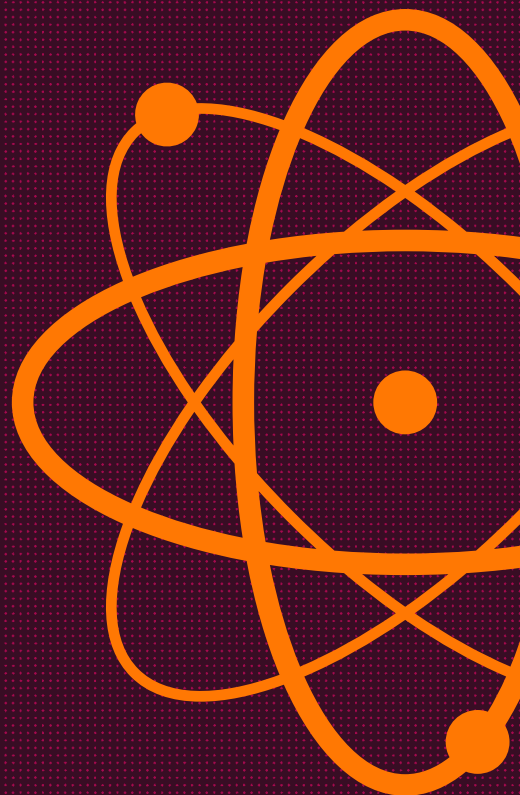
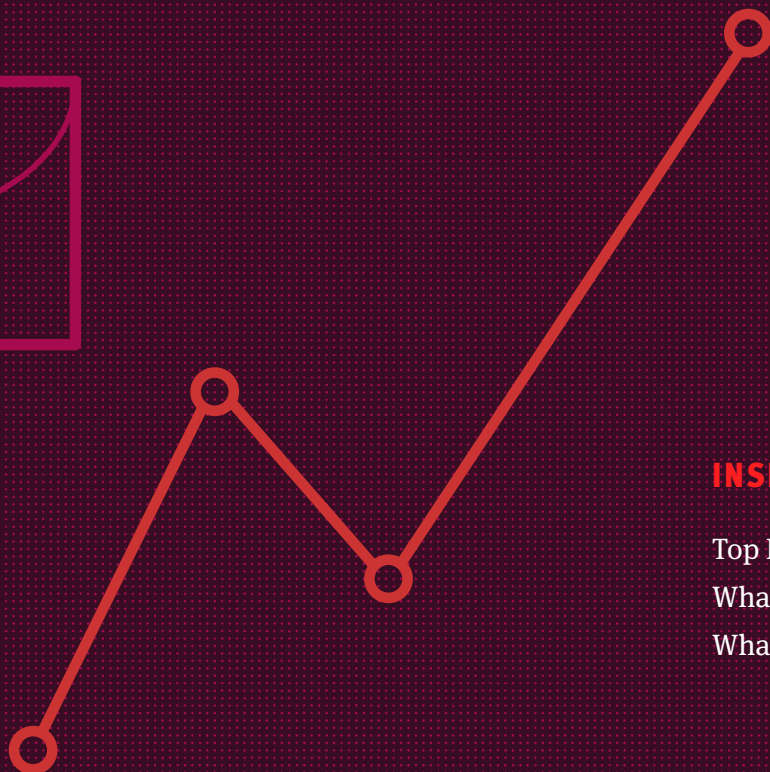
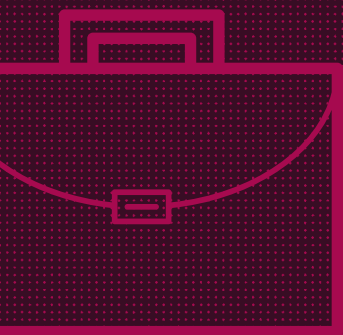


Differentiating your brand

How to stand out to prospective students



INSIDE:

Top Institutional Branding Trends

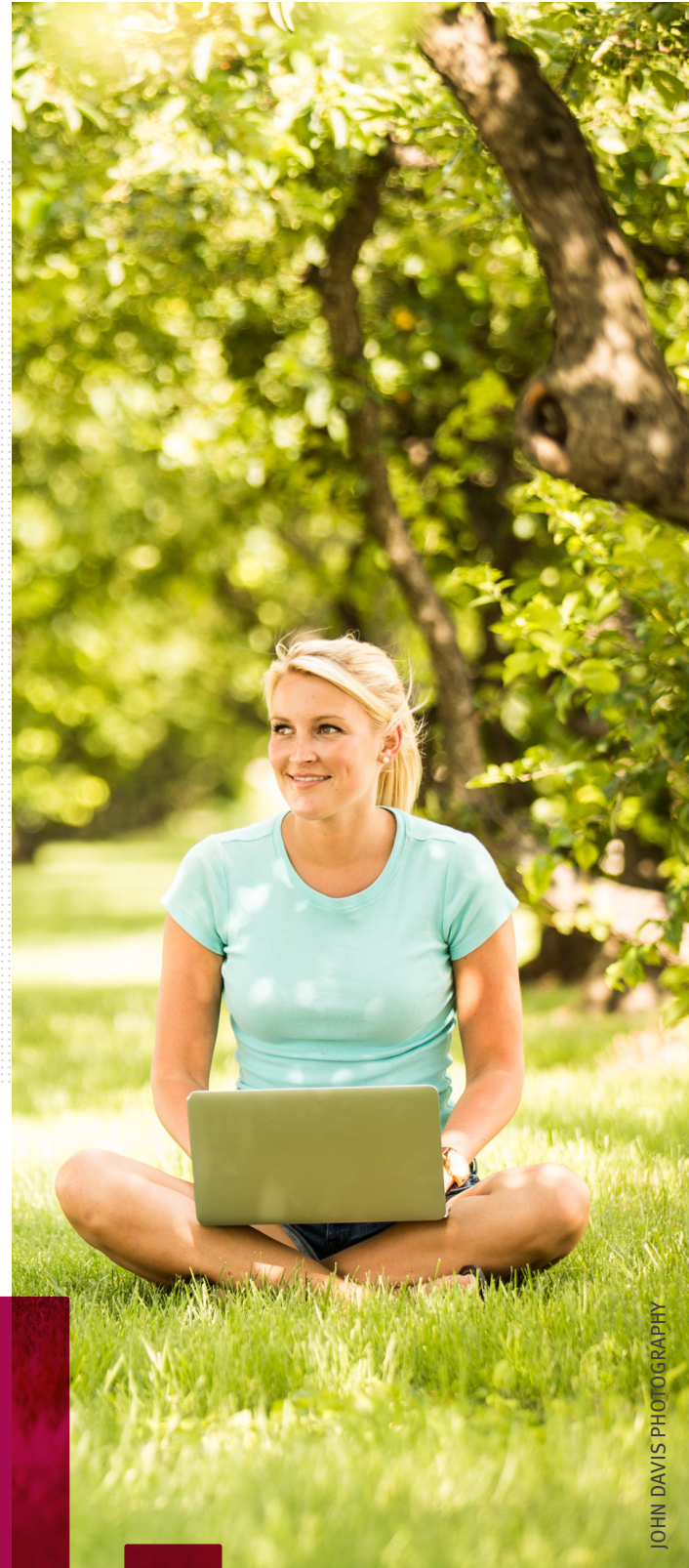
What Students Want from Schools

What You Can Do (and How We Can Help)

With more than 5,000 four-year private and public institutions in the U.S., it's hard for schools to stand out among the many options that appear on a student's list—especially when 29% of high school seniors apply to 7 or more colleges.¹ In fact, Gallup found that the mission, purpose, or vision statements of more than 50 higher education institutions share striking similarities.² What can you do to ensure your institution stands out from the thousands of other options?

“The value of a higher education's brand is worth only what students and parents are willing to pay for it, donors are willing to support it, and faculty are willing to contribute to make it real.”

– SEMWORKS



JOHN DAVIS PHOTOGRAPHY

One size doesn't fit all when it comes to colleges.

Of the 76% of higher education marketers previously engaged in branding efforts, 42% reported increased competition as a key motivating factor.³

Because it's important to attract the necessary quantity and quality of students who will represent your school's mission and values while fulfilling enrollment goals, you must brand the in-person experience and differentiate it from competing institutions. But there's another branding objective that can help you achieve your goals: build an identity that transcends the physical campus. By doing so, your institution won't be limited to just a campus or a community—online presence and a transcendent brand can travel far and wide to attract students who are eager to be a part of your world.⁴

Effective branding can help increase enrollment and expand fundraising capabilities. Institutions that fully implement a unified branding strategy create a competitive advantage in recruiting, retaining, and building advocacy among their audience—from students, parents, staff, alumni and donors.⁵ An effective and engaging website, also considered

the “ultimate brand statement,” is among the most important marketing tools in higher education. Therefore, institutions should focus on website personalization and optimization that customizes a student's experience with carefully selected content.

