The Social Campus

Revolutionising the Australian
Student Journey

Hootsuite™

Introduction

A Hootsuite Whitepaper

Students are digital and social natives, driving change across the education industry. As the world's leading institutions aim to enhance student experience, engagement and retention, Australian campuses have become digital environments.

It is an interesting time for the Australian higher education industry. With the growing strength and perception of institutions across the Asia-Pacific region, it is more essential than ever for institutions to be aware of students' use of technology.
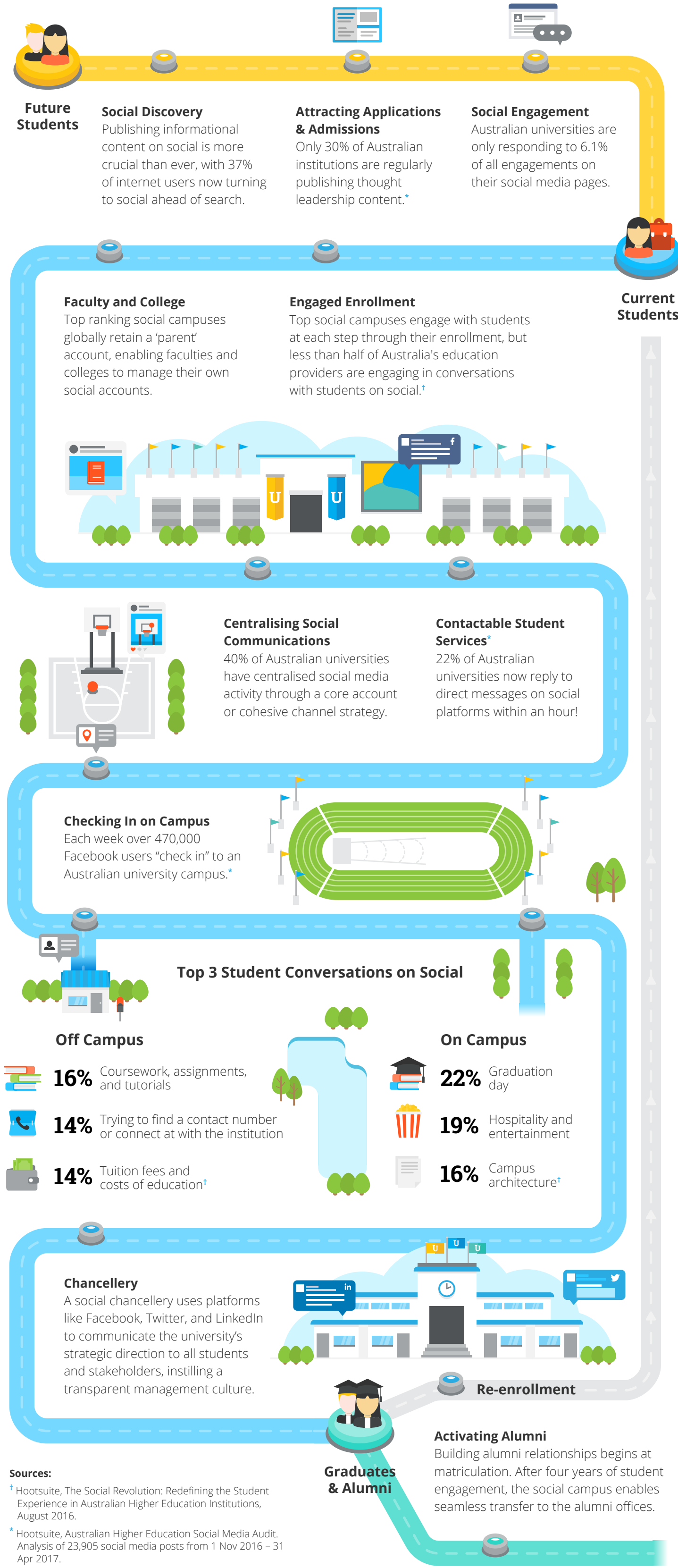
Social media is a much more important part of institutional communications and marketing efforts than ever before.[1] With top-ranking schools globally, (such as Harvard, Cambridge and Stanford) leveraging social networks to deliver a more connected learning experience, Australian institutions are yet to capitalise on the opportunities which social media can provide across campus and throughout the student lifecycle.

This report explores the role of social media in engaging students throughout their educational journey. The "Social Campus" improves engagement both on and off campus, enabling institutions to recruit and retain students, communicate academic success and thought leadership, and grow their reputation amongst a globally competitive environment.

Student journey on the social campus

Fostered by decentralised and complex organisational structures, the social media use on campus has developed organically across schools, faculties and departments at a majority of higher education institutions. These departments have developed social media programs largely in isolation from one another, sometimes sharing best practices but rarely coordinating their efforts under a single strategy. This fragmentation has resulted in an inconsistent, confusing, and risky communication environment that fails both students and administrators.

On the social campus, digital engagement is a shared organisational priority and responsibility. Every department works within an overarching social media governance structure to revolutionise the student experience through every stage of their educational journey–both on and off campus.

