



WHITE PAPER

# The Social Campus 2017

Social media and digital  
transformation in higher education

**Hootsuite®**

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Social media and digital transformation in higher education

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# The Social Campus 2017

Thirteen years ago, Mark Zuckerberg developed Facebook in his college dorm room. He couldn't have predicted the impact that Facebook would have on social media. Since then, social media has fundamentally changed our culture. As a result, people today have expectations for real-time data, transparency, access, and immediacy in all their interactions.

Social technologies have transformed the communication landscape for higher education institutions—it's what we call the social campus. It's a phenomenon that's well-illustrated by the fact that 75 percent of the class of 2013 used social media to help them decide where to enroll. And today, the social campus is ubiquitous. From the lecture hall to the football stadium, social media extends past the boundaries of the campus itself—pulling admissions candidates into the school community and keeping alumni engaged with their alma mater long after graduation.

Both students and research initiatives are fueling much of the change. While students are inventing new ways to communicate, they are also embracing the next new thing before any other demographic. To keep up, higher education institutions need to be on the cusp of every new social trend.

90% of higher education institutions agreed that social media is a much more important part of their communications and marketing efforts than three years ago.<sup>1</sup>

In order to keep pace in such a dynamic environment, higher education institutions are moving away from the dedicated social media team to unite across the organization—integrating social media into their broader digital ecosystem. This cross-institution approach is enhancing the student experience, attracting and retaining students and top talent, and creating efficiencies across teams and departments.



# Social Campus Evolution

Communications and student services departments originally developed social media programs in isolation from one another, sometimes sharing best practices but rarely coordinating their efforts under one integrated strategy. In fact, a report from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) showed that 83 percent of departments handle their own social media activities.<sup>2</sup>

Departments have geared social media initiatives toward their own business goals, community responsibilities, and educational objectives. However, decentralized social media practices ultimately block collaboration among the numerous stakeholders that contribute to the student experience. Without shared strategies, technologies, and processes for social media, universities can create a confusing and risky communication environment that fails students and administrators alike.

Alternatively, we have the social campus. It's where social media is an organizational priority and a shared responsibility. In this framework, every department works within an overarching social media governance structure, yet is empowered to leverage social media in creative ways to meet its own objectives. Representatives from multiple departments participate in social communities not only to foster school-student relationships, but also to spark interdepartmental collaboration. With a coordinated strategy, the institution uses social media to create a common thread between every stage in the student lifecycle, from application to commencement and beyond.



A photograph of two women sitting at a wooden desk in an office setting. The woman on the left has blonde hair and is wearing a denim jacket over a striped shirt. The woman on the right has dark curly hair and is wearing a dark blazer over a light-colored shirt. They are both looking at a laptop screen. The laptop is a silver Apple MacBook. There are some papers and a white mug on the desk.

# Social Marketing and Communications

While some administrations are consolidating their social presence, others are taking a more decentralized approach.

Regardless of the organizational philosophy, school communications departments have a vital role to play in coordinating and supporting social media programs throughout the institution. Administrators in the communications office are now looking to establish their brand, build social media strategy, and develop a measurement framework that evaluates return on investment for social media efforts.

73% of communications/PR departments are responsible for creating, monitoring compliance with, and enforcing institutional social media policies.<sup>3</sup>

## Spread social reach across campus

To align every department's social media strategy, communications and IT departments should conduct a comprehensive audit of the organization's social media footprint.

### Administrations should use automated and thorough methods to uncover:

- Brand-related social profiles—including unauthorized, fraudulent, and duplicate accounts.
- Active accounts—who is responsible for them, and whether or not they are still attending or working for the institution.

A social media audit allows the IT team to uncover security risks, as well as offers the communications team a bird's eye view of the institution's social media activity.

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**Educational institutions can benefit from using a social relationship platform (SRP) in a number of ways:**

1. Communications departments should lock down all school-branded social media accounts within a centrally administered SRP.
2. Once the institution's key social media assets are secured in the SRP, the communications team can then provision appropriate levels of access to management, faculty, and staff in various departments.
3. By establishing a standard SRP, the communications team protects the institution's brand against security threats and enables every department on campus to collaborate effectively in social channels.
4. Communications can then provide guidance to departments regarding when and how to create new social media accounts. With some direction and advice, stakeholders throughout the institution can maximize their social media success without setting up redundant or ill-advised profiles.

