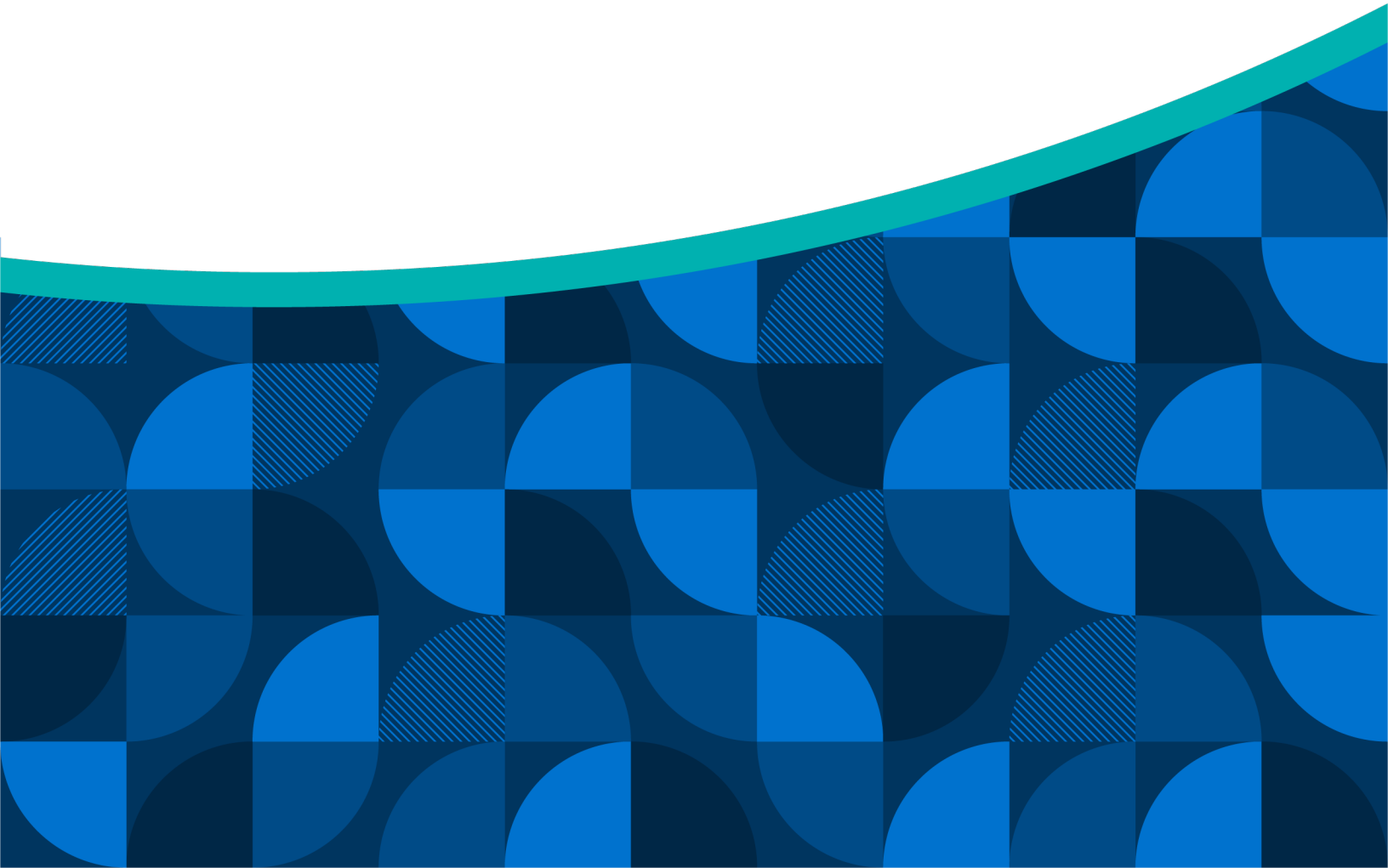




ENROLL360

Set Your School Apart with a High-Impact Virtual Tour

How to Create a Tour That Drives Gen Z Enrollment
Post-pandemic and Beyond



Project Director
Lizzy Donaher

Legal Caveat

EAB Global, Inc. ("EAB") has made efforts to verify the accuracy of the information it provides to partners. This report relies on data obtained from many sources, however, and EAB cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided or any analysis based thereon. In addition, neither EAB nor any of its affiliates (each, an "EAB Organization") is in the business of giving legal, accounting, or other professional advice, and its reports should not be construed as professional advice. In particular, partners should not rely on any legal commentary in this report as a basis for action, or assume that any tactics described herein would be permitted by applicable law or appropriate for a given partner's situation. Partners are advised to consult with appropriate professionals concerning legal, tax, or accounting issues, before implementing any of these tactics. No EAB Organization or any of its respective officers, directors, employees, or agents shall be liable for any claims, liabilities, or expenses relating to (a) any errors or omissions in this report, whether caused by any EAB Organization, or any of their respective employees or agents, or sources or other third parties, (b) any recommendation by any EAB Organization, or (c) failure of partner and its employees and agents to abide by the terms set forth herein.

