailed research than on a mobile device. Schools that unite their brand's marketing through a single hub amplify their ability to maintain consistent, branded messages throughout all channels.

Integration means taking the unique strengths of each channel and allowing them to complement each other to provide a better overall experience. But to achieve this, it's important to understand how to use each channel for its ideal engagement.

Channels have different peak hours and days when messages are best received. For example, email has its peak open, click-through and purchase rates from 8 pm till midnight. Facebook doesn't do well on Mondays or Tuesdays. SMS messages are best received between 10 am and 6 pm and are best used to communicate a sense of immediacy. When building a marketing plan for your school, timing is an important factor to consider.

The right social media channels for your school

Don't be tempted to include every social media platform out there. That's a dangerous trap to fall into and can end up being counter-productive and time-consuming. Not all channels are a good fit for your target audience. Take your time to find out which channels are the right ones and how many resources you can spend per each.

The good thing is that you can test and experiment. Social media accounts are free anyway. And you don't need to start with fancy videos. It's enough that you show the campus as it is through the tools you have. Just stay authentic and be yourself.

There's a myriad of ways that data from your different marketing channels can serve you. You could go overboard by trying to take advantage of all the information at your fingertips and end up wasting your time and money without making any progress.

Focus on a couple of core areas instead. What do you most want to improve? Do you want to improve student and alumni engagement? Do you want to increase enrolment rates? Whom do you want to reach — potential students, parents, faculty members? Choose only a few areas to focus on to maximize your efforts and effectiveness and go on from there.

Once you've focused your marketing on the selection of social media sites that's right for your school, it's important to know how your students are choosing to interact with you on social media.

Don't be distracted by superficial data such as likes and shares. Dig deeper to find out a more robust profile of engaged customers. Consider questions such as:

- Who are the ones who are clicking through from social media to our website?
- Which social media campaigns worked and which ones flopped?
- What are the demographics of your core social media audience?
- What other channels do these same users tend to use and how do they fit together? For example, do students tend to go from email to social media? From advertising to social media? From social media to website?

Analysing the relationship between channels should be a priority of your marketing department. Without a firm understanding of these connections, you miss the opportunity to target your marketing.

Test and see what works best

A/B testing is key to making multi-channel work for you. By pairing your social media strategy with different channels and tracking the results to see which ones work best, you form a more effective strategy. Once you've formed that strategy, use it well and then keep testing. There's always more tweaking and refining to be done.

More and more successful schools are harnessing the power of multi-channel marketing, and social media plays a key role in multi-channel success. By combining social media with other channels, you improve your campus awareness, student loyalty and donations.

The best way to connect, monitor and keep track of posts throughout your different social media channels is by using a hashtag.

How to run a successful hashtag marketing campaign

Hashtags accompany almost all our online conversations. They can add contextual cues to a message or indicate the author's emotions if they're not clear from the message itself. They can be used to inject humour and sarcasm or create a connection by tapping into a community.

But more importantly, for marketers, hashtags function as virtual beacons or anchors on social media networks. They focus and bundle conversations.

When used correctly, hashtags can make it easier to:

- follow conversations on social media,
- keep track of the news,
- stay connected and discuss topics at events and conferences,
- allow causes to gain traction,
- help schools run promotions,
- connect future students, educational body, alumni, parents and others who share the same interests.

When hashtags catch on, they can be immensely powerful, going viral and reaching millions of people around the world.

A hashtag campaign is a marketing campaign relying on hashtags to generate engagement and gain reach on social media. When schools first consider creating a hashtag campaign, they are often held back by certain fears that come with every new territory.

- What if no one takes part?
- Or worse, what if it goes wrong?
- What if users post the wrong kind of content?
- What if someone hijacks my campaign and it has a negative effect on my school?

These are all completely understandable fears. And they're not irrational either. All of this can happen and has happened before. But the good news is that all of these mishaps are avoidable if you follow a few simple rules.

By doing your research, planning your campaign properly and promoting the hell out of it, you will be on the best path to a successful hashtag campaign.

How to use hashtags on different social platforms

How hashtags are used — their placement, the recommended number of hashtags per posts, and whether they are tied to search functions — varies from network to network.

How to use hashtags effectively on Twitter

Should you use hashtags: yes

The recommended number of hashtags per tweet: 1–2

Are hashtags hyperlinked: yes

Hashtags on Twitter are hyperlinked and a popular tool to bundle conversations around trending topics, Twitter chats, marketing campaigns, breaking news, etc.

On Twitter, hashtags are a great discovery tool for new content. Hashtags automatically turn into links, which lead to a search results page for other tweets using the same hashtag. This also includes suggestions for related searches, allowing you to discover new content even more easily.

Research shows that using some hashtags (as opposed to none) will get you seen more on Twitter. However, hashtag overuse will be frowned upon, and hashtag-laden tweets are easily dismissed as spam messages.

How to use hashtags effectively on Instagram

Should you use hashtags: yes

The recommended number of hashtags per post: 7–10

Are hashtags hyperlinked: yes

Instagram is a good place for schools to raise brand awareness and engage your existing community of students and alumni. Hashtags on Instagram serve as a content discovery tool and are widely used. Just like on Twitter, hashtags turn into links which then show search results for posts that also use the hashtag.

Instagrammers very much like to use hashtags to discover more content from people with similar interests, which often leads to likes and sometimes even to new followers. You can also follow hashtags on Instagram, much like you would follow a profile, and they'll show up in your feed. Plus, you can add clickable hashtags to your profile bio and your Instagram Stories as well.

The acceptable number of hashtags per post is much higher than on Twitter. Instagram allows up to 30 hashtags per post. Using multiple hashtags leads to good results, and 7–10 hashtags per post are seen as best practice. But more than ten on one post may end up looking like spam.

How to use hashtags effectively on Facebook

Should you use hashtags: depends

The recommended number of hashtags per post: 1–2

Are hashtags hyperlinked: sort of

Hashtags are less effective on Facebook than other platforms, as the network’s stringent privacy settings prevent hashtagged posts from showing up in search unless their visibility is set to “public”.

Of course, everything that is posted publicly can still be found via search, so you can still use hashtags on your school’s page. Facebook also creates unique URLs for hashtags, where all posts with that hashtag are collected, e.g. facebook.com/hashtag/socialmedia for #socialmedia. It can be worthwhile for your school to create a unique hashtag and then specifically drive traffic to that page.

But if you want to find content with your hashtag posted by anyone else, you can only do so when it’s actually public content. Furthermore, hashtags used in comments, public or not, don’t show up in search either.

So when running a marketing campaign with hashtags on Facebook, you’ll need to inform your campus that to be seen by you, they need to make their posts with your hashtag public. Overall, this can take a lot of effort and can hamper participation, especially in times of privacy fears.

Many schools now opt to run hashtag campaigns and competitions on their Facebook page, asking people to post their entries there using the hashtag or simply by posting in the comments of the brand’s post.

How to use hashtags effectively on LinkedIn

Should you use hashtags: yes

The recommended number of hashtags per post: 3–4

Are hashtags hyperlinked: yes

Hashtags on LinkedIn are hyperlinked, and you can also follow hashtags as you would do with people or groups. But as with Facebook, LinkedIn's complicated privacy settings impact whether content using hashtags can be seen and found via search.

What's interesting is that hashtags on LinkedIn are not just connected to status updates but also to LinkedIn's built-in publishing platform where you can add hashtags to your articles before publishing.

So when you click on a hashtag or search for one, articles tagged with that hashtag will show up in the search results next to regular posts from your network that are using the hashtag — provided they are public, of course. Whether you post a status update or a LinkedIn article, you have to make your whole profile publicly visible for any of it to be found via hashtag search.

How to use hashtags effectively on Pinterest

Should you use hashtags: in most cases, it's safer not to

The recommended number of hashtags per post: 1

Are hashtags hyperlinked: yes and no

Hashtags on Pinterest can be extremely confusing! They *are* hyperlinked. However, they don't link to search results for the hashtag itself but rather to a search for the keyword or a similar keyword. This can lead people away from, instead of to, your pins. Consequently, hashtag use on Pinterest can be a bit unpredictable.

