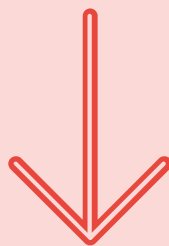
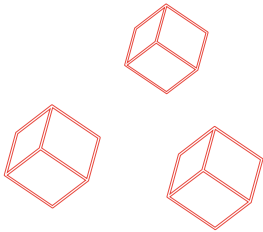


The State of Social in Education 2020.



Social Media for Higher Education

Given that social media and technology have become an integral part of our daily lives, the obvious place for students to look for information on what schools and universities have to offer is—of course—social media.



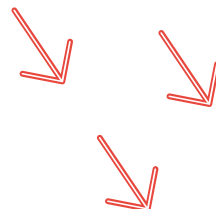
“If you are on social media, and you are not learning, not laughing, not being inspired or not networking, then you are using it wrong.”

— Germany Kent.

At the time of writing this report, the world was in the presence of a global pandemic that deprived many students of taking the much-awaited campus tours.



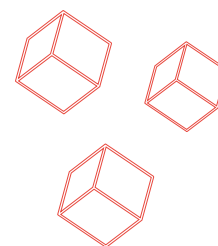
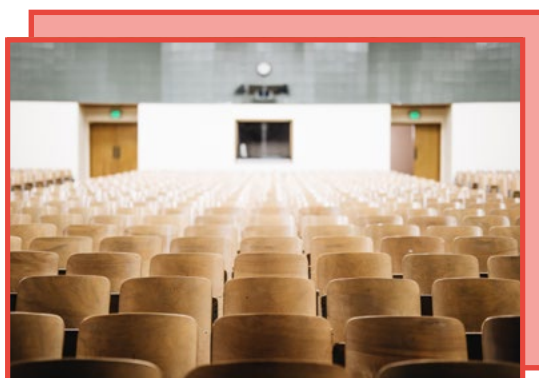
But thank God for social media because students still have the option of touring the campus through pictures and videos on the universities’ social media pages.



This is just one of many instances of how social media can act as an indispensable resource for the student and alumni community. The informal and approachable nature of social media encourages students and teachers to actively participate on the platform.

The process of executing and monitoring content, managing a school's reputation, and ensuring the safety of staff and students on social media may sound like a lot. However, when implemented correctly, **social media is the perfect avenue to raise your school's profile for students, alumni, and the social community.**

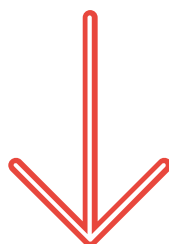
So, where do schools and universities stand today in their social media practices?



To answer that question, we looked into the social media activity of five top educational institutions and we're about to show you all about their social strategy on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. There are quite a few valuable takeaways for any educational brand that aspires to achieve a vibrant social presence.

On top of all that, we've included 10 topline statistics on the education industry by analyzing the performance of over 20 Universities on social media in the past year.

We hope you get **inspired!**

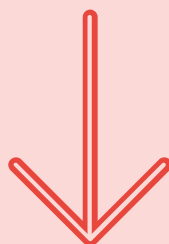


3



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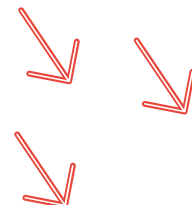


10 social media stats marketers in the education industry should know

We reviewed the social media activity of **20 different universities** and here's what's what.

It summarizes some of the trends, platforms, and behaviors that every marketer in the education industry should be monitoring this year. If you're looking to find something specific, Falcon's benchmarking functionality can help.

- Universities are killing it on Instagram and managed to collectively grow their follower base by 42% in the past year.
- People are less interested in following their favorite university on Facebook where the follower base grew by only 3%.
- There's a monthly average of 96 tweets tweeted, which makes Twitter the social network with the highest posting volume.
- Meanwhile, universities have very little to say on LinkedIn as the channel saw only 8 posts a month on average.
- A good chunk of content being published on social by universities attributes to photos (52%), while videos take up only 28% of the total content.
- Universities use paid promotion on only 8% of their total posts on Facebook. Which brings it to an average of 3 promoted posts per month.
- Instagram steals the show once again, receiving the highest average interactions per post of 6,203 than any other network.
- Facebook is far behind on interactions with only 715 as the average interactions per post.
- The network with the highest posting volume didn't fare well either. On Twitter, the average interactions per post is 127.
- It takes about 15 minutes for universities to reply to 24.5% of the total tweets on Twitter.



Introducing our top five educational brands on social

The five institutions on this list are the crème de la crème of the academic world that go above and beyond with their social media strategy. From speaking the social media vernacular of gifs and emojis to sharing engaging and informative content, these five institutions truly stand out for their exceptional use of social media.

1. Harvard University

It's no surprise to find Harvard at the top of the list. The world-renowned Ivy league has a reputation and prestige that's hard to beat. **The school's social media following reflects its stellar reputation** with a combined fan following of 8 million followers across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Their content strategy focuses on everything from covering the interests of students, alumni, and faculty to sharing updates and achievements of their community which includes Nobel laureate professors and notable alumni figures like The Obamas, Mark Zuckerberg and T.S. Eliot to name a few.

2. Yale University

Yale University traces its roots to the 17th century, and has grown and evolved as one of the most prestigious Ivy League schools in the country. **Yale's social media presence speaks volumes about its research capabilities.** The school's Facebook and Twitter channels highlight the work of its associates, students, and faculty in the arts, politics, business, and just about every other field of note. A stroll through their Instagram feed will give you a glimpse into the campus life, Yale's beauty at sunset, and its rich history.



3. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

MIT is yet another elite university that is best known for its programs in engineering and physical sciences. The university's commitment to education, research, and innovation are highly reflected on their social media pages too. The school has an active fan following close to 1.3 million followers on Facebook which boasts content related to their recent developments in their specialized fields, videos of sports events and lectures, and even gifs of baby Yoda welcoming the newly admitted students. **Their vibrant social media presence filled with informative content is sure to leave anyone inspired and enthused.**

4. University of Michigan.

University of Michigan is a major research university that has a lot to boast about on social. The school's social media pages never run out of content that highlight the works and achievements of its community. From sharing videos of lectures and school events to interviews that share the work of its notable professors, U-M is very active on social. **University of Michigan's use of Instagram stories deserves special attention.** The school shares "Michigan news" as weekly highlights of some of their greatest findings.

