

BENCHMARKING SOCIAL MEDIA INITIATIVES FOR MOBILITY PROGRAMS IN AUSTRALIA

A Proposal for consideration



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Introduction

We are proposing the first Social Media Benchmark in Australia to provide competitive intelligence on mobility programs offered by Australian institutions. This benchmark would provide vital intelligence about who is engaging with, investing in and getting value from social media. It will allow institutions to share their ideas on social media engagement and compare their efforts with other institutions.

Some universities have been engaging with social media for some time now but others are just starting to think about how they can use social media in their overall recruitment and communication strategies. This benchmark aims to identify those institutions that are using social media, those that may just be starting or are yet to engage in social media strategies, how they are doing it and how well they are doing it.

The importance of benchmarking

Benchmarking is a well-established method of comparing data across different organizations in order to improve policy development, management and administration. It is the process of measuring an organization's internal processes then identifying, understanding, and adapting outstanding practices from other organizations considered to be best-in-class.

It essentially identifies:

What you are doing?

How you are doing it?

How others are doing it?

How well you are doing it compared to others and in reference to agreed measures?

Benchmarking is extremely useful when comparing common business processes between institutions. It allows participating institutions to gain unique insight into other similar organisations and/or competitor operations and gives them the information they need to measure their performance and adoption of strategies against the industry.

Why is engaging in social media so important?

Social Media is changing the way we communicate with students. It's a powerful tool to engage with potential, current and past students. It provides a cost effective strategy to engage with your target markets and key stakeholders around the globe. It provides instant communication and the results of your efforts can be measured by a click of a button.

Social media channels include:

- ◇ Facebook
- ◇ Twitter
- ◇ YouTube
- ◇ Pinterest
- ◇ LinkedIn

More and more Australian institutions are recognizing the importance of promoting their international mobility programs through social media channels and now there is an opportunity to see what other institutions are doing online, how successful their efforts are and what are the advantage and challenges in this new space.

“Social media has become part of everyday life.

It is no longer nice to have, but a must have.” (Adobe Social).

Our proposal

What would be benchmarked?

This study would allow institutions to compare their social media strategies through a qualitative and quantitative benchmark analysis. It will provide a clear picture of how Australian institutions execute their strategies for the promotion of student mobility programs. The study would cover areas of interest such as:

- ◇ **Which institution have social media strategies**
- ◇ **Social media budgets**
- ◇ **Resources necessary to manage these strategies**
- ◇ **Aim and purpose of social media strategy**
- ◇ **Frequency of social media activity**
- ◇ **Messages communicated on social media**
- ◇ **How responses on social media are managed**
- ◇ **Are the results being tracked and measured?**
- ◇ **Policies and procedures**
- ◇ **Use of social media channels including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.**
- ◇ **Success of social media efforts**

How the benchmarking exercise would be conducted and delivered

Studymove would work closely with participating institutions throughout the various stages of the Benchmarking Project to ensure that all aspects of the Benchmarking exercise meet the needs of participating institutions. The Project would consist of the following stages:

- ◇ **Stage 1:** Studymove would develop the questionnaire in an easy to use online format and send it to participating institutions.

- ◇ **Stage 2:** Participating institutions would complete the survey by including all relevant. Studymove would provide ongoing assistance where necessary to answer any questions or concerns from university representatives completing the survey.

- ◇ **Stage 3:** Studymove will collect information on the public domain on how the participating institutions are using social media channels to promote their mobility programs.

- ◇ **Stage 4:** Studymove would collect and collate all participating institutions data.

- ◇ **Stage 5:** Studymove would then develop the Benchmark Report which would include charts and tables comparing all relevant data. Commentary would also be included about the results of the project. Prior confirmation and consultation would be sought from participating institutions to ascertain to what level of transparency would be acceptable.

The final report would be provided in either Word or PDF format to all participating institutions. Participating Institutions would each receive an individual report which illustrates their position in the various Benchmarking aspects and a Blinded Report can be produced for wider distribution if necessary.

Participating institutions would then have the opportunity to provide feedback to Studymove and the relevant changes would be incorporated in the report before it is finalized.

Studymove can present the final report if necessary to a forum of participating institutions or in other public forums if necessary.

Timing and costing

The Benchmarking Project can be developed at any time agreed and required by participating institutions. We are more than happy to discuss this with participating universities and fit in with any requests however, as a guide a possible timeline could be that the questionnaire is circulated in early March 2014 with results collected in mid April 2014 and the final report could be available by mid May in time for NAFSA if required.

From experience we have found that to develop the questionnaire and content for the Benchmarking exercise takes the most time and we suggest this stage could take 3-4 months. Once the questionnaire has been developed, we suggest institutions have at least 4 weeks to collect the required data and Studymove would need 6-8 weeks to complete the analysis and final report.

To ensure the benchmarking exercise produces meaningful and useful information, we would suggest that a minimum of a least 7-10 institutions participate in the project.

In terms of costing, depending on the extent of the benchmarking exercise, the approximate costs per institution would be between \$450 and \$650.

Your participation

If you would like to be consider for this study or provide additional feedback **please send an email to keri@studymove.com.**

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About Studymove Consultants

Studymove have conducted benchmarking for international institutions, developed marketing intelligence reports and online marketing strategies for institutions in Australia, Europe, USA and Latin America.

Their most recent client was the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) which consists of The Big 10 group of institutions in the U.S. Midwest which collectively send over 20,000 students abroad each year. CIC contracted Studymove Education Consultants to develop a comprehensive mobility benchmark addressing several emerging areas not reported in existing U.S. reports and with a focus Learning Abroad Programs (credit and non-credit programs). There has been confirmation from CIC members that they would like to continue the benchmarking exercise each year and it is expected that a larger number of U.S. institutions will participate in the study next year. There is also discussion of developing an International Mobility Benchmark that would include various international institutions.

Keri Ramirez and Dimity Huckel are the Directors of Studymove Education Consultants based in Sydney, Australia.

Keri and Dimity also assisted in the production of the AUIDF Mobility Benchmark and AUIDF International Student Benchmark in 2010 and 2011. All Australian institutions participated in these studies which analysed relevant information in regards to international mobility strategies undertaken by each university.

They continue to work closely with various Australian institutions in the development of unique and innovative Marketing Intelligence Reports which focus on both international and domestic student numbers. These reports have been development to assist key decision makers analyse trends and markets and assist them in developing future strategies.