

HIGHER ED

# social media engagement report

PRESENTED BY



**“We have plenty of followers and fans on our social channels, but why aren’t they liking or sharing our content? Are we posting into a vacuum? And why do our competitors' accounts seem to blow up when they post?”**

Does that conversation sound like your office on a Monday morning? It’s easy to point the finger at the issue, but how do you make it better?

We want to help you solve the engagement puzzle, so we partnered with the makers of a digital marketing competitive analysis software called Rival IQ. We’ve found great value in their software that provides competitive analysis & insights to marketers.

Rival IQ used their software to gather a plethora of useful data about higher ed institutions all across the country, and this report is the result of our forces combined. Its mission: to provide you with valuable insights about the schools that are crushing engagement in higher ed, and provide you examples to follow. First, a look at the methods and background behind the data.

The background is a blue-tinted image of a whiteboard. On the whiteboard, there are several handwritten notes and diagrams. At the top, there's a box labeled 'INTAKE' with an arrow pointing to another box labeled 'WORLD'. Below 'WORLD', there's a box labeled 'POLL'. To the right, there's a large double-headed arrow with a question mark above it. Below that, there are two lines of text: 'TIME ENTERED' and 'TIME EXIT'. A hand is visible on the right side, holding a marker and pointing towards the text.

# methodology

# methodology

Rival IQ used their software to analyze social media posts from 338 Division 1 higher ed institutions, looking at university-level account posts from June 2015 through May 2016.

They gathered data using Rival IQ's cross-channel ranking capability, as well as channel-specific rankings for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The cross-channel (or overall) ranking is influenced by engagement on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

**Engagement is defined as measurable interaction on social media posts, including likes, comments, favorites, retweets, shares, and reactions.**

Rankings were computed using a weighted score of audience, activity, and engagement (with a strong bias toward engagement). There's a fancy formula behind it all, but you can trust us—we have calculators.

Using this data and weighted formula, Rival IQ generated an overall engagement ranking for each school. The highest ranking universities have high engagement rates with average or better audience size and posting volumes.

When it comes to engagement, especially on Instagram and Twitter, higher education accounts outperform the benchmark set by non-education social media accounts with similar audiences. So they must be doing something right. What are the top-performing schools doing to drive engagement rates?

# methodology

This report will give you a rundown of the overall top-ranking schools by cross-channel, as well as the top 10 per channel, with examples and best practices that we hope you can learn from.

Let's start with the overall, cross-channel ranking.

Drumroll, please...

The background of the slide is a blurred image of a laptop screen. On the screen, there is a line graph with several data points and a pie chart. The overall color scheme is a solid orange.

