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SPARK EXCLUSIVE

UG FOCUS

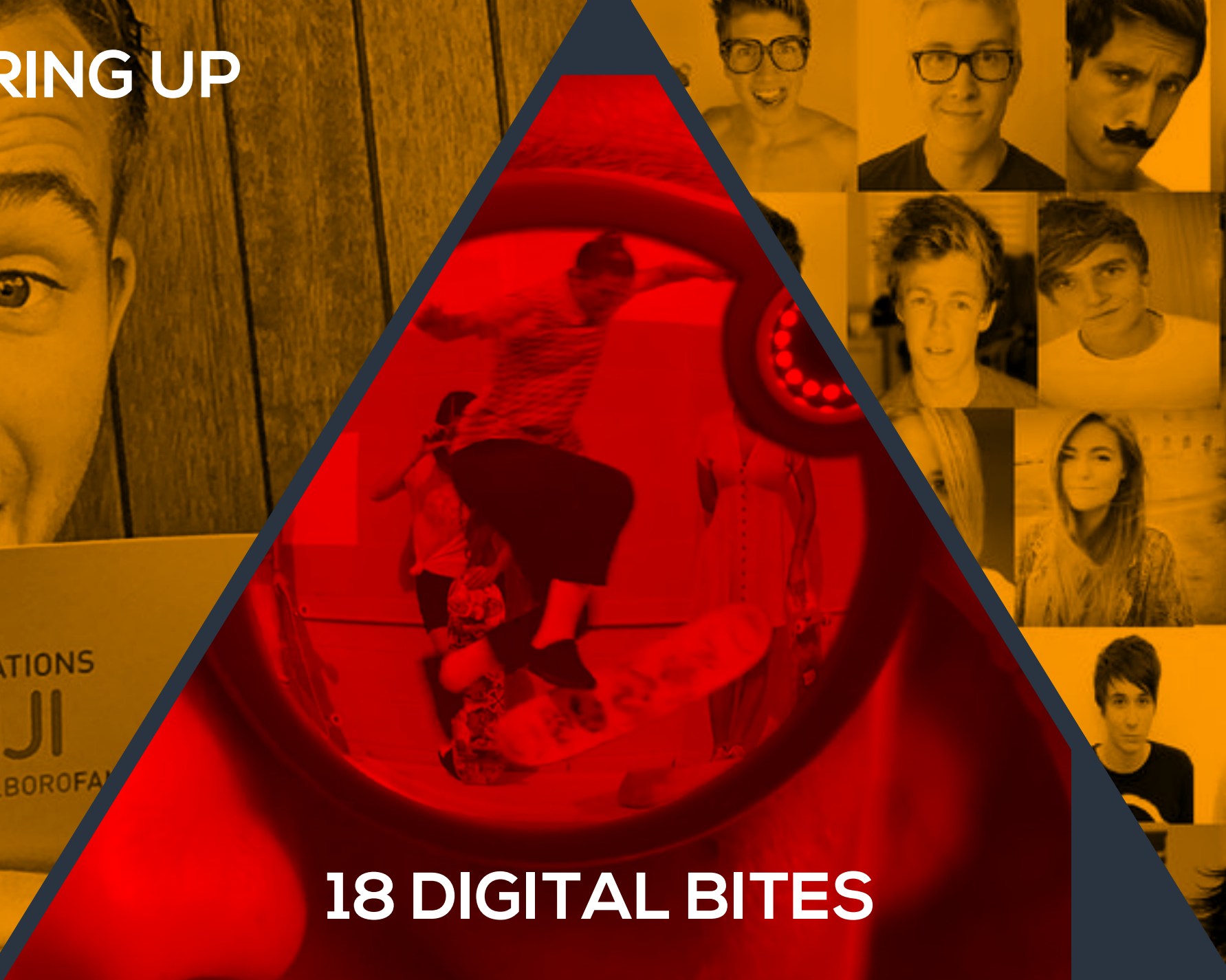
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first Spark of 2016/17. This edition includes a focus on Undergraduate recruitment and marketing. As ever, we're hoping to stretch your imaginations and encourage some lateral thinking, and so you'll find examples from around the world and out of the sector too. We kick off with some of the big UG things that have caught our eye, before zooming in on a few case studies that highlight some particularly important trends right now - Virtual Reality, Student Experience and the rise of the YouTubers. We've thrown in some examples from Clearing too, some digital trends and a few websites that are worth a look. Plus we've gone beyond UG and included 20 snapshots from the wider marketing spectrum that are worth a look. Remember, many of the images are linked to live links. The signposting should help you.



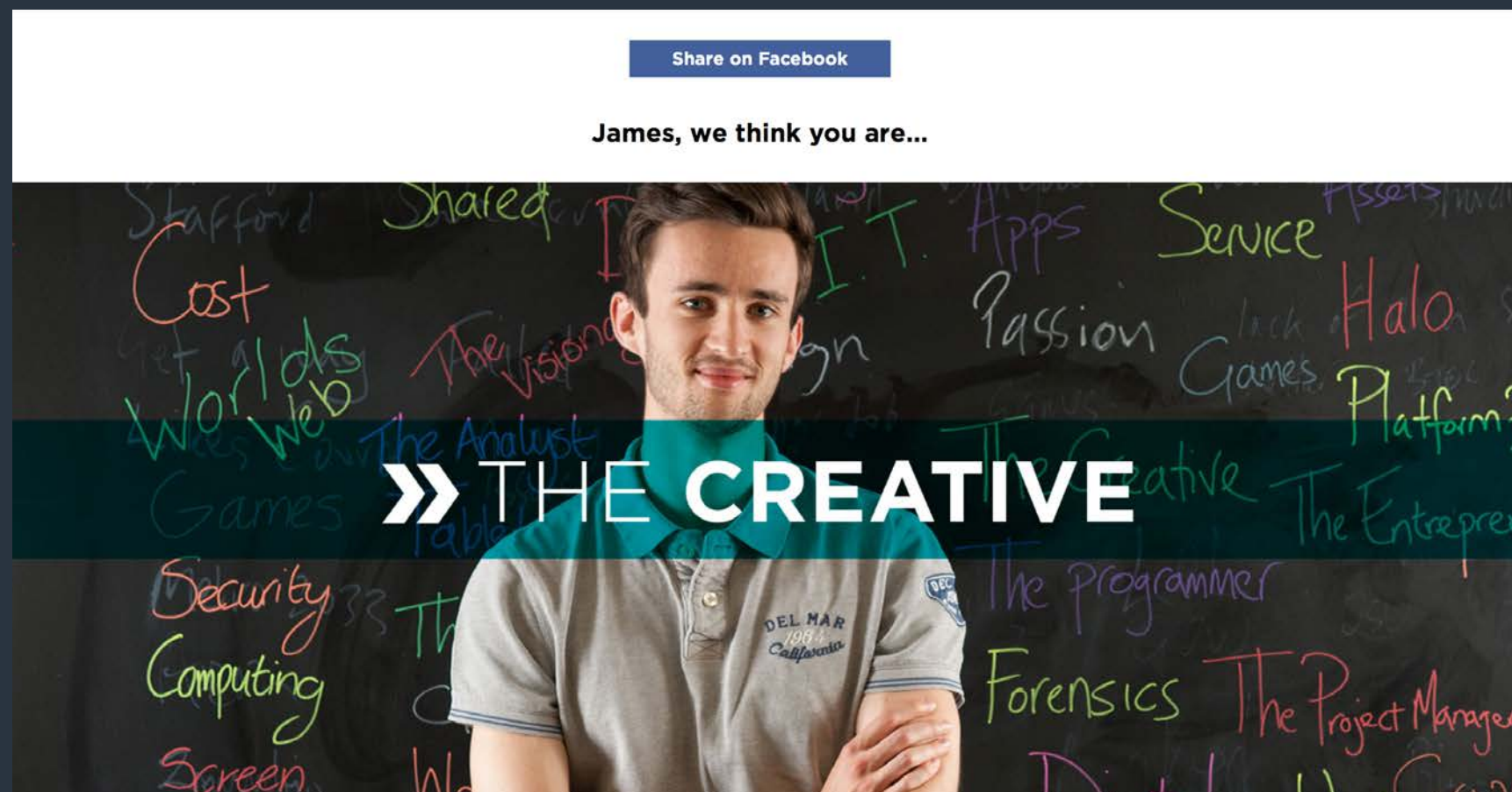
UG LANDSCAPE

FOCUS

Here's 16 recent examples from the landscape - all with the potential to inspire your own great UG marketing ideas. From magazines and quizzes to countdowns and music festivals . All live linked to further viewing.

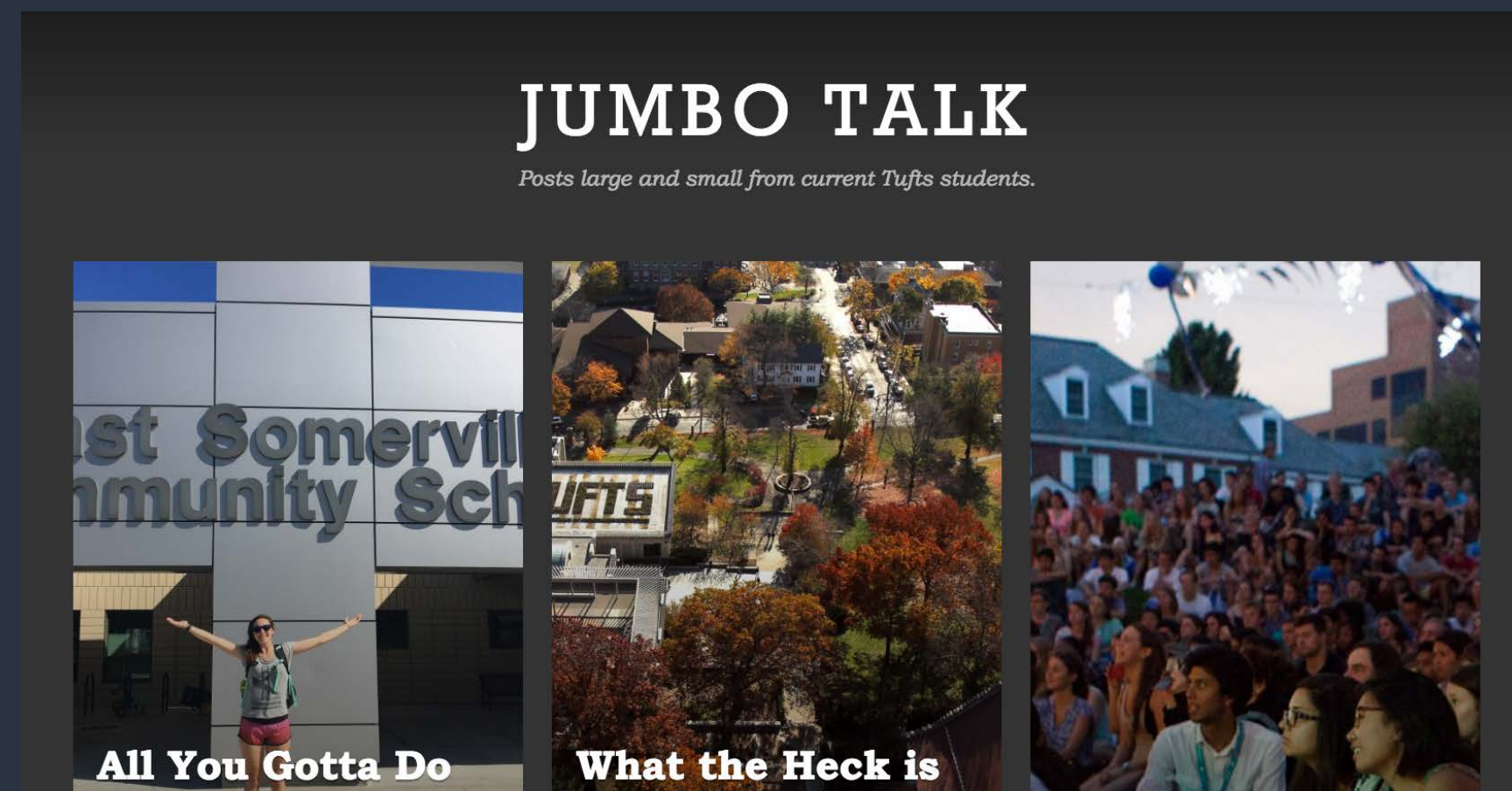


We're expecting an increase in the number of online quizzes and assessments to help students choose the right course and university for them. Those that include some kind of subject taster could prove particularly valuable especially as the retention of new students remains a key issue for many. These types of tools also offer great sharing opportunities and could be advocated through schools. The Gloucestershire self-selection (click below) exercise for computing studies is a particularly good experience and a worthy winner at this year's Heist Awards.



Sometimes university websites can be a bit overwhelming. So The University of Sheffield has created a 'Transform Your Future' microsite to give students a quick insight into their university experience, outstanding teaching and pioneering research. It was a good way for Clearing students in particular to get a real feel for the university in a matter of minutes.

We've always been a big fan of student blogs as they provide an insight into university life like nobody else can. So we're impressed with the way the Student Life Magazine from Plymouth University builds on this. Available online and offline, their professional looking magazine provides all kinds of advice, offers tips, highlights local attractions and tells alumni stories in an engaging way that's a little bit different to connect with current and future students.



