**ADMISSIONS SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE & CAMPAIGNS PROPOSAL**

**Executive Summary**

The generation researching and applying to colleges now have an “all about me” mentality. They are digitally savvy, multi-screen users who consistently consume large amounts of media and content. They want personalized communications and experiences, and are using social media to connect and engage with their favorite brands. They want stimulating visual content, but will still take advantage of more traditional and “outdated” websites and social media platforms to research colleges.

They value authenticity and privacy; on more public platforms such as Twitter and Instagram, they will be more likely to allow brand connections. A more aggressive digital relationship building tactic can be applied to these platforms. On more private platforms such as messaging apps or texting, our audience prefers brands to have a passive presence, allowing the student to make the first point of contact. From there, our audience will happily engage in conversation with brands but will expect almost immediate response. When researching colleges, they consider traditional materials important (print, email, web, etc..) but also hold the opinions and online social content of their peers equally as important when making decisions. They are savvy to professionally created materials and look for “real” content from peers or other sources to “verify” marketing messages and visuals.

The overarching goals of this proposal are to build a strong, engaged online community rich with prospective, accepted and admitted students as well as current students. The content shared should be exciting and engaging, visually stimulating, and cater to the short attention span of our audience. It should provide opportunities for our audience to visually place themselves on campus and develop a sense of belonging should they attend as well as build a digital relationship with the college. With this immersive and personal content and engagement applications should increase, especially Early Decision. Content that continues to connect with and resonate with our audience will continually reaffirm their choice of college and increase application yield to and beyond deposit deadlines.

**Audience**

Students being recruited were born when Google began and were in grade school when Facebook took off. They find information online, particularly on cell phones and other mobile devices. This iGeneration, or Generation Z, were born during 1994 or later and are “experienced researchers and savvy consumers that expect near immediate and personalized response” from the colleges they’re interested in.[[1]](#footnote-1)

iGens are focused on “all about me” - they want to know what’s in it for them, and want marketing messages to be personalized, authentic, and attest to how products or services will serve or better them, the consumer. iGens are multi-screen users and are used to consuming large amounts of media and content.

To connect with iGens, it’s important to keep the following in mind[[2]](#footnote-2):

**Personalize everything.** Members of this generation desire personalized communications. They want brands to market to them as an individual, rather than a generic number or name on a list. Generic or mass mailings, digital or print, are a turnoff. iGens share information online and expect brands to use this information in their communications. Discover the information they’re willing to share on social media (interests, hobbies, music, sports, etc..) and use it to personalize communication.

**Connect with them through social media.**  Members of Generation Z are using social media daily - Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, Pinterest, and Snapchat. They connect with friends and use these platforms as information sources. According to the 2014 MMNPL survey, when researching, 81% of iGens use social media as a resource.2 It’s important for brands to take advantage of real-time engagement on social and to use platforms as a conversation tool, rather than a push marketing tool.

**Excite iGens with content.**  Generation Z are used to constant visual stimulation and content from multiple sources. It is vital to produce content that excites and sparks engagement to reach the target demographic. More interactive features should be included in marketing materials, such as videos, photos, etc… to make them more effective. iGens want more robust content and better designed websites - they’re a visual generation, hence the rise in sites such as Youtube and Instagram.

**Digital Vs. Social**

It is important to distinguish between “digital tools” and “social media”. Students view social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc…) and digital tools (Chegg, Princeton Review, etc..) very differently. Digital tools are heavily influential at the discovery phrase of a student’s college search. **Nearly 75% of students find information on college review and scholarship sites helpful compared to <25% students who indicated social media as very helpful at this stage.**

While developing and implementing a social media strategy for yield and admittance is important, it is also important to include college search sites during the discovery phase into that strategy. The college should focus on reaching students with digital tools and college search sites during the discovery phase and utilize social media sites during the admit and yield phases.

**Trends**

**two-thirds of students indicated that their social media conversations with institutions influenced where they enrolled**, with the top two groups being other admitted students and admissions counselors. Facebook use is declining in favor of more visual services like Instagram and private messaging apps, but the use of Facebook to research colleges has increased.

51% of U.S. High School seniors have visited a college’ Facebook page. [[3]](#footnote-3)

37% follow a college or university on Twitter

**Quick Response.** 62% of students expect to hear back from college representatives within 24 hours or less after contacting them.The iGeneration not only demands but expects instant gratification, so prompt, digital response is crucial over more traditional forms of communication like note cards and mailings.

**Authenticity.** This demographic knows how to research and will intuitively filter out inauthentic, brand-heavy messaging. It is important to keep messages, content, and visuals authentic, with students at the center.