OVERALL

# top 10 ranking colleges

*Ranking based on Facebook, Twitter, & Instagram*

OVERALL

# top 10 ranking colleges

01. NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY



02. CLEMSON UNIVERSITY



03. U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY



04. UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON



05. SAINT JOSEPH'S UNIVERSITY



06. UNIVERSITY OF IOWA



07. JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY



08. U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY



09. GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



10. TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

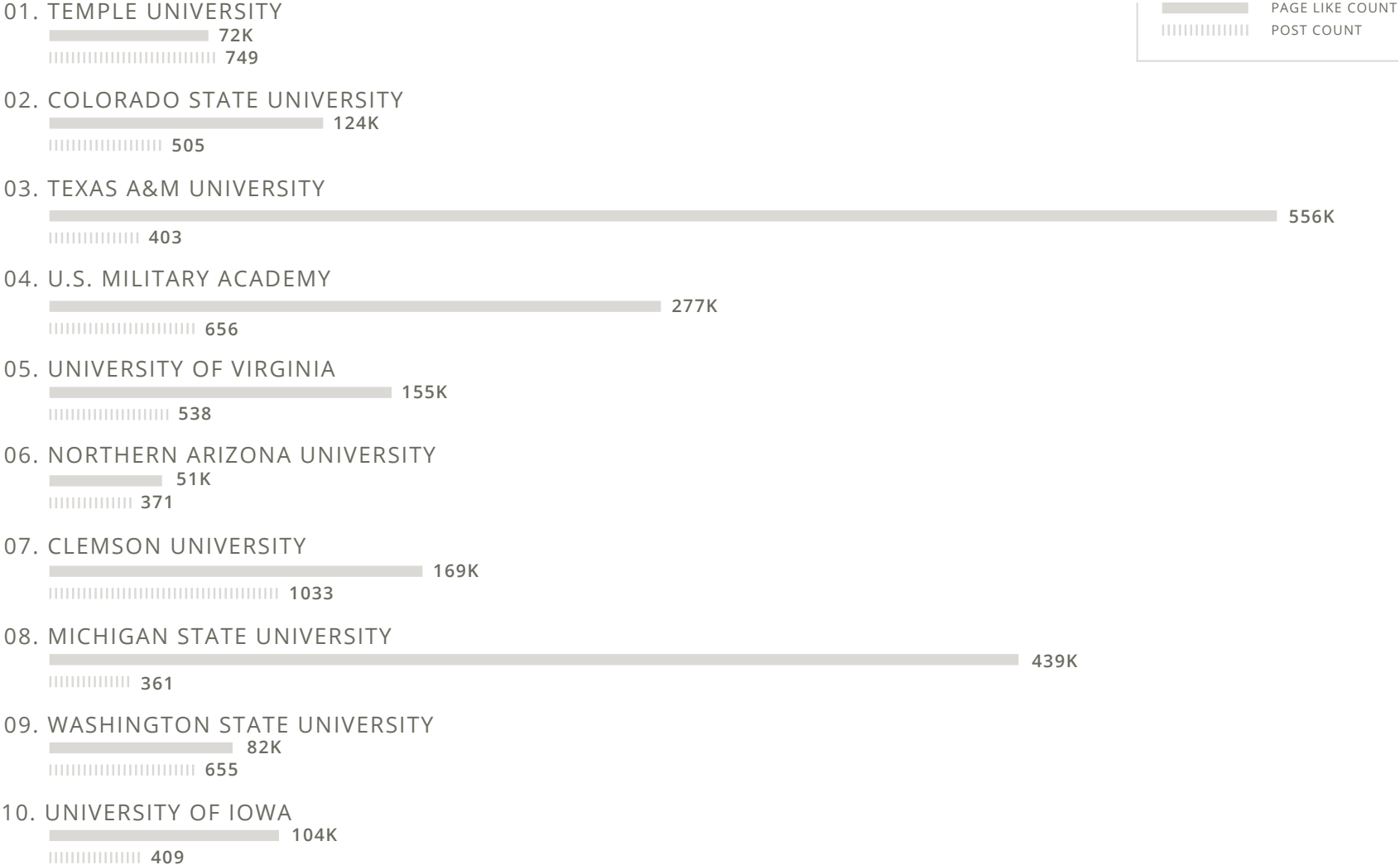




FACEBOOK ENGAGEMENT  
**top 10 schools**



# top 10 schools





FACEBOOK ENGAGEMENT

# best practices from top performers

# best practices from top performers



The U.S. Military Academy ranks #8 overall and #4 on Facebook. Here's an example of the kind of post that drives (rightly so) a huge amount of engagement.



**West Point - The U.S. Military Academy** Like Page  
May 24

No greater feeling than that of accomplishment! #DutyHonorCountry (U.S. Army photo by: Staff Sgt. Vito T. Bryant)



24K Likes 758 Comments 11K Shares

This moving photo exhibits top-notch photojournalism as it shows tremendous respect to a graduating soldier. They tagged the U.S. Army (which has over 4 million likes), and it received over 750 comments, and over 11,500 shares.

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Another best practice is focusing on finding content that just begs to be shared. The University of Utah nailed it with this breathtaking Facebook timelapse video of a rainbow moving across a local landscape.



Utah is ranked #3 overall and #15 on Facebook, and this type of content is a big reason why. Video continues to be king for engagement on social, especially easily shareable videos like this one.

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# best practices from top performers



You might be thinking, “Of course, they have a huge audience. What about us? We’re a small private school.” Don’t worry, you don’t have to be big to get huge engagement. Quinnipiac University, a private university in Hamden, Connecticut, ranked #13 on Facebook and #28 overall.

**Quinnipiac University** Like Page  
April 9

With less than an hour until the start of the NCAA National Championship Game, let's show America how strong and enthusiastic #BobcatNation is! Tell us from where you will be cheering! Let's see how many states and countries we can paint Bobcat Gold. Throughout the game, capture your most enthusiastic friends and family and post their photos below -- and be sure to share crowd reactions! The clips may be used in an upcoming feature. Watch the game live at 8 p.m. on ESPN 2!

