



Student Affairs Technology Update

An Introduction to Foursquare

- What is Foursquare?
- Profiles of Institutions Using Foursquare
- Factors to Consider Before Implementation

Author

Anne Lewandowski
Analyst

Practice Manager

Liz Rothenberg, PhD

March 2011



Advisors to Our Work

The Council would like to express its deep gratitude to the individuals and organizations that generously shared their insights, analysis, and time with us.

With Special Thanks

Arizona State University

Gini Sater
Director, Strategic Marketing and Communication

Duke University

Tim Bounds
Director, Student Affairs
Information Technology

Harvard University

Jennifer Hodge
Web Content Producer, Public
Affairs and Communication

Syracuse University

Kelly Lux
Community Manager, School of
Information Studies

Kevin Morrow
Executive Director of Social Media

David Rosen
Current Student, Campus
Representative to Foursquare

Anthony Rotolo
Assistant Professor in Practice,
School of Information Studies

Texas A&M University

Diane McDonald
Director, Social Media and
Marketing Programs

University of Wisconsin, Waukesha

Liz Gross
Director, University Marketing and
Communications



What is Foursquare?

Foursquare was officially launched in March 2009 at South by Southwest Interactive, an annual conference in Austin, Texas, that showcases new technology. Foursquare is one of several new location-based social networking applications that allow users to broadcast where they are at a given time (other examples of location-based social networking tools include Facebook Places, Gowalla, and SCVNGR). Users generally access Foursquare through wireless handheld devices, such as iPhones and Blackberries.

Foursquare is a free application that uses GPS technology (a part of most smartphones) to track a person's location. A user can register a location on Foursquare, such as a classroom or store, which causes it to become an official Foursquare "venue." When a user goes to a venue, he or she can use the Foursquare smartphone application to "check in."

Once a user has checked into a venue, friends can see the check-in through Foursquare or other social media sites (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, etc.). Checking into a location makes a user eligible for prizes and allows the person to see more information about the venue.

Sharing Information, Conversing with Friends How People Use Geo-Location Applications



Foursquare: The Next Big Thing?



Source: <http://foursquare.com/about>; <http://foursquare.com/2010infographic>; <http://techcrunch.com/2011/01/24/foursquare-now-six-million-users-strong-hit-381m-total-check-ins-in-2010/>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.



Why Use Foursquare on Campus?

As the number of students with smartphones has grown in recent years, universities have worked to find new ways to use this technology to engage students. Student Affairs practitioners hope that widespread Foursquare use on campus will result in students being more willing to explore different opportunities. Several Council interviewees expressed hope that Foursquare will encourage students to engage more with their surroundings, not just their computer screens.

Over the past year, many institutions have begun working with Foursquare to establish an official presence. As a result, the university can manage on-campus venues, which ultimately allows university officials to monitor check-in statistics and publish timely information about the venue.

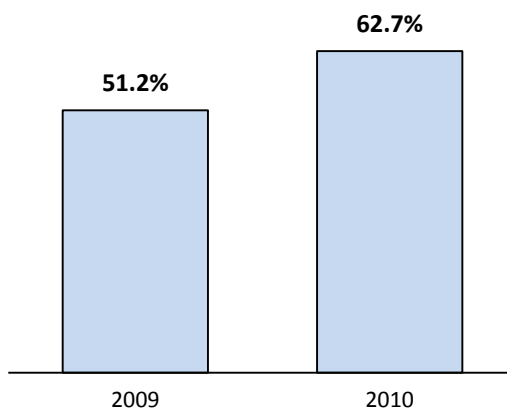
Foursquare is aggressively working to increase its presence on campuses around the world. In this report, the Council will explore how and why students use Foursquare, ways institutions can benefit from formally establishing a Foursquare presence, and factors institutions should consider before devoting resources to Foursquare.