Search results on Pinterest can generally be fairly volatile, and a search launched by clicking on a hashtag will sometimes give too many irrelevant results or no results at all. You'll almost definitely not get any results that include the hashtag you were looking for in the first place.

For example, clicking on #illustration will lead to a search for illustrations. But #infographic won't lead to other pins tagged with that but rather to a search for infographics of wildly varying content. So it's less than ideal as a tool of discovery and thus pretty useless to brands hoping to jump on board with trending content.

How to use hashtags effectively on YouTube

Should you use hashtags: yes

The recommended number of hashtags per post: 3–5

Are hashtags hyperlinked: yes

On YouTube, hashtags are mostly a search and discovery tool. You can search for specific hashtags using the search function. Furthermore, they are hyperlinked so you can also click on hashtags on videos to find other content tagged the same way.

Google has released clear guidelines on YouTube hashtag use. Hashtags on a video can be shown:

- in the title
- in the description
- above the title

You can prevent hashtags being shown above the title, by using one hashtag in the title. If you don't add any hashtags to your title at all, the first three hashtags mentioned in the description will show above the title.

What are hashtag marketing campaigns

Once hashtags started catching on, advertising and marketing professionals began to notice their potential and started using hashtags in marketing campaigns.

A hashtag campaign is a marketing campaign built around a hashtag which has been created specifically to drive traffic for the campaign. The hashtag aggregates — mostly user-generated — content and helps the campaign spread.

Organically growing hashtags which start to trend without any push from a company can sometimes go viral on their own if there's enough public interest. Hashtag campaigns use hashtags in hopes of getting traction — and most of them hope to achieve the unachievable and go viral.

Common use cases for hashtag campaigns are:

- Awareness or fundraising campaigns
- Internal campaigns to motivate and connect employees
- To connect attendees and create conversations at conferences or other events
- Promotional campaigns
- To connect students and alumni in academia
- To collect and show off user-generated content

How to find the perfect hashtag for your campaign

An important step in every hashtag campaign is choosing the right hashtag. Using your hashtag should be incredibly easy, and people shouldn't need a cheat sheet to contribute to your campaign.

- Choose something catchy that is easy to remember
- Choose a hashtag that says something significant about your campaign
- Choose a hashtag that's easy to spell: you don't want posts to get lost because of accidental misspellings
- Avoid using convoluted acronyms
- Keep it short and simple
- Avoid umlaut or other special characters
- Play around with capitalisation to make your hashtag more legible, e.g. #LovesLove instead of #loveislove (capitalisation also makes it easier to understand for people using screen readers)
- Make your hashtag unique: research if the hashtag you're planning to use already exists and check for hashtags that might be too similar to yours
- Pick a hashtag that can't easily be misinterpreted: you don't want to open the door for hashtag abuse or hijackings
- Settle on one hashtag for your campaign instead of multiple ones, unless you're letting people vote by hashtag or need multiple hashtags for functional reasons

So, how do you find a hashtag that's unique, catchy and unambiguous?

The 4-step process of creating a new hashtag

Step 1: Define your goals

Your first step will be to figure out what you want to achieve with your campaign and what kind of campaign makes sense for you.

Are you running a campaign to:

- Raise awareness for a school?
- Increase enrollment rates?
- Create buzz around your school and drive engagement?
- Collect user-generated content for your school?
- Promote an event?
- Inform about administrative issues?

Good. Now, write it down. This will be your guide for the rest of this process.

Step 2: Brainstorming

Gather a small group of people who know their way around social media. Ideally, this could be your team or department. If you work alone, you can always pull in people from other departments or ask a partner or friends to help you out.

Introduce your campaign to your focus group and tell them what you are looking to achieve with it. Then, brainstorm ideas as a group. Just write them all down on a board, a sheet of paper or a digital version thereof.

When you've come up with a bunch of ideas, start selecting the best ones and research them. Google if someone is already using the hashtag you just "invented". Check on social media if similar hashtags are circulating. Cross out the ones that aren't unique.

Step 3: Make an informed decision

Have a good night's sleep. Let the hashtag ideas that you've ended up with sit overnight and sleep on them. Only then make your choice. If you have a hard time deciding on your own, you can always run your top contenders by someone you trust. Ideally, someone who wasn't involved in the initial brainstorming session — you want fresh minds on this.

Is your hashtag clear and concise? Will your students and alumni immediately understand what it is about? Will newcomers to your university get it? If it takes you longer than a few sentences to explain your hashtag and campaign to someone new, it's probably still too convoluted.

Step 4: Fireproof your hashtag

Once you've chosen a hashtag you're happy with, give it one last test run and approach that one person who will always see a double entendre if there is one. You know, that friend who always chuckles in the background at seemingly innocuous remarks? The aunt with the inappropriate comments at the dinner table? Those are the people you need for this.

If you can get your hashtag past a "dirty mind" without eliciting giggling, you are good to go.

Of course, if your "filth tester" ends up chuckling you'll have to take a deep breath, figure out what the problem is and go back to the drawing board. Perhaps one of your other hashtag ideas from the brainstorming session will be a safer bet.

Running your campaign: The PEPE Formula

At first, the idea of running a hashtag campaign can feel like a gigantic task. You might worry about messing up or about the campaign not taking off or even about simply getting overwhelmed by the whole thing.

The secret to a successful, seemingly effortless campaign lies in a solid planning phase. If you take the time to plan out your campaign and prepare the materials you'll need, you'll have a much easier time running the day to day of the campaign. You can react faster to unforeseen circumstances and focus on engaging with your audience.

Planning is also the first part of our PEPE Formula for Hashtag Campaigns: Plan — Execute — Promote — Engage.

Plan

Planning your hashtag campaign should cover multiple areas. You need to know what you want to achieve with the whole campaign and plan out the individual steps as well.

Define a clear goal, a measurable goal, and then work towards that. Do your research and find out where your target group is. Find the right network and the right hashtag [see our chapter about finding the right hashtag above].

Take the time to plan your campaign:

- What is your main goal?
- How long will the campaign run?
- Who are you targeting?
- Which channels are you going to use?
- How are you going to motivate people to post and use your hashtag?
- How are you going to make your campaign interesting?
- Are you going to ask for UGC?
- What incentives are you going to offer in return?
- How are you going to utilise content posted throughout the campaign?
- How are you going to reward people who create and share content?

Plan out the phases of your campaign. Create a schedule for your most important posts in these phases and assign responsibilities within the team.

Execute

Once you've planned your campaign, you can start working on the details, the ins and outs of the campaign. This means preparing everything you think you'll need throughout the campaign in advance. This will make the launch and rest of your campaign go more smoothly.

Build a microsite: Consider creating a dedicated microsite that houses all the info about your campaign and embed your social media wall on it to have everything related to your campaign in one place.

Set up a social wall: Create a social media wall where you collect and show off all your content: your own posts, all posts with your hashtag, or even posts from a specific Facebook page.

Prepare copy and visuals: Produce visuals and copy in advance, so they are ready to be used in various formats on various channels. You'll probably have enough to do on the fly during the campaign and don't want to have to worry about content that you could have easily prepared beforehand.

Schedule social media posts: Prepare, and even schedule posts ahead of time. If you have your most important promotional posts done ahead of the campaign, you can focus more on interacting and engaging during the campaign itself.

Set up competitions and giveaways: Remember to allow enough time to plan competitions and giveaways if you're using them. Prepare them in detail before you launch.

Promote

It's time to tell people about your campaign! Promoting your hashtag is essential if you want users to take note and use it. You can use offline and online, paid and unpaid promotion methods to create some buzz for your campaign.

Use online promotion: Online banners and well-targeted social ads help you reach people who already care about your school.

Use your own channels: Of course, always use your hashtag on your own channels: on your website, in your newsletter, your tweets and Facebook posts, etc.