**Privacy.** This generation is focused on privacy, especially on social media. Trying to reach them on private social networks and messaging like Snapchat and WeChat will not have positive results. Students using these channels to research colleges are looking to connect with current students and other admitted students.

**Social Media as a Research Tool.**  76% of the Class of 2017 used social media as a resource when deciding where to enroll, compared to 39% of the Class of 2016. Students prefer to connect online vs. traditional communication channels. [[4]](#footnote-4)

**Behavior is changing.** NACAC reports portion of admissions inquiries that institutions receive by telephone calls have dropped 22% in 2002 to only 7% in 2011. Online engagement can help highlight those students who can’t afford to invest the time or money for a campus visit but are otherwise genuinely interested in attending an institution. 1

**A Sense of Belonging.** Students need to know they’ll be able to find a group to connect with. They’re using social media to determine if there are other students like them on campus and if they’ll fit in with the current student body.

**Goals**

The overarching goals of this project are to create social campaigns using exciting, engaging content and build digital relationships with students using a personalized approach to:

**Build a strong online community.** By meeting students where they are on social media and engaging in personalized outreach, the college can build a strong online community of prospective, accepted, and current students. A strong online community helps raise brand visibility, increase engagement, and build positive affinity for the brand.

**Increase applications.** Exciting and engaging content that allows the audience to discover a sense of belonging and explore the Champlain College brand will help them in determining the colleges to which they apply. Video content allows viewers to gain a comprehensive visual of the college and imagine themselves there in person. This element is vital for segments of the audience who are unable to visit physical campus. Visualizing campus and developing a sense of belonging will

**Increase application yield.** Applications are only the first step. Once accepted, the College needs to move students to deposit and remain interested until their college experience begins. Consistent social media content that highlights Champlain’s features and excites and engages viewers will aid in the final college selection process and reaffirm decisions to attend Champlain.

**Data Observations**

**Female Drop After Visit.** Admissions has noticed a drop in enrolled female students after visit and/or acceptance. Feedback mechanisms has indicated the campus seemed “unfriendly” but there is no substantive or clear reasoning to explain the drop.

**Gender Distribution.** The gender distribution is almost even when applying, but skews towards males during admittance and enrollment.

2015FA applicants: 108 females, 167 males. 275 total.

 2015 FA applicants: 137 females, 175 males. 312 total.

**Location.** The top application states continue to be in New England, although states like Pennsylvania and California remain in the top. States that have seen an increase in applications for 2016 include Florida, Georgia, Illinois, North Carolina, and Virginia. These states could be used for targeted marketing opportunities.

Geographic Application Distribution:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **2015** | **2016** | **Change** |
| New York | 43 | 38 | -5 |
| Massachusetts | 35 | 42 | +7 |
| Connecticut | 28 | 24 | -4 |
| Vermont | 26 | 23 | -3 |
| New Jersey | 22 | 19 | -3 |
| New Hampshire | 18 | 13 | -5 |
| Pennsylvania | 14 | 15 | +1 |
| California | 9 | 8 | -1 |

States with significant change:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **2015** | **2016** | **Change** |
| Florida | 8 | 12 | +4 |
| Georgia | 9 | 18 | +9 |
| Illinois | 5 | 10 | +5 |
| North Carolina | 9 | 18 | +9 |
| Virginia | 3 | 6 | +3 |

**Applicant Interests.** The top application states continue to be in New England, although states like Pennsylvania and California remain in the top. States that have seen an increase in applications for 2016 include Florida, Georgia, Illinois, North Carolina, and Virginia. These states could be used for targeted marketing opportunities.

**In-House Research**

### *Focus Groups*

Focus groups should be conducted among first year students, combining those who applied Early Decision and those who applied regular decision to provide a spectrum of experiences. Including individuals with certain MBTI data outlined below to examine personality effects on application decision should also be considered. These focus groups will serve to confirm quantitative data, collect qualitative data and may provide insight into areas that the quantitative data lacks.

### *MBTI Data*

Myers-Briggs Type Indicators identify ways in which individuals gain energy(I/E), gather
 information(N/S), make decisions (F/T), types of lifestyle preferences(J/P). For the
 purposes of this report, introverted and extroverted (I/E) will be left out and instead focus
 will be on the indicators surrounding information gathering (iNtuition vs. Sensing) and
 decision making (Feeling vs. Thinking).

**Immediate Campaigns & Initiatives**

### *Personalized Social Media Outreach*

**Follow & message students who recently visited.**  Historically, Champlain has found that those who visit the campus are more likely to apply. Using that theory, Champlain can begin using social media to personally reach out to students who have recently visited.