**Before creating a campus-related account, employees can ask:**

- Who is the audience? What is the goal? What sort of content will be shared?
- Do we have the staffing and resources to maintain the account?
- Can this social media initiative be achieved through existing school accounts?
- How will collaboration with social media coordinators from other teams or departments flow?
- Which platform is most appropriate for the objectives? What other school accounts are already operating on that platform?



## Organizational map of the Social Campus

On the social campus, the entire institution works together under a common engagement strategy. At the center are the communications and IT departments, which help teams collaborate through effective workflows and a campus-wide social relationship platform. By coordinating their efforts and following shared brand policies, every department can engage students with a consistent voice.

### Optimize workflows across the organization

Whether communications teams want to approve every outbound message or simply support other groups with social media best practices, they are increasingly relied upon by other departments to coordinate interdepartmental workflows.

As a school expands its social media footprint, it must have processes in place for handing off incoming messages between teams. Students expect universities to provide a seamless experience on social media. In particular, admissions and student services require support from a wide variety of stakeholders, and communications is uniquely positioned to facilitate such cooperation.

Communications departments should promote an organization-wide content strategy to propel institutional goals.

### With a campus-wide social media content strategy, teams can:

- Work together across the organization to curate, schedule, and cross-promote social content. This kind of collaboration increases awareness of school programs, ensures consistency when it comes to branding, and allows teams to grow their following.
- Follow a measurement framework for social media efforts. When all departments use common metrics and technologies, communications departments can evaluate social media ROI for the whole organization.

### Social media in the president's office

School presidents play a large part in nurturing lasting relationships between the institution, its students and their families, and the community at large. Not surprisingly, most presidents are embracing social media to break down barriers.

#### Tips for school presidents:

- Use an authentic voice. Do this by using a personal social media handle instead of an official school account.
- Offer a personal take on school events and student life, and participate in campus culture by engaging directly with students.
- Use their position to draw attention to faculty experts, and to promote student achievements in academia, athletics, and the arts.



# Recruitment and Enrollment

A stronger economy, shifting demographics, and decreased high-school graduation rates are just some of the challenges facing admissions teams in higher education institutions. Decreased enrollments equate to falling revenue, so it's unsurprising that 85 percent of higher education leaders are concerned about maintaining enrollment rates.<sup>4</sup> Two-thirds of private colleges and more than half of public post-secondary institutions missed at least one recruitment goal in the latest admissions cycle.<sup>5</sup>

But the news isn't all bad. Institutions are looking at new ways to engage prospects and attract new students. The most successful institutions have begun targeting prospective students where they are most engaged—on social media. And there's no shortage of stats to back it up. According to a 2015 survey, an estimated 78 percent of college-bound high school students indicated that college websites make a difference in their perception of the institution. Large percentages of high school students—60 percent of seniors and 55 percent of juniors—stated that they are more likely to consider institutions that use digital strategies such as email, text messages, and social media to communicate.<sup>6</sup>

Given the online habits of today's youth, it's vital to engage potential candidates in the same online spaces where they seek admissions advice and share their thoughts on post-secondary schools.



The admissions office at the University of Southern California (USC) is leveraging social media creatively. It recognized that prospective students were seeking more detailed information about campus housing. In response, USC created a YouTube series inspired by MTV show “Crisbs”. The series showcased a variety of student dorms to provide a glimpse of what campus life is really like. To increase engagement and social sharing, candidates were asked to vote for their favorite dorm in the series.<sup>7</sup>



## Begin with listening

Admissions departments want to connect with the next generation of students on social media. To do this, they must begin with a well-thought-out plan for gauging public perception and brand sentiment. This approach should also aim to understand the concerns and drivers of prospective students.