Reconnecting with Increasingly Wired Students

Percent of Undergraduates with Internet-Capable Handheld Devices

ECAR (2010)

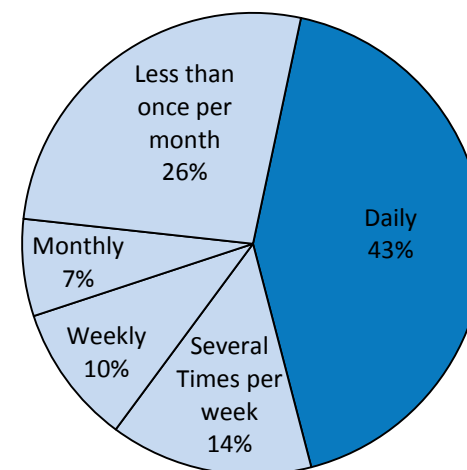
2010 n=36,950; 2009 n=30,6161



Frequency with which Undergraduates Access Internet from Handheld Device

ECAR (2010)

n=23,171



Bridging the Gap Between Technology and the Real World

“We were looking for a geo-location app that could pull our students away from their computers and into the real world.”

Diane McDonald
Texas A&M University



How Do Students Use Foursquare?

The primary function of Foursquare is to enable users to broadcast their location to friends. Users may publish their Foursquare locations on Facebook and Twitter. Foursquare can facilitate impromptu meetings between friends who find themselves checked into the same location.

In addition to locating friends, Foursquare users may also post and view “tips” about a specific venue. For example, people who have checked into a campus dining facility might leave tips about which dishes to choose and tonight’s menu. Campus officials could monitor these tips to informally assess student satisfaction with services.

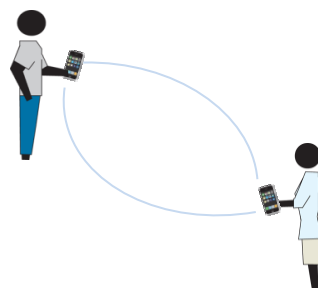
Currently, businesses are beginning to use Foursquare to drive traffic. For example, off-campus businesses or campus auxiliaries could offer discounts or free items to loyal customers who check in frequently on Foursquare.

Foursquare also offers virtual prizes. Completing a certain number or type of check-ins can earn users badges (pictured), which appear on their Foursquare profile. A user that has checked into a venue more than any other user becomes the venue’s mayor and receives a badge. Foursquare has also begun to offer badges targeted toward college students, such as the “Bookworm Bender” badge for library check-ins.

Foursquare Functions on Campus

Sharing Your Location

Users Let Friends Know Where to Meet Them



- “Study group meeting in basement computer lab.”
- “Just left multicultural festival. Stop by the China booth for free dumplings!”

Discounts and Prizes

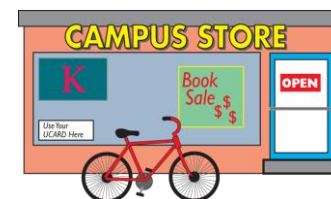
Venues May Offer Prizes for Checking In



- Free coffee for the mayor of the campus café
- 10% off at the bookstore for 5 check-ins

Learning About a Venue

Users Post Reviews and Insider Tips



- Checking into the football stadium reveals photos of the first game played there.
- “There are always vacant carrels on the 5th floor of the library.”

Virtual Incentives

Foursquare Offers Badges and Mayor Status



Image Credit: Foursquare

- University badges (left to right): College Explorer, Munchies, Smells Like School Spirit, Quad Squatter, and Bookworm Bender



Making the Decision to Establish a Presence on Foursquare

Before deciding to adopt this new technology officially, the Council recommends that institutions decide what they want to accomplish with Foursquare. An institution that hopes to use Foursquare to drive student engagement will have to dedicate more time and resources than an institution that only wants to use Foursquare to provide additional information to campus visitors.

Several institutions are exploring ways to use Foursquare to develop stronger connections with the community. At the University of Wisconsin, Waukesha, the Marketing and Communications office is looking to offer check-in incentives that will encourage students to explore off campus and will ultimately raise the small campus's profile in the community. Local business owners have been very interested in collaborating with the university to offer these specials.