EAB is a registered trademark of EAB Global, Inc. in the United States and other countries. Partners are not permitted to use these trademarks, or any other trademark, product name, service name, trade name, and logo of any EAB Organization without prior written consent of EAB. Other trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos used within these pages are the property of their respective holders. Use of other company trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos or images of the same does not necessarily constitute (a) an endorsement by such company of an EAB Organization and its products and services, or (b) an endorsement of the company or its products or services by an EAB Organization. No EAB Organization is affiliated with any such company.

IMPORTANT: Please read the following.

EAB has prepared this report for the exclusive use of its partners. Each partner acknowledges and agrees that this report and the information contained herein (collectively, the "Report") are confidential and proprietary to EAB. By accepting delivery of this Report, each partner agrees to abide by the terms as stated herein, including the following:

1. All right, title, and interest in and to this Report is owned by an EAB Organization. Except as stated herein, no right, license, permission, or interest of any kind in this Report is intended to be given, transferred to, or acquired by a partner. Each partner is authorized to use this Report only to the extent expressly authorized herein.
2. Each partner shall not sell, license, republish, distribute, or post online or otherwise this Report, in part or in whole. Each partner shall not disseminate or permit the use of, and shall take reasonable precautions to prevent such dissemination or use of, this Report by (a) any of its employees and agents (except as stated below), or (b) any third party.
3. Each partner may make this Report available solely to those of its employees and agents who (a) are registered for the workshop or program of which this Report is a part, (b) require access to this Report in order to learn from the information described herein, and (c) agree not to disclose this Report to other employees or agents or any third party. Each partner shall use, and shall ensure that its employees and agents use, this Report for its internal use only. Each partner may make a limited number of copies, solely as adequate for use by its employees and agents in accordance with the terms herein.
4. Each partner shall not remove from this Report any confidential markings, copyright notices, and/or other similar indicia herein.
5. Each partner is responsible for any breach of its obligations as stated herein by any of its employees or agents.
6. If a partner is unwilling to abide by any of the foregoing obligations, then such partner shall promptly return this Report and all copies thereof to EAB.

Table of Contents



Executive Summary.....4



Part 1: Understanding the Characteristics of a High-Impact Tour.....5

- Immersive
- Personalized
- Relevant
- Responsive to Engagement Data



Part 2: Measuring and Maximizing Virtual Tour Impact Across the Funnel10

- Growing Awareness
- Boosting Inquiry Generation
- Promoting Application Submission
- Increasing Yield



Key Takeaways and Additional Resources15

Executive Summary

Virtual Tours Are Essential to Enrollment Strategy

Virtual tour usage grew rapidly during the pandemic, accelerating adoption across the country and establishing a new norm for virtual and hybrid recruitment. Even with the return to in-person recruitment post-pandemic, virtual tours remain essential to enrollment strategy. EAB Virtual Tours data indicates that usage increased among visitors in 2023, showing that tours have not only taken root in enrollment strategy but also that they continue to grow in importance.

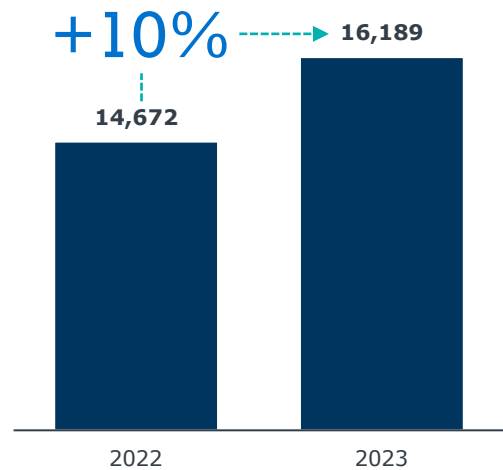
Demand for Tours Grew in 2023

EAB Virtual Tour Partners

+16% Increase in both **visits** and **visitors**

Virtual Tour Usage Increased in 2023

Average Annual Visitors per Institution, EAB Virtual Tour Partners



High-Impact Virtual Tours Must Meet the Needs of “Gen P”

A central reason for virtual tours’ staying power post-COVID is their unique ability to engage “Gen P,” or the subsegment of Gen Z students whose middle and high school experiences were impacted by the pandemic. This generation of students is characterized by especially high expectations for digital interactions with brands and intensified concerns about their college experience. When virtual tours have certain characteristics, they are a uniquely effective tool in engaging this population.

“

“The experience [of taking virtual tours] felt **mixed**. But oftentimes they were **positive enough to convince me to apply**.”

– Current first-year college student

”

In This Report: Insights and Recommendations to Maximize Your Virtual Tour

Based on data from EAB’s 600+ Virtual Tour partners and 9M+ annual tour visitors, this report defines the core components a virtual tour must have to engage Gen Z. It also explores the functions of virtual tours across the enrollment funnel and provides recommendations for optimizing your strategy.