5. Stanford University

Stanford's expertise in the fields of technology and research makes its social media pages a haven of informative content on artificial intelligence, humanities and science, medicine, education, food, and beyond. Stanford's Twitter account, which boasts over 700K followers, **is the place to be to treat oneself with materials that spark intellectual engagement and debate.** Not to mention its picturesque Instagram feed that gives a deep look into what life at Stanford is like.



Social strategy

on → Facebook ←

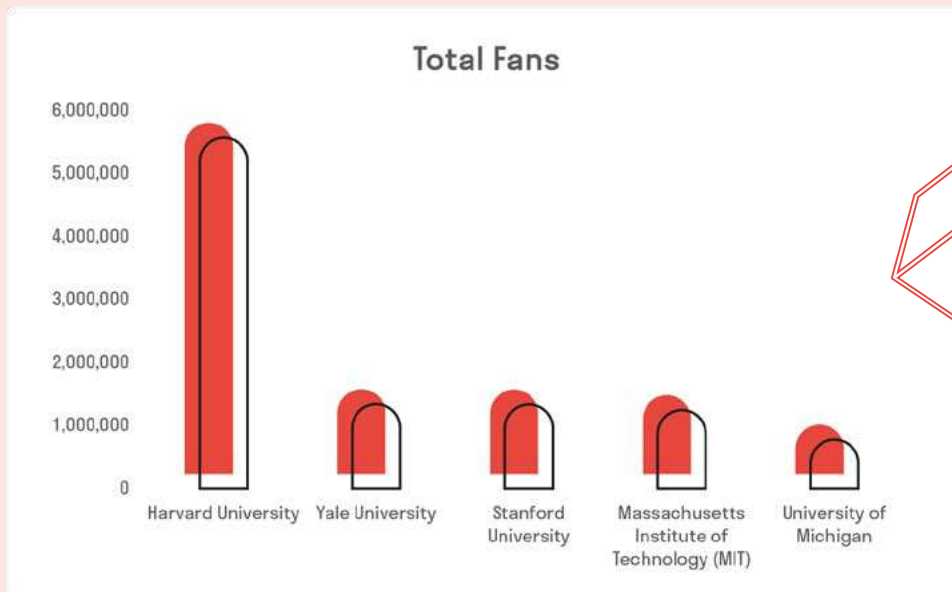
Facebook, originally created just for the members of Harvard University, looks vastly different from what it did in 2004. But no longer is it merely a place for social connections and memes. **From politics to baby Yoda, Facebook has got it all.**

In this section, we look at the social media activity of the five education institutions on Facebook **from April 30, 2019, to April 30, 2020**. It revealed the following insights...

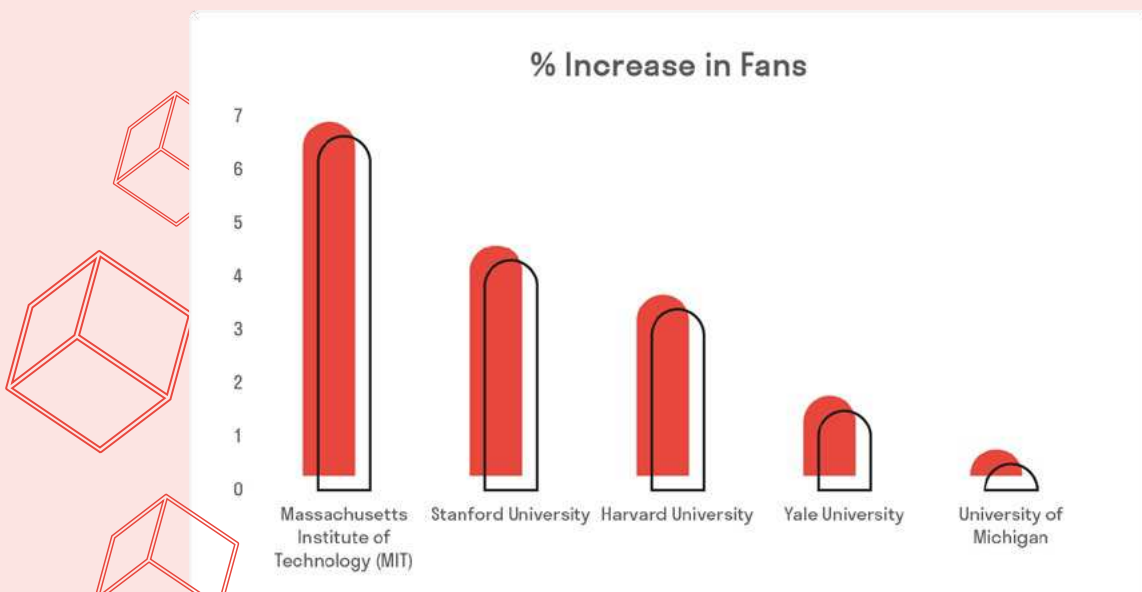


Audience size

Facebook continues to be the biggest platform for our education brands. All five universities have an active presence on the platform. **Harvard University and Stanford University have the largest audience size with 5.6M and 1.3M fans respectively.**

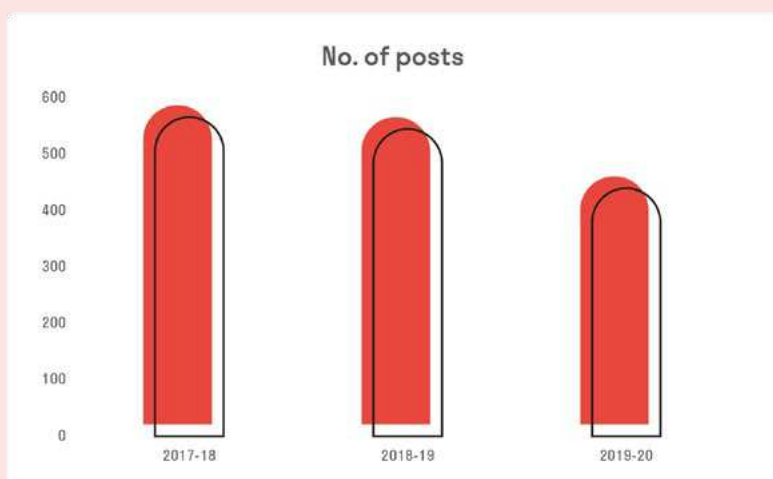


While Harvard University has the most fans, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) had the **highest audience growth rate of 6.6%**. This means that MIT added an impressive 77,000 new fans in the past year.



