



ALUMNI INSIGHTS

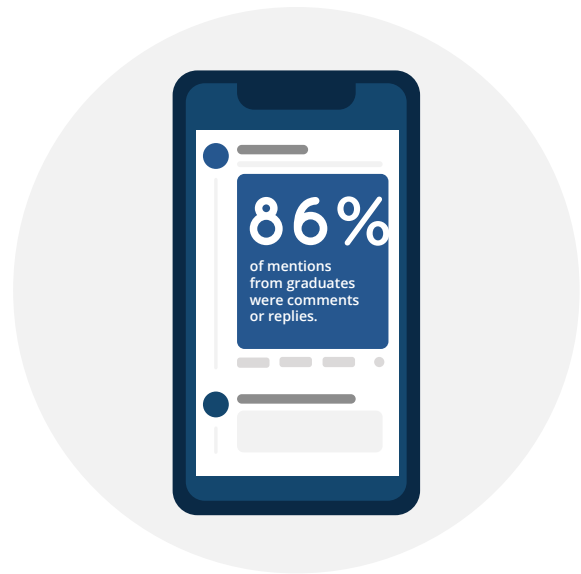
6 Ways to Elevate Brand Affinity through Alumni Stories

Our [recent trends research](#) explored current trends in higher ed conversation and [admissions audience themes](#). We're rounding out our insights with a look at alumni—how they tell your campus outcomes story and how to leverage them to generate positive affinity for your campus brand. This year's research analyzed over 4,700,000 mentions from 50 institutions of every type and size to bring you the most relevant and impactful insights.

Strengthen connections with your alumni and students with these data-informed recommendations.

1. Amplify alumni stories with positive outcomes to stand out from your competition.

Alumni tell your outcomes story because they're most likely to comment or respond to posts (posts most likely created by your prospective students). In our study, 86% of mentions from graduates were comments or replies. Your college graduates are influencers, affecting the thoughts and decisions of your prospective and current students. Their ability to speak authentically about their experience and tie it to educational outcomes is more valuable than any strategic marketing initiative aimed at prospective students and their families.



Your alumni also post their own content. For every piece of content your campus publishes about alumni, three pieces of earned alumni content are published. Identify your alumni mentions from third-party sources, such as other organizations or companies, etc., and stand out from your competition by amplifying the stories that align with your institutional goals of enrollment, retention, and donations.

If you're a smaller institution, you're likely to have a higher proportion of positive alumni conversation and athletics mentions because your overall conversation volume is smaller. Seek out these positive stories and shine the spotlight on alumni that align with your brand story, differentiators, and values to stay true to your campus culture.

2. Capitalize on the energy of alumni social media mentions to increase connection and impact.

Alumni are featured across a variety of online channels, but social media is consistently the go-to source with more than half (54% median) of non-athletics alumni online mentions. Balance your content sources, but leverage social media when you can—influence expands quickly with the ease of resharing.



3. Focus on former student athletes to increase online engagement.

The most reshared and commented on posts are athletic alumni mentions, especially at large and very large institutions. Athletics plays a critical role in promoting an institution's brand awareness, but students really want to see how alumni across multiple areas and disciplines succeed after graduation. Promote a balanced view of the alumni experience to help prospective and current students understand the long-term role their college education can play in their own success post-graduation regardless of their athletic involvement.



4. Repurpose alumni news mentions to expand authenticity.

Alumni storytelling strengthens the perception of an institution and increases your authenticity, giving prospective or current students and alumni examples of the positive experiences available and inspiring them to enroll or give their time, talent, or treasure. Repurpose alumni news mentions to highlight the long-term success of your alumni and grow your affinity.

Also take the opportunity to pitch alumni success stories to media outlets—particularly local ones. If your goal is to increase brand awareness, sharing stories of alumni outcomes to the local community is a strong strategy for campuses of all sizes to broaden positive outreach.

5. Collect diverse stories to showcase the expertise and experiences of your campus.

Celebrations of alumni success make up nearly half (46%) of local news mentions and 30% of broad-reaching alumni news mentions. Success stories are the majority of alumni news mentions, with athletics a close second. Track these highlights to easily collect diverse stories to use in institutional and athletic recruiting efforts. For example, feature the stories on social media and your website to inspire prospective students or use them to identify admissions volunteers and career mentors. The diversity of your alumni experiences deepens your internal and external understanding of the breadth and depth of your institution's expertise and outcomes.



6. Know where your alumni mentions happen in order to take timely action.

If a top ten news outlet talks about your alumni, it's a big deal. Less than 1% of all alumni news mentions appear in the top 10 news outlets. It's also unlikely your institution will be mentioned, which makes catching it via social listening even more important. You need to leverage positive mentions for digital or in-person engagement opportunities. If the mention is negative, monitor the conversation to get in front of an emerging issue and control the narrative as needed. Conversely, amplifying stories from outlets with less reach increases the chance they'll be picked up by larger outlets, further expanding your brand awareness.

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What goals do you want to achieve?



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