- ▶ **Part 1: Understanding the Characteristics of a High-Impact Tour**
- ▶ **Part 2: Measuring and Maximizing Virtual Tour Impact Across the Funnel**



Understanding the Characteristics of a High-Impact Tour

PART

1

1. Immersive
2. Personalized
3. Relevant
4. Responsive to Engagement Data

Characteristic #1: Immersive



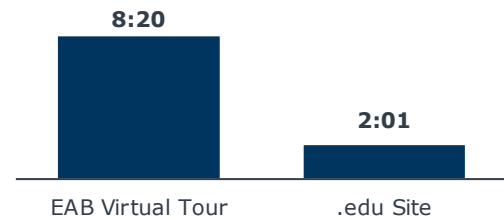
Immersive tours create a highly engaging, interactive experience through visual storytelling.

How Tours Compete for—and Win—Gen Z’s Attention

Gen Z has grown up surrounded by highly engaging, video-focused social media. They frequently use these platforms in their daily life, with EAB’s Student Communication Preferences survey finding that 78% of high school students use YouTube, 76% use Instagram, and 57% use Snapchat. College recruitment marketing has the extremely difficult task of competing for students’ attention with these highly engaging formats. Fortunately, immersive virtual tours have the power to capture and hold students’ attention in a way that few other recruitment channels do. EAB data shows that users spend an average of 8:20 minutes on a virtual tour, compared to an average of 2:01 per session when browsing school webpages.

Virtual Tours Are a Powerful Engagement Tool

Average Session Duration, 2023



55+ Average interactions per visit on EAB Virtual Tours

The Power of Visual Storytelling

By using videos and interactive elements to engage students, colleges can effectively convey many aspects of student life and build affinity for their institution. At EAB, we have found that students respond best to experiential and storytelling-based tours. Rather than showing large blocks of text, simple slideshows of campus buildings, or walking paths, students respond best to tour stops that prioritize visual exploration, attention-grabbing motion graphics, real people telling stories about their experience, and layered content including links to social media. This approach not only offers visual interest but also provides your school with ample opportunity to share what makes your campus culture unique. It can bring together a variety of content into a cohesive and easy-to-access format, helping you increase visibility of resources that might otherwise be buried or overlooked on your .edu site.

Effective Virtual Tours Focus on the Student Experience

Sample Virtual Tour Showing Campus Traditions



Student-led video clips discuss campus traditions

Linked supplemental media

Source: EAB research and analysis, <https://www.oho.com/blog/2023-google-analytics-benchmarks-higher-education-websites>.

Characteristic #2: Personalized



Personalized tours deliver the right content, at the right time, to the right student.

Gen Z Has a Strong Preference for Personalization

In addition to video and interactive elements, Gen Z also expects personalized content in their online experiences, with 74% of Gen Z reporting they're willing to share their hobbies and interests with brands in exchange for better service. This preference extends to college research as well: 62% of sophomores say they want personalized content from colleges. In addition to appealing to students' preferences, offering custom content can simplify processes that students find overwhelming, such as finding relevant information about programs or campus life.

How AI Can Enhance Personalization

While the time investment involved in creating personalized content has presented a roadblock for many enrollment marketing teams in the past, advances in AI offer new, more manageable ways to cater to Gen Z's preference for tailored material. For example, EAB Virtual Tours have adopted AI to automatically generate a list of "for you" tour stops based on free text search terms entered by the visitor or selected from a common terms picklist. In addition to quickly creating a customized selection of destinations for each visitor, AI also assists in associating user-generated topics with relevant available tour content, eliminating the need for enrollment teams to manually tag related topics. AI search personalization also enables enhanced visibility into aggregate student trends and student-level interests, which can help you improve the efficacy of your marketing, as discussed on page 9.

How AI Can Power a Unique Tour Experience for Each Student

EAB Virtual Tours

1 **Students Prompted to Share What They Want to Learn More About**

Interests can be indicated using a free form text box or a picklist of prepopulated topics

2 **Students Get a Personalized Experience Based on Expressed Interests**

Relevant tour stops are brought to the top of the virtual tour destination picklist

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE ON CAMPUS?

I'd like to see the dorms, cafeterias and climbing gym

By initiating this action, you consent to EAB collecting and maintaining a transcript of this interaction.

ENTER ANSWER ABOVE INSTEAD ▲

Academics

Business Programs Communication Computer and Information Science

Education Engineering Health Sciences Humanities Mathematics

Physical Science Social Sciences and History Visual and Fine Arts

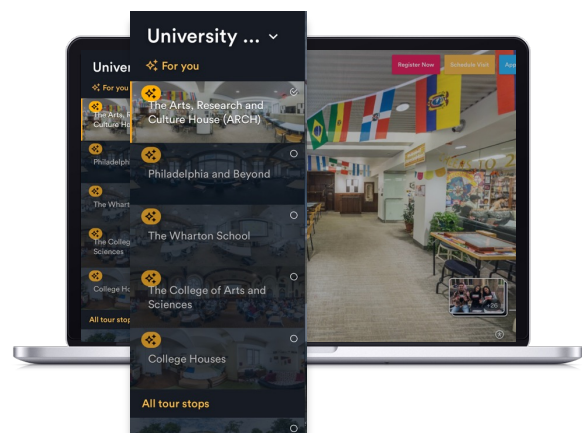
Post Undergrad

Graduate programs

Student Services

Career advising Counseling Financial aid International students

Study abroad



Characteristic #3: Relevant



Relevant tours provide up-to-date content on topics that matter most to students.