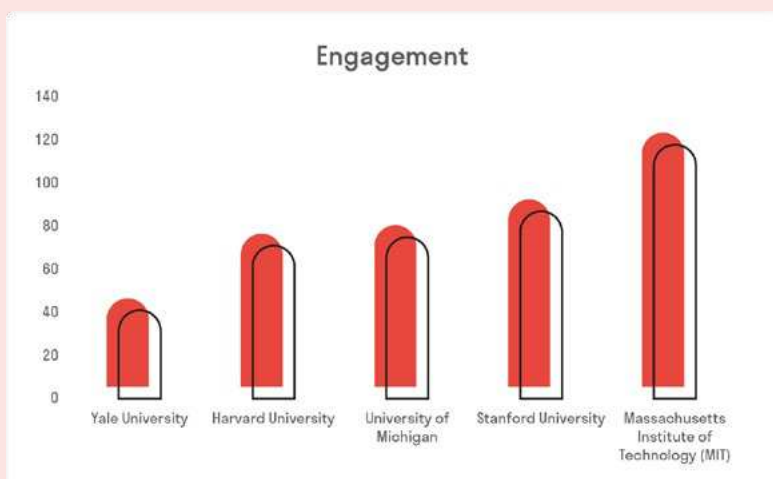
Posting frequency and engagement

On average, the **universities posted over 440 times on Facebook** during the time period. From collectively posting over 500 times (566 and 545 times on average in 2017 and 2018 respectively), there is a considerable decrease in the volume of posts being published the following year.



Benchmarking fact:

The average number of posts per year for the education industry is 504.



With **649 posts**, Yale University had the highest volume of published content. **Stanford University** only posted **228 times**, but actually saw the second-highest average engagement after the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

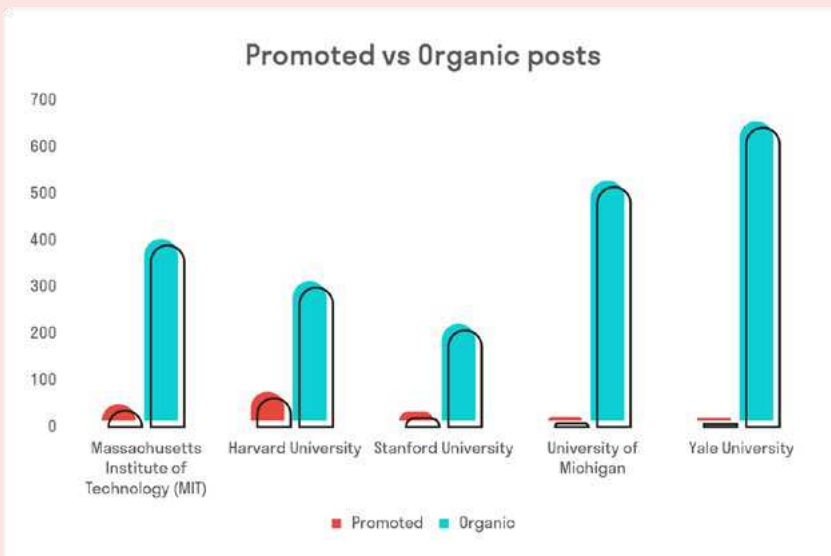
Teaching moment:

More isn't necessarily better. Don't overwhelm your audience with content on Facebook – be selective about what you're publishing. Spend more time creating better Facebook posts, and less time creating *a lot* of Facebook posts.



Promoted Content

All five of the universities we're investigating use the opportunity to promote their content on Facebook. In the year we've looked at, Harvard University had the greatest number of promoted posts (61), while Yale University shared the most organic posts (641).



Despite promoting only a relatively small number of posts, **Yale University saw the biggest surge in engagement** after promoting their Facebook content. On average, the universities promoted just 6% of their Facebook content.

6 promotional hacks that don't cost money

- Create different posts for different channels
- Add a call to action to your posts
- Ask your network to share your posts
- Get more people involved in the content creation
- Use industry-specific hashtags
- Ask questions to spark debate



Content Strategy

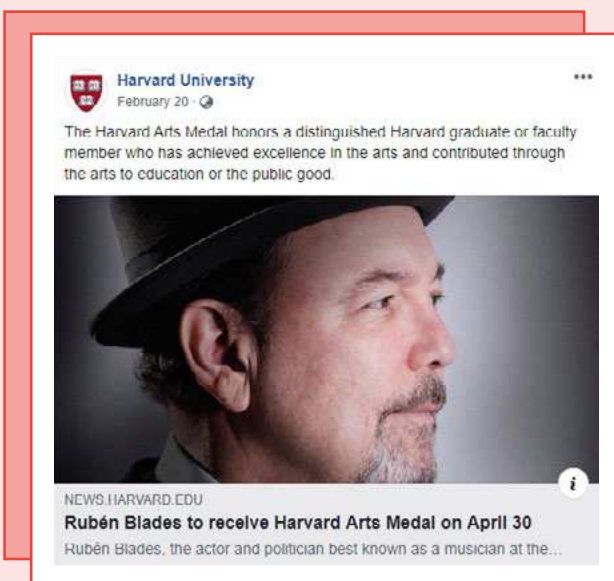
There's an overarching content theme as seen on all five universities' Facebook pages, and **that theme is community.**

To drive culture and nurture the feeling of community, universities regularly post about events, the faces of its students and faculty, and even beautifully captured images of the campus to show how great life is for their students.

The most popular video of the year goes to Yale University with the video of their mascot, Handsome Dan, barking orders at the Yale University Swimming and Diving team.



In December 2019, Stanford university celebrated its women's' volleyball team winning the NCAA title.



Appreciation posts and shout-outs for achievements of their students, faculty, and alumni also form a huge chunk of the content strategy on Facebook. For example, Harvard University posted to honor one of their graduates for achieving excellence in the field of art.