Many institutions hope to use Foursquare to encourage students to explore different areas of campus and to increase school spirit. However, these goals require additional effort and energy to achieve because students will only respond to up-to-date and relevant information.

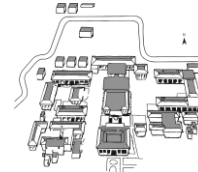
Why Use Foursquare on Campus?

Building Community Connections



- Encouraging students to patronize off-campus businesses
- Informing community members of events on campus

Encouraging Campus Exploration



- Offering specials for off-the-beaten path venues
- Informing students of events on different parts of campus

Boosting School Spirit



- Providing opportunities for alumni to follow campus events
- Sharing information about campus traditions and history



Case in Brief – Harvard University

An early adopter of Foursquare, Harvard University has focused on using this location-based service as a tool to engage community members and visitors to campus. Users can access tips at 76 locations on campus; tips focus on interesting facts, a place's historical significance, and amenities offered at different venues. The University's public affairs and communications office decided early on that Harvard's Foursquare activities should engage the greater community, and not be targeted to students. Harvard's Foursquare venues have had over 23,000 unique visitors; however, Foursquare has not replaced Facebook and Twitter as tools to engage the broader Harvard community.



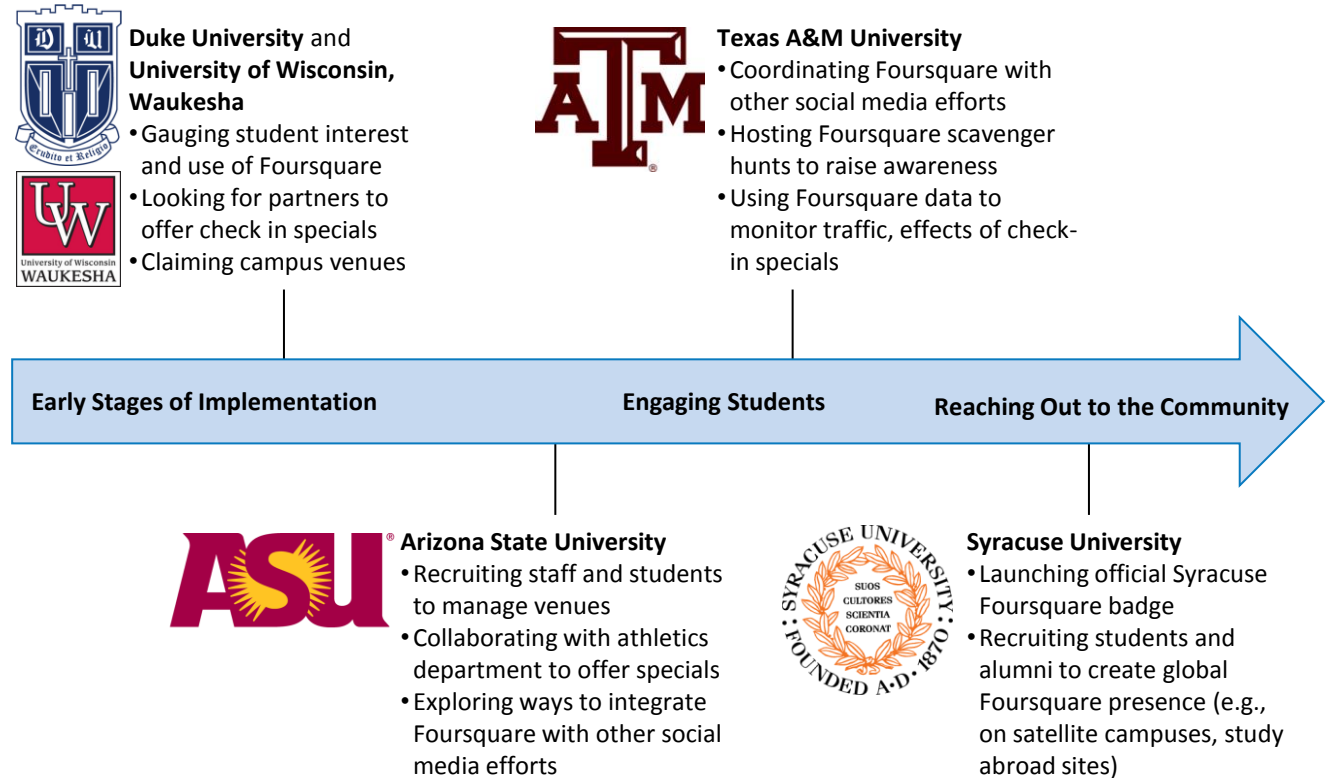
How Are Institutions Using Foursquare on Campus