A High Burden for Relevant Content

Today's high school students expect digital experiences with brands—including college brands—to be user-friendly, which involves anticipating students' interests and needs. As shown at right, 67% of high school students report that they will abandon college websites that are not user-friendly, and 81% report that poorly designed websites negatively affect their opinion of a college. While this data refers specifically to expectations around college websites, it reflects the generally high barrier that colleges must clear in their marketing to capture and hold student interest. One major aspect of an intuitive and seamless user experience is providing content that anticipates students' key questions and concerns throughout their college research.

Low Tolerance for Clunky or Unintuitive Experiences with School Marketing

EAB 2023 Communication Preferences Survey

67%

of high school students report they will abandon college websites that are not user-friendly

81%

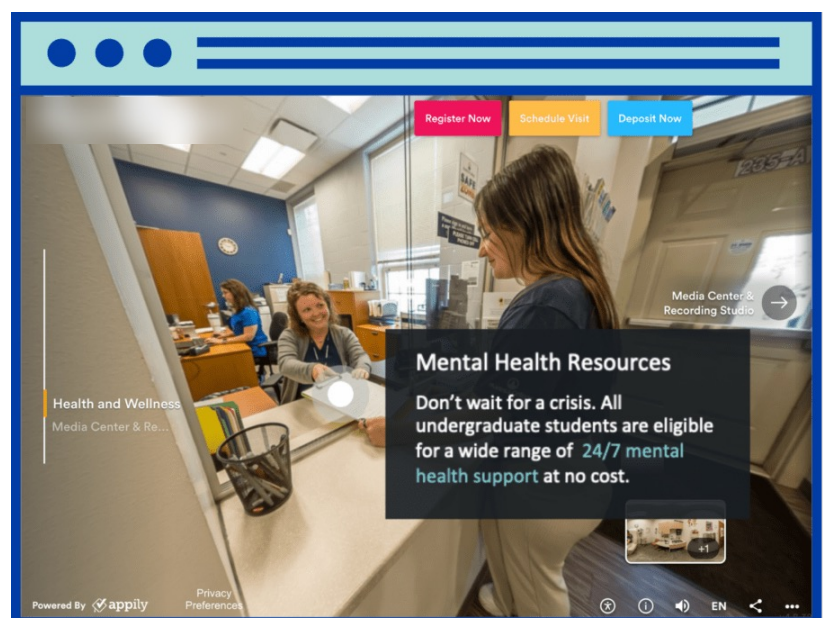
of high school students report that a poorly designed website will negatively affect their opinion of a college

The Importance of Timely and Fresh Virtual Tour Content

Based on their work across hundreds of institutions, EAB's Studios team has found that colleges can differentiate themselves and enhance virtual tour impact by ensuring content is up to date and frequently refreshed. Schools can do this in a variety of ways, including by sharing photos or videos of recent events, mentioning new construction underway on campus, or building customized tour stops about the elements of student experience that matter most to students right now. Within EAB's Virtual Tours, Instagram integration enables colleges to share posts directly from Instagram to their tour, facilitating updates on the latest happenings on campus.

Addressing Gen P's College Concerns Through Your Virtual Tour

High-impact virtual tours will not only convey the campus experience but also assuage students' concerns about college. EAB research on Gen P has found that this generation of students is more concerned about mental health in college, less academically prepared, and less convinced of the value of college compared to their predecessors. The image at right shows an example of how one college has integrated content on mental health resources into their virtual tour, including by showing students visiting mental health facilities and by linking to additional resources about mental health.



Source: EAB research and analysis.

Characteristic #4: Responsive to Engagement Data



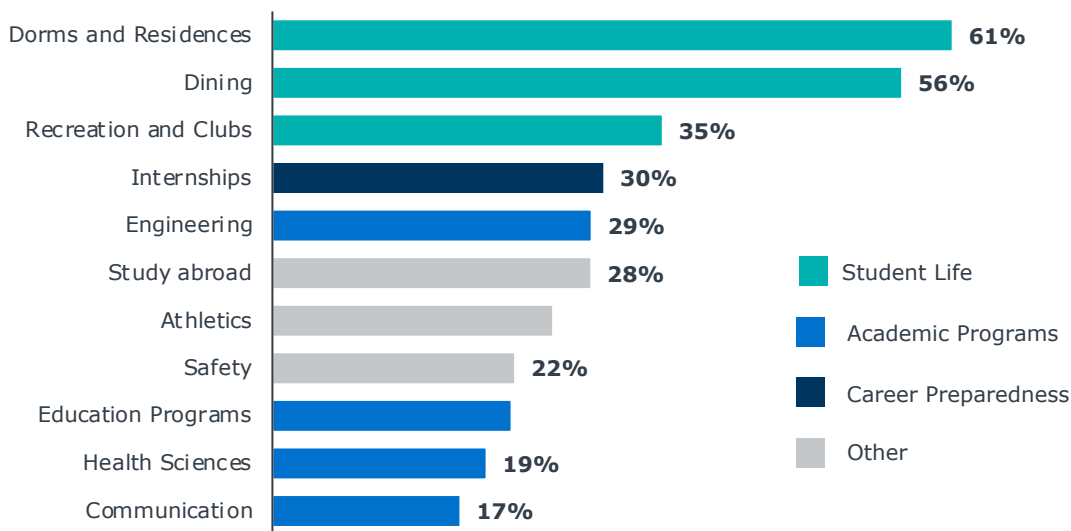
Responsive tours collect usage data and flexibly adapt to it.