10 quick content ideas for universities to share on Facebook



- Best study spots on campus
- Day in the life (...of your favorite professor maybe)
- Study abroad experiences
- How to pick your major
- College essay inspiration
- What I learned my freshman year
- What to pack? The full list
- Campus dining recommendations
- Recap of alumni events
- Guide to visiting campus



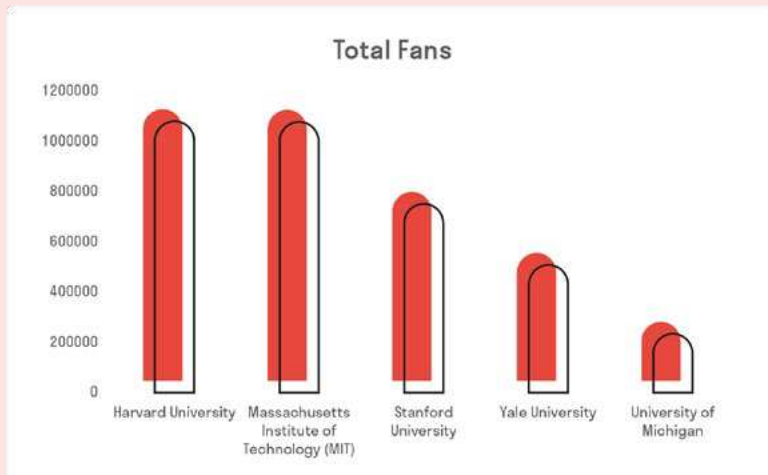


Social strategy → on Twitter ←

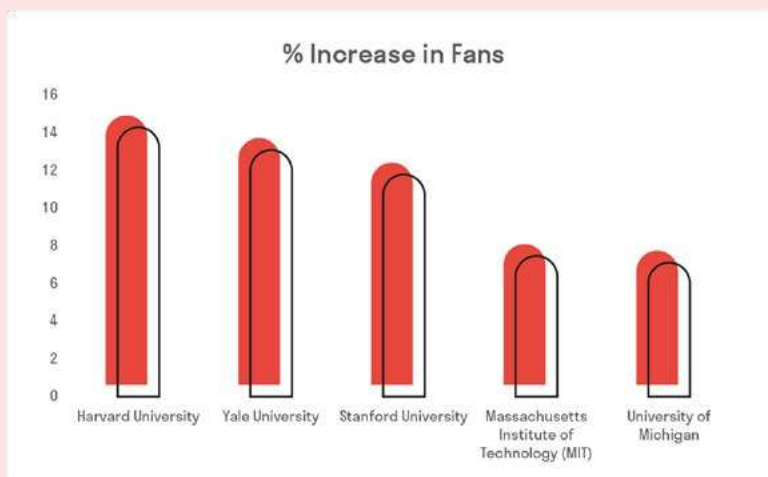
Next up, we've got Twitter. This massive repository of human thoughts, emotions, and right-now experiences boasts over 150 million users worldwide engaging in fleeting conversations daily. Let's dive into the social media activity of the five educational institutions on Twitter from **April 30, 2019, to April 30, 2020.**



Audience size and engagement



Harvard University and MIT share the highest audience size of 1.1M followers each. They're followed by Stanford that has 752.2K followers.

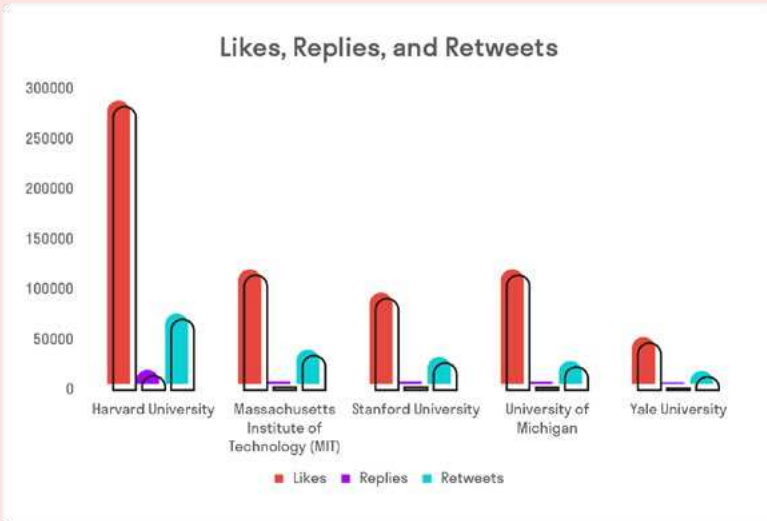


Harvard also had the highest fan growth at 14.3%, adding an impressive **136,000 new fans** in the analyzed time period.

Teaching moment: Weekly Twitter Routine

- Tweet trending content (news, memes, videos, etc.)
- Take note of follower questions for future content
- Share content from a top influencer in your industry
- Use DMs to establish a relationship with influencers

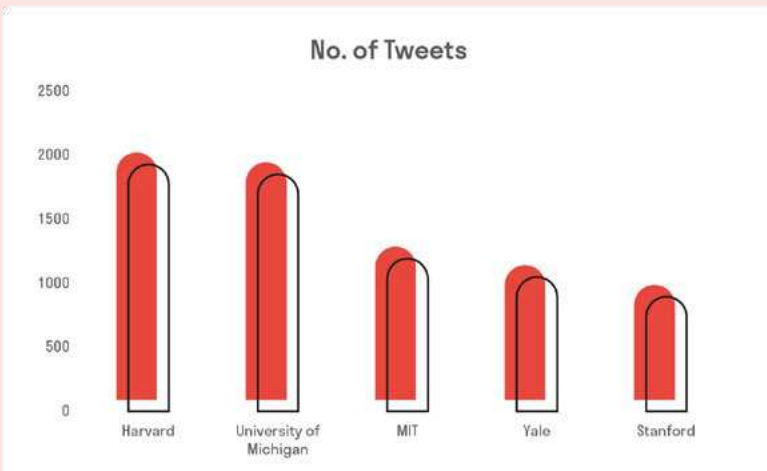




When we look at engagement, **Harvard was retweeted the most** and also had the highest number of likes and replies overall. Quite the conversation makers those Harvard staffers.

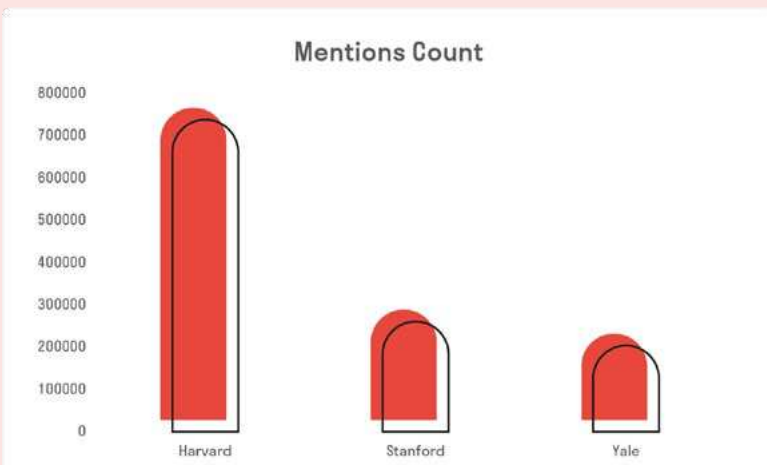
Posting frequency

On average, the **universities tweeted over 1,385 tweets on Twitter**, which brings it to 115 tweets per month, during the analyzed time period.