Use influencers: Influencer marketing is a great way to expand your reach. Find a handful of students with large followings — or young influencers who can help you expand your reach beyond your already established student base — and ask them to participate in your campaign. Convince them to promote your hashtag, to tweet, retweet and create content for your campaign.

Promote offline: Don't make the mistake of assuming promotion for a social media campaign can only happen online. Offline ads can be a great way to promote your hashtag if you have the budget for them: billboard ads, print ads in magazines and newspapers or even a hashtag printed on a product (like

T-Shirts) will lead fans to your campaign. Just make sure your hashtag is always present in promotional materials.

Set up competitions and giveaways: Part of promoting your campaign is finding ways to make people want to use your hashtag, for example, by asking them to contribute content and incentivising them accordingly. Competitions and giveaways are a great way to make it worth their while. Just keep in mind that contribution and incentive should always be in balance. If you're asking people to create a video for your hashtag campaign, you better offer them something amazing for their effort.

Collect user-generated content: To get [good user-generated content](#) from users, they need to immediately understand what your campaign is about. Be concise about what you would like them to do or create. Be clear in all your writing and visuals when planning and promoting your campaign.

Engage

An important part of social media — albeit one that is easily forgotten — is that you absolutely need to engage with others instead of just tooting your own horn. There's no better opportunity for this than a hashtag campaign.

Interact with the people who are picking up your hashtag and using it. Reply to them, start a conversation. You will be much more likely to retain them as fans of your school and perhaps turn them into ambassadors.

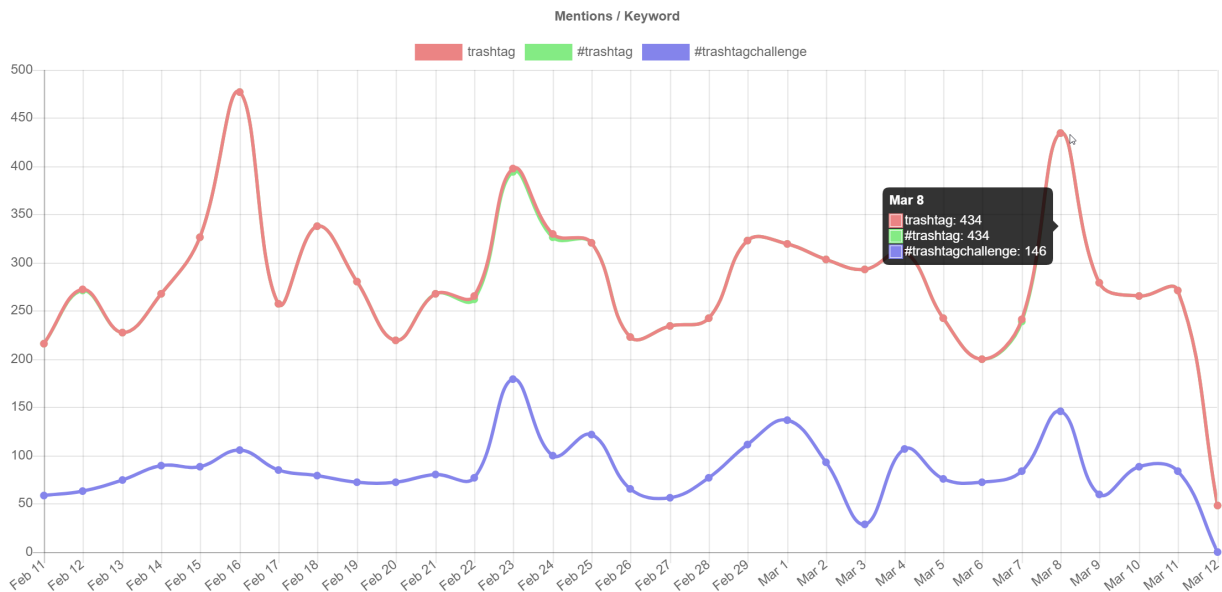
Show appreciation when someone takes the time to create content for your campaign. Thank them and reshare their UGC. Getting some recognition can often make someone's day.

Analytics: determining if your campaign was successful

As with most things marketing, it's important to analyse your hashtag campaign. The parameters by which you measure the success of your campaign depend entirely on your campaign goal.

If you're running a giveaway or asking for user-generated content, the number of submissions will be important for you. If your goal was to engage as many people as possible with your campaign, you need to take a closer look at the numbers of your mentions, tweets, unique users and reach. Frequency, the number of times you have reached one unique user, can also be an important factor.

If you're using Walls.io for your campaign, take a closer look at your Walls.io Analytics tab. Once your campaign has been running for a while, you will see results for some basic parameters: the number of mentions for your keywords, the number of mentions sorted by source and the number of unique users per source. This should give you an impression of how your campaign is doing.



There are plenty of free and paid social media monitoring tools available online. If you're already using a tool to monitor your social media reach on a daily basis, tracking your hashtag will be an easy way for you to isolate the information pertaining to your campaign from your overall analytics data.

Always take a look at the actual content throughout and after the campaign as well. Quality isn't something any analytics tool can measure, but it can make the difference between a campaign you deem successful or not.

Add some oomph to your hashtag campaign with a social media wall

A social media wall is a great way to collect your campaign's content in one place. What good is it to have fantastic user-generated content when you can't show it off to the world?

A social wall puts your and your fans' posts from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. on one landing page, turning it into a hub for your hashtag campaign.

Take Tiffin University, for example. Their social wall is not tied to any particular topic, allowing the social wall to change and feature all kinds of posts throughout the school year. It works well as a long-term embed on the school's website.

SOCIAL SCENE



Tiffin University celebrated its 131st annual commencement on Saturday, May 4 at the Heminger Center.



[Online](#) [Current Students](#) [Faculty & Staff](#) [Alumni](#) [Employment](#)

[Apply](#) / [Visit](#) / [Give](#)

With Walls.io, you can collect content from over 15 social media platforms by setting them up as sources. You can then either show all posts on your social wall in real-time or use filtering to only show specific types of content. It's all up to you!

You're in control of the image you project with your social media hub. Monitor incoming posts and use moderation features to hide specific posts and call attention to others.

Customise the look of your social wall. Choose from pre-configured themes. Adjust colours and much more to make your wall mesh with the look of your brand.

There's a lot more that you can do with a social wall:

- Embed the wall on your website or your campaign's microsite
- Show the wall on a screen at an event as a live social hub for your hashtag
- Get creative and create your own social wall integration using the Walls.io API
- Make your social wall permanent by turning it into a brand hub

Reach your goals with user-generated content

User-generated content, often shortened to the acronym UGC, is any content created by the users of a website or service. User-generated content is certainly one of the most trusted forms of marketing, and a lot of people find UGC far more interesting than content created by schools.

When people post using your hashtag, they create great original content related to your school. Others will appreciate that content when they're trying to find out more about your educational institution. They trust facts and stories by their peers. That authenticity is the key to better enrolment, engagement and donations.

Collect content that you and your students share every day on social media and use it to keep your website fresh and engage your student community. Aggregate user-generated content from hashtags, profiles and pages and select the content you want to display.

Understanding why people create and share content

But why would students put effort into creating content for a university? Sometimes, they are motivated by a material incentive. Maybe there's a cash prize or a product prize they're keen on, maybe their content submission will enter them into a competition to win a holiday or another experience. In your case, most of the time, that will not be necessary. Students, parents and alumni are proud to be part of your campus community and want to show that. All it takes is a little encouragement from your side.



A hashtag campaign allows you to very specifically shape what kind of User-Generated Content you are looking for. The clearer you are in the guidelines and promotion for your campaign about what you want students to create, the more likely you are to receive the content you need.

According to the New York Times' [Psychology of Sharing](#) study, one of the factors that influence whether people share content is connection — not just with your campus community but with each other. When

creating your campaign, consider how you can offer people the opportunity to interact through submissions, public voting, and other forms of contribution.

Best practice example for user-generated content

Using hashtags is the best method to bundle posts about a certain topic on social media, which makes it easier for interested parties to follow the conversation and interact with others. Create a social hub to collect user-generated content that matters at your university and display it in real-time. Share information about events, courses, ceremonies, and awards.