Enhancing Your Tour Based on Aggregate Data Insights

Given Gen Z’s high standards for content customization, relevance, and quality, high-impact tours must collect usage data and respond to it, either to account for large shifts in student interests or for variation by person. EAB’s Virtual Tours do this through tracking of user engagement with content, which can be broken down according to various student demographics. AI search personalization also offers a window into the topics that most interest students, as shown in the chart below. Given the high levels of engagement with virtual tours and their ability to customize content at scale, virtual tours offer a wealth of data-driven insights into student preferences compared to other channels. The insights from virtual tour usage data not only can help you refine and enhance your virtual tour, but they also can surface differentiators and inform content across all other marketing channels.

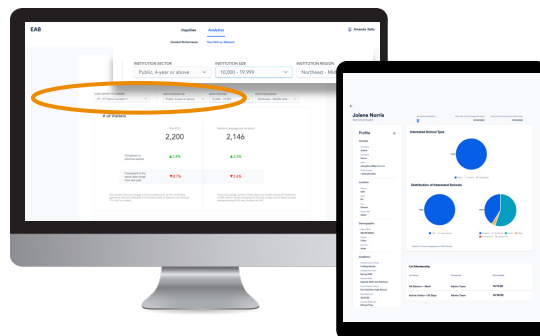
Most Popular Categories in Personalized Stops

Early EAB Virtual Tours AI Personalization Data, Top 5 Topics per User, Topics Named by 15% or More of Students



Student-Level Tour Analytics and Insights Can Inform Marketing Strategy

Virtual tours also offer numerous actionable insights into student-specific data. For example, with EAB Virtual Tours, admissions teams can view tracked engagement data including topics in which students have expressed interest, other school types students are researching, the date a student was last active on a tour, and user engagement scores. Using this information, admissions teams can generate segmented outreach lists of students meeting specific criteria and personalize communications to students.



Source: EAB research and analysis.



Measuring and Maximizing Virtual Tour Impact Across the Funnel

PART

2

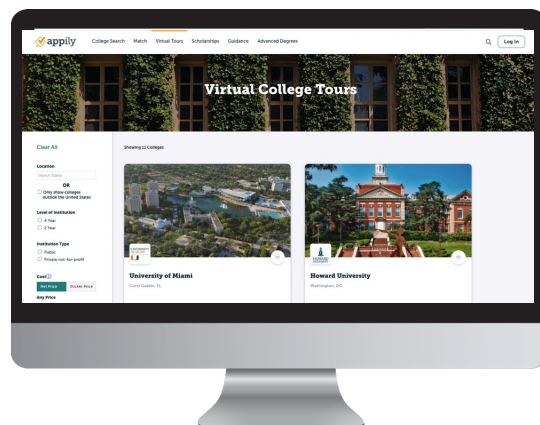
- Growing Awareness
- Boosting Inquiry Generation
- Promoting Application Submission
- Increasing Yield

Growing Awareness

Extending Your Reach with Your Virtual Tour

At EAB, we help our partners maximize the impact of their awareness activities by providing flexible embed code for all tours, which enables institutions to easily integrate their tour across the digital landscape, including via school-owned channels such as the college website, digital marketing, and email campaigns, as well as on third-party platforms such as Common App.

EAB has brought together leading college search tools with Appily, a one-stop platform to support students in their college search. Virtual tours are spotlighted on a school’s Appily profile page and searchable in the virtual tour library, helping spread awareness among the 3M+ Appily student users.



Intentional and thorough promotion of your tour can help maximize your outreach potential. Consult the checklist below for recommendations.

Virtual Tour Reach

EAB Virtual Tour Partners

9.4M

Virtual tour visitors in 2023

50

States represented among users

3.2M

Students on the Appily platform

57%

of college-bound seniors are in Appily’s audience

Checklist: Maximizing the Visibility of Your Virtual Tour



Your .edu and Portals

- ✓ Embed on main .edu, action pages (Admission, Visit), and program-specific pages
- ✓ Promote via immersive banners and profile images
- ✓ Integrate into student portals and custom micro-sites (e.g., admissions micro-sites)
- ✓ Create a short link that goes directly to your virtual tour
- ✓ Add virtual tour as a “to-do” item on admissions checklists



External Sites

- ✓ Link in external profiles such as Appily, Naviance, Concourse, and Common App