Benchmarking fact:

The education industry averages 96 tweets posted per month.



Harvard University had the highest volume of tweets (1,930 tweets) while Stanford University had the least (897 tweets) over the course of one year. **Harvard also had (by far) the highest volume of mentions** followed by Stanford and then Yale.



Content Strategy

Twitter seems to be the go-to platform for each of our five universities when it comes to establishing themselves as **thought leaders in the field of research and academia.**



Promoting the stellar research capabilities of their institutions, communicating the latest developments in various fields, and highlighting the work and achievement of its community dominates the content shared on each of their Twitter accounts.

When they're not busy promoting their latest breakthrough in the fields of medicine, art, or engineering, they frequently discuss matters of social politics. On occasion, though, the five universities engage in light banter discussing things like food or sports.



Stanford even has a separate Twitter account dedicated exclusively to football updates.





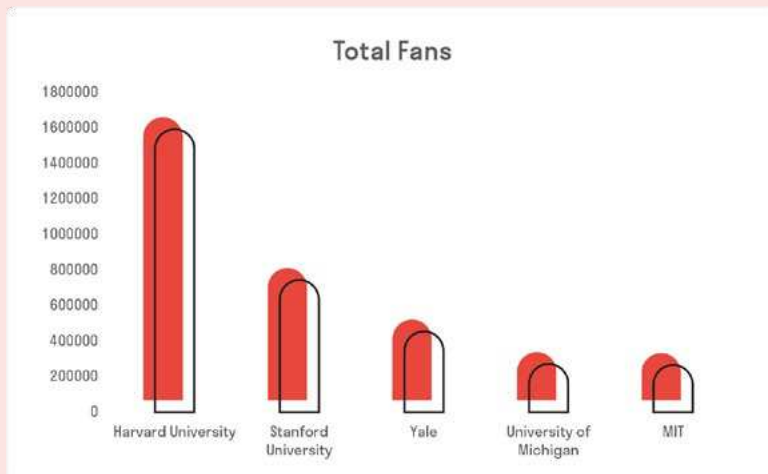
Social strategy → on Instagram ←

Let's move on to Instagram. Since its launch in 2010, Instagram has become mighty successful. So successful in fact, that it seems like everyone — even Handsome Dan — is on Instagram. For reference, we look at the social media activity of the five institutions on Instagram from **April 30, 2019, to April 30, 2020.**



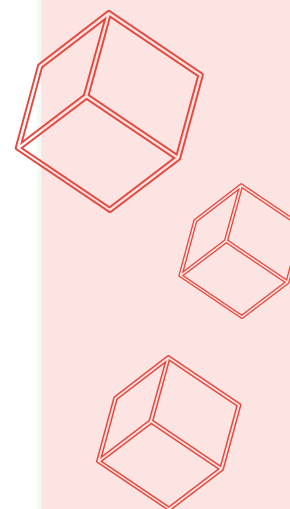
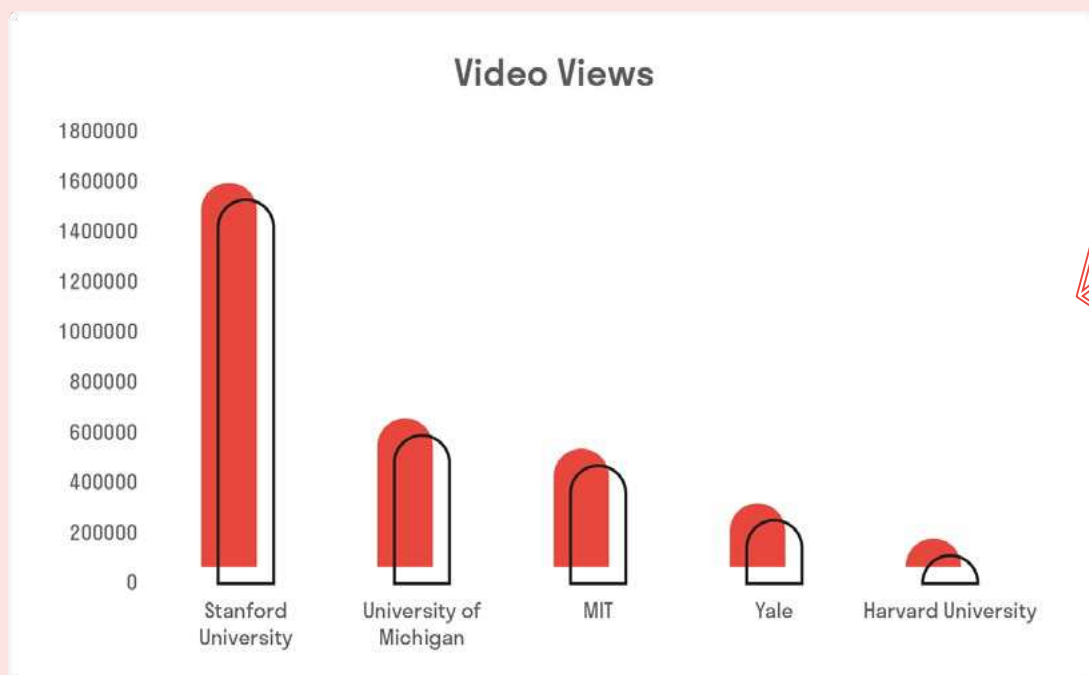
Audience size and engagement

Harvard has the highest audience size with **1.5M followers on Instagram** followed by Stanford that has 747,000 followers.