Future Students

Social Discovery
Publishing informational content on social is more crucial than ever, with 37% of internet users now turning to social ahead of search.

Attracting Applications & Admissions
Only 30% of Australian institutions are regularly publishing thought leadership content.*

Social Engagement
Australian universities are only responding to 6.1% of all engagements on their social media pages.

Current Students

Faculty and College
Top ranking social campuses globally retain a 'parent' account, enabling faculties and colleges to manage their own social accounts.

Engaged Enrollment
Top social campuses engage with students at each step through their enrollment, but less than half of Australia's education providers are engaging in conversations with students on social.†

Centralising Social Communications
40% of Australian universities have centralised social media activity through a core account or cohesive channel strategy.

Contactable Student Services*
22% of Australian universities now reply to direct messages on social platforms within an hour!

Checking In on Campus
Each week over 470,000 Facebook users "check in" to an Australian university campus.*

Top 3 Student Conversations on Social

Off Campus

16% Coursework, assignments, and tutorials

14% Trying to find a contact number or connect at with the institution

14% Tuition fees and costs of education†

On Campus

22% Graduation day

19% Hospitality and entertainment

16% Campus architecture†

Chancellery
A social chancellery uses platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to communicate the university's strategic direction to all students and stakeholders, instilling a transparent management culture.

Re-enrollment

Graduates & Alumni

Activating Alumni
Building alumni relationships begins at matriculation. After four years of student engagement, the social campus enables seamless transfer to the alumni offices.

Sources:

† Hootsuite, The Social Revolution: Redefining the Student Experience in Australian Higher Education Institutions, August 2016.

* Hootsuite, Australian Higher Education Social Media Audit. Analysis of 23,905 social media posts from 1 Nov 2016 – 31 Apr 2017.

Engaged enrollment

The overarching goal of higher education institutions is to ensure the high quality of the talent they attract. Better students equal higher retention and on-time graduation rates. They also go on to do great things, which contributes to an institution's reputation. By leveraging social media intelligence, admissions teams can craft enrollment campaigns to attract top talent using a myriad of engagement tactics to convert top prospects into applicants. The key to a solid social media student enrollment strategy is having the right tools and the right approaches.

Leading higher education institutions are quickly learning that social media is an effective and cost-efficient way to engage with prospective students, drive traffic to application portals, and gather intelligence to steer their strategies. However, with 52% of Australians unfollowing or blocking messaging from social media owing to irrelevant or unappealing content, it is important to remember not to pin social media activity solely on marketing.

From researching the social media behaviour of Australian students, the importance of engaging prospective students in social media channels where they seek out admissions advice and share their opinions with peers becomes apparent. Admissions departments that want to connect with the next generation of students on social media must begin with a comprehensive plan for listening.

CUSTOMER EXAMPLE:

University of South Australia

In 2013, UniSA set a plan in motion to increase its international profile. With social media playing an increasingly important role in higher education, UniSA recognised the need to implement a university-wide social media strategy to connect with prospective students and enhance the whole experience. UniSA empowers their employees to be their eyes and ears on social media. With every department, region, and team working together on one centralised platform, the result is a well-organised social media effort. This social business model is highly scalable and improves UniSA's position in a highly competitive international market with the right tools for success.
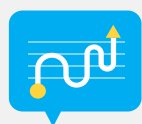
23%
increase in social reach to new markets.

42%
increase in global engagement levels.

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The institution's main social media accounts are obvious channels to monitor for wall posts, comments, and mentions. However, prospective students reach out to schools at a variety of social touchpoints, not all of which are managed by the university's admissions or communications departments.

Prospective students often post messages about universities and colleges without referencing their social account handles. They also share their thoughts on external review sites, blogs, and forums. 69% of Australian Facebook users aged between 18 and 29 years are enrolled in or have attained a tertiary qualification.[2] With less than 50% of Australian institutions engaging in public engagement on their own channels[3], the opportunity for admissions departments to proactively engage new prospects is huge.

To move the needle upward for enrollment targets, the admissions department should incorporate social media listening into its overall strategy for relationship management. By incorporating intelligence from social media into their customer relationship management technology, admissions department staff can bridge the divide between an online persona and an application record. With a socially integrated view of admitted students, they can make better predictions, lose fewer recruits to competing schools, and reach enrollment targets.

Armed with better intelligence by using social media, institutions can employ a number of engagement tactics to convert prospective students, thus empowering enrollment teams to initiate personal, two-way dialogue with prospective students and showing them the type of experience they can expect from the institution. Instead of simply telling prospective students that their institution is great, there is an opportunity to provide real value by answering students' questions with a human voice. The department can also proactively solicit questions from students to ensure every applicant understands the admission process.

Connecting with students in real time

Growth in the adoption and use of messaging platforms, such as Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. Messaging is changing the way students engage with educational institutions.

22%
of Australian universities are now responding to direct messages on social **within an hour**.