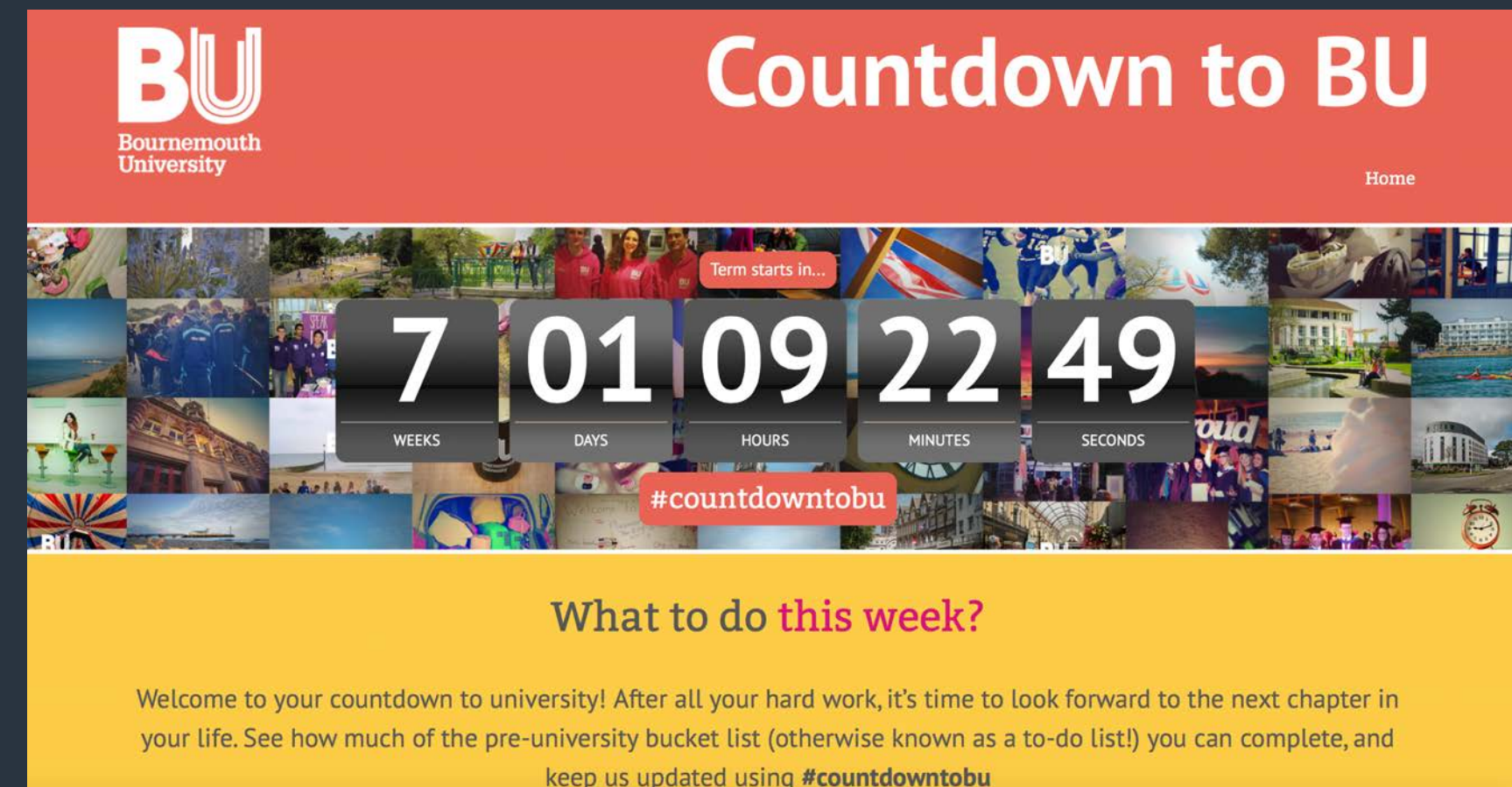
If you want to have a look at a best-in-class blog then Jumbo Talk is well worth checking out. Not only is it well populated, and up to date, but it's searchable by subject. So type in 'Women in Engineering', 'Travel Abroad' or 'Admissions Tips' and you get the low-down straight from the students themselves. Blogs like this could become even more important in the UG selection process, but we expect there will be a greater mix of content delivery to meet so many different consumption preferences.

As well as learning about their subject, students learn a lot about themselves at university. It's a much wider learning experience. The University of Sydney has brought these extra elements to life through a microsite where through quotes and nicely branded videos, their students share what they have learnt at the university beyond the classroom. Their microsite promotes their experience by providing an insight into everything from making friends to being independent.



LSBU used a clever and interesting tactic during clearing, going to where students are to tap into their mindset. They ran a couple of sponsored articles on BuzzFeed that talked about 'Top 10 tips for Clearing' and '5 things you didn't know about Clearing'. These weren't corporate or branded. They were created in the BuzzFeed style way with funny GIFs, short paragraphs and links for easy sharing.

We've seen a few useful countdowns to university over the last couple of years. Leeds Beckett's excellent 'Freshers Countdown' has previously been featured. This year Bournemouth's 'Countdown to BU' caught our eye, mainly because of the student vlog style content that was shared with each topic each week. And whilst the serious stuff about UG preparation was covered, there was a bit of fun too - such as a reminder to learn how to use the washing machine. This is all part of the unsurprising extension of communication through the conversion phase.



You can't underestimate the importance of teachers when students are thinking about deciding whether to go to university and which university they should choose. So, we were impressed with UEA's UniBox that provides advice, resources, thought leadership, news stories and even an eBook to help teachers support their students when they are choosing and applying for university.



Going to university is a transformational time for students and their families. So, to support parents Sheffield Hallam University has created a team of Parent Ambassadors who they have trained to pass on their advice and talk about their personal experiences at open days. They connect with students and their parents, providing advice and reassurance as part of their outreach team. Their support could tip things in SHU's favour when it comes to deciding on a uni.



Click on the image above to have a look at Harvard's Shopping Week. It's now a key part of the elective decision making that new students go through. In this case they get to try as many classrooms as they like. This one's a bit of a wild card to encourage some creative thinking about the UG cycle. What if first year lectures were open to all for one week? What if they were all broadcast online simultaneously? Either way, the opportunity for applicants to sample learning will be a growth trend - we're sure of that.

Today people want to be part of experiences - even if they can't be there physically. Which is why Magyar Telekom has created the Festival Buddy. This high-tech buddy attends all kinds of gigs, festivals and events, enabling people at home to see what's going on and interact with people at the event by talking to them face-to-face and even squirting them with a water pistol. It immediately transports people to events. An idea that could easily be used for open days, graduations and all kinds of student events. The buddy even has its own microsite.



AUT in New Zealand describe their interNZ business as an industry connector for students, preparing university leavers with job ready skills to complement their academic qualifications, then matching and electronically placing them in front of employers who have specific talent requirements. This is a university clearly committed to employability and we love the on campus and cross social media promotion of the whole opportunity. Many universities do this kind of stuff but the packaging is so important, especially for standing out to UG applicants.



We like to keep in touch with what Deakin are up to and, yet again, they've delivered something interesting. In the world of UG recruitment it's a big step. Deakin have launched their new 'Think Young' campaign, complete with vibrant visuals, typography and colours. Check out the website and videos (running as TV commercials in Australia) and see that it's not a nod to Evian, but it certainly is closer to the world of lifestyle commercial brands. The link takes you to a case study that describes the 'progressive and courageous' positioning, backed up by stories and profiles, all showcasing how Deakin is a university for the future, tackling the big challenges out there.



Videos of students talking are a great way to bring the student experience to life. But head & shoulder shots can get a bit boring. Which is why we like the way The University of Huddersfield has added an extra element and used animation to hold interest and support their student storytelling approach when promoting their open days. [Nicoles' story](#) in particular stands out as the animation effectively interacts with Nicole in the video .

We've previously highlighted clickable videos. But Ted Baker has taken things to the next level . They have created a film directed by Guy Ritchie where shoppers can click on plus signs near the actors to put the clothes in their shopping basket. Bad puns aside it brings the worlds of retail and entertainment together. And it's a way unis could serve up what students want to know about. The retailer also launched a cryptic [social media campaign](#) where you can look in their shop windows and speak coded messages into Google's voice app to access exclusive discounts.



TotalJobs are making Jamie Mudle the centre of a £1m campaign to find him a job. Jamie will be give access to the best job hunting tools and mentoring from industry experts (including from TV's The Apprentice), whilst the story will be shared online and through out of home advertising. It reminds us a little of BI Norwegian Business School's ['Flying Start' campaign](#) - now using its winning student to front a multi-media campaign. Maybe a university will follow suit and use one student to share the whole application journey? Maybe to help humanise the whole process - a bit like Direct Line's Winston Wolf did for its service differential.



VIRTUAL REALITY

CASE STUDY

IMMERSION TIME

We're on the cusp of the VR wave right now. And UCSD in the USA is riding it already. Literally. Here's a quick look at where VR is up to and what the big opportunities could be for engaging with prospective UG students.





We've been talking about VR for some time, but now it's definitely about to go up the gears. Quite literally too, as Samsung and its Gear headset have been key protagonists in taking the technology mainstream. And although Oculus Rift has just enjoyed its big launch, it's Sony and the PS4 that could have the biggest impact yet. On October 13 they are due to ship the very first headsets out to teenage bedrooms across the world. And with 50 VR games rumoured to be in the pipeline we can expect that Generation Z will start to embrace the 360 first-person experience quicker than most. But this all leads to a warning for universities. Don't expect your VR 360 corridor tour, or even your drone flyby, to get students as excited as you hoped. Remember they may have come to you fresh from a battle with aliens in their bedrooms, from a world cup final in their kitchen, from a cliff hanging thriller on the edge of a virtual rainforest or even a hyper jump through a black hole. Virtual classrooms and coffee shops might not impress them as much. If you are going to do a VR tour then take a lead from Regis in Colorado, USA. Take prospective students around facilities and labs, throw in facts, figures and statements, and if you're lucky enough to have a Rocky Mountains amphitheatre then show that off too!

Some universities are proving more imaginative. There's UC San Diego who have been promoting their 'shakeboarding' at open days. Students get to wear an Oculus Rift headset whilst riding a wave or two at the local (pretend) beach. But as they watch and listen they also get tilted, fans blow wind at them, and no doubt there's a little water around too. Virtual Reality goes 4D. And as they meet the ultimate wave caused by seismic disruption then they experience the university's earthquake research credentials, and sustainable surfboard technology at the same time. A little more interesting than the virtual library we think. And, as ever, look for some inspiration from out of the sector. We think aerospace innovator Lockheed Martin's 'Mars Experience Bus' is a great example of fusing education with a virtual tour. In this case, children from schools get onto the bus, strap in and prepare for a trip. But the windows are really screens, and when the trip starts the view is of Mars - complete with narration of course. It's definitely time to get more immersive.

STELLIFY ME

CASE STUDY

WALKING THE TALK

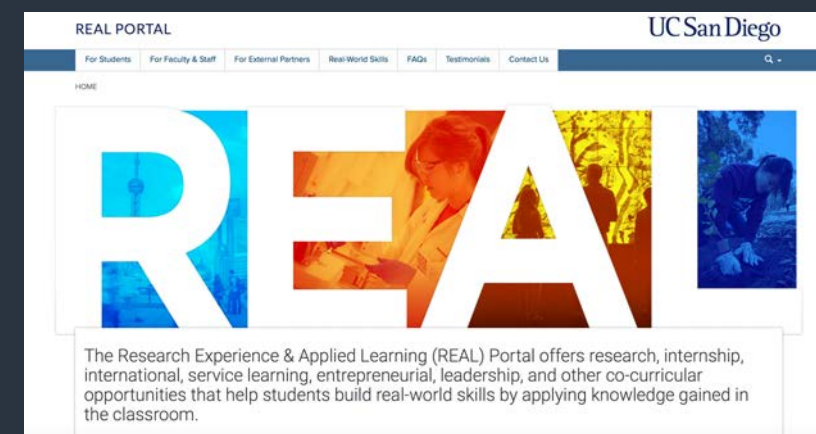
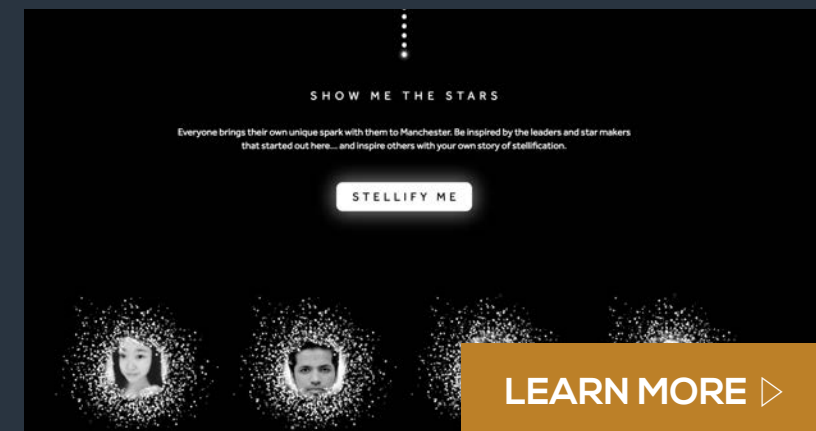
UG student applicants, their parents and schools, will soon be bombarded with statements about how a prospective university can offer the extra curricular opportunities, world-ready skills, and employability x-factor. But universities have to deliver on this. From Manchester to San Diego they are starting to walk the talk. A big challenge is to package it properly to resonate both on and off campus.