Digital and Social

- ✓ Link to tour from digital ads
- ✓ Include tour in social platforms



Email, SMS, and Mail

- ✓ Add to email signatures and promote cross-campus stakeholder utilization
- ✓ Promote your tour in student email campaigns
- ✓ Feature in parent email campaigns
- ✓ Link your tour in SMS outreach
- ✓ Include tour’s shortened URL in mail campaigns



Hybrid

- ✓ Integrate tour using links or QR codes in print collateral, walkway signs, or door stickers
- ✓ Take on the road to events and recruitment fairs
- ✓ Promote tour on digital signage in admissions office or other campus locations
- ✓ Launch a self-guided tour from mobile via GPS or QR Code
- ✓ Host guided virtual visits
- ✓ Offer virtual on-site visits for when weather hinders walking tours

Boosting Inquiry Generation

Virtual Tours Increase Inquiry Generation

When executed well, virtual tours have significant potential to influence inquiry generation and enrollment outcomes—a function that is especially critical given the recent rise in stealth shopping behavior. As students research colleges, virtual tours offer a highly engaging touchpoint in your multichannel strategy at which you can capture prospect interest and collect valuable lead information. EAB partner data illustrates the degree to which virtual tours can engage and capture new leads: 64% of students who inquired via EAB Virtual Tours were incremental to other sources. Virtual tours can also amplify engagement across other channels: including virtual tours in email campaigns boosted inquiry rates by 21%.

Virtual Tours Capture New Leads and Amplify Inquiry Generation Across Other Channels *EAB Virtual Tour Partners*

64%

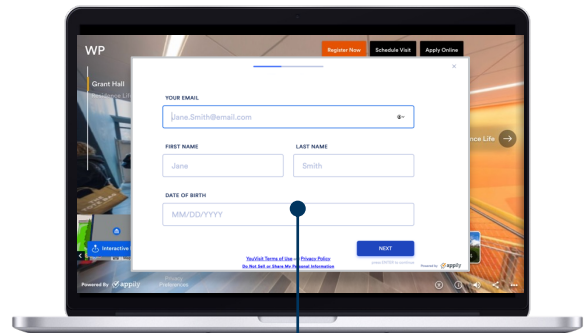
of students who inquired via EAB Virtual Tours were incremental to other sources

21%

Increase in inquiry rate when email campaigns incorporated EAB Virtual Tours

The Importance of Inquiry Form Design

Inquiry form design plays a surprisingly large role in a virtual tour's ability to capture inquiries effectively. At EAB, virtual tours use a rigorously tested Conversational Inquiry Form that has been shown to result in a 2x lift in form completion compared to a standard inquiry form. EAB UX testing has found that features which streamline user experience or maximize relevant data capture can have a major impact on form efficacy. Some of these features include "resuming logic" that enables users to resume the form where they last left off; real-time data capture, which saves information as a user progresses through the form even if they don't complete it; gamified design; and a visual progress bar, among others. Many virtual tour solutions and alternatives, including school-built approaches such as YouTube videos or WordPress sites, lack these components, meaning they are unlikely to maximize inquiry generation.



Sample Conversational Inquiry Form, which has been shown to drive a 2x increase in form completion compared to standard inquiry forms

Supporting In-Person and Hybrid Strategy

A virtual tour should not be viewed as a replacement for an in-person visit. Rather, EAB research has found that high-impact virtual tours drive in-person visits: in 2022, we saw a 3.9x higher campus visit rate among students who inquired through a virtual tour alone compared to other sources.

Virtual tours should also be integrated into in-person visits. For a hybrid promotion checklist, refer to the previous page.

Virtual Tours Drive In-Person Visits *EAB Virtual Tour Partners*

3.9x

Higher campus visit rate among students who inquired through a virtual tour alone compared to other sources