 *Goals*

* Connect and build digital relationship with prospective students
* Increase brand awareness
* Convert prospects to applicants
* Build brand affinity

*Tactics*

* **Build prospects database.** Using data from recent campus visits and Bus Trip programs, build database of prospect name, location, program of interest, and any other information deemed useful from Admissions team in excel sheet.
* **Research social media profiles.** Using data, search on social media platforms to find student profiles. Use additional identifying data (age, location, interests, etc..) to verify identity. Add handles & URLs to excel sheet listed by name. Note any information available on profile such as interests, clubs, etc...
* **Connect with Social profiles.** “Follow” users from institutional accounts.
* **Engage in digital conversation.** Engage users in conversation, thanking them for visiting, offering to answer any questions, including first name (if available) to personalize message. Use any shared information to make connections to the College (i.e. user indicates interest in sports, share info on intramural sports). Track any shared links with Ow.ly links and UTM codes.
* **Note reciprocal connections and replies.** Record any individuals who connect back with Champlain and/or reply to initial messages.

 *Tools*

* Twitter
* Instagram
* Hootsuite
* Excel

 *Resources*

* Admissions Counselor (Online Conversations)
* Admissions Interns (Researching & Database Building)

 *Measurement*

* **Connect and build digital relationship with prospective students**
	+ Followers
	+ Replies
* **Increase Engagement**
	+ Likes
	+ Shares
	+ Retweets
* **Convert prospects to applicants**
	+ Increased Applications
	+ Regular Decision app to ED conversion
* **Increase Traffic**
	+ Page Views
	+ Unique Visitors
	+ Length of Visit

 *Anticipated Costs*

* None

### *Facebook 360 Degree Videos*

**Allow users to gain a 360 Degree view of campus on Facebook.** Facebook has recently updated its interface to allow for interactive, 360 degree videos to play within its timeline. Users can play the video and click and drag within the video for different perspectives as the video plays. As Champlain is gaining more attention from prospective students outside of the New England area who may not be able to visit campus, an interactive visitor experience is the next best thing. While the marketing team is re-designing the virtual campus tour experience, taking advantage of Facebook’s newest feature will not only bring that experience to the social sphere, but will reflect our “#1 Most Innovative School” ranking as the feature is new and innovative. An example of this technology can be found here: https://www.facebook.com/Facebook360/

*Goals*

* Generate interest
* Increase brand awareness
* Increase engagement

*Tactics*

* **Develop Content Ideas & Calendar.** Develop a list of 360 degree videos to shoot throughout campus, including places and events (graduation, convocation, etc..). Determine a calendar to collect and create videos and a share schedule.
* **Create Materials.** Shoot videos based on schedule or event date and edit into correct format and style, adhering to all necessary brand visual guidelines.
* **Socialize.** Share content based on established calendar to spread content out over time. Direct users on other channels to main Facebook page to promote videos.

 *Tools*

* Facebook
* Twitter
* Instagram
* Youtube
* Adobe Premiere

 *Resources*

* Videographer (in house/intern)
* Video editor (in house/intern)
* Camera w/360 degree filming capabilities

 *Measurement*

* **Generate interest**
	+ Website clickthrough rate
	+ Visit or more information request
	+ Ave. completion rate
* **Increase brand awareness**
	+ Reach
	+ Views
* **Increase engagement**
	+ Likes
	+ Shares
	+ Comments

### *#Champstagram - Crowdsourced Social Content*

**A crowd-sourced view of Champlain College.** The iGen audience is moving beyond traditional brand marketing campaigns and looking for the “real view” of colleges from peers and current students. #Champstagram would act as a multi-channel hashtag campaign to gain a crowd-sourced view of Champlain College. Using our various social media channels, Champlain would promote the hashtag #Champstagram, asking users to capture their Champlain experience and share on social media using the hashtag. Content with the hashtag would be re-shared and featured on Champlain College social channels. The hashtag, although aimed at prospective students, would engage multiple audiences; parents could get an inside view of their student’s college experience, alumni could re-visit their college memories or experience a feeling of nostalgia and share positive sentiment about Champlain. Other Champlain College channels such as Champlain College Alumni or Champlain College parents, even Champlain College online and Champlain College graduate studies could utilize the campaign to encourage their respective audiences to participate in the campaign using photos and videos.

A content aggregator such as Tagboard, Tint or other service should be used to display moderated social media content on Champlain’s website, specifically in the prospective and admitted student sections to increase applications and yield.