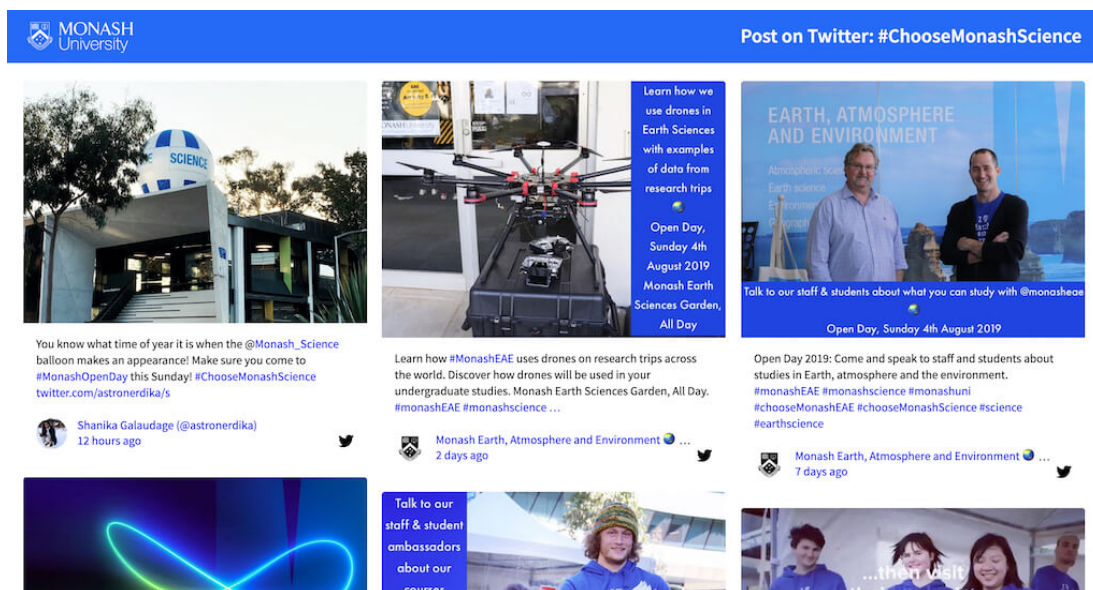
A social wall is a great way to take the fantastic content your students, alumni, staff, etc. are creating for you and truly let it shine. With Walls.io, you can collect posts from multiple social platforms, curate the content, and display it on a social wall on your website, a microsite, on Facebook or even on a real-life screen that you have set up somewhere.

Increase enrolment

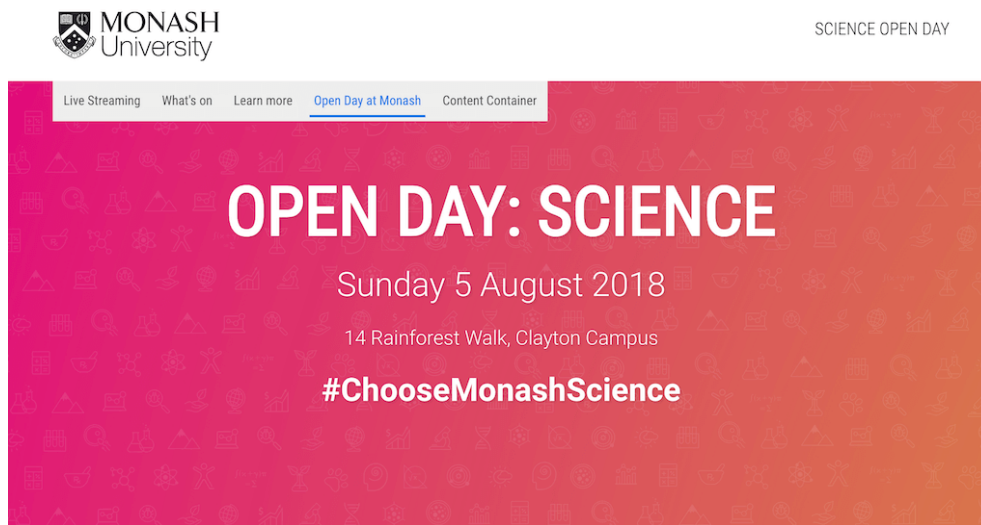
User-generated content mixed into your social media strategy can be a great promotional tool. Two out of five students choose their school based on social media only. By creating a social hub where students can share their experiences, you generate trust with those who are just getting to know you.

You can set up a social wall for Open Days, for example, to reach out to prospective students and their parents and make them feel welcome as they visit your school. Hand out informational leaflets that point to the social wall and hashtag and display the wall somewhere on campus to catch visitors' attention.

Monash University in Australia set up a social wall for the Science Open Day, allowing everyone to share their impressions and experiences.



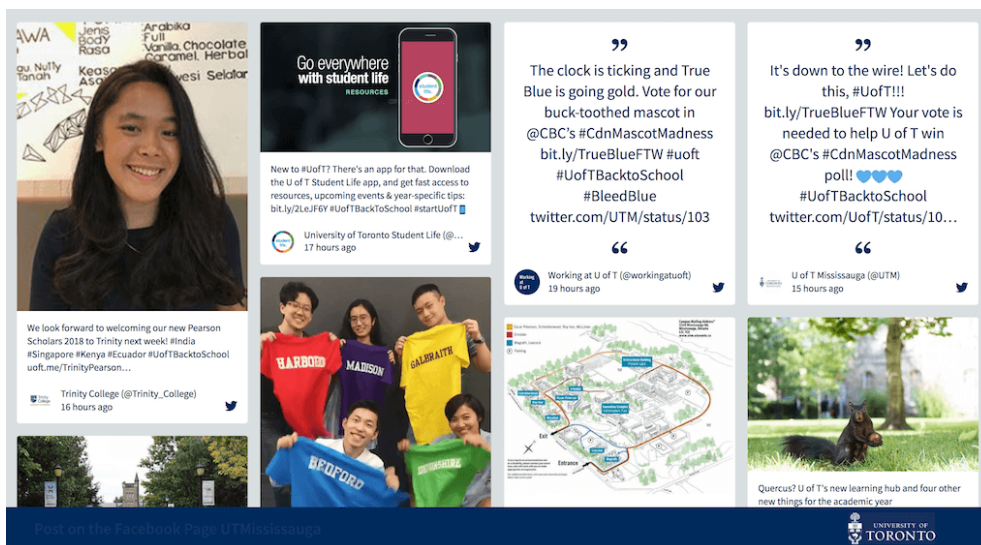
The university specifically promoted the Open Day and its hashtag #ChooseMonashScience on the website as well.



Engage with students

Celebrations and parties often accompany the arrival of old and new students. Celebrate on social media as well and welcome your students with a social wall, which is a great place for sharing information and friendly messages.

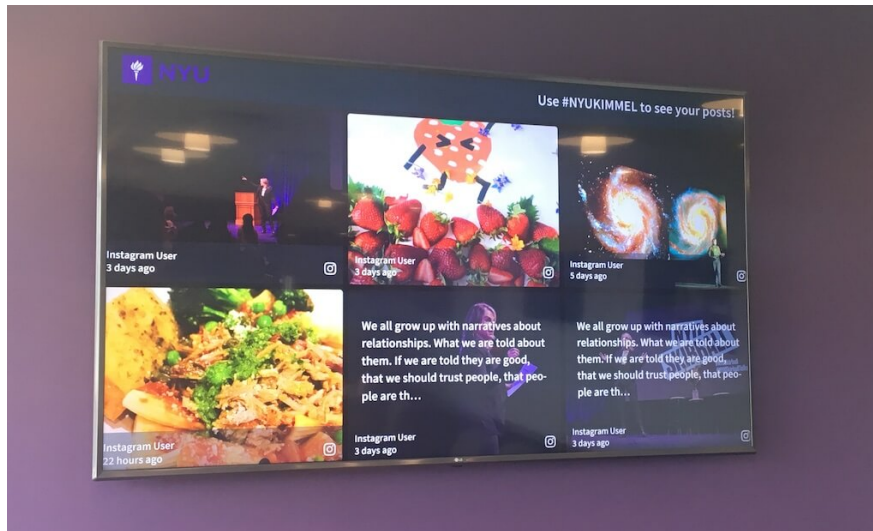
The University of Toronto welcomes its students with a social wall, which is a great place for sharing information with new students. Here you can see the University of Toronto Student Life Programs & Services account sharing the link to the student life app on the social wall. The app helps new students find their way around their new campus.