For example, we notice that candidates often post Twitter messages about universities and colleges without referencing their official account handles. The same kind of users also share their thoughts online through external review sites, blogs, and forums. In order to move the needle on enrollment targets, the admissions department should incorporate social media listening into its overall strategy for relationship management. By pulling data from social media into their customer relationship management (CRM) technology, admissions staff are able to bridge the divide between an online persona and a school application. With this socially integrated view of admitted students, the admissions department can make better predictions, lose fewer recruits to competitors, and hit enrollment targets. Now armed with better intelligence through the use of social media, the admissions department can employ a number of engagement tactics to convert recruits into registrants:

### 1. Boost enrollment with online engagement

Social media allows the admissions staff to initiate personalized, two-way dialogues with prospective students. Instead of simply telling candidates that their school is great, admissions can provide real value by answering questions with a human voice.

The department can also actively solicit inquiries from students to cover a range of topics, such as making sure every applicant understands the admission process. For example, the University of Northern Florida uses Twitter to invite applicants to ask about their application status and then tells them when to expect a decision.

As an added benefit, these interactions ultimately showcase the kind of experience students can expect from the institution.



### 2. Foster connections through an online community

An estimated 50 percent of students researching schools want to connect with current students.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, admissions staff should encourage the student body to be on social media—similar to how they enlist active students as campus guides. By directing hopeful candidates to social media communities where current students are present, they can build a rapport, discuss the details of campus life, and establish a knowledgeable point of contact for candidates.

### 3. Fill your content strategy with campus experiences

When it comes to content curation, admissions staff should collect and share the most engaging social media content across campus. Whether it's material generated by official school accounts, or the personal social media handles of students or faculty—sharing the experiences of real people is a good place to start. For example, to attract student athletes, admissions teams can share the gameday Twitter feed of the school's football team.

Boosting social media posts via paid advertising is growing—59 percent of higher education institutions say they promote updates on Facebook and 18 percent advertise on Twitter.



# Student Engagement

A growing number of universities and colleges are using social media to prove that they care about the well-being of the student body.

## 1. Improve customer service with real-time responses

Staff can monitor student feedback and comments on social media in real time. This also provides the opportunity to address any concerns and issues before they escalate. Using keyword search streams, school representatives can uncover messages that aren't directed to the school's official social media channels. By engaging on the social platforms, blogs, forums, and other online communities that are popular among the student body, school administrators also provide greater visibility to their official channels and resources.

Resolving student inquiries on public channels is not without its challenges. Administrators in student services must balance the need for efficient customer service with the imperative to protect student privacy.

Here's what student services departments can do to stay compliant with institutional policies and regulatory requirements:

- Provide guidelines for taking conversations offline and for removing student-generated content from public channels.
- Employ automated systems to immediately remove non-compliant messages that have been erroneously published by staff or students (e.g. credit card information, account numbers, and other private data).

## 2. Strengthen campus culture by promoting student activities

Higher education institutions are increasingly using social media to enrich the student experience by promoting clubs, activities, and events happening on campus. Staff can leverage the institution's main social media accounts to share content from across the wider student community. This cross-promotion raises the profile of niche groups and helps students organize themselves around shared interests.

When looking to engage students in campus culture, it's critical to bridge the online and offline worlds. Here's how:

- Use location-based services to build student advocacy for campus landmarks, venues, and facilities (e.g. checking-in at a campus restaurant, location tagging a park, etc.).
- Use hashtags to promote events across multiple social media networks to help like-minded students connect.
- Cross-promote content on visual channels like Instagram, Snapchat, Youtube, and Tumblr.



### 3. Drive fan engagement and recruitment in athletics

Athletics departments are taking to social media to enhance the fan experience. They use compelling visual mediums such as Instagram and Snapchat to take fans behind the scenes, as well as provide live, in-game updates on Twitter. For example, some of the biggest and most active fan communities are on Facebook—it's where athletics programs promote interaction among supporters and stir up friendly rivalry with other school teams.

With a prepared strategy for listening, engagement, and analytics, athletics departments can gain an intimate understanding of their fans. They can discover exactly which players, rivalries, and in-game moments are driving fan engagement and build those concepts into their marketing strategy across all media channels. Furthermore, by integrating web analytics technologies, athletics programs can measure how a social media campaign can lead to conversions like the purchase of game tickets or online merchandise.