 *Goals*

* Showcase an authentic Champlain view
* Increase brand awareness
* Increase engagement

*Tactics*

* **Develop Materials.** Digital assets to promote the campaign will need to be created, including Facebook cover photos, social media visual posts, and/or short videos promoting the campaign. Research legal parameters, if any, for re-using content.
* **Create Content Calendar.** If campaign is spanning across different audiences, work with coordinators in each department to outline content calendar to align efforts and messaging. Determine prompts, schedule, and calls to action to encourage participation in campaign.
* **Launch & Promote campaign.** Use channels and developed materials to launch and promote campaign. Acknowledge and thank participants.
* **Curate and share content.** Collect shared content on hashtag and re-share on main Champlain channels to increase reach.

*Tools*

* Facebook
* Twitter
* Instagram
* Youtube
* Canva
* Adobe Premiere

 *Resources*

* Graphic Design (In house/Intern)
* Social Media (in house/Intern)

 *Measurement*

* **Showcase an authentic Champlain**
	+ Content Pieces Shared
	+ Unique User Participation Rate
* **Increase brand awareness**
	+ Reach
	+ Views
* **Increase engagement**
	+ Likes
	+ Shares
	+ Comments

 *Anticipated Costs*

* Content Aggregator (Tint, Tagboard, etc..) - costs ongoing/monthly

**Long-Term Campaigns**

### *Live Champlain*

A video & photo based campaign that speaks directly to students centered around the tagline “Don’t just attend college. Live it.” The campaign uses verbiage and topics included in the most recent Student Life mailing piece sent out by Marketing. The campaign features videos that are quick paced, with quick cuts, video clips, and music to make it energetic and inspiring. It uses language that speaks directly to the viewer, and allows the view to see themselves at Champlain College. The social media campaign would incorporate the hashtag #LiveChamplain, and content would encourage dialogue between other stakeholder groups (current students, alumni, community members, parents, etc..) to participate in an online discussion around what it means to #LiveChamplain on channels such as Facebook and Twitter. Longer versions of videos can be hosted on Youtube and shared on Facebook, and smaller clips can be used on Instagram as a way to drive traffic to Youtube or a webpage with embedded videos.

This campaign will appeal to the target demographic through its use of visually appealing and engaging content. It uses language, either written or voice over, that speaks directly to them, making the content feel personalized. It will help prospective students better visualize themselves on Champlain’s campus and get a feeling of the types of activities, organizations, and lifestyle available as a student.

*Example Language*

At Champlain, it’s all about you. Your passion - finding it, focusing it, nurturing it

by creating academic, professional and personal opportunities for growth

We’re rewriting the rules of higher education. We’re giving you a college experience that delivers strategic advantages for your future career success. We’re providing you with the ideal environment to cultivate your big ideas and create the kind of college memories that will last a lifetime.

Find your passion. Pursue your passion. It’s all here for you. Don’t just attend college. Live it.

*Possible Video Topics and Social Media Text:*

* Academics - You are not one dimensional. Your education shouldn’t be either.
Don’t just attend college. Live it. #LiveChamplain
* Majors & Programs - Learn what you love. Love what you learn.
* Don’t just attend college. Live it. #LiveChamplain
* Faculty - Our professors practice what they teach.(?) Don’t just attend college. Live it. #LiveChamplain
* Internships- We’ll help you get one foot in the door, followed quickly by the other. Don’t just attend college. Live it. #LiveChamplain
* Career Services - We help you bring your career vision to life. Don’t just attend college. Live it. #LiveChamplain
* Study Abroad To expand your horizons - go beyond your borders. Don’t just attend college. Live it. #LiveChamplain
* Student Life - Life is good here. Don’t just attend college. Live it. #LiveChamplain
* Residence Halls - Rock the house. Don’t just attend college. Live it.
* Burlington - The ultimate college town vibe. Don’t just attend college; Live it. #LiveChamplain
* Vermont - Find your bliss here. Don’t just attend college. Live it. #LiveChamplain

*Microsite*

A microsite or group of websites should be utilized with the social media campaign. This drives users to the college website and creates a path that drives them deeper into the site to explore other student life options, academics, and apply. The video collection should be included, along with copy and hyperlinks to other areas of the site. It should incorporate other similar content such as student stories and student featured work.