610 Likes 167 Comments 59 Shares

They took full advantage of their #1 ranked college hockey team, documenting their journey all the way to the National Championship game. Athletics are a natural engagement booster, so take full advantage of your school’s super fans.

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# best practices from top performers



But Quinnipiac is more than just hockey, as you can tell in a high-performing Facebook video. While typical “drone shots of beautiful campus with sentimental music” videos can stray into cliché, this one hits the right notes, letting the campus speak for itself instead of boilerplate “it all starts here” voiceover.

**Quinnipiac University** Like Page  
March 23

We are proud to provide the tools to develop extraordinarily well-prepared graduates -- with our 400 world-renowned faculty and an eclectic mix of nearly 100 undergraduate, graduate, law and medical degree programs to a dynamic alumni network surpassing 30,000 members and three of the most beautiful campuses in America. "Nature has given us the seeds of knowledge, not knowledge itself," Seneca wrote. We help nurture those seeds to ensure a fruitful, life-long harvest.

300K Views  
2.4K Likes 108 Comments 1.4K Shares

Inspiring nostalgia, camaraderie, and school pride, it drew students, alums, parents of current & future students, and employees to comment how proud they were to have Quinnipiac as part of their lives. It garnered 300K views, nearly 1500 shares, and over 100 comments. Facebook is a natural hub for a wide audience and continues to push video as the best type of content to post, so this type of content is perfect.

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# best practices from top performers



Campbell University in North Carolina is a small private Christian university with solid engagement. They ranked #27 on Facebook and #30 overall. This recent Facebook video is a great example of seizing a timely moment and maximizing its impact.

**Campbell University** Like Page  
April 27

"A Campbell education is not a transaction; it is a transformational learning experience that changes lives."

Our new video about Campbell University shaped by President Creed's inaugural address a few weeks ago.

69K Views  
769 Likes 39 Comments 1K Shares

Combining high production value with a message that aligns with their mission, the video has over 68K views and over 1,000 shares.

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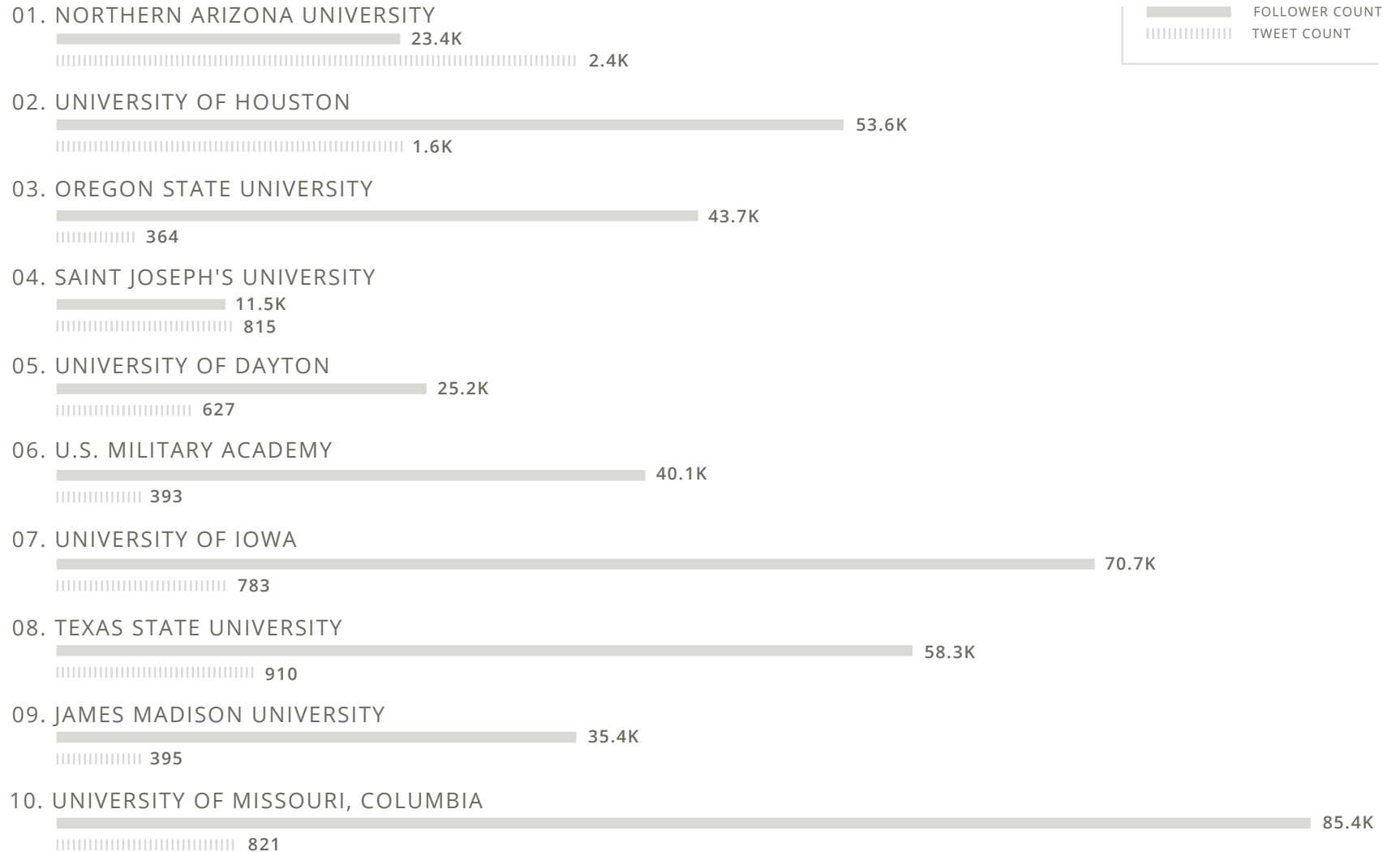