Use a social wall and hashtags to bring content from multiple university departments, students, alumni, and staff together, and display it all on a prominent screen. The social wall keeps people informed, but it also helps everyone feel that they're a part of something bigger.

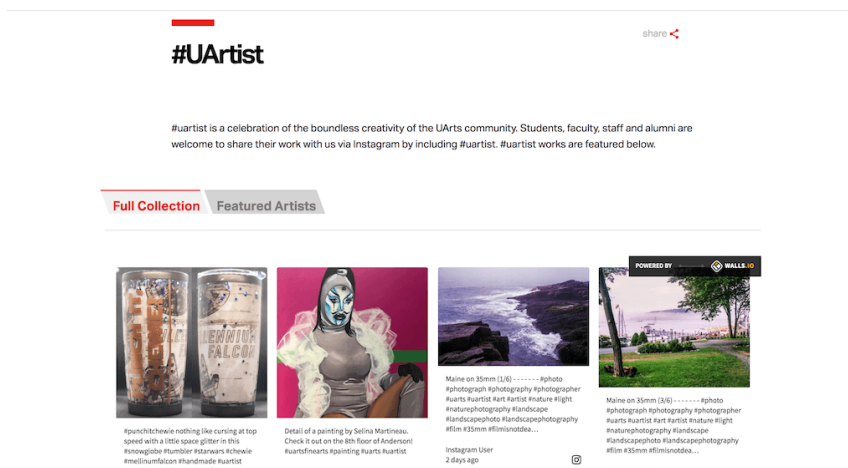
New York University, for example, uses various hashtags and adapts the social wall to fit whatever is going on at the university at that moment.

Here we see the NYU social wall displayed on a screen on campus.



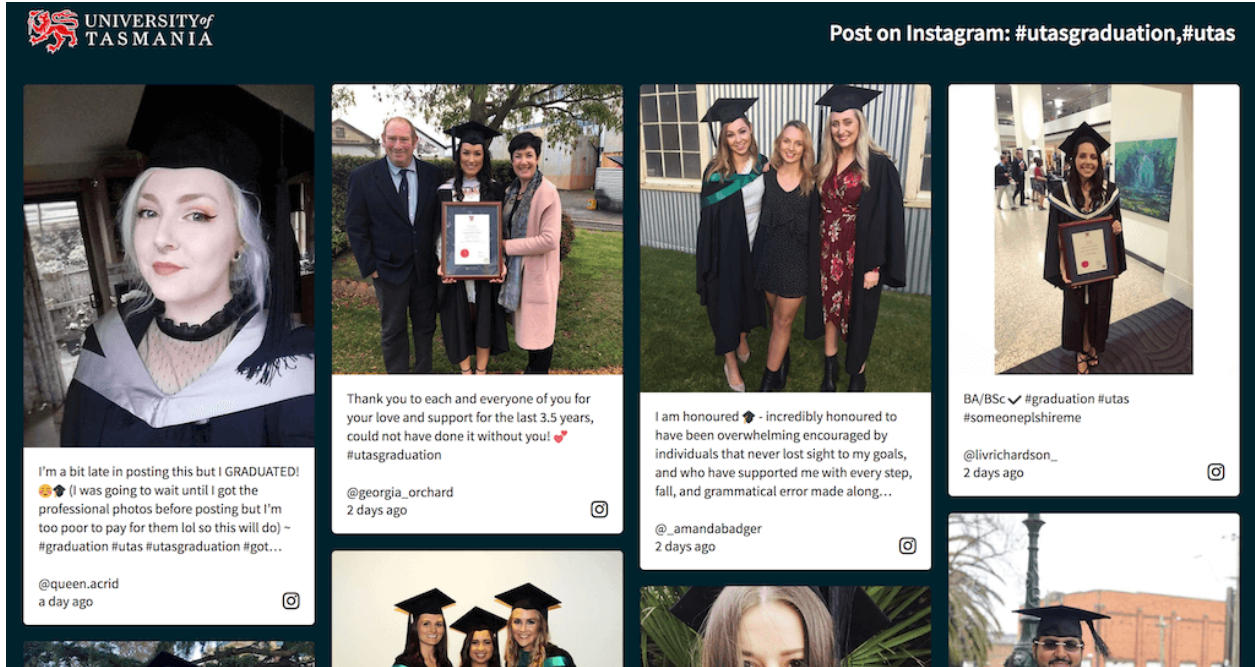
You can also use a social wall to highlight the amazing things your students are doing — whether it's charitable work they've completed over the summer, prizes they've won, or art they've created during their studies.

The University of the Arts in Philadelphia (UArts) has set up a social wall dedicated to students' creations, collected under the hashtags #UArtist. The social wall is embedded on a subpage of the website where specific artists are featured in more detail as well.



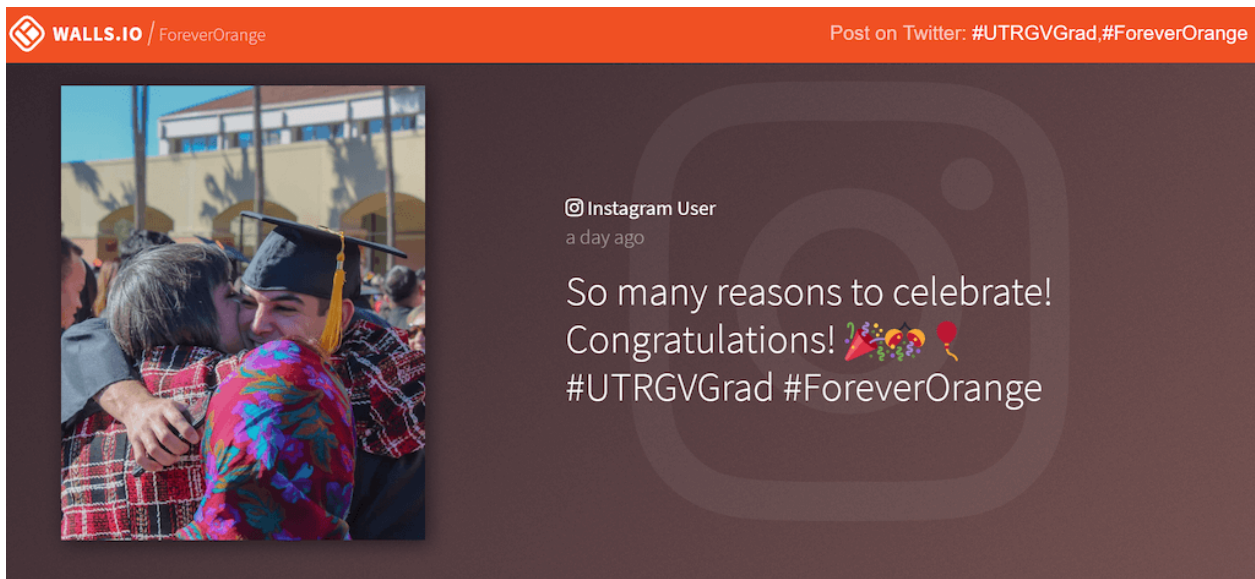
The highlight of most people's university experience is when they graduate. So it's unsurprising that a lot of our university customers have set up social walls to celebrate Graduation Day.

The University of Tasmania graduation social wall is a great example.



A dedicated social wall gives students, parents and everyone else a chance to share and celebrate this day together. Proud parents and students can share graduation pics and see them pop up on the social wall.