The University of Manchester recently launched their Stellify programme with an intergalactic big bang. Stellify is designed to give all students opportunities in extra-curricular activity, in learning, volunteering, campus challenges and mentoring, whilst calling for students to seize their chance to be a star of the future: to shine in their own individual way. On 20 September the University also began to really walk the talk, putting all 8,200 new starters simultaneously through a Grand Ethical Challenge. Maybe it was the world's biggest classroom? Click on the top image to read more about it. Clearly this kind of activity is going to shine through the social media shop window, enabling prospective students to see the opportunity on offer.

Stellify has its own website, and browser-enabled app so that students can 'stellify themselves.' And there are already quite a few pictures and statements being uploaded. Again, this is only going to help prospective students see the type of opportunity available whilst getting to hear about experiences directly from the students. And finally stellify may get to mean something more in Manchester than an Ian Brown song.



Although aimed at PGR students, the UCL 'Research Summer School' could offer inspiration to those designing and promoting the UG experience. The school is designed to bring together research students from different disciplines, to combine their knowledge and skills, and to contribute to tackling one of the University's 'Grand Challenges'. Surely any university that is claiming to focus on interdisciplinary teaching could do something like this - to walk the talk of course. And we love the 'Real' portal at UC San Diego, enabling all students to sign in and get involved in the University's research in all sorts of ways. Again, a university that is breathing reality into their big statements.



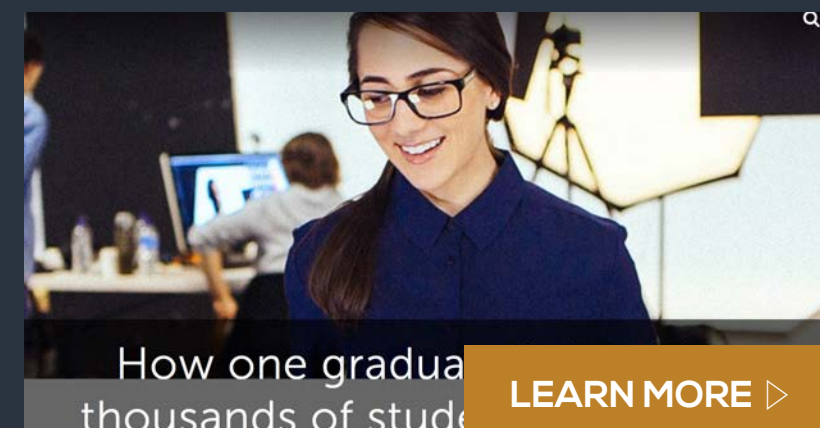
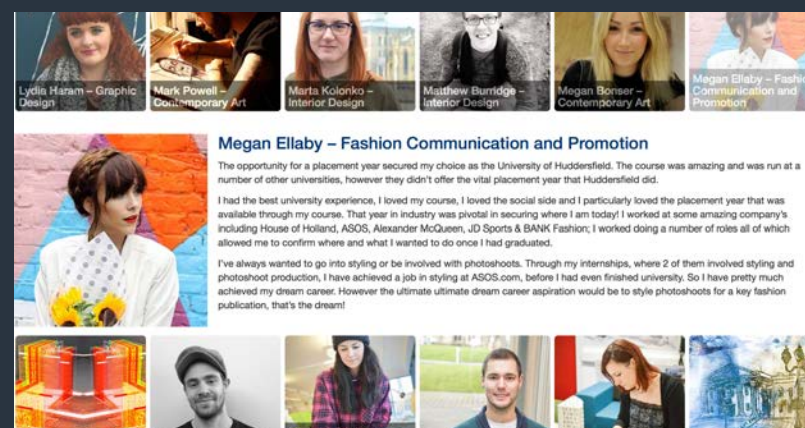
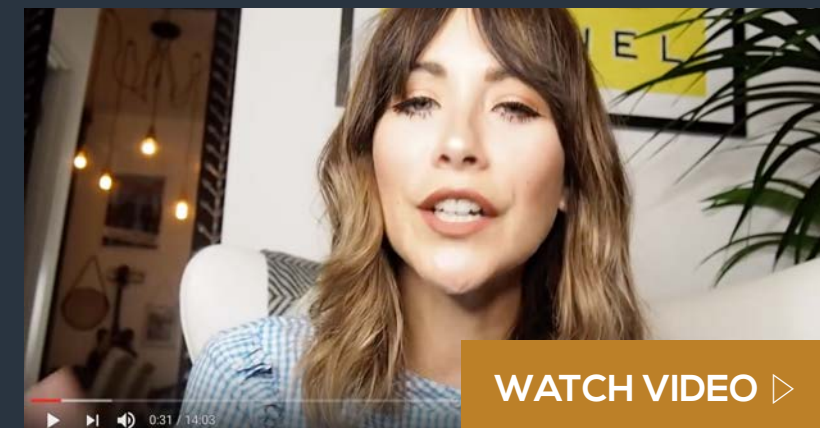
VLOG ON

CASE STUDY

THE POWER OF YOUTUBE

So how much of an impact has YouTube had on UG recruitment so far? Well, it may have only just scraped the surface. Over the next few years we are going to see new age-groups coming through, wedded to YouTuber influence like never before. Will you be ready?





Ask twelve or thirteen year olds how they would find out about a city or a university right now and many would reference YouTube, and specifically 'YouTuber' style videos. Listening to trusted advisors, who have thousands of subscriptions, is their comfort zone. It's what they've grown up with. The campus YouTuber is already wielding significant influence. It's certainly caught on in the the USA. But remember, when America catches a cold the UK invariably sneezes.

We typed in 'New York University' into YouTube's search box and we were straight into a world of YouTuber reviews, advice and full on life-stories. And we really do mean professional YouTubers. These are students who are probably making a fair dew dollars from this. Many of the videos have over 100,000 views . One student, Jayla Koriyan, has almost 250,000 subscribers. That is ten times more than NYU and at least 245,000 more than many UK universities have! And as we clicked from video to video, we realised that we could view this stuff for hours. It seemed endless. But to a typical teenager now? It would seem normal. Go try for yourself - it's an eye opener.

So who's embracing the YouTubers? The University of Huddersfield is worth a mention. Megan Ellaby is an ASOS online personal shopper and a fashion vlogger. She's also a Huddersfield graduate. She's had 250,000 more YouTube views than her alma mater; she has over 20,000 more subscribers. And she makes videos about succeeding in the fashion industry. Understandably, Huddersfield have been using Megan's videos to help get prospective fashion students thinking about Huddersfield - notably by sharing through their social channels. In fact, the university have been building the relationship since early in her student days - she has regularly been profiled, her placements talked about and she still remains as a key student profile on the website. Megan Ellaby is one of those dream tickets, and it's time to get hold of more. You need to stand out in the wave of video that could be coming your way. Just remember New York.

Finally, click the last image to see how YouTubers are taking over the classroom. Well, influencing it at least. Deakin University Psychology graduate set up her own 'Study With Jess' channel to help students get through high school, university and all the decisions along the way. She has over 200,000 subscribers! The wave is definitely coming.



CLEARING UP

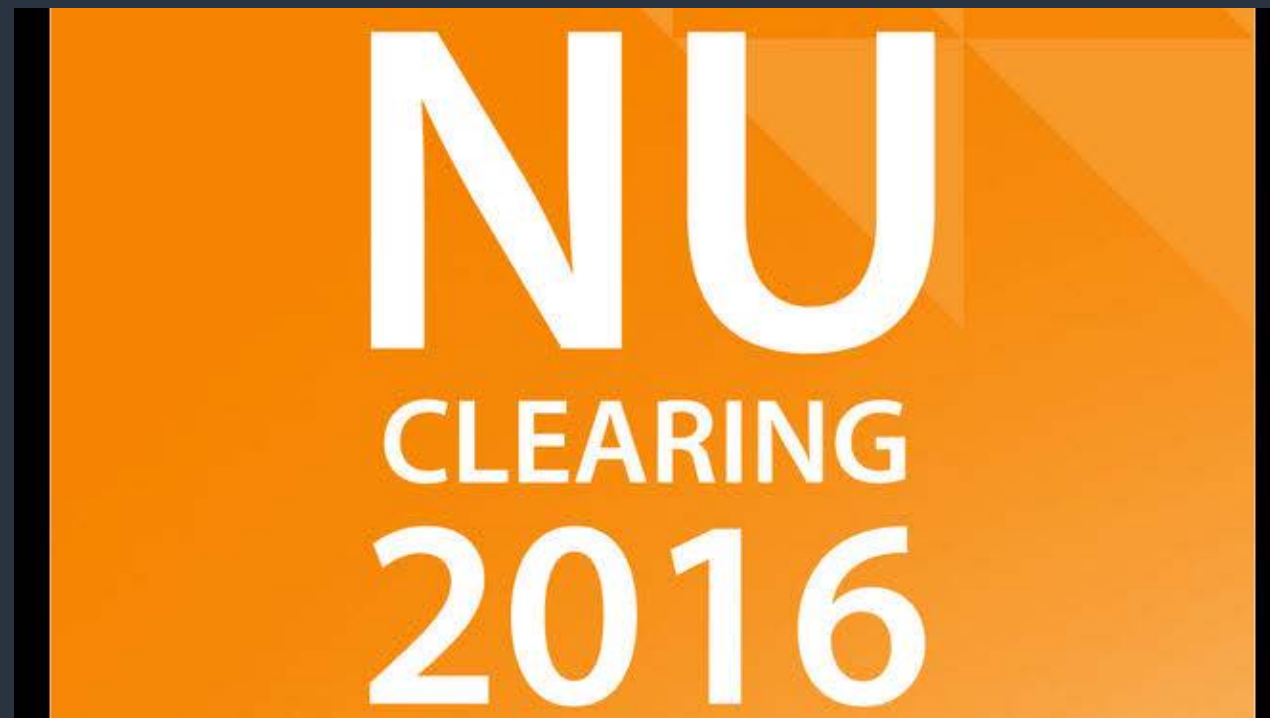
So what stood out during Results, Adjustment and Clearing? Here's a dozen samples to dig into.

CONGRATULATIONS
BENJI
WELCOME TO THE #LBOROFAM



From the world of Clearing....

016



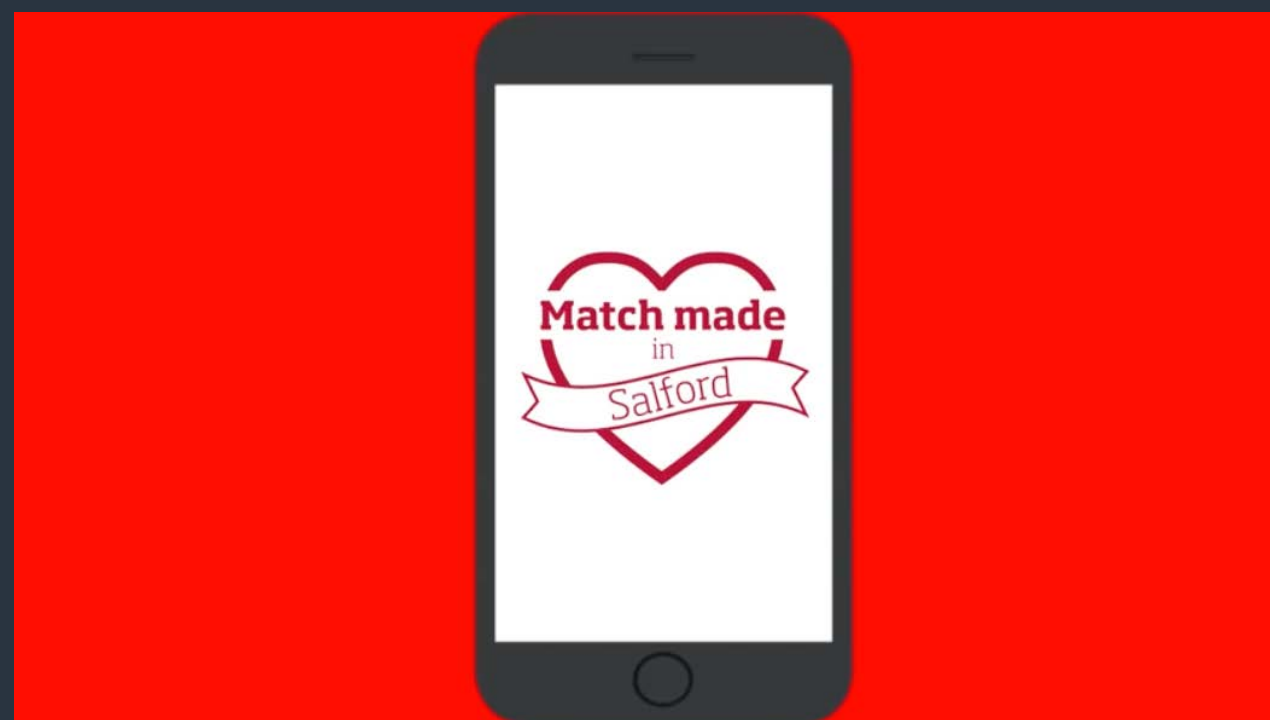
Northumbria University created a comprehensive Clearing Guide app. But would it have worked better as a microsite?