Council research found that institutions vary widely in the extent to which they have implemented Foursquare.

Many institutions decided to adopt Foursquare because students were already using it. At some institutions, students and community members had already registered campus locations as Foursquare venues, which can create a small but surmountable challenge for institutions seeking to join. Foursquare is free to join, so the biggest cost for institutions at the outset is the staff time associated with claiming venues.

Council interviews reveal, however, that a handful of institutions want to use Foursquare to improve student engagement. To achieve that goal, schools must invest additional time and effort in their Foursquare initiatives. The graphic at right provides an overview of how institutions at various stages of the implementation process dedicate their energy and resources.

From Simple to Sophisticated: A Range of Options





Arizona State University: Recruiting Partners Across the University

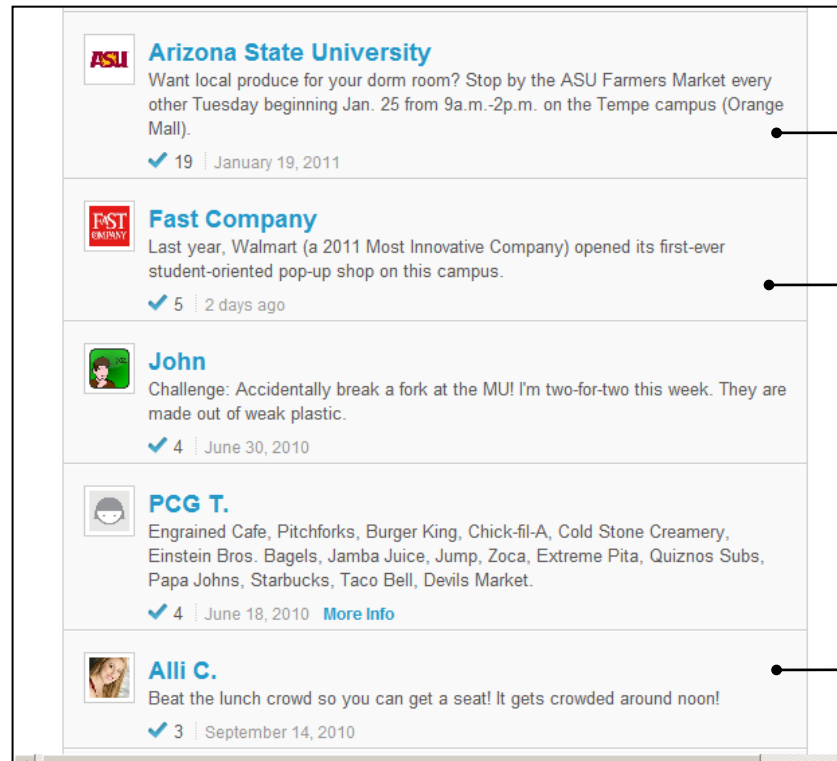
Arizona State University's goals with Foursquare are like those of other social media tools: to help create engagement between members within the community and between the institution and the community.

Staff from Arizona State University's Provost Communications Group served as the main liaisons with Foursquare to create the initial university presence. The group is now expanding involvement to unit-level staff who can assume responsibility for managing venues across the university's campuses. By delegating management, the people who are most aware of and involved with current happenings at the venue will be able to post and update information and events. These individuals are also better prepared to respond to any suggestions related to their venues.

The group is also collaborating on additional plans to increase the university's engagement beyond its initial presence on Foursquare. Students are already actively posting commentary on their experience at the university, and as more "follow" ASU, the university will continue to develop more activities around Foursquare.