# TWITTER ENGAGEMENT

# **top 10 schools**



# top 10 schools





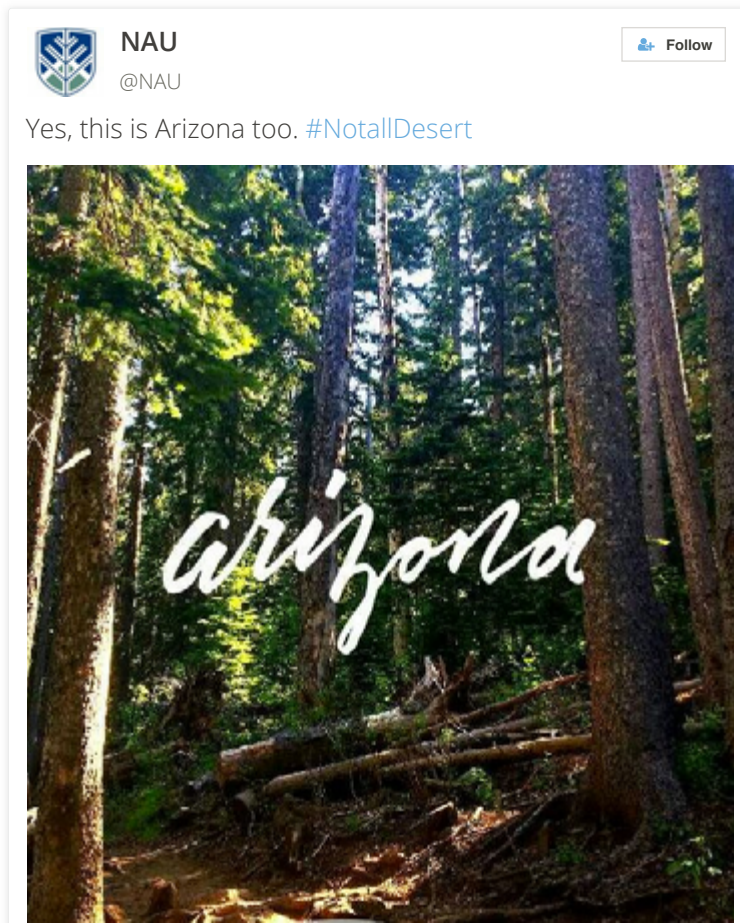
TWITTER ENGAGEMENT

# best practices from top performers



# best practices from top performers

If you're looking for a school's social media strategy to emulate, you might want to start with Northern Arizona University. They ranked #1 overall, #1 on Twitter, #6 on Facebook, and #1 on Instagram.