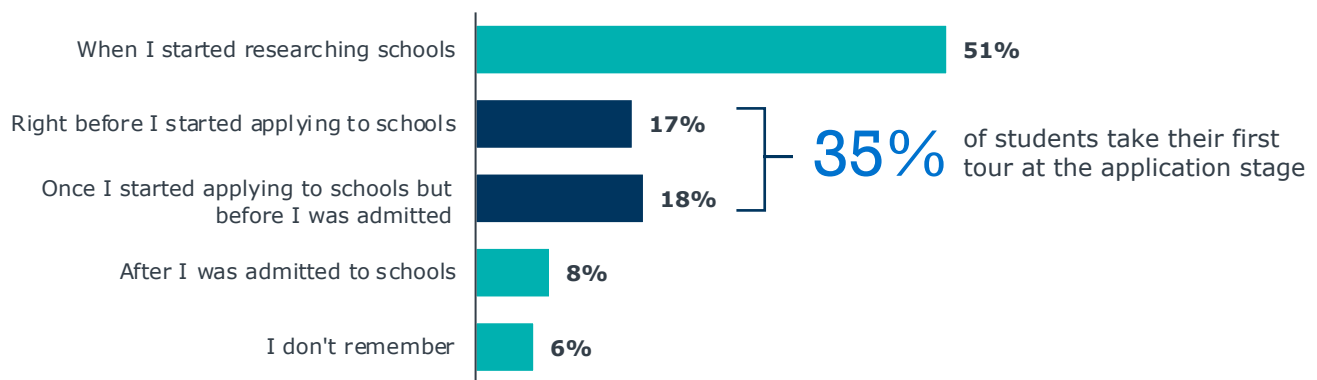
Promoting Application Submission

Virtual Tours Are Highly Influential in the Application Stage

While virtual tours play a critical role in students’ initial research, it’s important not to underestimate the function virtual tours serve at the application stage. Data from EAB’s 2023 First-Year Experience Survey indicates that a large share of students (35%) took their first virtual tour right before they started applying to schools or once they started applying to schools but before they had been admitted. First-generation college students were more likely than their non-first-gen counterparts to take a first virtual tour after they had started applying to colleges, indicating that virtual tour engagement at the application phase should be a particular focus for institutions looking to increase first-generation enrollment.

More Than a Third of Students Take Their First Virtual Tour at the Application Stage

Q: “At what time during your college search did you first take a virtual visit or tour?”, EAB 2024 First-Year Survey



Students Report That Virtual Tours Influenced Their Choices

Current First-Year College Students



“I was unable to visit in person until I was admitted. The virtual tour allowed me to get a basic understanding of what the campus looked like, and I found a lot of the amenities appealing.”



“I liked the virtual tour tool as an option for schools that are farther away from me that wouldn’t be a quick and easy trip. So, it was a convincing thing for me.”

A Powerful Tool in a Time of Changing In-Person Visit Behaviors

The role of virtual tours at the application stage is even more important given recent shifts in in-person visit behaviors. EAB research has found that, in the years after the pandemic, an increasing number of students have opted to visit only colleges to which they’ve been accepted, rather than visiting colleges in person before applying. In a world where many students are no longer participating in in-person visits in their junior year or senior fall, virtual tours fill several important roles. They can both offer students a way to get a feel for student life pre-admit and provide colleges a way to build and strengthen affinity for their school. As the quotes above illustrate, students report that virtual tours can be influential in their decision of where to apply, especially when they aren’t able to visit in person due to travel expenses or other factors.

Increasing Yield

Supporting Robust Yield

Virtual tours can help maximize yield in two different ways. First, effective virtual tours offer a source of inquiries that yield at high rates. EAB Virtual Tours inquiries have an average 81.3% deposit-to-enroll rate, indicating that virtual tours can successfully reach and engage inquiries who are later likely to yield. Second, virtual tours can help institutions actively engage and win over admitted students as they weigh their decision of where to enroll.

Strong Yield from Virtual Tour Inquiries *EAB Virtual Tour Partners*

81%

Average deposit-to-enroll rate when students inquired via a virtual tour

Enhancing the Yield Experience

“I was already admitted to the school I go to currently, but it was the one school I didn’t get to see in person so **seeing the campus with a virtual tour was exciting.**”

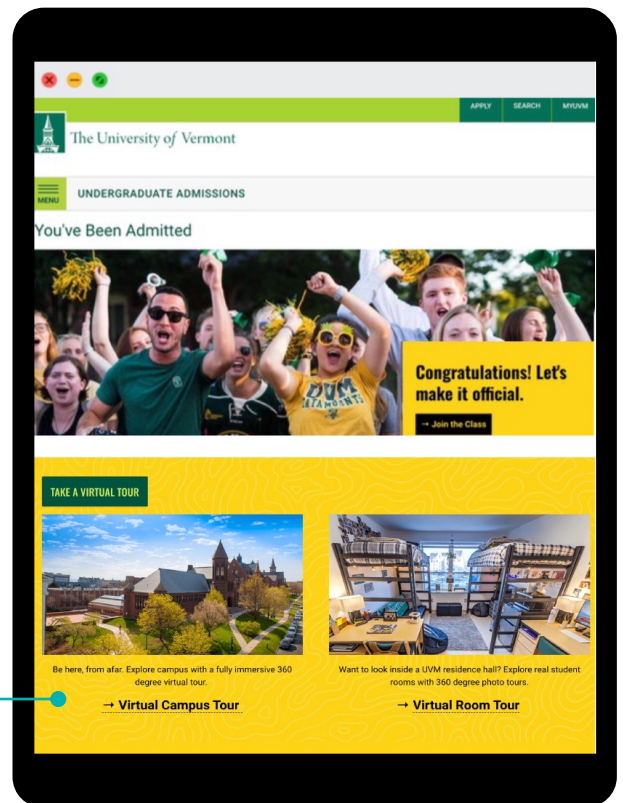
- Current first-year college student

How to Make Your Virtual Tour an Effective Yield Tool

Virtual tour can be a powerful tool for engaging students during the yield phase, when leveraged well. To maximize your virtual tour effectiveness in yield, consider the following strategies.

- **Website placement:** Embed your virtual tour on your home page and admitted-students pages.
- **Communication with families:** Send an email to both a student and their parent/guardian that includes a link to your virtual tour, encouraging them to set aside time to tour your school together.
- **Virtual visits:** Host a virtual visit in which someone guides visitors through your virtual tour. Be sure to promote virtual visits on your admitted-student page.