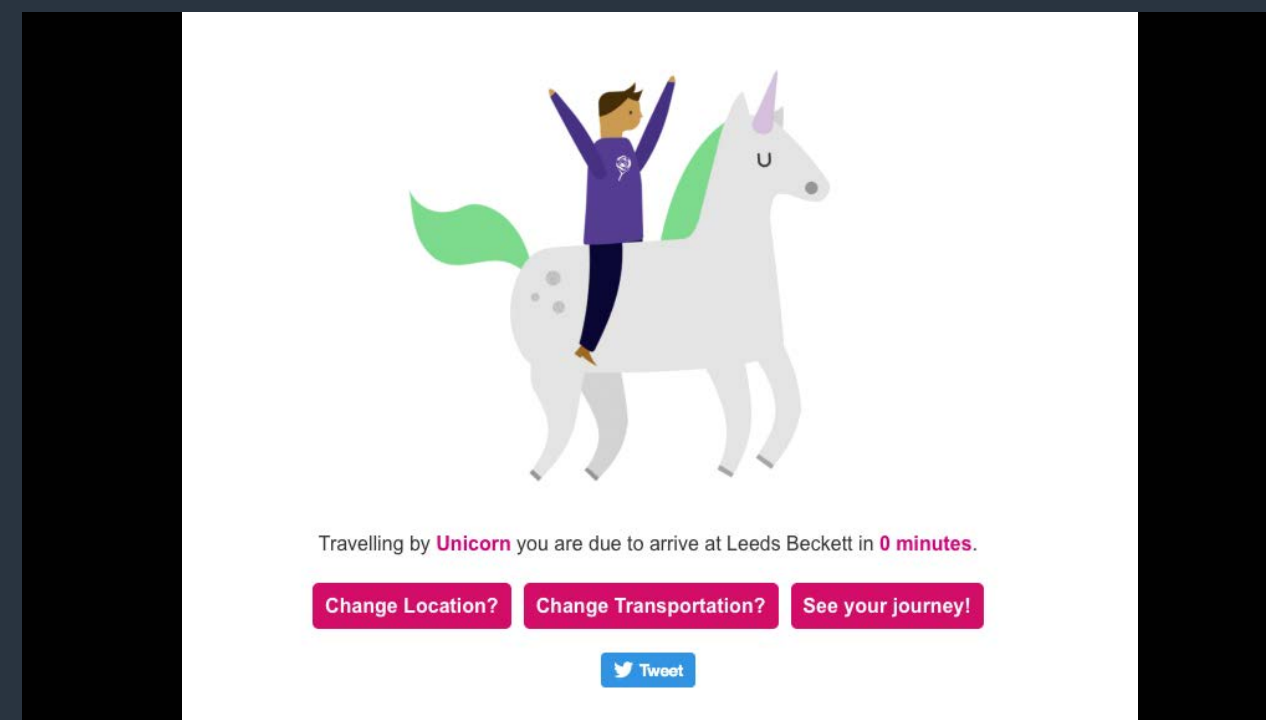
Golden tickets were just the ticket for new students at Loughborough University who happily shared their selfies. This got lots of engagement and lots of extra PR.



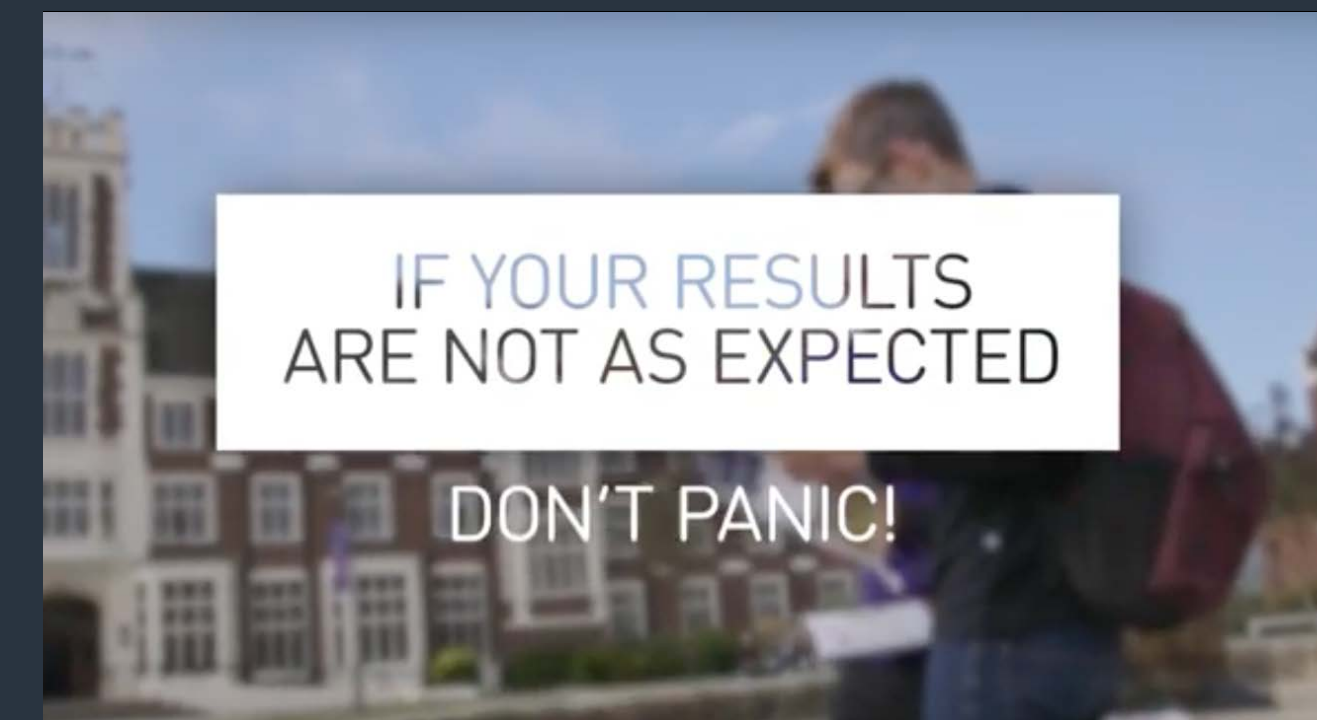
The Heading to Hudd photobooth enabled students to personalise their images. Although we didn't see much activity.



The University of Salford put its 'Match made in Salford' concept on Tinder. Some amusing conversations ensued.



The personalised journey planner at Leeds Beckett showcased different modes of transport from unicorns to elephants.



Loughborough University also cleverly used video outtakes to remind students at Clearing that things don't always go to plan.

CLICK IMAGES TO VIEW ↩



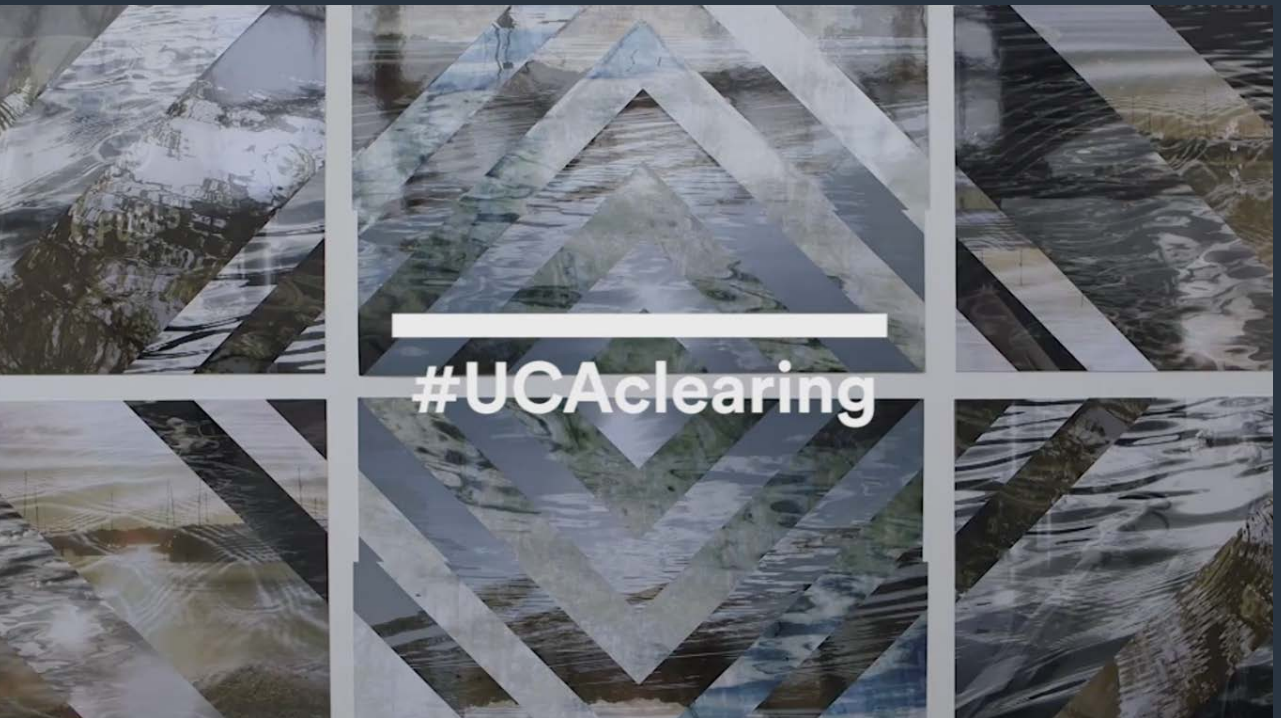
From the world of Clearing....



Keele University launched an upbeat video with great sound and nice footage.



Sheffield Hallam University was one of many to use Facebook Live or Periscope to show Clearing teams in action.



UCA also launched a powerful and arty video during Clearing to show the creative sparks of their students.



It's an oldie but a goodie. And it just goes to show you don't always have to reinvent the wheel every year.



The University of Bradford asked their new students to share their smile and other people's too.



At Escape Studios they used their student work to create a video that called for game changers not spectators.

CLICK IMAGES TO VIEW ↩



DIGITAL BITES

There have been lots of developments in the digital world over the last couple of months. We've picked out 6 that are particularly important for you.



Social bites worth mentioning....

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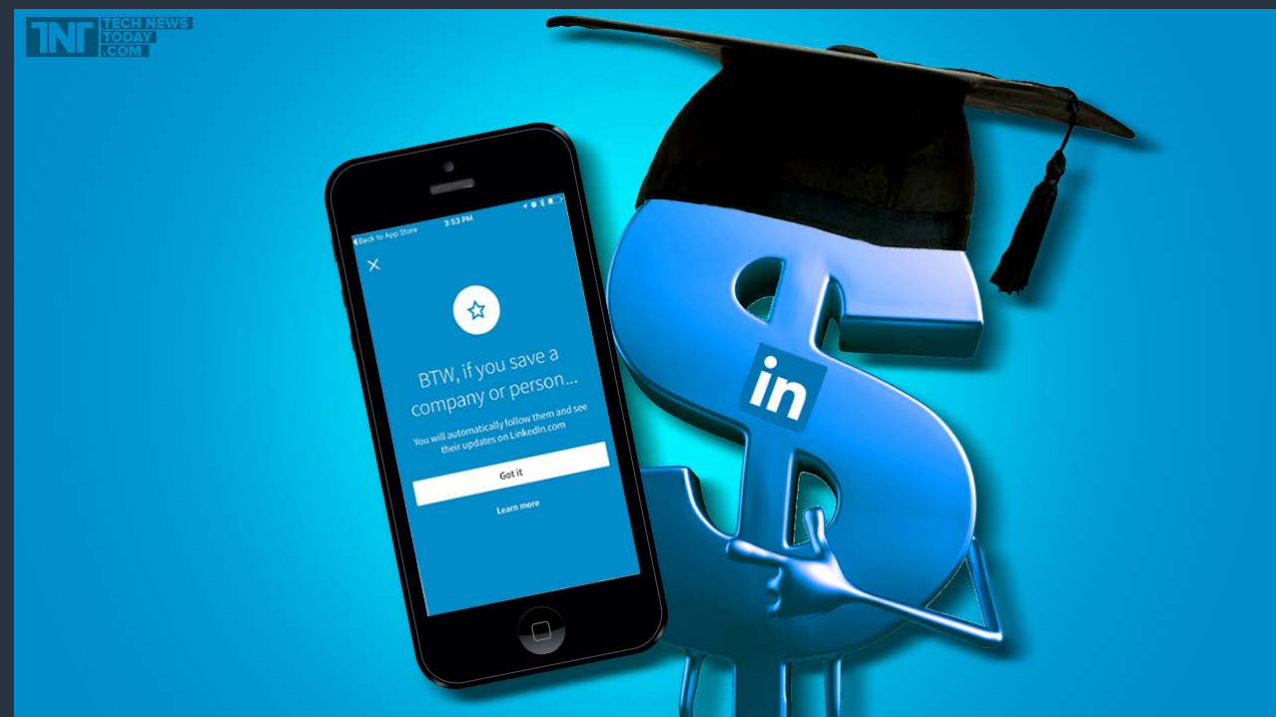
Snapchat launches Spectacles - sunglasses that can record 10-second video snippets.



