



Content Marketing for Higher Education

How to Engage Students with Effective Content

media**valet** x



Contents

The Growing Need for Content	3
Departments	
<i>Recruitment and Admissions</i>	5
<i>Student Services</i>	8
<i>Athletics</i>	11
<i>Research</i>	14
Enabling Content Creation Across the University	17
Partnering for Success	19

The Growing Need for Content

At face value, it can be a challenge to differentiate between any given university. Many offer similar courses, comparable athletics and beautiful campuses. Yet, prospective students are often very deliberate in deciding where they choose to apply. This is because a majority of the selection process is based on emotions and reputation. Whether it's a new graduate hoping to attend their family's alma mater, a business professional looking to get their MBA in the Ivy League or an NBA prospect looking for the best basketball scholarships, decisions are made based on each individual's perception of the school, which has been built over time.

To be successful, universities need to build brand trust and create unique selling points that differentiate themselves from the other options available. But, the truth of the matter is, marketing in the higher ed industry is a lot like a campus between classes; noisy and unruly, as everyone dashes to get to their next class as quickly as possible. Universities need to engage with prospects, students, alumni and the community on a consistent, ongoing basis if they hope to build their reputation.

Doing this well requires a strong, well-executed content strategy. Universities need to consistently build valuable content to attract prospective students, keep students and alumni engaged, and build positive relationships with the community. But doing this is no easy task. It requires an in-depth understanding of unique selling points, open lines of communication across departments and an ongoing commitment to creating on-brand pieces of content to drive the university's message.

In this eBook, we'll dive into:

- Four key departments and their goals
- The types of content that can be used to help meet those goals, and
- How you can maximize content creation across the university.



Getting Started with Content

As a marketer you're constantly thinking of new ways to reach and engage your prospective students. Whether it's printed materials, videos, blog posts or infographics, the list of content types is endless. But, staying inspired and creating high-quality, well-performing content is no easy task. To identify new types of content to create, start by analyzing the goals of your key department and align your content to address those goals.

To help you get started, in this eBook we'll cover:

- Recruitment and Admissions,
- Student Services,
- Athletics and,
- Research.



DEPARTMENT 1

Recruitment and Admissions



Applying for post-secondary education is often a stressful time. To many, it feels like the beginning of their careers. The vigorous research involved, along with the various fees, application requirements and lengthy processes can lead to cases of fear, doubt and excitement in prospective students. After all, one small error during the submission process can result in a rejection letter.

Your recruitment and admissions department is ground zero at your university. They're often the first point of communication for any prospective students and can have a major impact on a student's success. As the central point of contact for information, your admissions department is tasked with alleviating these stressful emotions and making students feel confident in their decision to apply to your university, and even more importantly, select you as their university of choice.

How Content Can Help

During this stage, students are looking to understand if your university is a good fit for their goals and career path. They'll have a multitude of questions and concerns, most of which they'll be looking to answer online. Content can be a helpful tool to address these questions and provide them with additional information that encourages students along their journey.

Content created should clarify what to expect as a student at your university, including life on campus, opportunities beyond the classroom and alumni successes. By creating alignment with recruitment and admissions, marketers can have a better understanding of the most frequently asked questions and tailor content to address them. As admissions are often cyclical, understanding deadlines around important dates can be critical to the delivery of content.



Types of Content:

Student Interview Series

Provide prospective students with a peek into a day-in-the-life on campus. These interviews often cover a broad range of students with varied backgrounds, majors, and interests, to show the breadth of the university. This tactic is most effective when done via video or paired with an image of the student, as it puts a face to the story.

Admission Checklists

Are used to help put students at ease when submitting their application. Highlighting important milestones, including when applications, grades, financial aid requests and fees are due, will help students manage the most important dates on their calendars.

EXAMPLE

Birkbeck, University of London

Birkbeck, University of London is a unique university that offers courses in the evening, to free up their students during the day. They created a quick, [3-minute video](#) that compiles insights from a few students on the benefits of attending a school that provides this kind of flexibility.



DEPARTMENT 2

Student Services



For new students, the first year of university is a transition period, where they're exposed to a new schedule in a new place with new people. For many, this transition can be a challenge as they struggle to adapt to their new classes and any extra-curriculars. With 28% of post-secondary students dropping out within the first year ([Source](#)), many universities have developed an increased focus on setting up students for success from day one.

The student services department is tasked with ensuring students are armed with the tools they need to be successful, keeping student turnover low and graduation high. They develop programs to support each student's transition to university, and help them achieve personal and academic success. While overall messaging can be relevant for all students, it's primarily tailored to new students who need additional assistance during their first year. The information the student services department provides is often crucial for setting the tone for how students acclimate.