#### A solid social media strategy can also help attract candidates interested in joining a sports team at school:

The University of Tennessee football program garnered attention across the NCAA with one of the top recruiting classes in the country, despite having posted four straight losing campaigns. A key to the program's success was the social media strategy led by head coach Butch Jones. Each time Jones made a Twitter connection with a student, he demonstrated the accessibility of the coaching staff for other potential recruits. Jones was assisted by someone who knew the ins and outs of social media, an early recruit named Vic Wharton. Over a 13 month period, Wharton connected with sought-after recruits through thousands of phone calls, text messages, and social media interactions. Wharton's contribution was instrumental in convincing top athletes to join him at the University of Tennessee.<sup>9</sup> Working together, a dedicated coach and a social media expert proved that open communication can inspire team loyalty before the season even kicks off.





# Alumni and Fundraising

According to an annual survey conducted by the Council for Aid to Education, contributions to colleges and universities reached an all-time high of \$34.75 billion in 2014.<sup>10</sup>

## Strengthen fundraising

With social media usage on the rise in every demographic, development offices should incorporate social media into their outreach and fundraising for both young and old alumni.

62% of institutions use social media channels for donor stewardship or to connect with current donors <sup>11</sup>

According to a 2014 Inside Higher Ed article, colleges are “increasingly turning to one-day social media blitzes to raise money, especially from their youngest alumni.”<sup>12</sup> However, methods of solicitation should be relevant to each potential donor, and the most effective stewardship programs use a multichannel approach to reach the right audiences with the most compelling messages.

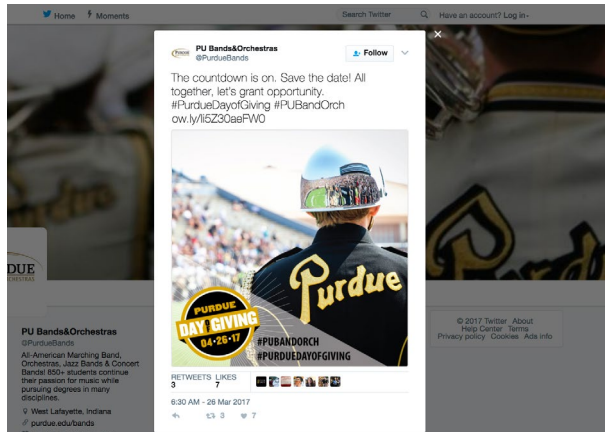
On April 29, 2015, Purdue launched their second “Purdue Day of Giving,” raising more than \$13 million with nearly 10,000 gifts in just 24 hours.<sup>13</sup>



Together the two branded hashtags, #IGave and #PurdueDayofGiving, generated 10,000 mentions and 20 million impressions throughout the month—16 million of which occurred on just one day.

## Relationship management for the long haul

Universities must think of alumni relationship management in terms of the entire student lifecycle, which begins at acceptance into the school rather than graduation. When considering the entire student lifecycle, alumni relations becomes the responsibility of multiple departments—not just one.



Upon graduation, students are thinking about job prospects and major life decisions. Countless other priorities are competing for their attention, and the alumni relations department cannot afford to play catch-up in the race for social media connections. One way to pass the baton is to encourage current students to engage with alumni on LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social channels, before they graduate. In doing so, the school can facilitate employment opportunities for students and demonstrate the mutual benefits of a long-term relationship with the institution, both online and offline.

## Build a united school

Alumni can give back to their alma mater in more ways than just financially. Graduates have a deep and diverse pool of knowledge that higher education institutions can draw upon to put towards curriculum development and other program improvements. Therefore, the social media strategy of the alumni relations department should help alumni build the future of the school with their minds as well as through their financial contributions.





# Risk Management

## Prepare for real-time crisis communication

During an emergency, students, staff, and news outlets inevitably turn to social media to seek out and share information. When events are developing in real time, campus officials must be ready with a prepared plan for monitoring and communicating through social channels. Rather than improvising a response on the fly, institutions should integrate social media into their overall crisis communication strategy.