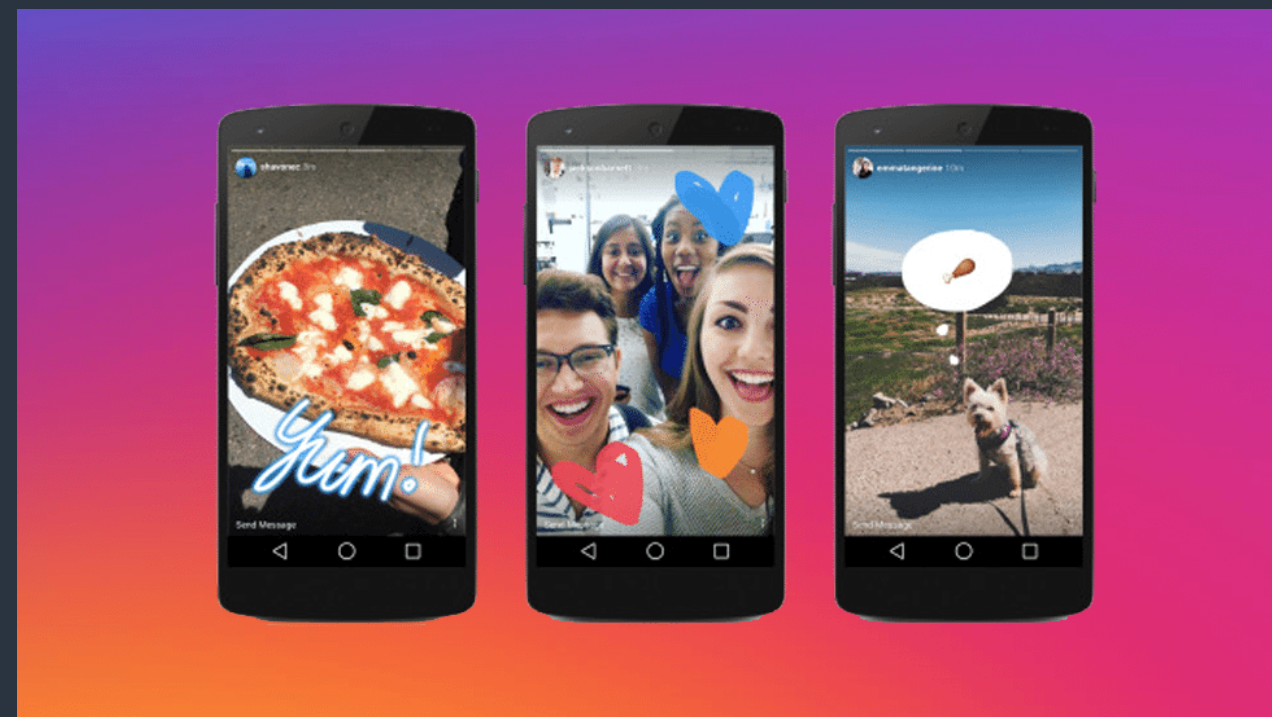
YouTube Community launches, creating a new social network that enables greater viewer engagement for YouTubers.



The Spindle app enables everybody with a smartphone to shoot VR footage without fancy, expensive equipment.



LinkedIn Students launches. This app acts as a 'job exploration' guide and helps grads find jobs, challenging careers advisors.



Instagram Stories mirrors Snapchat with story posts that disappear after 24hrs. It also recommends stories.



Lytro unveils the first 6D 360 VR film. Viewers can look around objects and lean forward to take a closer look at things.

CLICK IMAGES TO VIEW ↩



SNAPSHOTS

So it's not all about UG this edition. These 20 snapshots - again, all live linked to videos, case studies and more - should inspire some ideas across the full HE marketing spectrum.



The University of Reading partnered with Kerrang to explore their town's mega music festival last year. They were back again this year, this time with the NME - aligning their student experiences with the festival context. It's also an example of how Reading are trusting their own students to deliver some excellent content. It's one way to sell the town.



When they graduate many creative students have to seek out free agency placements where they can hone their skills. However Jagermeister has created pop-up agency Concept 56 in Nashville and Detroit to provide a helping hand. Supported by industry mentors 5 college graduates in each city join a 6-month programme where they get paid real-world experience working on campaigns and events for the brand. While Jaegermeister gets to tap into top talent.



Collecting student content remains a big challenge for many universities. Deakin prove there are different ways of doing this with a re-run of their 'My Deakin World' film competition. As usual, Deakin package everything up really well and promote across multiple channels.



There's a big trend right now for providing collaborative outreach spaces that bring people in the local community together to create, inspire and share new ideas. Full Sail Labs inspires young minds by offering 7-17 year olds 8-month programmes in Gaming & Coding and Filmmaking & Storytelling. They get a real taste of the university experience. While UCL has created the Institute of Making a multidisciplinary research club for those interested in the made world.



This just goes to show that social media posts don't have to be 360 degree or beautifully crafted. This simple idea from Full Sail just asks 'Sonic or Mario'? And the response is staggering with over 3,000 likes and 200 comments. This creative university taps into creative themes that connect with their audience. And it's part of a series of posts that cover everything from where people learn the best to choosing the best horror movie villain. It's an effective model all unis can follow.



We love this collaborative music video created by mobile provider Fido and band Keys N Krates. They asked fans and artists to submit images of the local area via hashtags and geo-tagging and stitched them together to create a music video where the band interacts with different social media images. Take a look at the video yourself. It would be a great way for universities to create a promotional video in collaboration with current and future students powered by social media.

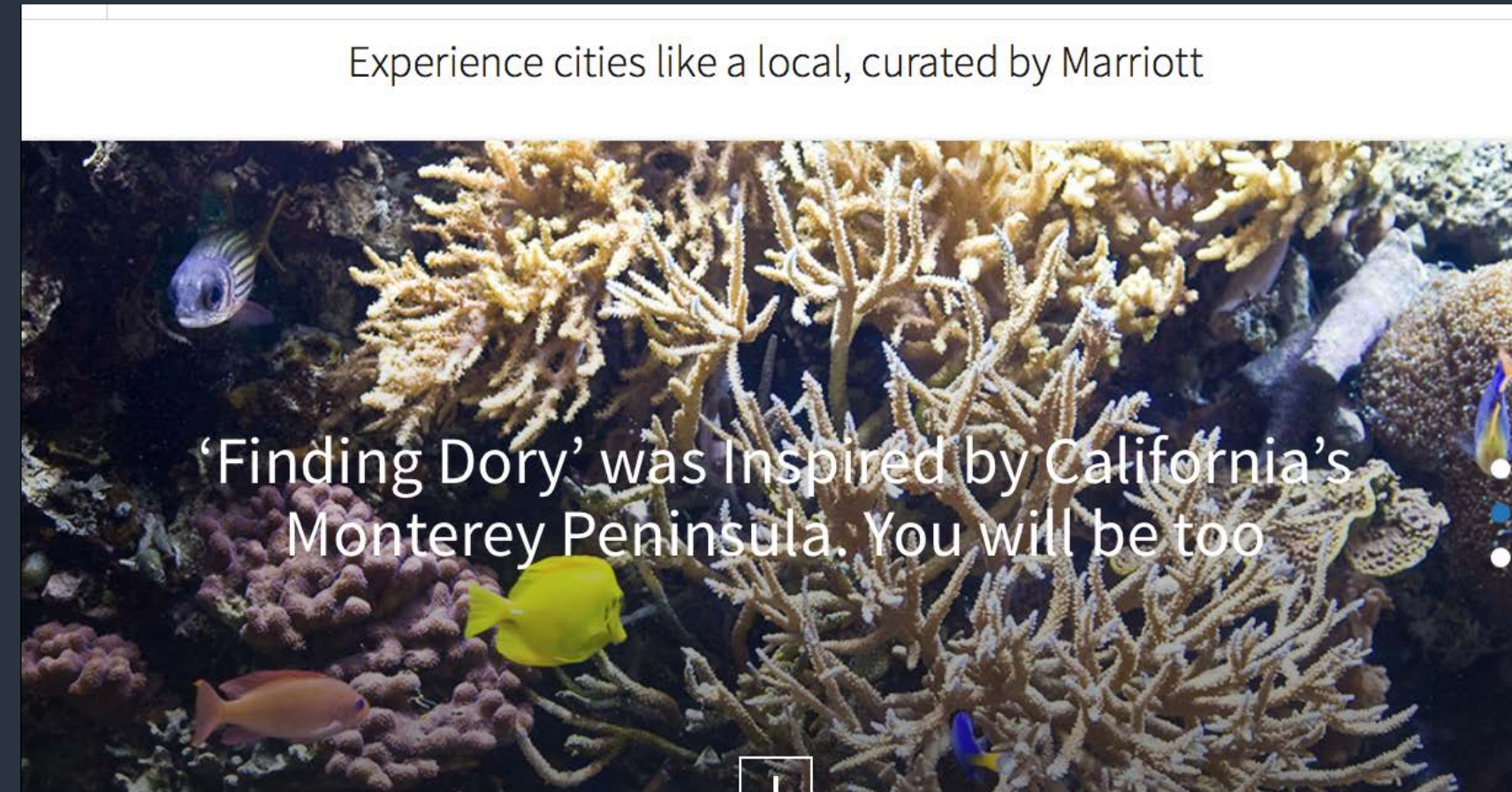
They say pictures tell a thousand words. Now they can tell even more. Thanks to Thinglink universities can annotate images and videos so people can click on different aspects of the image to read more, watch videos or listen to audio. You can also add elements to [360 video](#). It's a great way to enhance social media posts (like this one from Open University) and enable people to quickly learn more about different students, research stories or aspects of your campus.



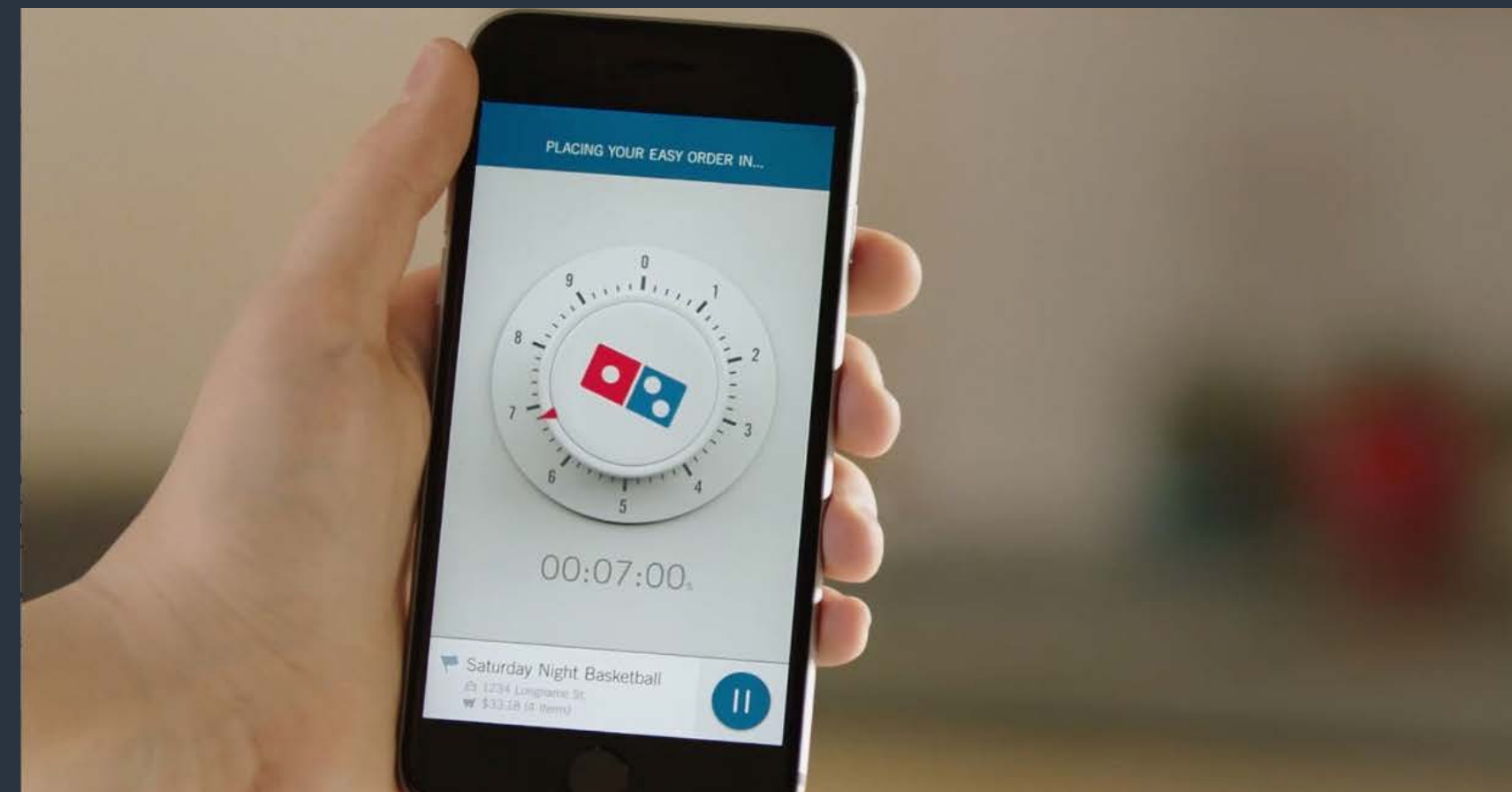
We're also seeing more universities funding the start-up ideas of their students. At the University of Hong Kong they have launched 'Dreamcatchers' where students from across the University can pitch ideas to win \$100k of seed funding and also enjoy workshops, mentorship and networking opportunities. We also thought [Soup](#) was a great idea. At Plymouth University start ups pitch their ideas with attendees voting over a bowl of soup and the winner getting the entrance money. A new form of crowdfunding to help local businesses attract investment.