How Content Can Help

New students want to know what to expect in their first year. In addition to taking on a new curriculum, they need to become familiar with their new campus, its various events and any additional services available to them. Content can provide these students with the information they need, so they can feel excited for their first year, rather than anxious. Content should provide insights into how each student can prepare ahead of time, and what to expect in their first day, week and year at the university. It often offers a combination of need-to-know information, like orientation basics, and excitement-inspiring material, like annual social events.



Types of Content:

International Student Welcome Packages

Can provide students travelling from outside of the country with an introduction to both the university, as well as the country. It can include both fun insights, like where to eat and places to visit, as well as useful information, like how to apply for a work visa or sort out health insurance.

Printable Social Calendars

Can remind students of upcoming events and volunteer opportunities on campus, keeping them engaged and excited about life on campus.

EXAMPLE

University of British Columbia

[UBC's webpage](#) dedicated to Student Services provides a wealth of content for new and existing students, to help them make the most of their time on campus. Offering videos from their most popular events, helpful guides, a UBC Life blog and more, students can easily find the information they need to be successful.



DEPARTMENT 3

Athletics



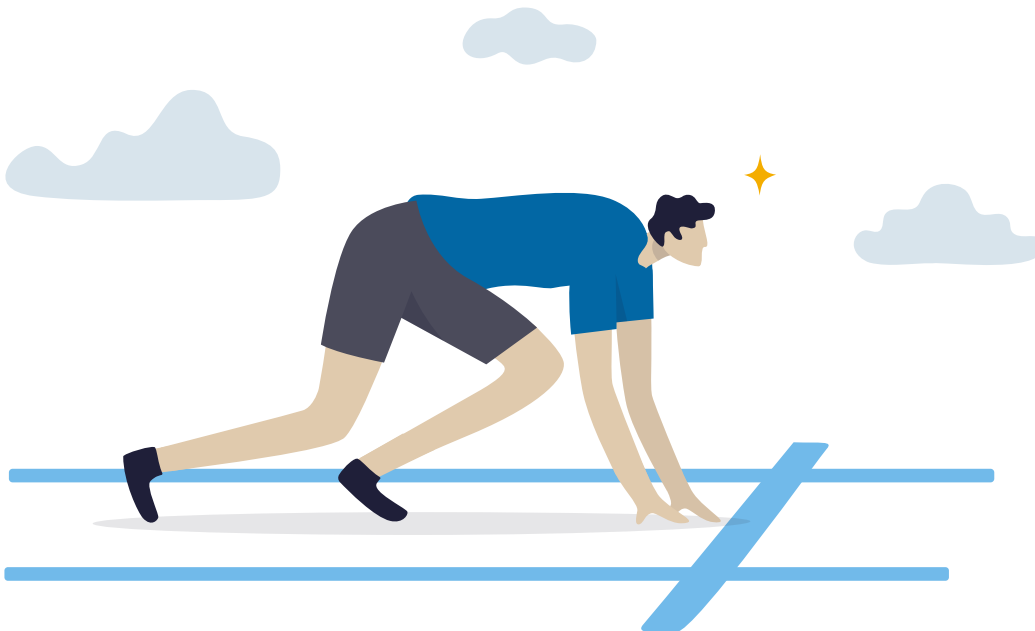
Athletics are a major brand driver for many universities across the globe. With a large audience of students, alumni and locals, alike, the athletics department is often the most visible and public aspect of any given university. With weekly match-ups in football, baseball, basketball, lacrosse, swimming, gymnastics, fencing, etc., there's always some sort of sporting event attracting people to the campus.

The efforts made in your athletics department is the primary source of support for each team, and attendance at on-campus games. In addition to attracting fans, they're also tasked with encouraging athletes to join the team and developing sponsorships from local and national brands. They constantly work to boost brand loyalty, both in-person and digitally, and build a strong reputation for your teams.

How Content Can Help

Connecting with fans is a unique challenge that the athletics department is faced with. It's a community mindset, focused on making people feel involved, invested and inspired by their selected teams. Content created for this department helps to create an emotional connection with them, celebrating wins and mourning losses together.

Content produced for athletics will tap into audience emotions, boiling up feelings of excitement and making them feel like they're at the game, even when they aren't. Visuals are always a major focus in this department, delivering inspiring videos and spot-on photography. With access to thousands of visuals, marketers are able to deliver compelling, visual content for fans.



EXAMPLE

University of Washington

Even during the off-season, the University of Washington continues to drum up excitement for their football team, the Huskies. They use their social media accounts to post short clips from their training camps, showcasing the talent of the team for the upcoming year and building deeper connections with each individual athlete.