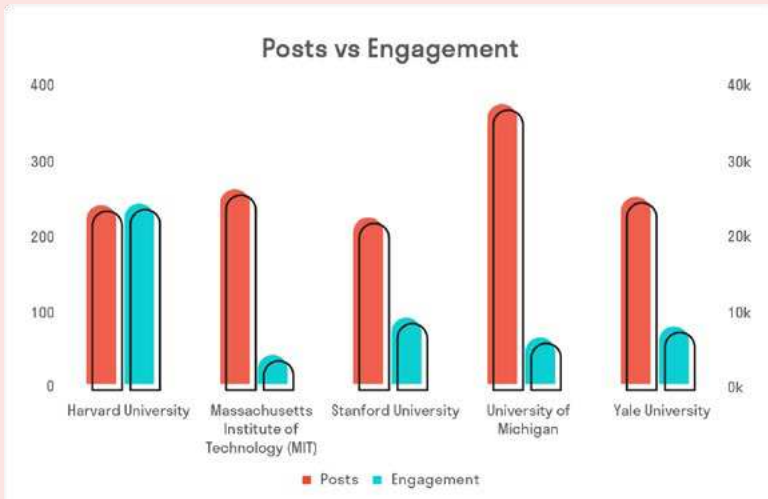
While Harvard University had the greatest number of followers, **Yale had the highest follower growth at 42.6%**. This means that Yale added an impressive 136,000 new fans in the analyzed time period.

In terms of engagement, Harvard University had the highest average engagement score of 23,808, **while Stanford University posted the videos that (by far) got the most views.**



Posting frequency

On average, the **universities collectively posted over 265 times**. That's 22 posts per month on Instagram during the time period.



Benchmarking fact:

The education industry's average number of posts per month on Instagram is 19.

The University of Michigan had the highest volume of posts (369 posts) while **Stanford University had the lowest (220 posts)**. Despite their low posting frequency, Stanford University saw the second-highest average engagement on posts after Harvard University.

Popular Hashtags

Whether it's **#mondaymotivation** and **#throwbackthursday** or branded hashtags like **#GoStanford** and **#Harvard19**, these institutions are totally acing the hashtag game.

While MIT's somewhat obvious hashtag **#MIT** was the most frequently used hashtag (it was used on 203 out of 257 posts), Harvard's **#Harvard19** had the highest average engagement of 27,155 in the analyzed period.

Teaching moment:

Using relevant, targeted hashtags on your posts and stories is still one of the best ways to get discovered by new audiences on Instagram. Adding hashtags to your Instagram strategy can translate into more engagement, more followers, and more awareness.



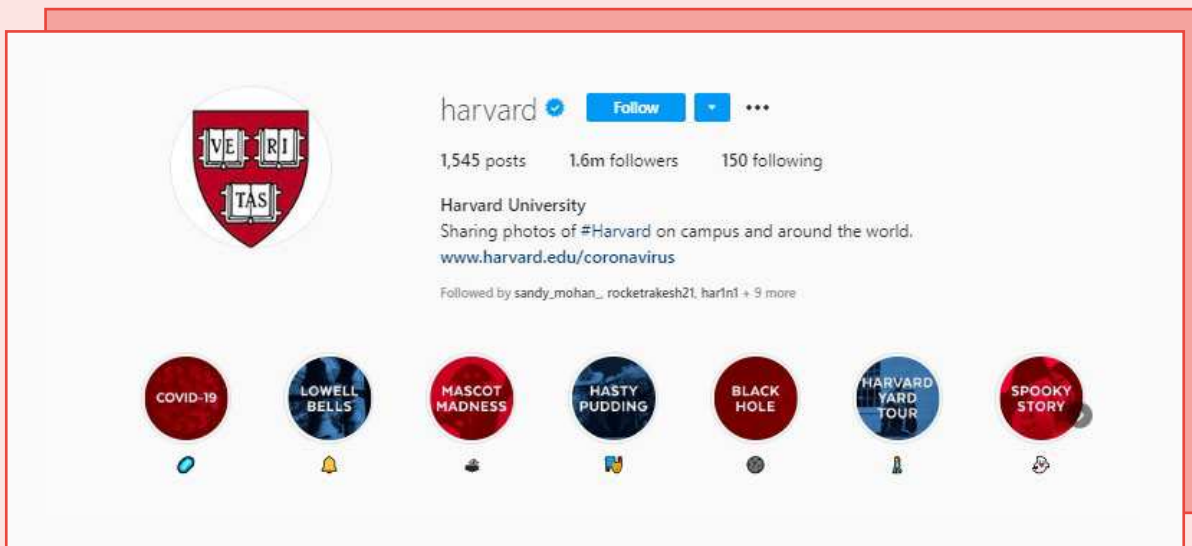
Content Strategy

There's no place like Instagram for brands to deliver a visual treat to their audience.

Snapshots of the residence halls, the classrooms, the celebrations, and the outdoor spaces help students decide on a school by offering a glimpse of what university life is like.



Instagram stories are also heavily used by our five education institutions. By showing their audience a visual tour of its campus, hosting games online, and running online polls, they showcase the culture and identity of each school. As part of their social strategy, stories are also saved as highlights on their page, so followers can see them whenever they want.



Stanford, for one, shares a lot of video content in the form of IGTV. They even ran a series of videos on their faculty members, asking them to share personal stories that shaped their life or career.



As our five universities so elegantly showcase, following a consistent theme of hues, angles, themes, or even captions on your Instagram feed can greatly help with brand recognition.



Take the University of Michigan for example.

Their Instagram grid consistently used the colors of their university logo, which spark instant brand recall.



And the rule can be applied at campaign level too. The orange grid featuring prominent women of U-M and their inspiring stories was shared as part of U-M's Women's Day campaign.



How did Universities react to COVID-19?

This report wouldn't really be complete without exploring what brands in the education industry did on social media during the COVID-19 crisis.

Even if a lot of our day-to-day activities came to a grinding halt when WHO announced the global pandemic, **there was one place that was still buzzing with activity: social media.**

From posting about the safety of their employees and customers to sharing ideas on how to stay entertained and safe during the lockdown, a lot of brands have come together to spread awareness and do what they can to combat the virus.

Which brings us to this question: **What did the academic world do to stay connected with their online community?**

In this section, we explore the social media activity of our five universities during the COVID-19 crisis.

3 best practices for managing social media in a crisis.

1

Speed is everything.

An immediate social media response is key when any crisis hits.

2

Monitor social media 24/7.

This allows you to get a handle on the situation before it gets out of control.

3

Plan ahead.

Do your best to prepare, so your team knows what to do in case of a crisis.