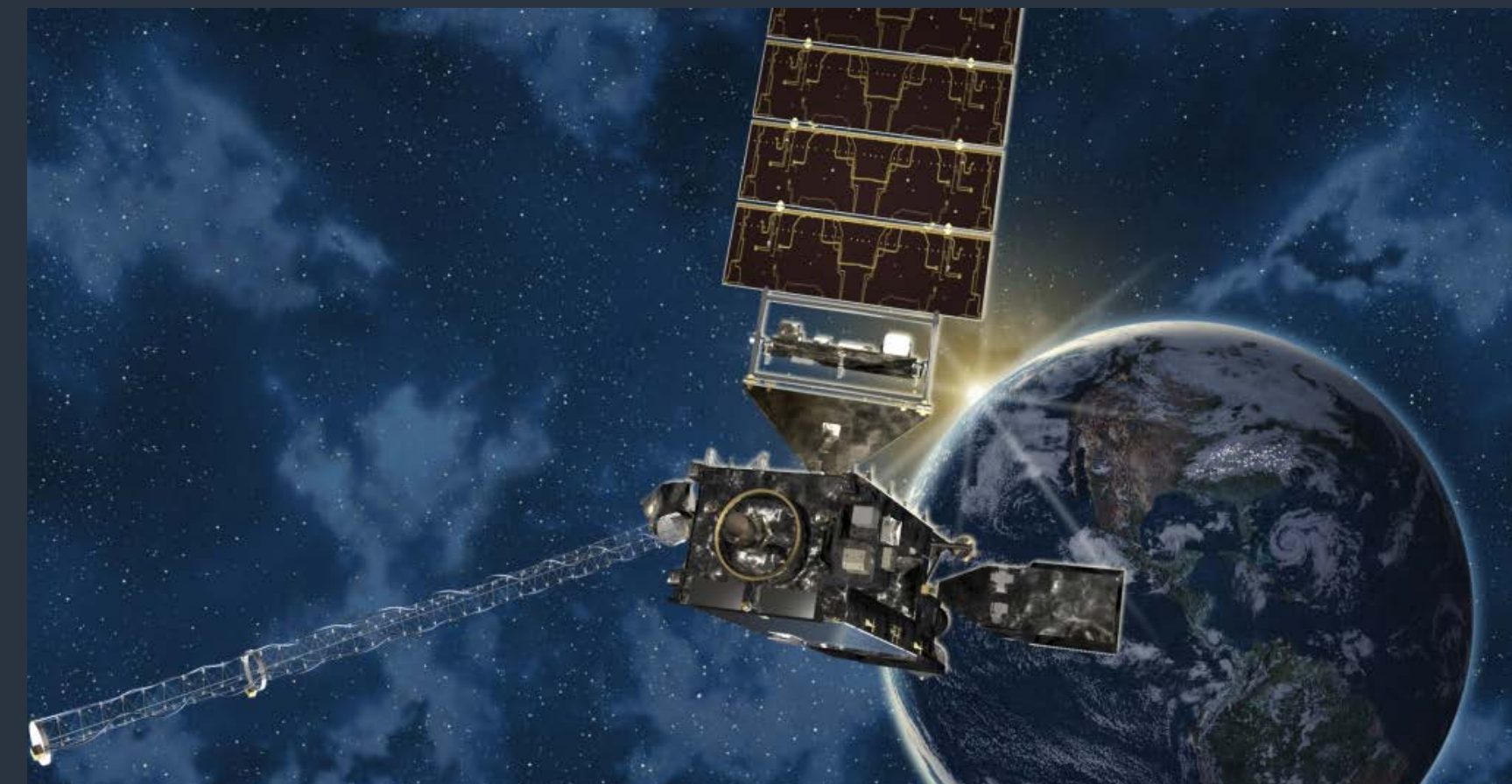
To inspire people to travel and stay in their hotels Marriott have created the 'Traveler' website that crowdsources stories about different places. Their members tell their travel stories to highlight different aspects of cities, offer hints and tips and provide a unique insight. All nicely done to compete with Airnb's paid hosts who act as local guides to their travellers. It's a way universities could crowdsource tips about the best places on campus and beyond.



Universities can have some longstanding and very strange traditions. Oklahoma University has so many they have turned them into a 'Tradition Keeper Program' with its own book and app. Students can get involved, take part in different traditions, share photos of themselves and even earn rewards. OK, not everything is strictly a tradition. But in essence it's a university bucket list of 'must-do' things on campus and beyond The app enables students to tick things off, learn more about uni life and share their experiences. After all you don't want them to miss anything.



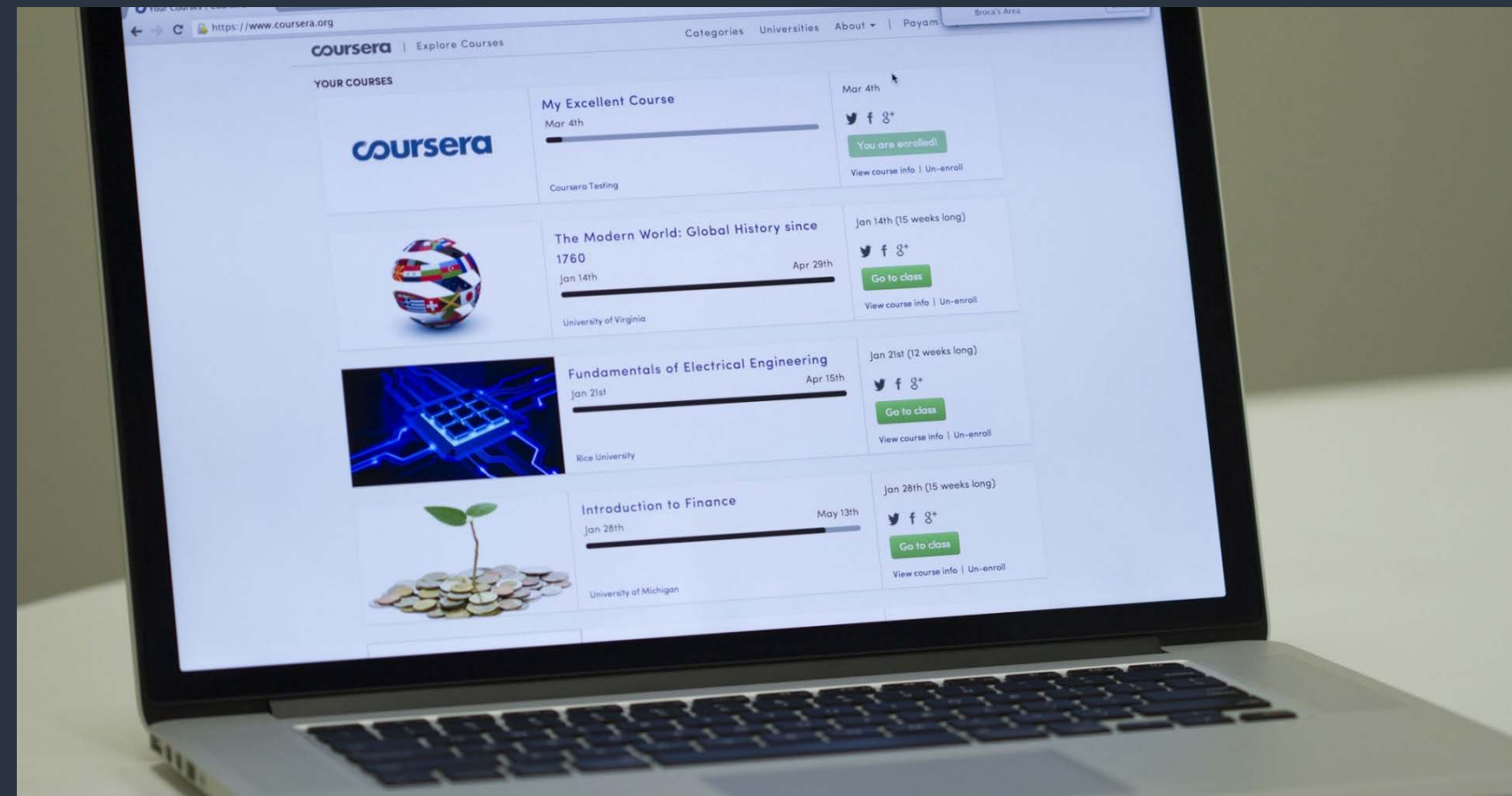
The chatbots are on the March. Now with the full endorsement of Mark Zuckerberg and opening up conversations in Facebook Messenger on devices right now. Domino's are usually early to the digital innovation party, and they wasted no time with this one, serving up 'Dom' the chatbot assistant to take automated orders. This type of communication should be considered by universities - perhaps as an extension of Q&A and FAQ. Maybe one day to manage Clearing?



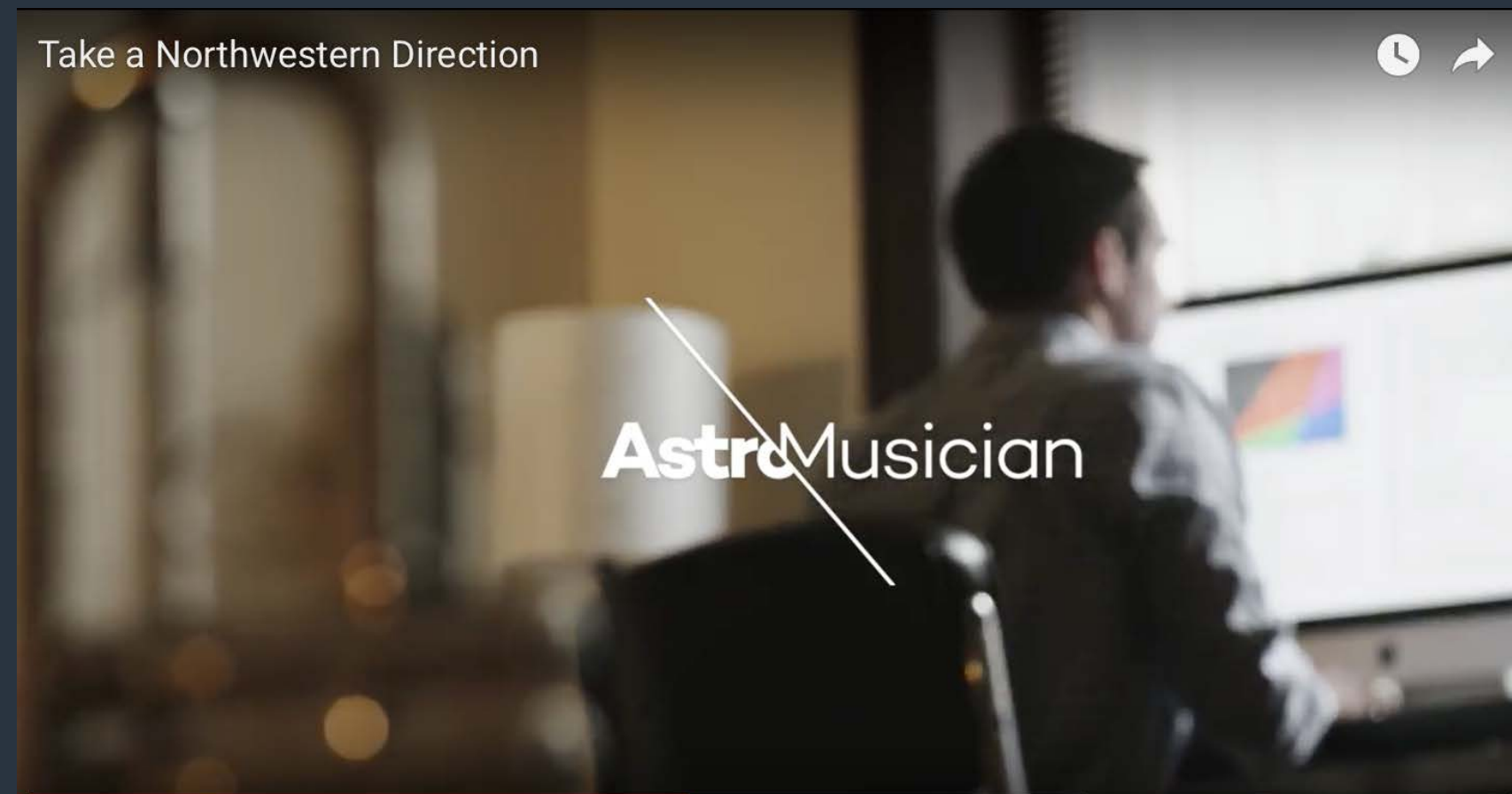
Ever wanted to go to the ultimate launch party? Well, how about the launch of a rocket? NASA Socials is an initiative that enables influential social media users to apply for credentials to get backstage at some of NASA's biggest events. It's all part of a wider commitment to encourage 'influencers' to amplify the social news about NASA's work. This has to be an inspiration for universities - why not set up your own 'front row' initiatives, open up access, and blast off!