Here, a student from the **University of Texas Rio Grande Valley** shares their excitement about graduating.



Connect with Alumni

A dedicated hashtag for alumni helps you keep them in the loop, but it also allows former students to share their own stories and where they are in their lives right now. Keep in touch with them long after their graduation and show how proud you are of them by sharing their successes on your social media accounts as well.

The University of Sussex set up a hashtag campaign for its alumni. They dedicated the hashtag #SussexGrad to social media posts about successful alumni stories. They promote the hashtag on their graduation website.


See how the University of Sussex doesn't restrict their students and Alumni to one specific social media platform but asks them to use the network they feel most comfortable with. They communicate clearly what, where and how to do it in order to appear on their wall of fame. By using a social wall, they can aggregate all the posts connected to the hashtag and display them directly on their website.

Join the graduation hall of fame

Post your favourite Sussex photos to Instagram, Facebook or Twitter, tag it with **#sussexgrad** and you'll appear here.



We're really proud of all our Alumnae and this #IWD2020 want to thank and celebrate all who have volunteered for us this year, including entrepreneur Molly Masters, who graduated in 2018 and founded @bo...

 Sussex Alumni (@sussex_alumni)
3 days ago




Happy International Women's Day! At Sussex we're lucky to have so many amazing female students and Alumnae to celebrate today. We'd like to thank all of our Alumnae who have taken the time to come back and volunte...

Instagram User
2 days ago

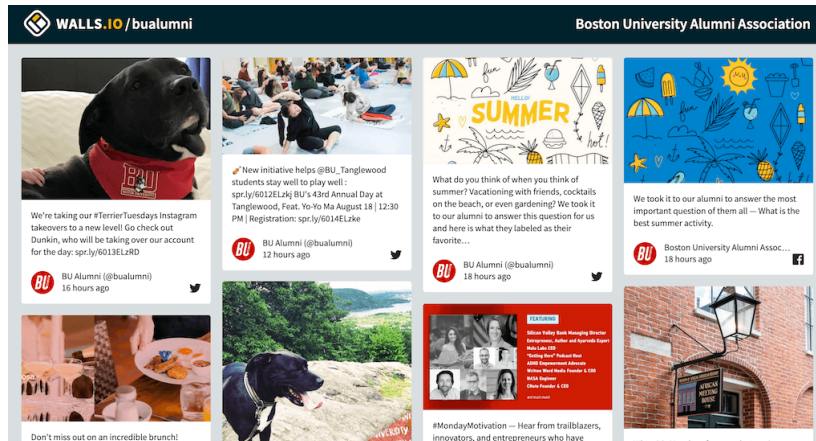


We're delighted to be welcoming Albie Sachs (PhD, 1972) to give our annual Draper Lecture on Wednesday 4 March from 18:00-20:00. Albie has a history of championing human rights and social justice. Watch the...

 Sussex Alumni (@sussex_alumni)
8 days ago



The Boston University Alumni Association uses a social wall to update people, feature interviews with alumni, or simply to stay in touch with former students with a bit of banter. The social wall is also embedded on the alumni association’s website with the words “There’s no better way to keep up with what’s happening at BU or in the lives of your fellow Terriers.”

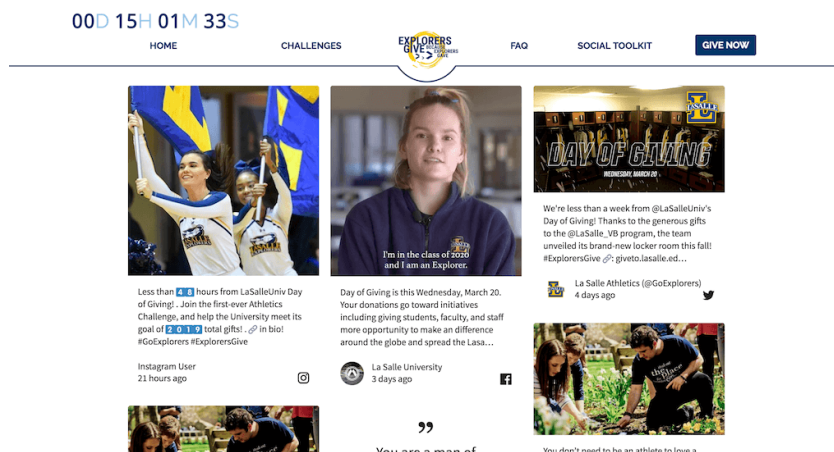


Boost donations

84% of Facebook users share a post to show their support for a cause and highlight issues that are important. Many universities use social media for specific fundraising events meant to raise money for scholarships, athletics teams, departments, repair funds, student unions, etc. It makes perfect sense to collect and connect them all with a dedicated hashtag.

Hashtag campaigns combined with social walls can make it easier for you to spread the message about fundraising events. A social wall provides a hub for visual materials, support messages and donation appeals throughout the fundraising process. It is also a great way to thank your donors.

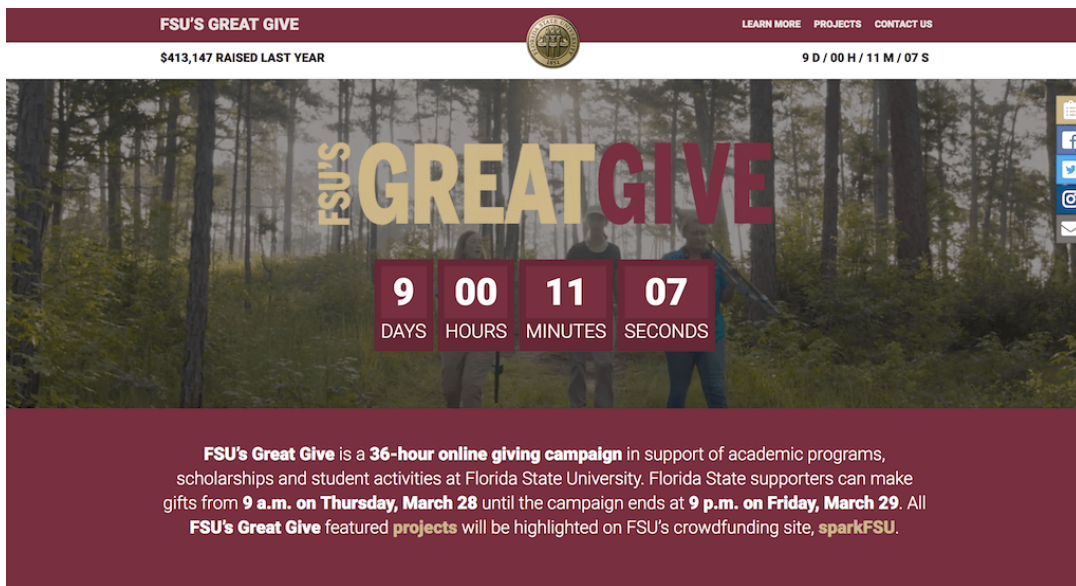
For example, **La Salle University in Philadelphia** used a social wall during ExplorersGive Day of Giving in 2019. The wall was embedded on a microsite along with more information and a countdown timer for the fundraising event.