Here's an example of a tweet that does a beautiful job of accomplishing multiple purposes & garnering engagement

In one tweet, they've promoted their location, worked on dispelling the "Arizona's a barren desert" misconception, used a beautiful image with a classy text effect, and used a memorable hashtag. 85 retweets & 173 likes later...well played, NAU.

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# best practices from top performers

Jacksonville State University in Alabama ranked #19 for Twitter engagement. They followed the best practice of riding the wave of “what’s trending” with their own school spirit-infused play on #MayThe4thBeWithYou:



Harnessing the power of current events, whether real or “Internet events,” is a best practice to keep in mind. Look ahead at your calendar to plan what creative you might need, and if you’re wondering who to get involved, ask around & you might just discover a super pop culture fan (like this Star Wars fan) eager to get involved.

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# best practices from top performers



Wofford College, a small independent liberal arts college in Spartanburg, SC with around 1,600 students, ranked at #36 for Twitter engagement, showing again you don't need a huge audience for large engagement.



This tweet is a great example of a social media principle we like to call "it's not about us."

They're giving well-deserved public praise to their faculty & staff. That goes a long way in promoting loyalty and school pride.

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# best practices from top performers

South Dakota State came in at #28 on Twitter, and they show their savvy by connecting with future classes before they even step on campus:



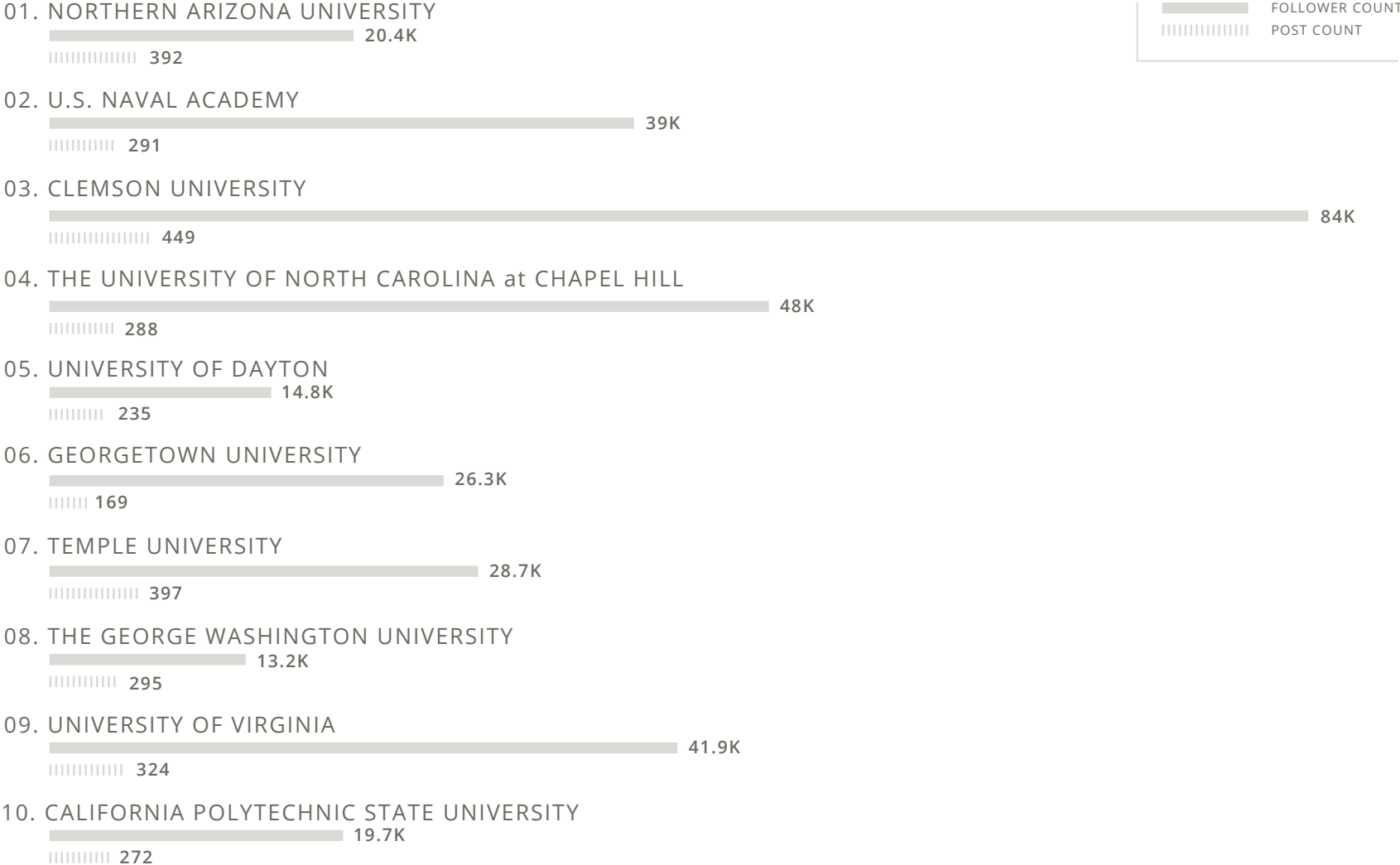
By engaging with the incoming class, they're already connecting with the next generation of lifelong ambassadors, and showing prospective students that they're more than a number.

