Brand Clarity + UGC: Winning Big on Small Budgets

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What is UGC?

User-generated content (UGC) refers to any brand-specific content created by students (past and present) or faculty rather than the brand itself and shared across digital platforms. Traditionally positioned in a first-person narrative, this content can include images, videos, text, reviews, and testimonials, all created by individuals with no production costs. This content can then be published on social media or used for digital advertising efforts.

According to Adweek,

85 %

of people say UGC is more influential than content made by brands directly

Why do you need to start creating UGC?

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- Trust and Authenticity

- Increased Engagement

- Cost effective

- Improve your SEO & GEO

- First digital generation entering the world of higher education

- Authentic compared to advertisements

- You don't need a large Marketing team

Gen Z Snapshot:

- First digital-native generation
- Expect transparency, social consciousness, and relevance
- Prefer real voices over brand voices
- 78% of prospective students say a school's social media presence influences their decision to apply

It's not a
"nice to have"
it's a "must have"

Set Your Strategy & Goals

- Align UGC with your **current marketing strategy**

- Decide the **type of content** you need (e.g., photos, short videos, testimonials)

- Define clear **KPIs** (engagement, reach, conversion, sentiment, etc.)

- Create a **content calendar** for consistent posting

- Provide Clear, Supportive Guidelines

- Distribute UGC Across Channels

Build Your UGC Contributor Network

- Find **existing student ambassadors or volunteers**
- Look for students already posting about your brand
- Offer **topics**, not scripts (keep it natural!)
- Encourage storytelling and **personal experiences**

Suggested Topics:
- ➤ **Undergrad:** Dorm life, sports, majors, why they chose your school
- ➤ **Grad/Online:** Daily routine, balancing work/school, career growth

The #MVPeay Story

Make It Easy to Participate

- Promote your UGC call-to-action in:
    - Social bios
    - Campus events
    - Emails & newsletters
    - Website banners

- Use branded hashtags (e.g. #MyXCollegeLife)

- Create filters, stickers, or AR effects

- Connect with faculty in marketing, communications and media courses for possible class project/curriculum coordination!

💡 *Host photo/video contests or challenges with fun incentives (shoutouts, swag, gift cards).*

Guide Contributors to Quality

Give students a one-sheet with **tips for shooting UGC**

Video Tips

- Shoot vertically unless instructed otherwise
- Wear branded/school gear
- Use clean backgrounds with good lighting
- Use natural light or a ring light
- Use phone tripods or steady handheld techniques
- Enable 4K recording
- Capture audio in quiet places with a clip-on mic
- Keep videos between 30–60 seconds

Storytelling Tips

- Use first-person narratives
- Show authentic emotions
- Stick to a clear beginning, middle, and end
- Focus on specific themes (e.g. "why I love this major")

Moderate & Manage Risk

- Set clear **community guidelines**

- Actively monitor submissions for:

- Inappropriate content

- Negative feedback

- Copyright issues

- Get **explicit permission** to use any UGC

- Always **credit the original poster**

Promote Your UGC Strategically

- Use UGC across **multiple channels**:
- Website landing pages
- Email campaigns
- Social media feeds and stories
- Admissions microsites
- Recruitment ads
- Physical displays (digital signage, brochures)

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Department of Computer Science

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Yates wins at Georgia Tech

Amanda McNair

"As I've learned more and different (computer) languages, I feel so much more confident. My communication skills are better, and now that I'm a senior, my leadership skills are on point, and I know they'll get better."

Major: Computer Science
Hometown: Clarksville, Tennessee
Involvement: APSU Fortera Street Team, CSCI Coding Camps, Structure Learning
Assistant, APSU Help Desk, Association of Computer Machinery
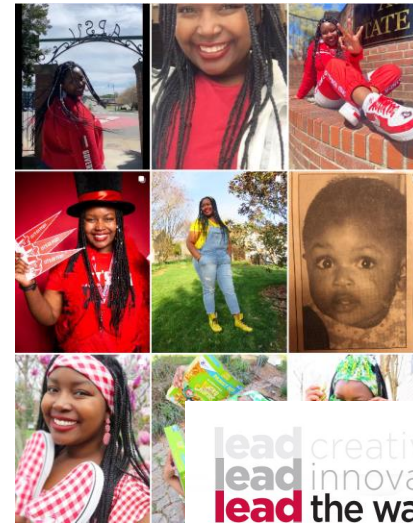
lead creativity
lead innovation
lead the way
lead the future
lead tomorrow

We are **Difference Makers**

"I love teaching people because it helps me learn. It was the faculty and staff at Austin Peay that influenced my decision to teach. I admired their wisdom and how they have the ability to teach those who are new to computer science."

AMANDA MCNAIR
Computer Science

apsu.edu/govlife   **AP Austin Peay** State University

Monitor Performance & Optimize

Use **analytics tools** to track results:
- Tools: Hootsuite Analytics, Hootsuite Insights, Mention, Keyhole
- Track:
  - Engagement (likes, shares, comments)
  - Reach & impressions
  - Brand sentiment
  - Click-through rates (CTR)
  - SEO performance

Celebrate and Reuse UGC

- Create **Community Highlight Reels**

- Feature standout content on all channels

- Send shoutouts and thank-you messages to contributors

- Build a recurring program or UGC ambassador team

Stay Legal

- **Always get consent** before reposting UGC

- Avoid reposting content with:
  - Copyrighted music
  - Brand logos not your own
  - People who haven't given permission

- Keep a record of conversations & permissions

Content Ideas at a Glance

Type	Description
🎓 Day-in-the-life	Daily routine, class schedule, dorm life, campus walk
💬 Testimonials	Why I chose this school/major, best decision I've made
🏀 Spirit Moments	Campus events, pep rallies, game day vibes
🎥 Video Challenges	Pose with gear, use product creatively, show your workspace
🧩 Gamified Content	Trivia, polls, scavenger hunts, tips sharing
🌍 Values Stories	Sustainability, DEI, community involvement
🎙️ Q&A Content	Answer a question of the week, "Ask me anything" format
🎁 Contest Entries	Show how you use the product or represent the brand

Tools for Success

- **Hashtag Tracking** – Use Instagram, TikTok, Twitter search
- **Analytics** – Hootsuite, Mention, Keyhole
- **Editing Apps** – InShot, Canva, Adobe Premiere Rush
- **Submission Forms** – Google Forms, Typeform, direct uploads on website

Final Tips

UGC should feel **real, not over-produced**

Encourage **diverse voices and stories**

Consistently **credit and celebrate** contributors

Think **community-first, brand-second**

Keep it **positive, inclusive, and engaging**

Your students are your best marketers — all you have to do is **empower them** to tell your story.

Connect with us!

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