



## Your client touring college campuses

### Handing out free samples is a great way to connect

By Diego Vasquez  
May 10, 2010

If you've ever walked into a campus dorm room littered with branded Frisbees, pens and T-shirts, you know that there's very little college kids love more than free stuff.

Delivering that free stuff via a campus tour is a great way for advertisers to connect with this very desirable audience, which has a large amount of discretionary income.

College campus promotional tours have been around for some time, but the number of tours dipped during the recession as advertisers cut their budgets.

This year tours have been ramping up again, though they're more modest than in the past. Instead of hitting 40 or 50 campuses, an advertiser might target 10 or 20.

Tours can take several months to organize, so advertisers interested in a fall tour should start planning now.

To find out how to get your client on a college campus tour, read on.

#### **Fast Facts**

##### **What**

Advertising to college students through on-campus promotional tours.

##### **Who**

Any agency that handles promotional events can set up a college tour.

A half-dozen U.S. agencies specializing in youth targeting have preexisting relationships with colleges, which speeds up the process.



### How it works

The single most important part of a campus tour is the sampling that takes place at each stop. According to one survey, nearly 60 percent of college students find sampling the most effective form of advertising.

Samples typically end up hung on walls or doors, or are worn in the case of clothing, which means they continue to be seen long after the tour is over.

Giveaways are a great way to draw in students, and they can be worked into any tour. On a campus with 25,000 people, an average 2,500 to 3,000 samples will be given away each day.

Jockey toured 24 campuses during fall 2008 with a van wrapped with brand creative and had street team members hand out free T-shirts and underwear from a kiosk it set up on each campus. The company also gave away posters.

Another way to engage students is to get them involved in events.

Last fall, U.S. Cellular set up a booth before college football games at which students were invited to text a phrase. The phrase was then printed on a T-shirt, which was given to the student.



U.S. Cellular also had an area set up where students could try out new models of wireless phones.

The most successful college tours include some element of interaction with the sponsor's product.

This spring Adult Swim set up block parties near campuses in nine college towns, where, among other things, students could play games inspired by the network's series and preview upcoming shows.

The tour was co-sponsored by T-Mobile and Capcom, and students could also try T-Mobile devices and test Capcom video games.



Another way to engage students is to sponsor entertainment, be it a free concert or a screening of an upcoming movie release.

The sampling is usually handed out from a touring bus or van parked on the campus quad or in front of the student union.

Six to eight people work the average campus tour stop, including students who are recruited to help out. Only two or three people travel with the actual tour. Street teams are recruited in each market.



### **Markets**

College tours can include campuses in any markets.

Most sponsors target schools with large enrollments, such as state schools, because they want to reach as many students as possible. But some will target smaller schools, as in cases where it's a retailer with a store in that market.

### **Numbers**

There are 13.8 million college students ages 18-30 this year, according to the latest Alloy College Explorer survey, the highest number ever.



California had the largest enrollment, according to the most recent numbers from the Digest of Education Statistics, at 2.5 million. Texas was second at 1.3 million, followed by New York at 1.2 million.

About a third of all students attend private schools, with the rest in public schools.

### **How it is measured**

School enrollment is used to measure impressions. Advertisers also track how many promotional items and samples are distributed.



### **What product categories do well**

Frequent ad categories include telecommunications, personal care items, entertainment, video games, retail, beverages, apparel and TV networks.

### **Demographics**

Forty-six percent of undergraduates age 24 or younger are male, with 54 percent female, according to the 2010 Gender Equity in Higher Education report from the American Council on Education.

According to the group's 2009 Minorities in Higher Education report, 60 percent of college students are white, with 29 percent minorities, 3 percent foreign and 8 percent unknown. Among the minorities, 41 percent are African American, 35 percent Hispanic, 21 percent Asian American and 3 percent American Indian.

According to the Alloy survey, discretionary spending for college students ages 18-30 is \$56 billion, up 37 percent from four years ago.

### **Making the buy**

Agencies recommend that advertisers begin planning a college promotional tour at least three months in advance due to the logistics involved, including securing a spot on campus, clearing the event with administrators and recruiting students to assist.

Pricing varies depending on the number of markets and elements involved, but a 10-city tour starts at \$100,000, which includes promotions leading up to the event, street teams and a vehicle.

### **Who's already on college tours**

Recent college tour advertisers include Adult Swim, Capcom, T-Mobile, Jockey, Garnier, U.S. Cellular, MTV, Best Buy, Nintendo and Electronic Arts.

### **What they're saying**

"College students have a tremendous amount of disposable income, and also they're forming their own brand loyalty for the first time. They're making purchase decisions on things like soap that mom may have bought for the past 18 years. And hopefully that will carry on with that consumer for life. And that's really the one core insight that makes students attractive to an advertiser." – *Pete D'Andrea, senior vice president at AMP Agency (Alloy Marketing and Promotion)*