16%
of universities are not responding to students on messaging platforms.[4]

Student services department

The broad mandate of the student services department is reflected in the sheer variety of enquiries and issues they now face on social media. Students have always had questions and concerns about financial aid, housing and residence, orientation, counselling services, and safety, but social media has brought them out into the open. However, are Australian institutions listening? More importantly, are they responding?

With less than 30% of Australian higher education institutions engaging their own social media communities more than once a week, compared to 80% of global education leaders, the opportunity to improve student experiences is huge[5]. A true social campus places student services at the core of the engagement strategy, to monitor student feedback and comments on social media in real time, and address problems before they escalate.

By engaging in the social communities, blogs, and forums that are popular among students, student services departments are able to proactively resolve issues and provide greater visibility for 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.

Social media in the chancellery

The university executive and chancellery are responsible for nurturing lasting relationships between the institution and its students, their families, and the academic community in general. Globally, the executive office and chancellery are embracing social media to break down barriers and Australia is no different in this regard. While the majority of communications from the chancellery are published via an institution's formal news and communications system, a number of Australian institutions are leveraging social media platforms to enable communication and insight with senior academia.

Missed opportunity?

Australian universities are only replying to **6.1%** of engagements on their social media pages.[6]

Graduates and alumni

Institutions must consider graduate alumni relationship management in terms of the entire student lifecycle, which begins at matriculation. After four years of student engagement, the university should be able to transfer existing social media relationships seamlessly to the alumni office in order to maintain relationships post-graduation.

One way to pass the baton is to encourage current students to engage with alumni on LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social channels, even before they graduate. In doing so, the university can facilitate employment opportunities for students and demonstrate the mutual benefits of a long-term relationship with the institution, both online and offline.

Graduates and alumni can give back to the institution in many ways. They have a deep and diverse pool of knowledge that higher education institutions can draw upon for curriculum development and other program improvements. Therefore, the social media strategy of the alumni relations department should help alumni build the future of the university with their minds as well as from financial contributions.

Alumni relations professionals can solicit and monitor feedback from former students in multiple social media channels, including the institution's official LinkedIn university page and unofficial groups on LinkedIn and Facebook. They can also look for unsolicited feedback on open social channels and the web, using keyword searches and content discovery tools. This monitoring can reveal the pulse of the alumni community—how they are reacting to new executive hires, strategic initiatives, fundraising campaigns, and more.

With an organisational strategy for social media intelligence, the benefits of alumni feedback and expertise can be felt throughout the institution. Alumni relations should work with communications and IT service departments to create workflows for disseminating information to other departments. This information sharing can occur at the tactical level via message assignments and at the strategic level by periodic reporting.

Which social media platforms are Australian students active on?[7]

f **99%**   👻 **60%**   📷 **58%**

🐦 **33%**   in **12%**
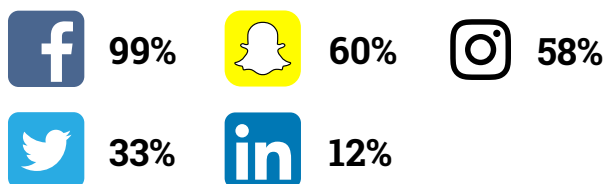
Source: Sensis Social Media Report 2016, Social Media Channels of Australians Aged 18–29.

Journey to the social campus

Leading institutions across the world are transitioning to social campuses. 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.

By centralising social media strategy and enabling employees across campuses, institutions will gain new insights from social media intelligence, allowing universities and colleges to capture and expand institutional knowledge. Insights help inform and drive better decisions by students, staff, and other constituencies.

References

1. Case.org. "CASE – 2016 Social Media Survey." (accessed May 2017)

2. Facebook - Facebook Audience Insights, Australians aged 18–29, The highest level of education reached based on self-reported data from people on Facebook (accessed May 2017).

3. Hootsuite, The Social Revolution: Redefining the Student Experience in Australian Higher Education Institutions, August 2016.

4. Facebook - Messenger Insights, Reply Times for Australian Universities. Collected and analysed by Hootsuite from automated Facebook page data. May 2017.

5. Hootsuite, The Social Revolution: Redefining the Student Experience in Australian Higher Education Institutions, August 2016.

6. Hootsuite, Australian Higher Education Social Media Audit. Analysis of 23,905 social media posts from 1 Nov 2016 - 31 Apr 2017.

7. Sensis Social Media Report 2016 - How Australian people and businesses are using social media. Social Media Channels of Australians Aged 18-29 (accessed May 2017).

About Hootsuite Enterprise

Partner with Hootsuite to accelerate your social transformation

Social Marketing

Social Selling

Employee Advocacy

Social Customer Service

Hootsuite is the most widely used platform for managing social media, loved by over 15+ million people around the globe and trusted by more than 800 of the Fortune 1000. Hootsuite Enterprise empowers organisations 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 250+ business applications and integrations, allowing organisations to extend social media into existing systems and programs.

Along with our channel and agency partners, we help organisations 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 organisations pioneer the social media landscape and accelerate their success through product training, group training and tailored organisational training, as well as security and compliance services.

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