Promoting Campus Conversations and Events

Foursquare Page for ASU's Memorial Union



ASU staff post tips to promote new events

News organizations highlight significant activities on campus

Students leave insider tips and give feedback, which may surface unmet needs

Image Credit: Foursquare and Arizona State University

Source: <http://foursquare.com/venue/45147>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.



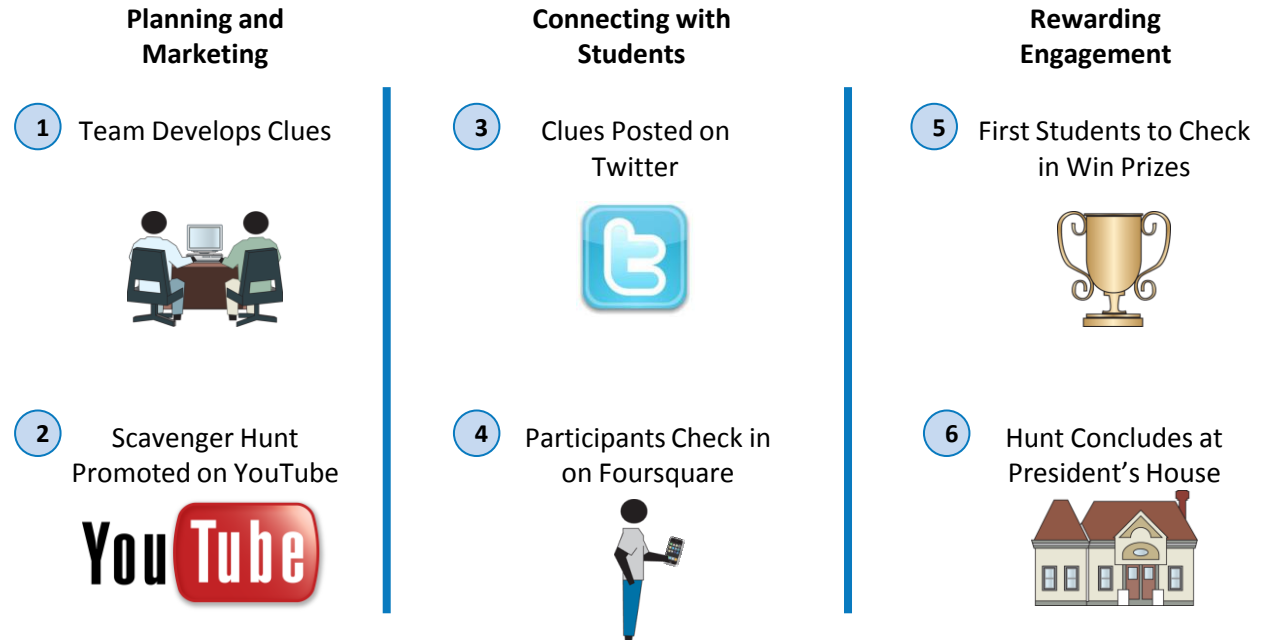
Texas A&M: Incorporating Foursquare into University Social Media Strategy

Before implementing Foursquare on campus, Texas A&M University already had an active presence on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Texas A&M wanted to add a geo-location tool to their social media offerings as a way to encourage students to engage with their physical campus.

To encourage students to join Foursquare and become more comfortable using it, Texas A&M's social media and marketing office worked with students to develop a social media scavenger hunt. The scavenger hunt was promoted through the university's YouTube channel, Facebook, and Twitter. Students would follow the clues and use Foursquare to check into the correct spot, becoming eligible for prizes including Aggie apparel and an iPod (a total of 80 prizes over three days, furnished by the bookstore). The final venue was the president's house, where many students were able to meet the president for the first time.

Over the course of the scavenger hunt, Texas A&M gained over 1,500 Foursquare friends, pushing their total to over 6,000. There were also 223 tweets about the scavenger hunt. Interviewees reported that alumni followed the hunt on Facebook and Twitter; some even wrote in with suggestions for more challenging clues.