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# INSTAGRAM ENGAGEMENT **top 10 schools**

# top 10 schools







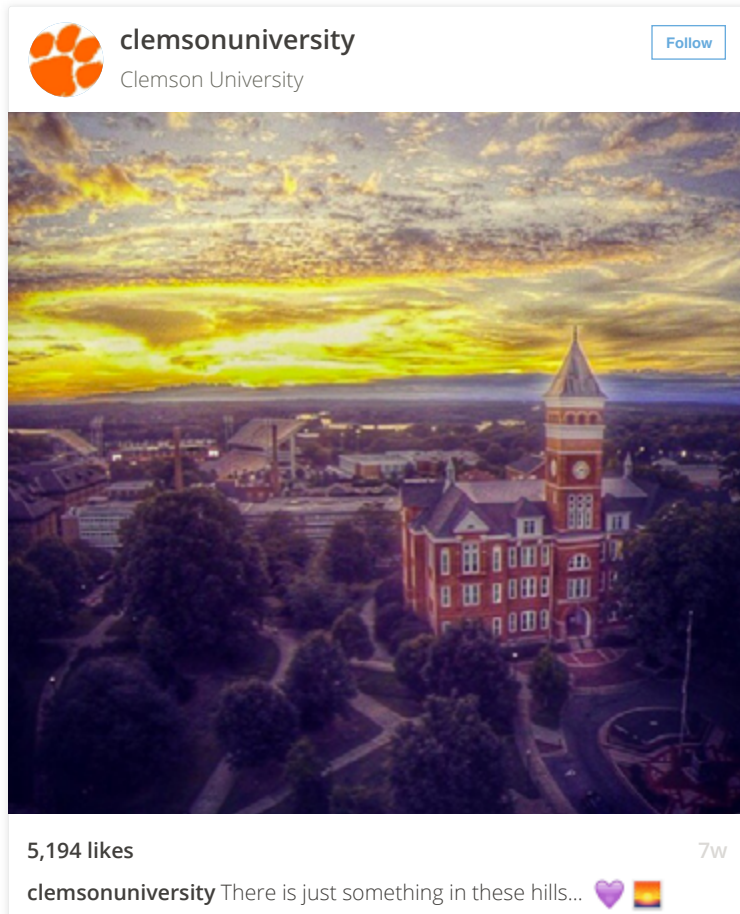
INSTAGRAM ENGAGEMENT

# best practices from top performers

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Clemson University ranks #2 overall, #11 on Twitter, #7 on Facebook and #3 on Instagram. Their social presence helps keep the nation's most engaged alumni base plugged in. Their Instagram feed is full of beautiful shots of campus and Lake Hartwell:



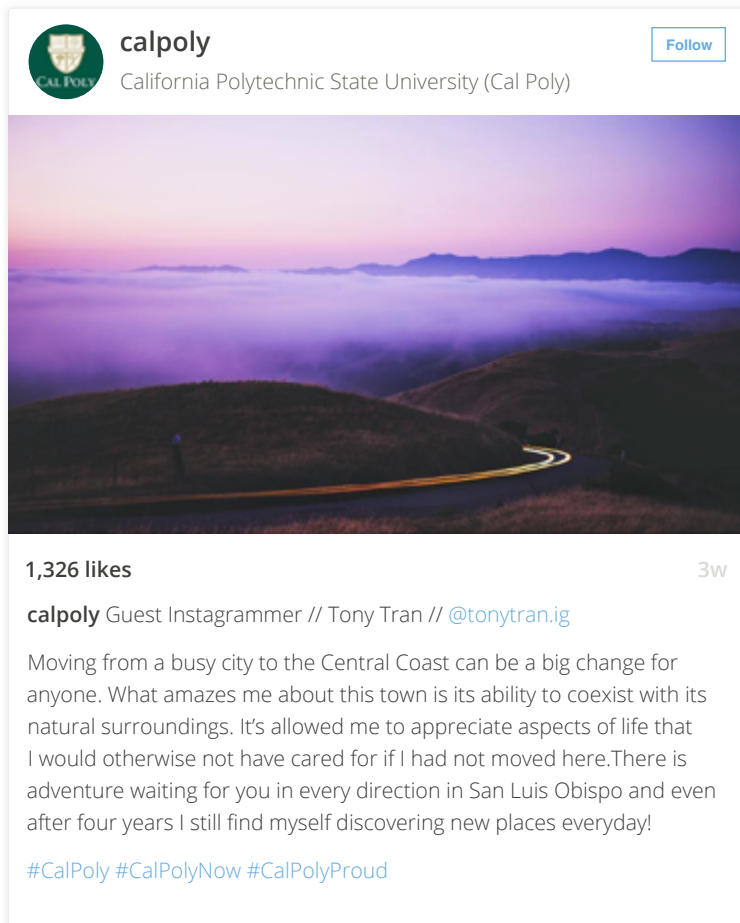
Campus beauty is always good for engagement, since it inspires that “I belong” feeling and stirs nostalgia for current students and alums. It’s also great for prospective students to see where they could spend the next 4+ years, and it gets enrolled students saying “I can’t wait to go there!”

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# best practices from top performers



Ranked #10 on Instagram, California State Polytechnic Institute (“Cal Poly”) drives engagement with another best practice: guest posting. Students see their friends taking over and are more motivated to interact.



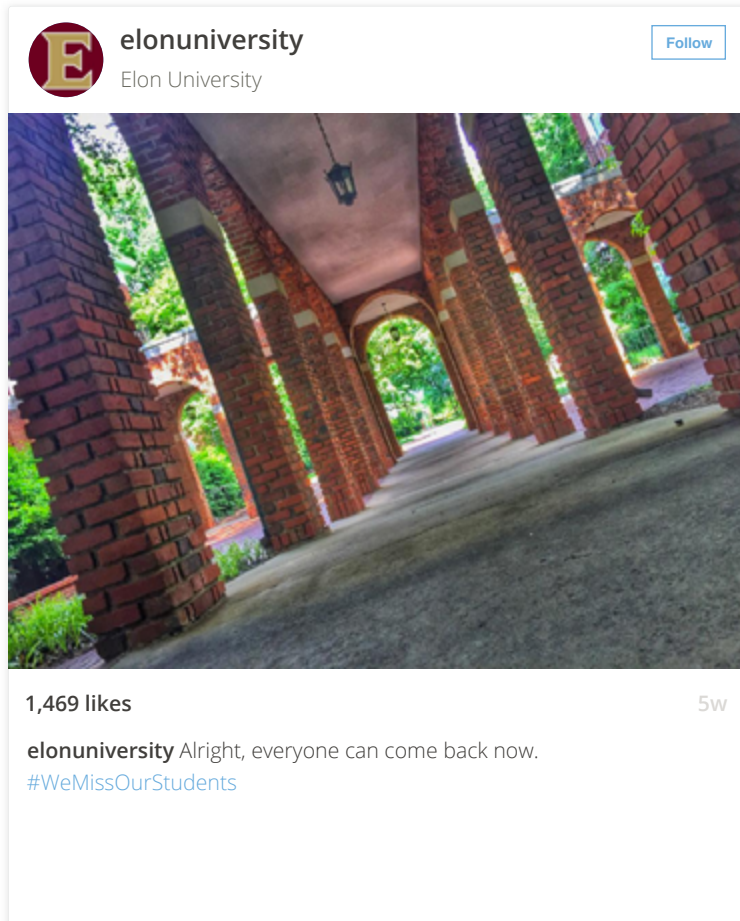
It also provides a perspective that you might not see otherwise, and those first-person stories make connections to prospects, alumni and beyond.