Too many people are dismissing MOOCs as loss leaders or simply promotional tools. But it's time to think more laterally and open up the biggest opportunities. How about designing MOOCs for corporate partners? They pay for it and licence the education to their employees. This is what Mastercard, AT&T, Shell and others have done in partnership with Coursera.



Funding and scholarships continue to be big trends with some students even crowdfunding their studies through websites. Here KLM turned over their social media channels to a good cause and created a Flightfunding website that enabled people to donate little amounts so Juanita could afford to travel to Canada to see the grandson she had never met. It just goes to show how social media and powerful storytelling can combine to raise funds for students and research. While new apps like DREAMer's Roadmap are helping students to find scholarship opportunities.

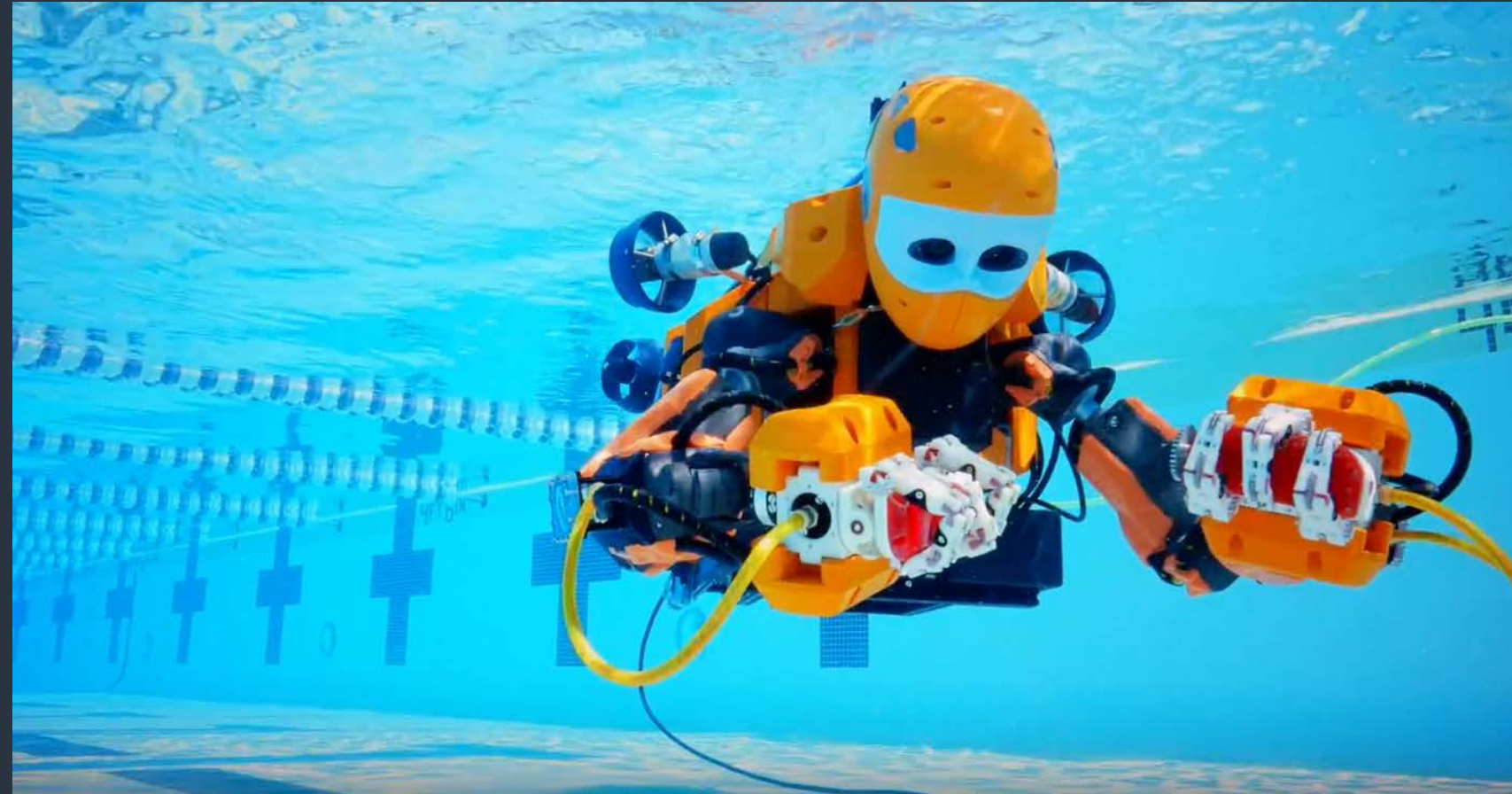


More and more universities are looking to take differentiation to the next level - notably in how their portfolios and courses are different from elsewhere. This video from Northwestern University is an example of how their 'DNA' is all about fusing science + art, and why this approach is perfect for the new leaders and companies of the world. It reminds us a little of Melbourne's 'Collisions', although Northwestern like to call them 'mesh-ups'.



The University of Glasgow are one of many universities to have really embraced Snapchat in the last year. They've taken it a little further now, encouraging students to tell their stories and share them with the world - via a Snapchat takeover, promoted by the University across all of its platforms of course. We recently shared in US student Ruby's adventure as she landed in Glasgow for the first time.

We're always on the lookout for inspirational research stories, and this Stanford tale of Humanoid technology is definitely one. With almost 200,000 views already yon YouTube, we're probably not alone. The human / robot fist bump at the end wraps it up all nicely. Definitely worth a look.



Canada's top universities, including Toronto, UBC and McMaster, have come together to create 'Research to Reality', a showcase of the best in Canadian university research. This partnership is aiming to put the spotlight on Canada, using strength in numbers to claim a greater share of global opportunity, whilst serving as a public engagement portal. Post-Brexit this may be an even bigger inspiration for UK universities.

Harvard X, an initiative to drive the University's advances in online learning & access opportunity, consistently reminds us of the importance of packaging. Harvard X just looks the part. And so it's no surprise to see Harvard's online courses on China hosted under the banner of China X on the EdX platform. So many X's - but repetition builds reputation as they say.



New university competitors are thinking innovatively to capture more of the education space. Online educator Udacity has joined forces with Mercedes-Benz and different ridesharing and autonomous vehicle partners to create a new 27-week course that can turn anybody with basic coding experience and \$2,400 to spare into deep learning engineers to meet the growing needs for people to develop autonomous vehicles. This approach is popular as it's faster, cheaper and taps into an immediate demand in a way traditional university courses can't do.

WEBSITES

We couldn't resist sharing these 12 websites that caught our eye recently. If you want 2 benchmarks to really get stuck into then try Michigan State and Johns Hopkins - both have some outstanding features.

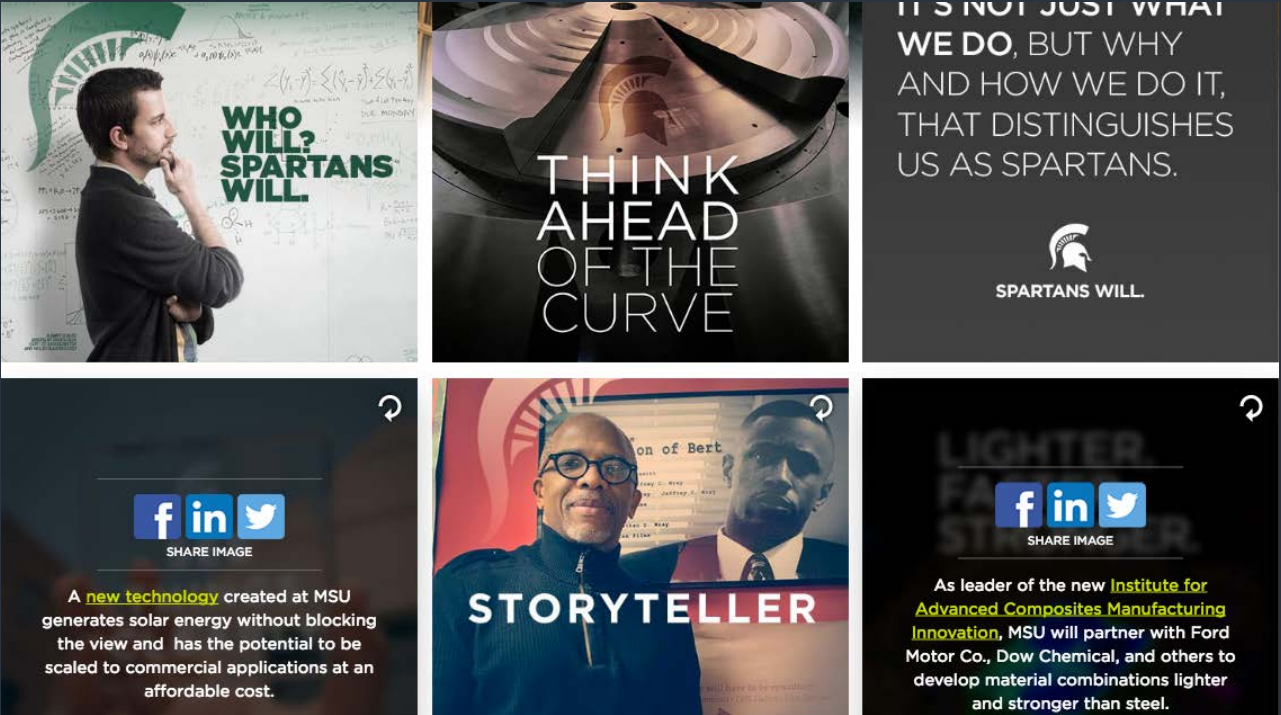




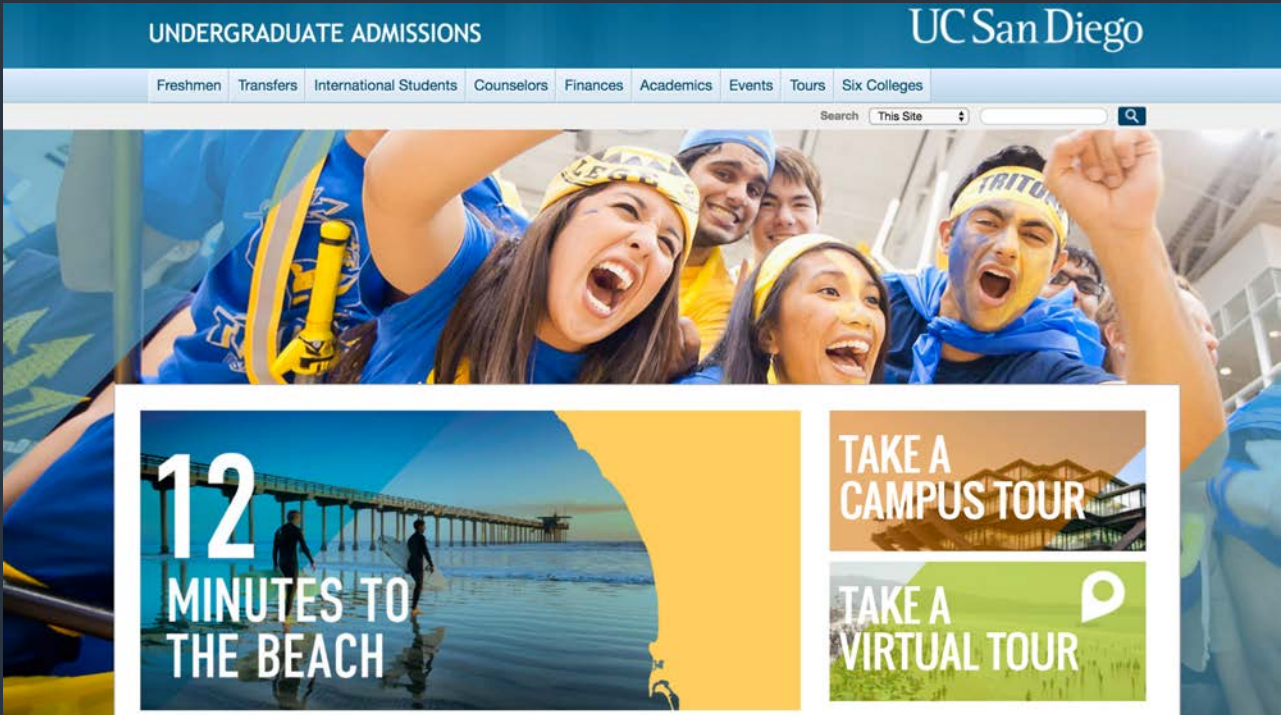
MSU show what Spartan career success looks like through moving infographics.