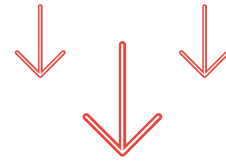


Posting Frequencies

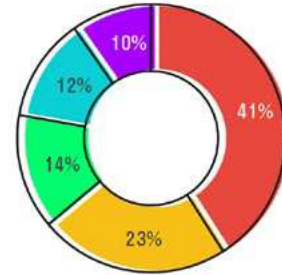
Facebook

The conversation around COVID-19 started at end of January 2020. A total of **144 corona-related posts** were published on Facebook by these universities.

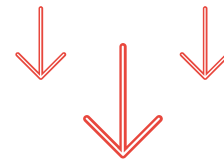
Yale University had the highest volume of posts (41%), followed by Harvard University (23%), while Stanford had the least (9.7%). Despite its low share of voice on corona-related content, **Stanford University saw the highest average engagement score of 176** followed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) at 143.



Share of voice on Facebook



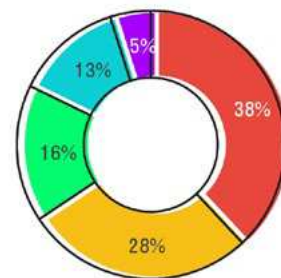
■ Yale ■ Harvard University ■ MIT ■ University of Michigan ■ Stanford



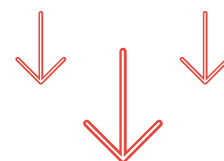
Twitter

Twitter saw a slightly higher volume of content on COVID-19 than Facebook. Of the 163 tweets, **Harvard had the highest share of tweets at 38.5%**, followed by MIT at 28%. Despite having a low share of voice, Stanford saw the highest average engagement score of 888 followed by Harvard at 860.

Share of voice on Twitter



■ Harvard University ■ MIT ■ Yale ■ University of Michigan ■ Stanford

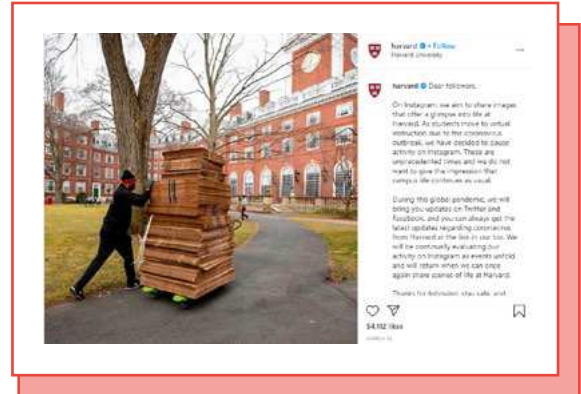


Instagram

Instagram saw the least volume of content related to COVID-19.

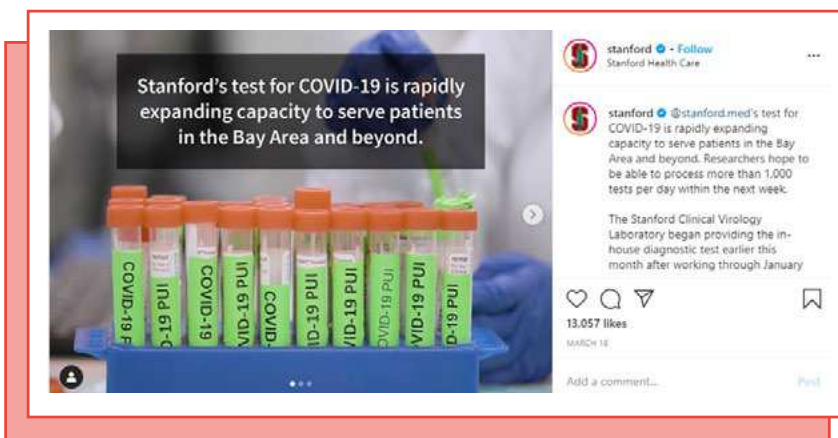
A mere 17 posts were published by these five universities of which Yale and Stanford covered 75% of that content.

Harvard University's Instagram strategy is to share images that offer a glimpse into life at Harvard. Due to the ongoing global pandemic, **the university decided to hit pause on their Instagram activity** as they didn't want to give the impression that campus life continued as usual when it did not.



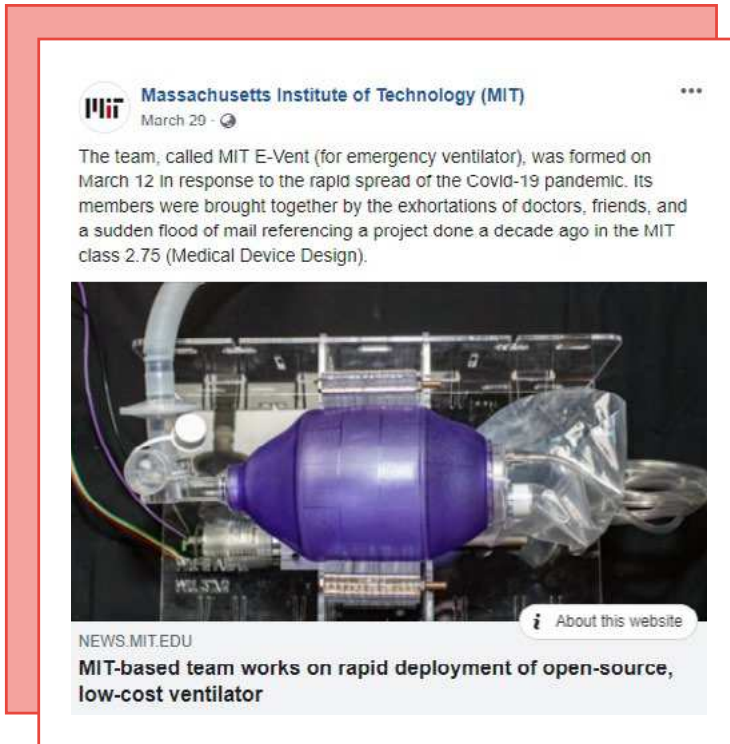
Content strategy

Much of the content related to COVID-19 was around the science behind the virus, the importance of social distancing, efforts taken by universities to combat the virus, PSAs, or inspiring stories of frontline workers.

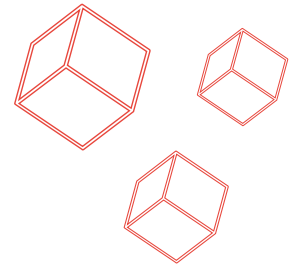


Stanford shared an update on Instagram explaining the expansion capacity of the COVID-19 tests to serve patients in the Bay Area and beyond.