Profile: Texas A&M's Social Media Scavenger Hunt



Additional Information on the Social Media Scavenger Hunt

For additional details about Texas A&M's social media scavenger hunt, visit:

- <http://dianecmcdonald.wordpress.com/2011/01/31/our-social-media-scavenger-hunt/>
- <http://tamunews.tamu.edu/2011/02/07/texas-am-scavenger-hunt-demonstrates-viability-of-social-media-marketing/>

Source: <http://dianecmcdonald.wordpress.com/2011/01/31/our-social-media-scavenger-hunt/>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.



Texas A&M: Incorporating Foursquare into Social Media Strategy (cont.)

Beyond the scavenger hunt, Texas A&M has embarked on an ambitious campaign to implement Foursquare on campus. Council interviewees argue that efforts to integrate Foursquare with other social media have been key to its success. Ultimately, the success of Foursquare has been directly related to the amount of energy staff and student volunteers put into it. At Texas A&M, a staff member usually spends three to four hours a week monitoring and updating Foursquare. Other events, such as the scavenger hunt, required several full days of effort from the social media team, the business development team, and students.

Texas A&M is also using Foursquare to track data about traffic to campus venues. Foursquare provides reports to venue managers that summarize check-ins and traffic patterns over time (see right). This information is particularly useful to business development offices, which can use the reports to determine when venues are most popular and the impact of check-in specials or other promotions.

However, interviewees reported that Foursquare is not able to provide detailed demographic data about users. In particular, Foursquare cannot show venue managers whether users are students, staff, or visitors.

Venue managers can monitor overall check-ins and postings to other social media.

Spikes in check-ins can indicate the effectiveness of venue specials and promotions.