MSU also do a great job of telling the stories of Spartans who are advancing the common good with uncommon will.



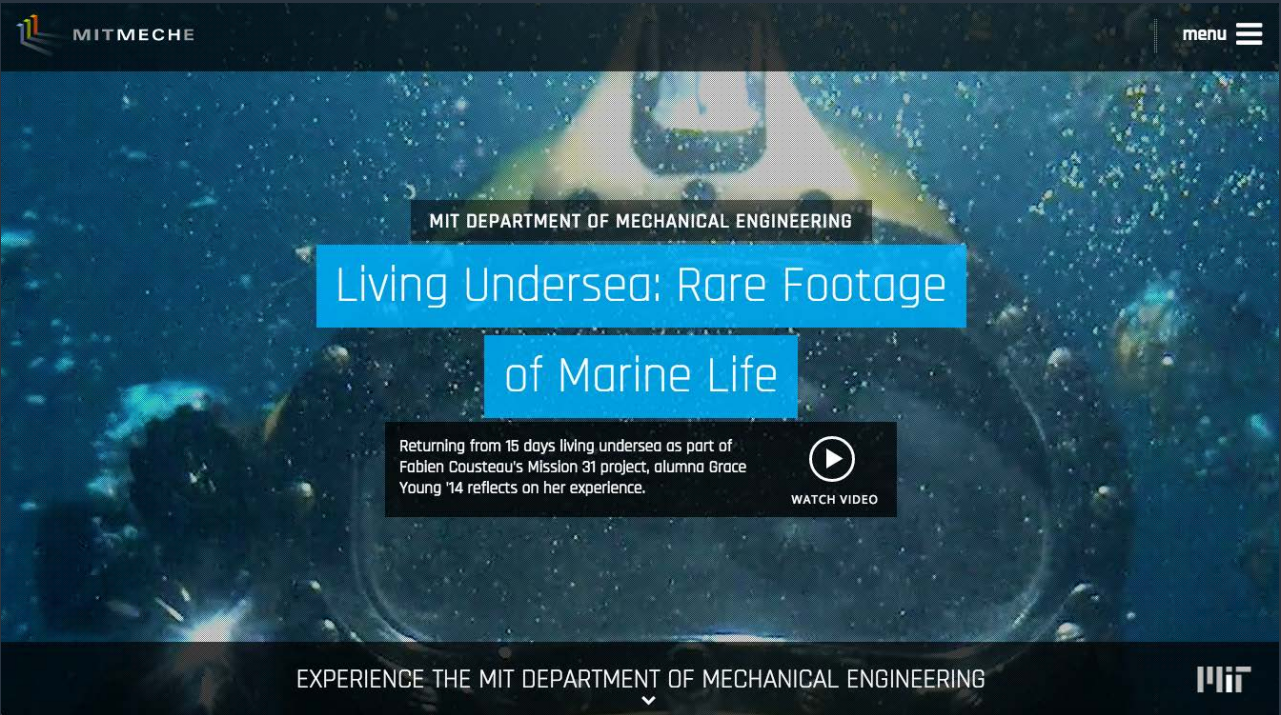
Their President's Report is also well worth a look as it's very well done and definitely not dry or boring.



UCSD's site stands out for its easy navigation. On the home page you get to click on your current status (applying, waiting on decision etc) to get the best experience.



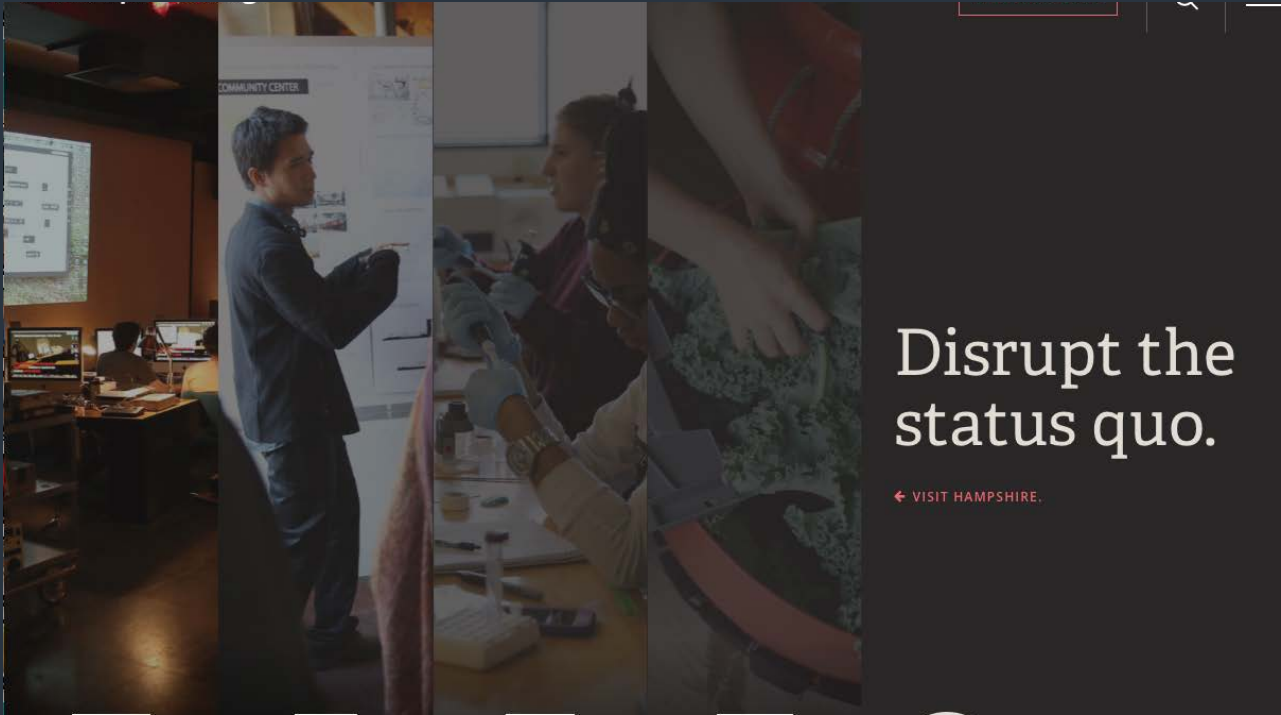
A stunning and simple website that brings their research and learning experience to life.



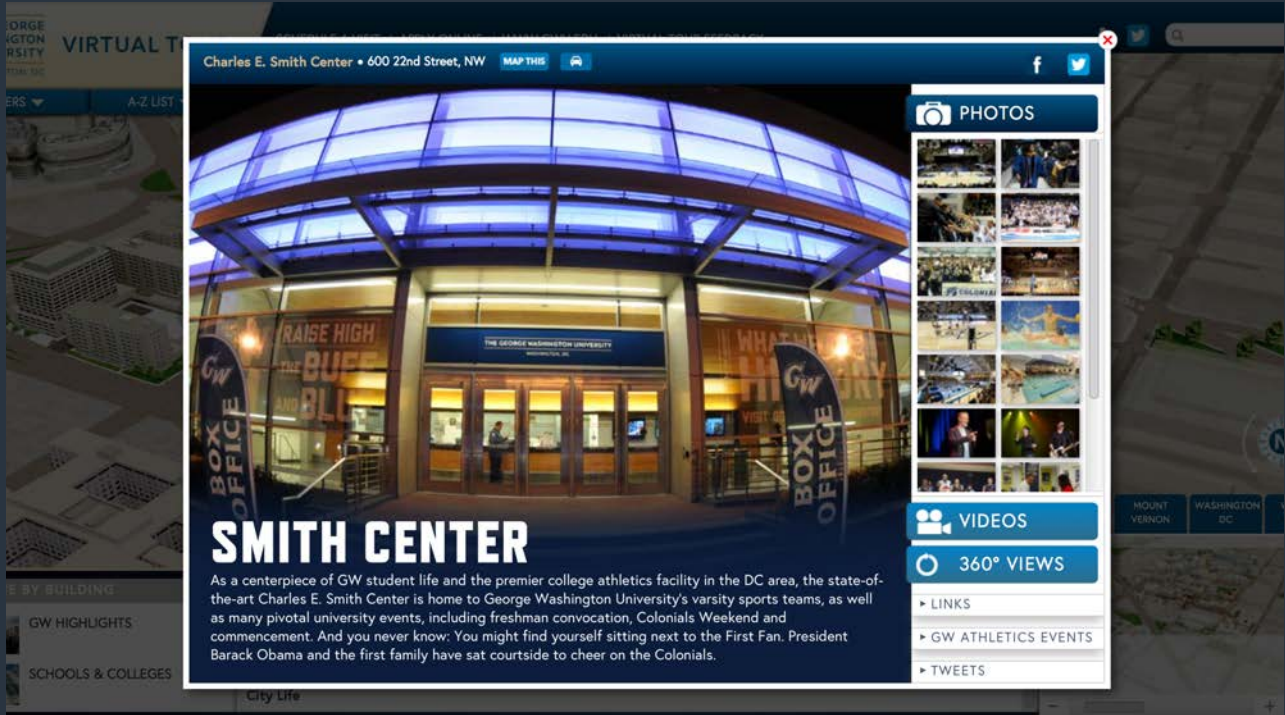
The MIT Department of Mechanical Engineering tells the stories behind its research and how it's making an impact on the world.

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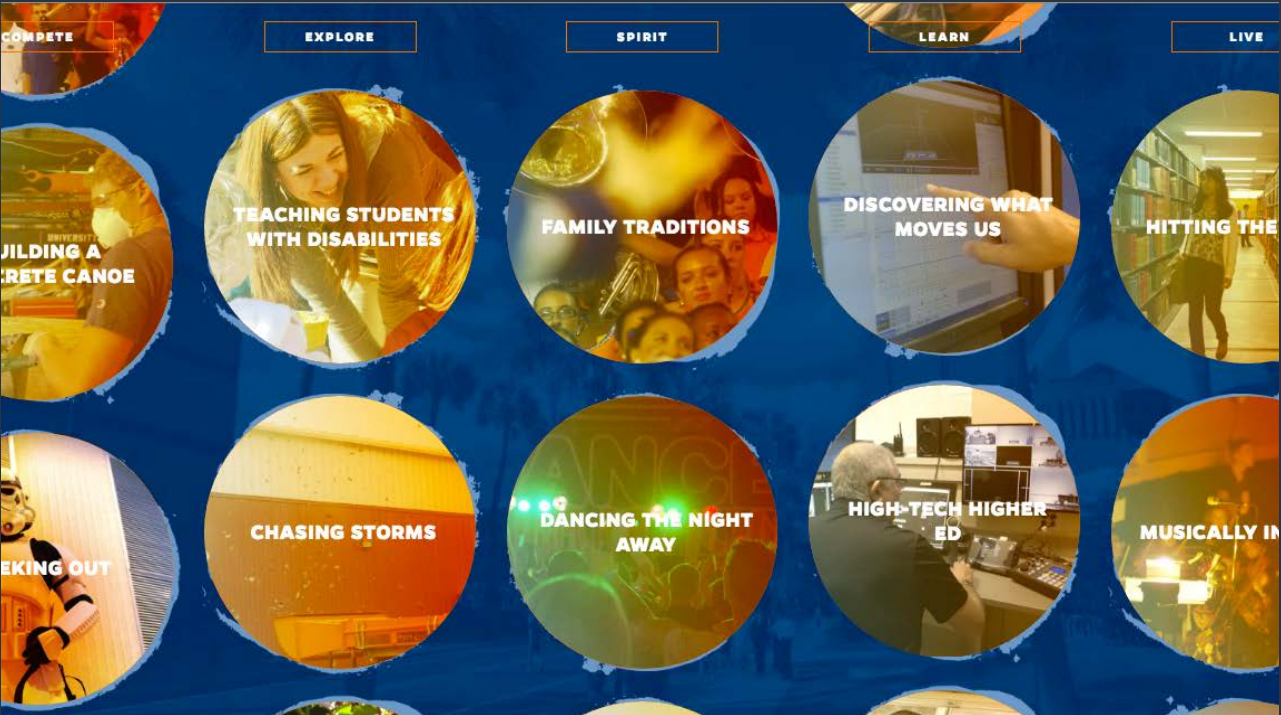




This website stands out for the way it quickly signposts students to sections that focus on learning, living and leading.



The GWU virtual tour goes further to give you a real insight into the many different building on campus.



Students can explore UFL through a variety of different virtual experiences.



This 2015 Yearbook beautifully tells the story of the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins.



The Open University brings learning to life and promotes its free Welsh OpenLearn courses with an interactive website.



This is a beautiful animated website that crowdsources voices for research. An approach universities could adopt too!

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We apologise if a link or two no longer works, but the sea of information on the Web ebbs and flows all the time.