Example of virtual tour featured prominently on University of Vermont’s admitted-student page



Key Takeaways

1

Virtual Tours Remain Highly Popular

Several years after the return to in-person recruitment, it's clear that virtual tours remain crucial to enrollment strategy. Virtual tours are not only a highly popular channel in their own right, but they can also be a powerful tool for boosting engagement across channels.



2

Virtual Tours Must Engage Students on Their Own Terms

Not all virtual tours or tour substitutes will be equally high-impact. To engage Gen Z and maximally inflect enrollment results, virtual tours must be immersive, personalized, relevant, and responsive to engagement data. They must meet Gen P's high expectations for interactions with brands.



3

Virtual Tours Can Meaningfully Inflect Results Across the Funnel

A well-designed and well-promoted tour is a uniquely effective tool in engaging students across every stage of the enrollment funnel. Intentional UX design and deliberate integration of tours across digital, hybrid, and in-person campaigns can help you maximize tour impact.



About Enroll360 Virtual Tours

A Virtual Tour Experience That Drives Results

Work with our award-winning EAB Studios Team to craft a fully immersive digital experience that differentiates your school and allows prospective students to explore your campus, learn about your academic programs, and experience student life from anywhere.

WHAT SETS US APART

Through a combination of proprietary technology and 12+ years of experience, we deliver exceptional virtual campus tours that go beyond what other tour or map vendors can offer to support your key enrollment goals.



Increase participation in **campus visits** (in-person or virtual)



Drive **out-of-state and international** enrollment



Promote specific **majors or programs of study**



Support **class-shaping** and diversity goals



BEST-IN-CLASS CONTENT

360-degree photo and video tours that leverage interactive elements to encourage participation and deepen engagement

NOTE: ADA-compliant in accordance with WCAG 2.0



PERFORMANCE INSIGHTS

Actionable insights into inquiry data and tour performance to inform recruitment strategy and maximize tour impact



OPTIMIZED INQUIRY GENERATION

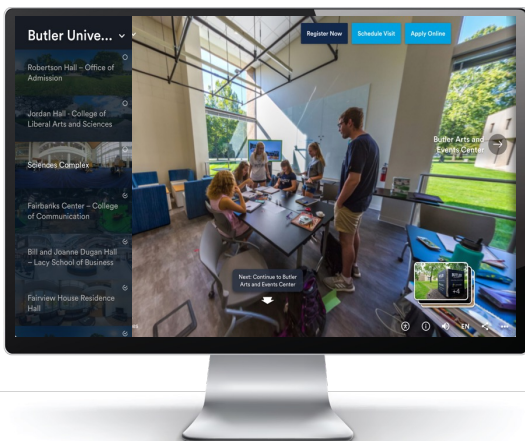
Embedded calls to action that appear intelligently, based on a student's journey



ONGOING PARTNER SUPPORT

A dedicated strategic partner for performance reviews and best practice sharing

Why **600+** Schools Partner with EAB on an Enroll360 Virtual Tour: **We Deliver Results**



8:20 minutes

Average time per visit



18.3%

Average inquiry rate



56%

Average inquiry-to-application rate



15%

Average inquiry-to-deposit rate

EAB Virtual Tours and EAB Cultivate Campaigns Are More Powerful Together

Cultivate students who also inquired via an Enroll360 Virtual Tour had a:



69%

Average inquiry-to-application rate



7X

Higher inquiry-to-deposit rate

Learn more and request a demo at:
eab.com/virtualtours

Unlock Every Recruitment Advantage with **Enroll360**

Enroll360 Solutions to Outperform the Market at Every Stage of the Funnel



Cultivate



Apply



Aid



Yield

Tailored partnerships that work in concert to generate unmatched search, recruitment, and yield results.

What Makes Enroll360 Solutions Different

Comprehensive Suite of Services



High-Touch Service Model



Strategies Rooted in Research and Testing

Enroll360 Products to Elevate Student Awareness and Engagement

Audiences

Build awareness and influence and grow applications with leads from our expansive ecosystem.

Tours

Engage Gen Z in immersive virtual tours that tell your brand story and build affinity.

Match

Enroll students from all backgrounds with our unique "reverse admissions" model.

Transfer

Facilitate the transfer process and boost enrollment with best-in-class technology and marketing.

Powered by the Leading Student-Facing Platforms



To speak with an expert or schedule a diagnostic conversation, email eabenrollmentcomm@eab.com

Learn more at eab.com/Enroll360



202-747-1000 | eab.com

 @eab  @eab_  @WeAreEAB  @eab.life

ABOUT EAB

At EAB, our mission is to make education smarter and our communities stronger. We work with thousands of institutions to drive transformative change through data-driven insights and best-in-class capabilities. From kindergarten to college to career, EAB partners with leaders and practitioners to accelerate progress and drive results across five major areas: enrollment, student success, institutional strategy, data analytics, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). We work with each partner differently, tailoring our portfolio of research, technology, and marketing and enrollment solutions to meet the unique needs of every leadership team, as well as the students and employees they serve. Learn more at eab.com.