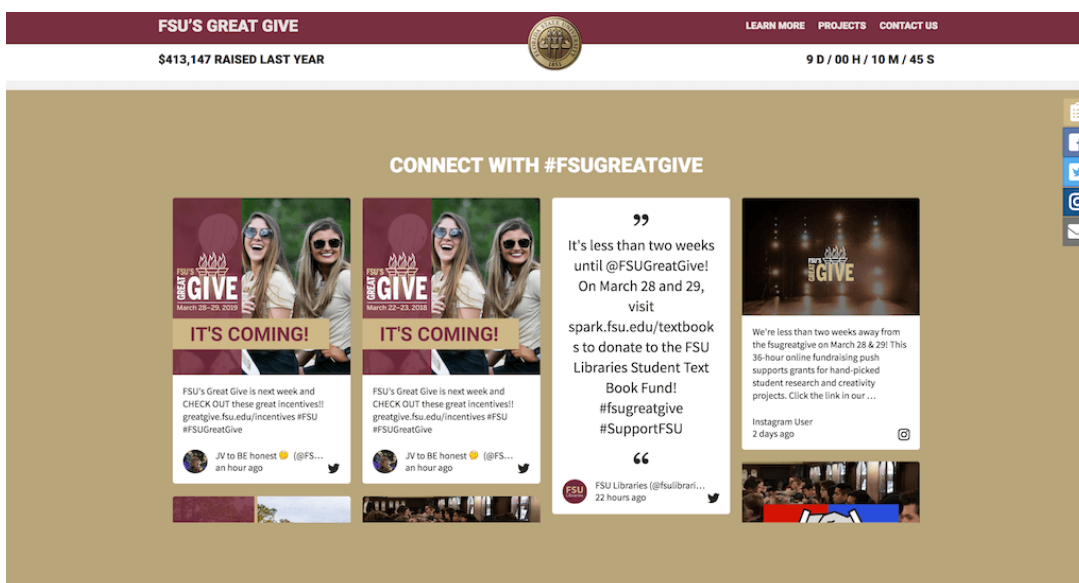
If you have the resources, you can even create a microsite. A microsite is a neat way to keep everything about a fundraising event in one place. It's a one-stop-shop for information and shows people how they can get involved.

For fundraisers, you can also add a countdown, the tally of donations so far, etc. And after the event is over, the microsite turns into a recap of the fundraiser and lays the groundwork for next year's event.

Florida State University has set up a wonderful microsite for the Great Give, an annual fundraising event for the school.



FSU also embedded the social wall on the Great Give microsite.



Use social media and user-generated content as a bridge between offline and online

Social media, especially in combination with user-generated content, is a great way to connect the digital and analogue world and create a social online campus. The beauty of social media is that it has many different networks that all have a different focus on media and audience. Therefore, everyone can find the network that they feel most comfortable with. This freedom of choice can also be a pain for you as a marketer.

You created all that amazing social media content, students and alumni are posting their experiences on the different networks, and you monitor it all through specific hashtags. But the problem stays the same — all this is just visible on one social network. It is time to aggregate all of that amazing content and display it outside of the social media bubble.

Display social media at events

Use social media to engage students and parents during events. Be it sports events, events organised by students, conferences, graduation and welcome parties, or even fundraising events — social media will connect your community, help you collect authentic user-generated content and spread the word about your university. A social wall bridges the gap between offline and online communication at events and conferences. Collect social media posts from your attendees and prominently display them on a social wall at your venue.

People will gather around your wall like a campfire and start talking to each other. It's an excellent icebreaker, and everyone loves spotting their posts highlighted on a screen.

Give your event global social media exposure. Social walls are not just for attendees. People from all over the world get to follow your event via the social wall online even if they couldn't make it there themselves. And after the event is over, a social wall is a great way for everyone to look back at the event (and it'll make a good impression in your reporting as well).

State University of New York using social media at events

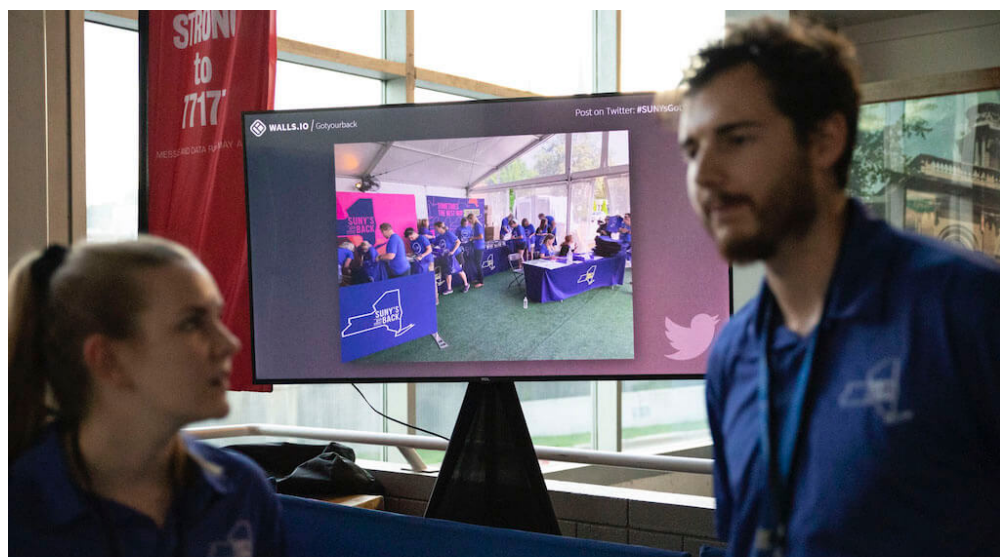
In 2016, SUNY launched a university-wide initiative called SUNY's Got Your Back. It aims to provide support bags for victims and survivors of sexual and interpersonal violence. Since its inception, the

program has organised events in all 64 SUNY campuses and even held a presence at PGA Tour events. Items for bags are collected and packed, and the finished bags distributed to shelters all across the state. Fundraising efforts complement the program's primary focus and, each year, the number of bags provided has grown.



SUNY is using social media to raise excitement for events, but more so they use it to engage students and community members in a positive way, both for information about the program, and information about the resources available to victims of crime.

They are using the Walls.io social media wall at SUNY's Got Your Back assembly events. Students and community members post photos and messages which are then rotated on the screens. This helps their attendees engage individually and collectively with the program in real-time.



They used to use rolling powerpoints with information at the events, but students weren't always engaging with the content. So they have added the social media wall, and it has helped with engagement. They promote the hashtag heavily across different media and include it on their materials,

encouraging students and community members to use it when posting. They also make use of the hashtag to educate readers about reducing the impact of violence on campus and in the community.

As SUNY's Got Your Back quickly found out, a social wall has been much more engaging for students than the previously used PowerPoint. Most people these days are already attuned to communicating and interacting on social media. It's an easy and natural step for them to start posting away if they see a social media wall at an event.

And the fantastic thing is that, as an event organiser, you have an easy way to keep conversing with them as well. On a social wall, you can mix informative content you create with engaging discussions about the topic. You can raise awareness, call people to action, fundraise, give last-minute updates, and much more.

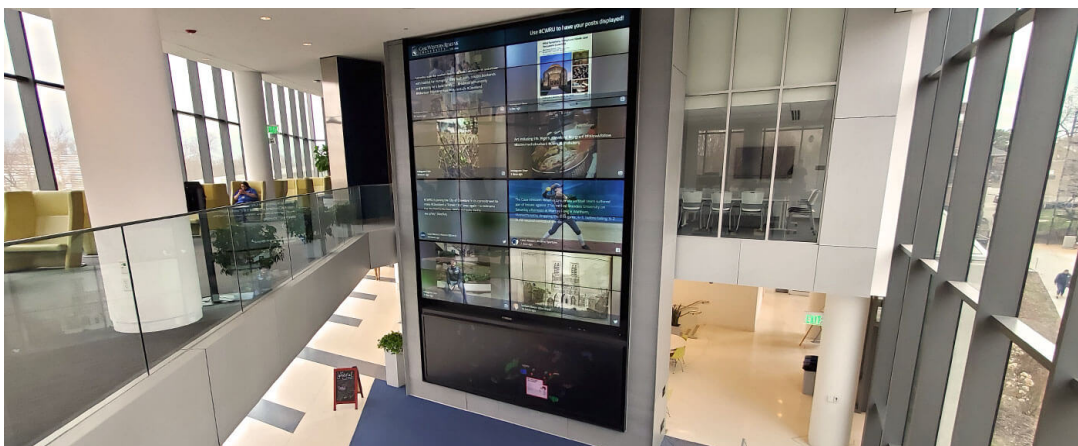
Set up permanent displays

University social media wall displays help create a sense of community. They foster interaction and engagement and are a great way to show school pride. You can also use them to spread relevant information to students, whether it's about cancelled classes or upcoming events, or just encourage them to share their campus experience.