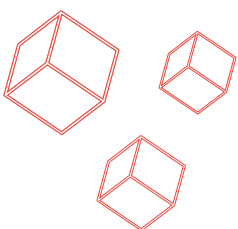
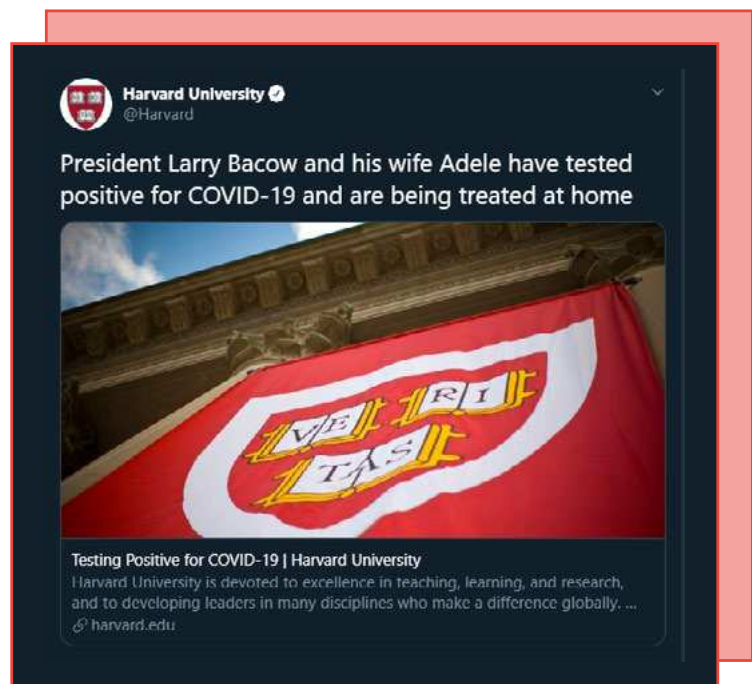
Yale University shared a video of one of its students explaining the biology behind COVID-19 and the reason why social distancing is so important.



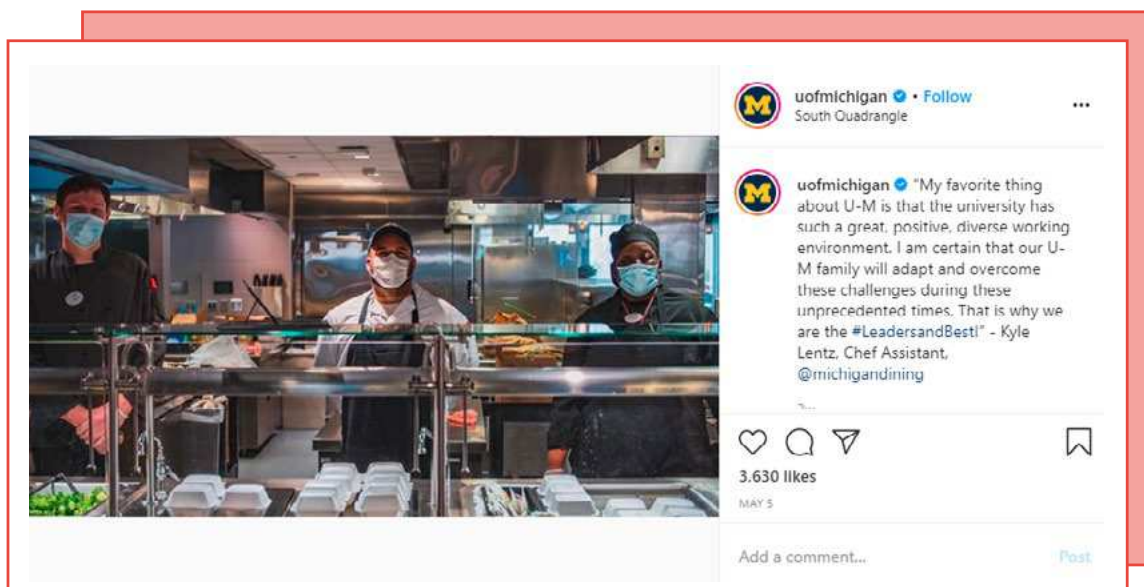
MIT's post of a low-cost ventilator, which was deployed by its special team formed in response to the COVID-19 crisis, was a huge hit. This post received over 3,000 likes and 1.6K shares.



Of the many well-known figures who tested positive for coronavirus, Harvard President Larry Bacow and wife Adele were also among them. Harvard shared the disheartening news on Twitter.



The University of Michigan shared an uplifting image of its dining crew explaining the great, positive, and diverse working environment the university has and how they will adapt and overcome these challenges during these unprecedented times.



Speaking of COVID-19

This is not an easy time for anyone right now...families, communities, and businesses. It's a tricky situation and it keeps evolving. Please do continue to support struggling businesses any way you can. Stay healthy, safe...and updated on social media trends within your industry.



Remember: Forever and ever, amen

About posting consistently

Sharing content consistently is vital to having success on social media. Why? Well, for one, **the algorithm favors consistency**, which means you'll have more engagement. The five education institutions subject to this report manage to uphold momentum on social media by posting almost every day. Maintaining a consistent schedule will help your performance and allow you to stay top of mind with your audience.

About community building

What you want is to build a community to grow and engage with, drive culture through networking, and eventually drive enrollment. **No place like social media to do all of that** and more. By posting regularly about daily activities, concerts, and sports events, these five institutions have managed to grow a strong community that shows how great life is for their students.



About thought leadership

A commonality we noticed when analyzing these institutions was that **universities are using social media to position themselves as thought leaders** in the field of research and academia. They are also making their opinions clearly heard. **Don't shy away from sharing your research studies and discoveries on social media.** After all, research is the backbone of academic institutions and universities.

About keeping track of trends and changes

Keep track of trends and new developments on social media platforms, so that you can stay relevant and engage with your audience. You can use tools—such as Falcon—to track trending topics before you put your two cents in.

And don't do it just for the sake of it. **Instead, view it as an opportunity to join the conversation and engage with your community.** Often, trending topics may have no relevance to your brand or business, but then again, it's a matter of how you look at it. It could be an opportunity for you to put an educational spin on trending topics.

About being relatable

And finally; always be relatable. Not everything on social must be about your school. **The key is to be authentic** and deliver content that resonates with your audience. So, feel free to explore different styles and experiment with what's in vogue these days.





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falcon.io



welcome@falcon.io