Only 56 percent of colleges and universities have a social media crisis management plan and most fail to respond to social media conversations in crisis situations.<sup>14</sup>

The school's emergency management group should regularly simulate a variety of likely scenarios—anything from a dangerous incident to a snow day. During a crisis—or any situation that causes a spike in social media activity—institutions must be prepared to do the following:

- Monitor multiple social networks for real-time information from students and other sources.
- Centralize control of school social media accounts in order to broadcast accurate and timely updates across all networks and prevent the transmission of misinformation.

## Implement risk management for classroom social media accounts

Official school social media accounts are at high risk of being compromised. Consider the reasons why:

- Large number of people manage them.
- Numerous profiles on each social media network, typically managed by different teams.
- Passwords are often shared.
- No record or accountability for an individual's posts.

To effectively secure classroom social media accounts and to reduce the risk of compromise and damage to an organization's brand, the following preventative measures should be taken:

- Implement a social relationship platform to manage users, accounts, and workflows.
- Eliminate shared account authorization by giving each user separate credentials.
- Put double-approval systems in place to avoid social media misfires like posting to the wrong account and reducing the risk of human error.
- Approve and revoke access to accounts without sharing passwords.
- Implement automated security notifications to suspicious activity on accounts.



# Social Learning and Research

We have more technology than ever to help us stay efficient and connected. Despite the benefits, these technologies present a different problem to the workplace: a digital skills gap. We have rushed the introduction of many new solutions, to the point where existing workers are falling behind and recent graduates are not equipped with the skills needed for many industries.

Social media—and the solutions to help manage it—fall into the category of in-demand digital skills. While over 90 percent of college-aged students use social media, many of them enter the workforce without practical skills to help them manage it in a business environment.<sup>15</sup>

More schools are integrating social media into the curriculum to prepare students for graduation. The benefits to this are twofold—firstly, students have presentable social media profiles to help them advance their careers rather than hinder them. Secondly, socially-skilled graduates are ready to put their skills into action in the workplace.

Employees not knowing how to use the right technology tools is costing the U.S. economy over \$1 trillion per year.<sup>16</sup>



# The Future of the Social Campus

The widespread adoption of the social campus has already begun. It's advancing simultaneously with the digital revolution in education—challenging universities and colleges to rethink the way information is imparted to students.

As the benefits of open communication and social collaboration become even more apparent in the classroom, institutions will empower a larger and more diverse cross-section of their staff and faculty to participate in social media initiatives. Every employee will be given the platform and training they need to collaborate at scale—both in and outside the institution. New insights will emerge from social media intelligence, allowing universities and colleges to capture and expand institutional knowledge. Surfacing in real time, these insights will drive better decisions by students, staff, and other constituencies. Best of all, social media will continue to deepen relationships across the institution for every generation of students and faculty going forward.

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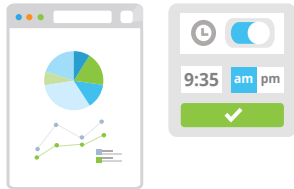
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## Social Marketing



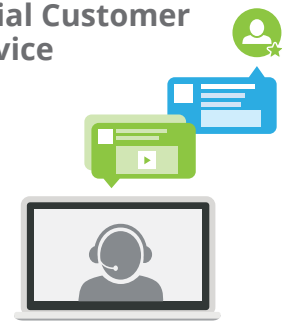
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## Employee Advocacy



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Hootsuite is the most widely used platform for managing social media, loved by over 10 million people around the globe and trusted by more than 800 of the Fortune 1000. Hootsuite Enterprise empowers organizations to execute business strategies for the social media era and scale social media activities across multiple teams, departments, and regions. Our versatile platform supports a thriving ecosystem of social networks complemented by 200+ business applications and integrations, allowing organizations to extend social media into existing systems and programs.

Along with our channel and agency partners, we help organizations build deeper relationships with customers, stay connected to the needs of the market, grow revenue, and draw meaningful insights from social media data. Innovating since day one, we continue to help organizations pioneer the social media landscape and accelerate their success through product training, group training and tailored organizational training, as well as security and compliance services.

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