Case Western Reserve University uses multi-story social media display

Case Western Reserve University set up a two-storey multimedia wall at the heart of the CWRU campus that serves as a communication hub and features the university's social media walls. For a few years now, the multimedia wall has also been home to the university's two social media walls.

The university wants to bring the campus together, not just physically in the university's central hub, the Tinkham Veale University Center, but also virtually with the help of social media. Since lots of people pass through the building, they wanted a way to display all of this information to them in an innovative and relevant way.



Their media wall, on which their two social walls are displayed, is designed to keep the Case community informed and connected to all that is happening on campus and in the greater Cleveland area. It's the very first thing you see when you walk into the "Tink".

This is the first time the "Tink" has used any sort of social media wall. It has been a success and has affected the way they market, and the way other departments market. CWRU quickly got a lot of requests from all over campus, asking to display certain department accounts or hashtags.

Every campus department posts cool and interesting content about their events and research and many of them now create posts especially with the media wall in mind. While they may have previously just posted a simple tweet, they now attach a photo or video knowing that it will be more dynamic when it shows up on the wall.

The media wall is also a nice selling point for conferences or workshops hosted at their venue. Often, these large events have a designated hashtag. They incorporate these hashtags into the wall, and event organisers love seeing content show up that's specifically about them and their guests.



Display it on your website

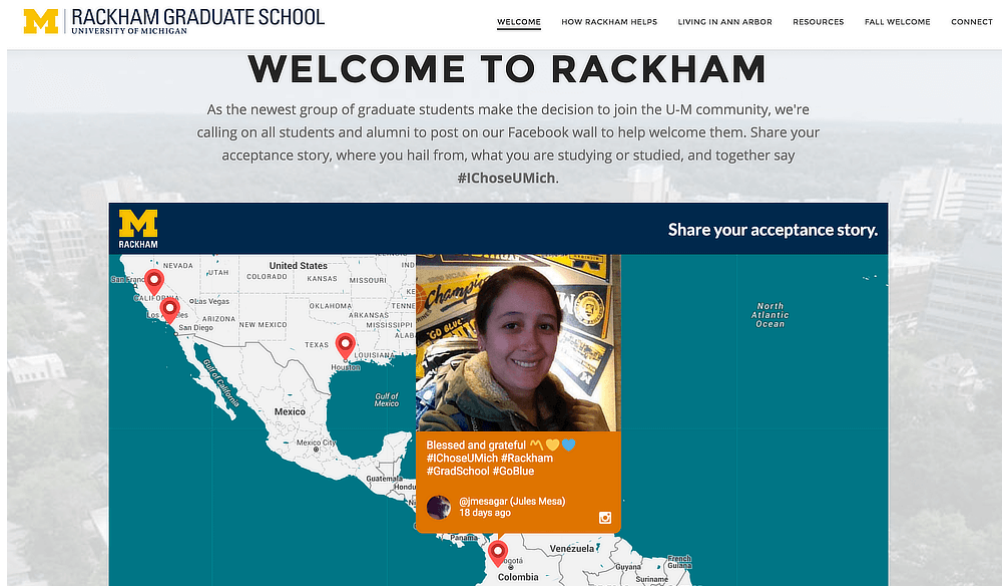
Using a social wall on the university website helps you keep students up to date with content that you already create for your social media channels. It also adds compelling social proof by displaying authentic content posted by your students. This is content that's highly influential and will encourage new students to pick your university over others.

The University of Michigan uses social media to connect students worldwide

Rackham Graduate School, the home of graduate education at the University of Michigan organised a hashtag campaign for Signing Day and has invited their incoming students to publicly declare #IChoseUMich on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, posting pictures, their hometown and what they'll be studying.

The communications team at Rackham pulled out all the stops for this Signing Day campaign. They set up an elaborate hashtag campaign, created a GIF to promote and visualise their use of the map theme, and launched a dedicated microsite that serves as a one-stop-shop to welcome new students in style.

The map-themed social hub is embedded front and central on the microsite showing posts from UMich graduate students all over the world.



All posts from the beginning of March leading up to Signing Day on April 15 were gathered on the #IChoseUMich social media wall. Current students and alumni were also invited to use the hashtag or submit posts in order to show the diversity of disciplines and backgrounds of the Rackham community.



#IChoseUMich lets new students celebrate on social media with photos, shout-outs, and in-the-moment excitement. The campaign demonstrates two key values of how Rackham serves its students: They support the diversity of Rackham graduate students' backgrounds and experiences. And they want to create a sense of connection and continuity among the new cohort, current students, and alumni. At the core of this campaign is a message of inclusion, that each student belongs here and that each student enhances the learning environment on campus.

For the campaign, the Walls.io map and wall were embedded into a welcome page, a kind of portal for new students to introduce them to campus life in Ann Arbor and the many resources available to them. Students are directed to this site when they receive their offer of admission, to help inform their decision-making. After they accept their offer, the university highlights specific resources throughout the summer to ease their transition into the fall semester.

UoM used the offer letters and matriculation confirmations to introduce the campaign and reached out directly to alumni and current students.

Checklist for getting started quickly

There are so many great ways of using social media for universities and colleges. With this eBook, you hopefully received some insight into why, when and how to use it. It's a lot of information and can feel a little overwhelming. Therefore we put together a little checklist of how to get started.

It's not about setting up the most impressive social media campaign, creating thousands of followers and increasing engagement rates by 1,000%. It is about getting started, testing what works and what doesn't. There is no universal way. Every campus is different, has different values, students and educational body. But you know them the best and can surely find the right approach for your school.

- Check what social media channels you are using currently. Where do you see engagement? Which ones drive traffic to your website?
- Define the overall goal you want to achieve
- Structure a campaign around that goal. Define the channels and the assets you need.
- Come up with a hashtag that is unique and easy to remember
- Be clear on what you want to achieve with your hashtag campaign and set goals
- Set up a social wall, add your sources and your hashtag as a keyword
- Create a short blurb that clearly states what your campaign is about and how people can take part
- Promote your hashtag online on social media, in newsletters, blog posts, social ads, etc.
- Promote your hashtag offline on flyers, posters, on location, etc.
- Show appreciation by retweeting and resharing the best posts using your own social media accounts
- Make use of user-generated content for your own marketing efforts
- Embed your social wall on your website or show it live on a screen






Cheat sheet: social media image sizes

As is generally known in social media marketing, images enhance the effect of social media posts. Figures show how big the difference is. For example, analyses by Buzzsumo for Facebook showed that posts with pictures generate 2.3 times as many interactions as those without pictures. The same applies to Twitter and co.

If you want to use this potential, it's not only about the content but also about the quality of your pictures. This means that they should be neither blurred nor cropped nor distorted at the edges. But what size is best for a Facebook post, a profile picture on Instagram or a cover picture on LinkedIn?

On the next page, you will find a cheat sheet with the most important image sizes for networks. Print it out, hang it next to your PC and you will always have the best image.

2020 Social Media Image Size Guidelines

 Facebook	Cover Photo	820 x 321 px
	Profile Picture	180 x 180 px
	Shared Image	1200 x 360 px
	Image with Shared Link	1200 x 628 px
	Stories	1080 x 1920 px
	Newsfeed Ads	1200 x 628 px
	Collection Ads	400 x 150 px
	Carousel Ads	1080 x 1080 px
 Instagram	Profile Photo	110 x 110 px
	Square Image	1080 x 1080 px
	Vertical Image	1080 x 1350 px
	Horizontal Image	1080 x 566 px
	Stories	1080 x 1920 px
	IGTV	1080 x 1920 px
 Twitter	Header Photo	1500 x 1500 px
	Profile Photo	400 x 400 px
	Shared Images	1024 x 512 px
 Youtube	Cover Photo	2560 x 1440 px
	Profile Picture	800 x 800 px
	Thumbnail	1280 x 720 px
 LinkedIn	Profile Picture	400 x 400 px
	Cover Photo	1536 x 768 px
	Post Images	1200 x 628 px



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