Today, institutions dedicate far more attention to branding and marketing than they did in previous years. Many universities have hired external marketing professionals or companies, and have invested significant time and money to create strong institutional brands. 60% of higher education marketing administrators indicated they had created a brand strategy to increase awareness for their school. Of those who implemented new branding work, 63% spent more than \$100,000 on their branding and marketing initiatives—hiring external marketing professionals to create strong institutional brands.⁶

ONLINE, PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS ARE MOST DRAWN TO:

- **ACADEMICS:** PAGES ABOUT YOUR PROGRAMS AND RANKINGS
- **MONEY:** DETAILS ABOUT COST AND SCHOLARSHIPS
- **ENROLLMENT:** APPLICATION PROCESS AND COUNSELOR CONTACTS



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TOP MARKETING AND BRANDING TRENDS FOR INSTITUTIONS

- RESPONSIVE DESIGN AND MOBILE DEVELOPMENT
- WEB ANALYTICS
- STRATEGIC SOCIAL MEDIA
- MARKETING AUTOMATION
- TEXT MESSAGE MARKETING
- ADVERTISING VIDEOS



What You Can Do (and How We Can Help)

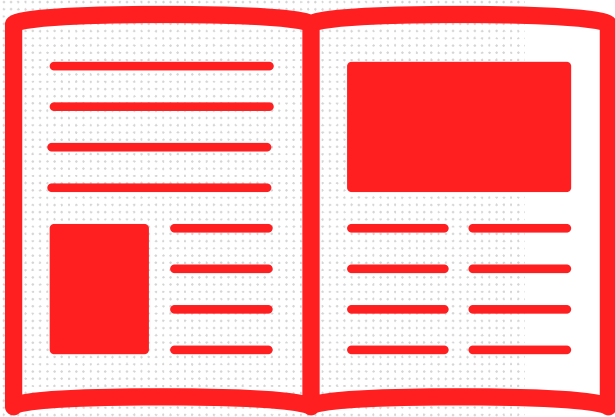
1 **IMMERSION**

What unique value can you bring to your target audience? Athletics? An international community? A unique campus tradition? Our one-on-one immersion phase unearths the essence of your institution to its core. Key stakeholders, including parents and students, can reveal what it means to be a part of your institution in our intimate meetings, along with any gaps you may not have recognized. It's important to listen to what's being said about your brand, where you stand, and how you can improve.

2

BRANDING

Once you determine consistencies in your current presence, accept one thing: it's not all about the rankings. There are schools with inherent notoriety like Yale or Harvard, there are schools known for a specific niche in healthcare or business, and there are local schools embraced by their communities. It's important to accept what your institution means to your target audience, then serve your students and community first—don't just try to beat the competition. Once you figure out your unique value and attraction, create your mission, identity, and messaging. Remember: branding is more than a logo and color palette—it's creating a platform from the inside out. Our validation process confirms branding decisions and messaging choices through interviews with carefully selected audiences to ensure it's the most effective change for your institution.



OVER 92% OF COLLEGE STUDENTS SAY THEY **PREFER READING IN PRINT** OVER ANY FORM OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA⁷

3

SHOWCASE YOUR VALUE

Allow your brand refresh to travel past the parameters of your quad. Students have many intangible qualities they look for in universities, so tell your story across many channels to reveal culture, traditions, community life, and more. Digital or print publications are a great way to unite students and parents to learn more about what your school offers. Beautiful photos, campus facts, student spotlights, and alumni success stories are all great ways to share these features. Videos are another strategic way to share your institution's message to a wide audience. An average of 78% of colleges post branded videos on YouTube, proving that an integrated marketing approach is an effective and necessary strategy.

WHAT STUDENTS WANT FROM AN INSTITUTION⁸

- Hidden treasures like unique research opportunities, leadership organizations, or one-of-a-kind technology.
- Intangible qualities such as cultural diversity, community traditions, and historical events special to your campus.
- Affordability and financial aid options—offer tools such as a cost calculator or scholarship options.

ENDNOTES

¹ <http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/downloads/CCIHE2015-FactsFigures.pdf>

² <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/call-action-marketing-and-communications-higher-education/differentiation-hard-necessary>

³ <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/call-action-marketing-and-communications-higher-education/what%E2%80%99s-driving-demand-brand-higher>

⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rogerdooley/2013/02/05/college-branding-tipping/#57753433417f>

⁵ <http://www.ct.edu/files/pdfs/workgroup-report-marketing-trends.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.ct.edu/files/pdfs/workgroup-report-marketing-trends.pdf>

⁷ Ruffalo, Noel, Levitz, “2015 E-Expectations Report”

⁸ <http://www.nolamediagroup.com/2016/09/14/higher-education-branding-beyond-the-rankings/>

Contact us today.

Orange Element helps companies find new energy, clarity and confidence when presenting their brands. We strive to be a valued and trusted leader in integrated branding and design thinking.

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