Tracking Venue Statistics

Report Provided by Foursquare to Venue Managers

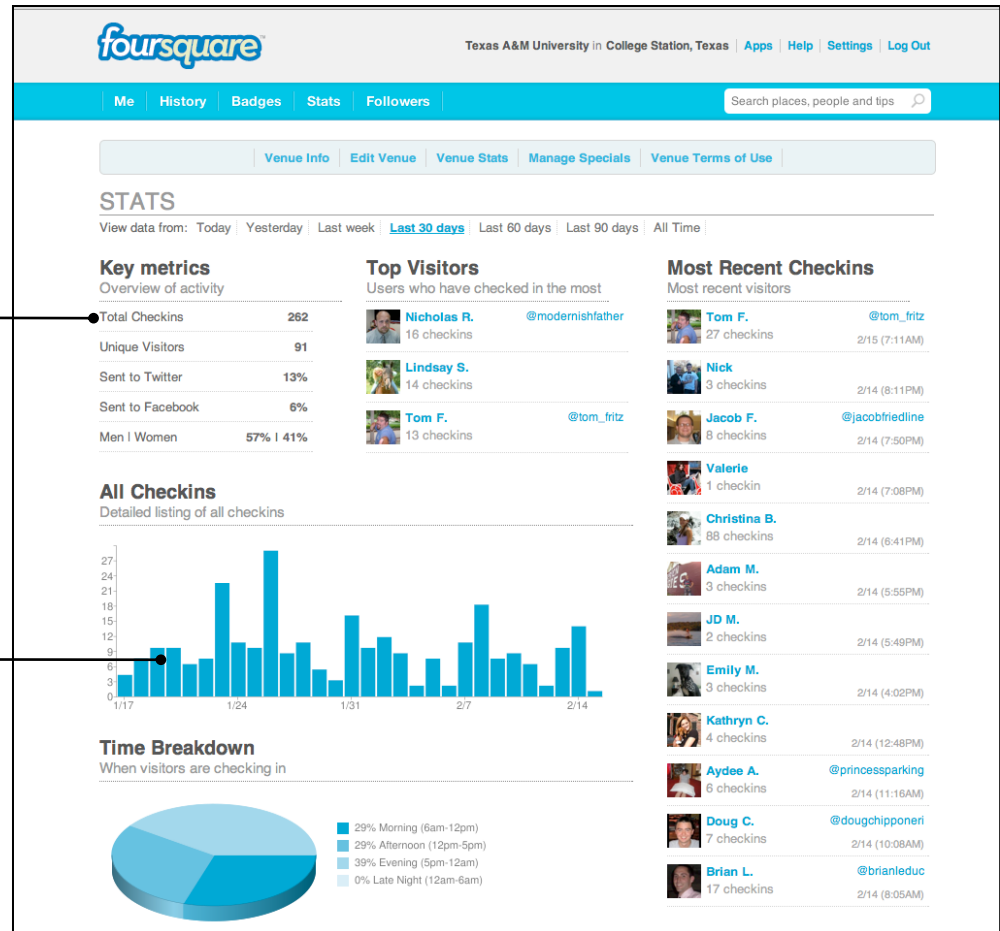


Image Credit: Foursquare and Texas A&M University



Syracuse University: Student Enthusiasm Drives Foursquare Growth

At Syracuse University, Foursquare's growth has largely been driven by students, but with ample support from the university. In 2010, a student member of Syracuse's social media team (a partnership between the Division of Advancement and External Affairs and the School of Information Studies) suggested that the university establish an official Foursquare presence. The idea was well-received because many individuals at the university were already using Foursquare, which had been founded by an alumnus.

Although most of Syracuse's Foursquare activities are predominately student-driven, staff still provide some support. The initial set-up required 35 to 40 hours of staff time for taking over campus venues that had already been registered.

Council research found that student involvement is essential to creating an engaging Foursquare community that accurately reflects student life. At Syracuse, a team of students and staff led by the university's official student Foursquare ambassador work with various entities on campus, including the bookstore and food services, to arrange tips, check-in specials, and Foursquare giveaways.

Capitalizing on Existing Student Interest

Students on the Social Media Team



- Helps social media staff identify interesting venues
- Contributes tips for venues: ensures information posted is relevant
- Generates ideas for check-in specials and prizes
- Brainstorms promotions to increase student participation
- Provides extra manpower for promotional events

Foursquare: The New "Insider's Guide"

"We have received a tremendous response to our Foursquare presence—especially from students and alumni. Foursquare is a great way to engage people, to have fun with them, and to educate them about Syracuse University's venues, wonderful history, and many activities."

*Kevin Morrow
Syracuse University*



Harnessing School Spirit at Homecoming

- Created a Foursquare information booth during homecoming
- Students and alumni could win t-shirts for checking in on Foursquare, visiting information booth
- Saw spike in Foursquare usage over homecoming weekend
- Spurred alumni engagement with Syracuse Foursquare
- For more information, visit <http://aboutfoursquare.com/syracuse-homecoming/>



Image Credit: Kevin Morrow, Syracuse University



Syracuse University: Using Foursquare to Create Global Connections

Syracuse University recently became the third university to have a campus-specific badge, which can only be unlocked through check-ins determined by the university (unlike Foursquare's university badges that can be unlocked by any person on any campus). The social media team had worked directly with Foursquare to launch the badge. Interviewees noted that they hope the badge will encourage students and alumni to explore different areas of campus.

Syracuse has also begun to expand its Foursquare presence globally. Council interviewees reported that earlier this year, alumni used Foursquare to arrange a viewing party in New York City for Syracuse's bowl game. The university is beginning to register venues at its US satellite campuses as well.

Interviewees also highlighted efforts to connect Foursquare with study abroad. In addition to establishing venues at Syracuse's study abroad sites, the university is actively encouraging students to leave tips about their host city for other students. At a post-study abroad meeting, all students were given a card where they were required to write down at least one tip about their host city. These tips will be used to add to Syracuse's Foursquare tips for other locations.



Image Credit: About Foursquare



Moving Forward

Creating a University-Specific Badge

- Only three universities have university-specific badges¹
- Unlocking the Syracuse badge requires checking in at “off-the-beaten path” venues
- Number of Foursquare users at Syracuse spiked after announcement of badge
- Alumni interest in Foursquare has increased
- Syracuse now has over 15,000 Foursquare followers

Creating Syracuse Venues Around the World

- Alumni encouraged to use Foursquare to meet-up for events like networking nights and viewing sporting events
- Syracuse study abroad students leave tips at venues, creating “insider's guide” to study-abroad city
- University has begun claiming venues at satellite campuses

¹ Harvard and Stanford also have university-specific badges.