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# best practices from top performers



With around 6,000 in enrollment, Elon University is another example of a smaller school excelling in engagement. They ranked #12 on Instagram, #28 on Facebook, and #27 overall.



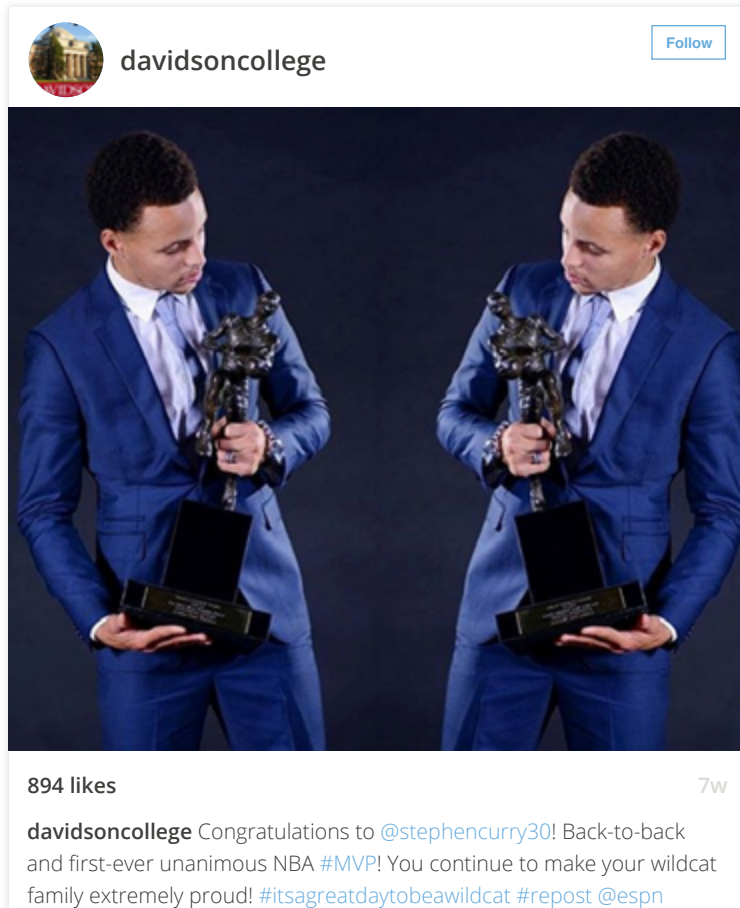
This post is a great example of staying connected with your students during the summer. It inspires nostalgia and reminds them they're the heart of your school.

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# best practices from top performers



Davidson College, a private school in North Carolina with about 2,000 in enrollment, came in at #30 on Instagram. They're a good example of another good idea: making the most of famous alums.



Nothing wrong with that! In Davidson's case, you might have heard of this guy.

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**where do you rank?**

# where do you rank?

Curious where your school might be ranked? [Click here](#) to see the full higher ed social media engagement report.

Unlocking better social media engagement doesn't have to be a mysterious dark cloud of algorithms. We hope this report helps you gather insights from top performers that will help you push social media engagement through the roof.



**Up&Up is a higher ed marketing agency in Greenville, SC that's committed to impacting the world through the good our clients do.**

We've been lucky enough to work with a great group of higher ed institutions over the last 15 years. To us, higher education marketing is more than just getting new freshmen through the doors on move-in day or getting more alumni to join a Facebook page. Connecting the right student to the right school not only provides someone the perfect college experience, but it also makes them fans for life. This isn't marketing for the next four years. It's marketing for the next forty.

Learn more at  
**[upandup.agency](http://upandup.agency)**



## Rival IQ delivers digital marketing analytics with a competitive and comparative context.

Our goal is to equip you with a toolkit so you can uncover new opportunities, identify trends, and track results across all major social channels and the web.

The insights in our reports help you set tangible benchmarks, make data-driven marketing decisions, improve results, and better understand competitors.

Learn more at  
[rivaliq.com](https://rivaliq.com)

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