Common Content Types:

User Generated Content

Is content created by the public. Most of the time, they're photos and videos taken by fans at games or wearing merchandise. Sharing user generated content across social channels and web pages can provide fans with much-needed recognition and make them feel more connected to the team. It's important to get explicit consent when using this type of content.

Monthly Countdown Videos

Provide quick summaries of the happenings across the various athletic programs and creates interest in other events on campus. Themes often include best plays, top players, most heartwarming moments and more.



DEPARTMENT 4

Research



While leading research projects may not attract the wide audience of an athletic championship, they are a major driver for many students, with 56% of the USA's basic research being conducted at universities (Source). When a university has a reputation for providing leading research facilities, providing undergraduate participation in research and internationally-renowned discoveries, they're able to differentiate themselves from their counterparts.

For your research department, their goals are two-fold: to bring in the funding necessary to develop their research programs and attract top students to conduct the research. They need to ensure students are aware of the research projects happening on campus and connect them with the resources they need to be successful. They also build relationships with the government, businesses and individual donors to attract millions of dollars in funding for various projects.

How Content Can Help

Promoting the groundbreaking work being conducted is essential to improving a university's ability to attract the types of students that are interested in a particular field. Content is often used to build excitement about research being done and attract funding.

Promoting successful research and development projects and establishing credibility for the people conducting them is critical to establishing validity and boosting confidence in funding. Content created for each research project is often highly informative and meticulously written. While a small typo is forgivable in other departments, in research pieces, it can reduce credibility and dilute the piece's impact.



Common Content Types:

Award Winner Features

Provide credibility to the scientists and doctors leading research projects, helping attract donors and students alike. These awards often provide proof that others believe in the success of the project.

Research Podcasts

With research leaders establishes their knowledge on any given topic. These podcasts often aren't specifically about their project, but instead provide a higher-level conversation about the overarching topic. The podcast format allows people to listen on-the-go.

EXAMPLE

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

As one of the top research universities in the world, MIT has nailed brand consistency across its content. Every social media post, news article, [webpage](#) and other piece of content showcases their expertise using scientific, authoritative language that increases trust in their messages.





Enabling Content Creation Across the University

At their core, schools behave in the same way as other businesses and depend on an array of departments and people to promote them. To do this well, messaging and visuals need to be consistent across the entire institution. But, without the right processes and technology in place, it can be difficult to ensure a consistent message.

So, what can be done?

Here are 3 actionable ways that leading universities are unifying their marketing effort:

Centralize All Media

The first step in establishing consistency is ensuring everyone has a consistent place to access the assets they need to create unique material. Providing a centralized library, like a digital asset management system, where all departments can access the relevant photos, videos and content being created across the university maximizes visibility and ensures brand consistency. It can also prevent the duplication of efforts for content that may already exist.

Provide Standardized Templates

Once your library is established, providing pre-approved templates for all of the various forms of content can save countless hours of design work. Whether it be a brochure, an email, a web page, or a presentation, all departments can ensure that materials are delivered with a consistent look.

Ensure Unified Messaging

The most critical aspect of aligning departments is ensuring that everyone is on the same page about the university's overall message and goals. While each individual department can have their own goals, any content they create needs to ultimately connect back to the university's overarching message. Ongoing, two-way communication with each department, where you both share your goals, ensures a unified message across the board. This includes key differentiators, monthly themes, specific marketing campaigns, and more.



Partnering for Success

While it's possible to develop technologies and processes in-house, working with an agnostic consultant and industry expert can bring a fresh perspective and insights on areas that have not previously been considered by your institution. Their expertise and experience can provide a better understanding of how content flows through various departments and help create a cohesive marketing solution for the entire university.

By identifying areas for improvement, marketing technology specialists can provide direction on the appropriate technologies and implementation strategies that can dramatically help you meet your unique marketing requirements.



About MediaValet

MediaValet is a leader in cloud-based digital asset management that helps marketing, communication, video production and creative teams easily manage, collaborate on and distribute their digital assets and content, improving productivity and increasing the ROI on their marketing investments. With unlimited users, support and training, teams worldwide can access the content they need, whenever and wherever they need it.

About IO Integration

Since 2001, IO Integration has been connecting marketing and creative teams with technology. We help the world's leading brands, agencies, retailers, and marketers by providing a consultative approach to creative operations. Working closely with our clients, IO Integration is able to analyze and identify process improvements in creative and marketing production and offer a complete set of technology services which include product selection, implementation, integration and support of technology solutions that meet each customer unique business requirements.



**See MediaValet
in Action Now!**

[Book a Demo](#)

media**valet** x