Source: <http://aboutfoursquare.com/syracuse-gets-its-own-foursquare-badge/>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.



Implementation Guide: Diagnostic Questions

The Council strongly encourages Student Affairs practitioners who are considering launching Foursquare to first investigate if there is existing student interest. Several institutions decided to adopt Foursquare because students approached the administration about it. If students are not already active on Foursquare, it will be challenging for Student Affairs staff to generate buy-in for a new social media tool. In addition to gauging student interest, practitioners should also join Foursquare and familiarize themselves with the user experience.

Before officially launching the tool on campus, practitioners must decide how much time they want to commit to keeping Foursquare updated and relevant. Including students in managing and updating venues can lighten the burden on staff while ensuring that the campus's Foursquare presence reflects student life. Staff should also decide if they want to recruit on-campus vendors to offer incentives (e.g., free coffee at a campus cafe, t-shirts, etc.) to drive student participation.

Factors to Consider Before Launching Foursquare on Campus

Yes	No	Diagnostic Questions
		Are students already using Foursquare?
		Have students approached staff about creating a university Foursquare presence?
		Have campus locations been registered as venues?
		Are other locations around campus on Foursquare?
		Are businesses in the local community using Foursquare?
		Have users been leaving tips about campus venues?
		Are staff familiar with Foursquare?
		Does the institution already have a Facebook and Twitter presence?
		Are there staff members in charge of social media initiatives either at divisional or institutional levels?

If you answered “yes” to all or most of the above questions, then the Council strongly recommends launching an official institutional Foursquare presence.



Implementation Guide: Next Steps

Not Sure About Moving Forward

Answered “no” to most diagnostic questions



Continue Monitoring Foursquare Activity

- Occasionally log on to Foursquare to monitor activity around campus
- Claim any venues that are located on campus
- Take note if students express interest in Foursquare
- Read technology blogs such as Mashable (<http://mashable.com/>) and TechCrunch (<http://techcrunch.com/>) to keep apprised of new initiatives

Time/Resource Considerations

- May be necessary to delegate these tasks to a staff member to avoid letting them slip through the cracks

Students Are Interested

Answered “yes” to several diagnostic questions



Formalize the Institution’s Foursquare Presence

- Spend time using Foursquare to become more comfortable using it
- Contact Foursquare to claim venues located on campus
- Decide who target audience will be for Foursquare efforts: students, alumni, and/or campus visitors?
- Recruit student workers or volunteers to leave Foursquare tips and monitor university pages
- Periodically access Foursquare to make sure content is appropriate
- Consider how Foursquare can be integrated with existing social media efforts (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

Time/Resource Considerations

- Initial registration of venues may require a few hours of work per day
- Once venues are claimed, student volunteers can take over many venue management tasks

Already on Foursquare, Want to Do More

Looking for ways to grow Foursquare presence



Image Credit: Foursquare

Consider Ways to Boost Participation, Expand Audience

- Meet with student workers and volunteers to brainstorm promotions
- Meet with campus auxiliaries, athletics, and food services to discuss possible Foursquare check-in specials
- Explore ways to tie Foursquare into campus activities, such as orientation or a campus-wide scavenger hunt
- Monitor Foursquare analytics for specific venues
- Publicize Foursquare to alumni
- Consider working with Foursquare to create a campus-specific badge

Time/Resource Considerations

- Requires consistent effort from staff
- Large events (e.g., scavenger hunt) require a team of staff and students working over several weeks
- Efforts to drive engagement may incur costs for check-in specials from campus vendors



Student Affairs Leadership Council • Education Advisory Board

2445 M Street, NW • Washington DC 20037

Telephone: 202-266-5600 • Facsimile: 202-266-5700 • www.advisory.com