 *Goal*

* **Generate interest**
	+ Website clickthrough rate
	+ Visit or more information request
	+ Ave. completion rate
* **Increase brand awareness**
	+ Reach
	+ Views
* **Increase engagement**
	+ Likes
	+ Shares
	+ Comments

 *Tactics*

* **Create Copy & Record Voiceover.** Using copy above and other existing sources, craft copy for short, 30 second to one minute videos for each topic. Record video voiceover, either in house or outsourced.
* **Gather and/or Record Video Footage.** Gather existing footage and record any necessary shots not already in Champlain video archive.
* **Develop Materials.** In addition to creating videos, develop any accompanying promotional materials such as social media copy, social visual promotions, etc…
* **Launch & Promote campaign.** Use channels and developed materials to launch and promote campaign. Use call to action to encourage audience to participate to the campaign using the hashtag #LiveChamplain

 *Tools*

* Facebook
* Twitter
* Instagram
* Youtube
* Canva
* Adobe Premiere

 *Resources*

* Videographer (in house/intern)
* Video editor (in house/intern)

 *Measurement*

* **Generate interest**
	+ Website clickthrough rate
	+ Visit or more information request
	+ Ave. completion rate
* **Increase brand awareness**
	+ Reach
	+ Views
* **Increase engagement**
	+ Likes
	+ Shares
	+ Comments

 *Anticipated Costs*

* Editor hours
* Paid advertising to boost views
* Small budget for giveaways/incentives to boost participation
* Possible voiceover talent costs

### *“Let Us Dare to…” Video Series*

A video based campaign developed around first-person, GoPro footage. The campaign features Champlain’s Let Us Dare tagline, followed by actions verbs such as “learn”, “grow” “create”, etc… Footage is gathered from current Champlain students wearing GoPro participating or exhibiting specific verbs that allign with the Champlain college brand and mission. First-person footage allows the viewer to place themselves within the situation and “see” themselves in Burlington, on campus, being a student at Champlain, etc…Videos will be short, 30 seconds- 1:00 long, in order to capture the attention of our generation.

This campaign will appeal to the target demographic through its use of visually appealing and engaging content. It will help prospective students better visualize themselves on Champlain’s campus and get a feeling of the types of activities, organizations, and lifestyle available as a student.

The campaign, in addition to the videos shared on social, can be complemented with similar engaging social media content with prompts such as “What was the last thing you dared to do?” and visuals promoting the campaign and asking users to share their own “let us dare” moments, videos, images, etc…

*Goals*

* Generate interest
* Increase brand awareness
* Increase engagement

*Tactics*

* **Establish series list, student participants, and calendar.** Determine list of verbs & video ideas that align with the Champlain brand. Contact students to participate and collect footage for each video segment. Establish a production calendar to ensure video footage is collected, compiled, and shared on time. This will be critical for limited resources.
* **Collect & create content.** Lend out GoPro cameras on established schedule for students to collect content. Retrieve GoPro and edit footage into exciting and aspirational 30 second to one minute video.
* **Launch & Promote campaign.** Use channels and developed materials to launch and promote campaign. Acknowledge and thank participants.
* **Curate and share content.** Collect shared content on hashtag and re-share on main Champlain channels to increase reach.

 *Tools*

* Facebook
* Twitter
* Instagram
* Youtube
* Snapchat
* Adobe Premiere

 *Resources*

* Videographer (in house/intern)
* Video editor (in house/intern)
* GoPro Camera and accessories (Already have)

 *Measurement*

* **Generate interest**
	+ Website click through rate
	+ Visit or more information request
	+ Ave. completion rate
* **Increase brand awareness**
	+ Reach
	+ Views
* **Increase engagement**
	+ Likes
	+ Shares
	+ Comments

 *Anticipated Costs*

* Possibly another GoPro or similar camera
* Editor hours
* Student compensation/incentive
* Budget for paid advertising/post boost
1. Rogers, Gill, and Kendall Robertson. *Selfies, SnapChat, So What? The 2015 Social Admissions Report*. Rep. N.p.: Chegg Enrollment Services, n.d. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Schneider, Joan. "How to Market to the IGeneration." *Harvard Business Review*. Harvard Business Publishing, 06 May 2015. Web. 29 Nov. 2015. <https://hbr.org/2015/05/how-to-market-to-the-igeneration>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Powers, Patrick. "Social Media Trends in U.S. Higher Education." *SlideShare*. MStoner, 11 Nov. 2014. Web. 29 Nov. 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Leung, Suzanne. "Looking Beyond the Campus Visit: How Online Behavior Is Changing Predictive Enrollment." *Uversity Roundtable Blog*. Uversity, 10 Apr. 2013. Web. 19 Nov. 2015. <https://www.uversity.com/blog/what-you-should-know-about-behavioral-enrollment-data/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)