

Blog > All Content > Education

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Making College More Compelling With Augmented Reality Tours

Today's consumers are really excited about using augmented reality and virtual reality headsets to see and experience everything from faraway places to shopping and games, according to new [research](#) from Accenture. Colleges and universities know that teens are the ultimate consumers, and they are capitalizing on this interest by creating visually interesting, 3D tours of their facilities, with the goal of spiking the interest of high schoolers in pursuing enrollment.

To create the most dynamic experiences, many are combining the best of augmented reality—a partially immersive environment that allows users to remain in touch with reality while interacting with virtual objects around them—and virtual reality, a more immersive virtual experience. The reason that's important is that colleges and universities want potential students to remain engaged with those around them as well as what's in front of them.

By creating mixed reality tours of the campus, classrooms, athletic facilities and dorms, colleges and universities can emphasize their strengths to prospective students at college fairs, high school recruitment visits, and other events geared toward potential students. It's also a great way to drive nostalgia in alumnae who might be willing to donate.

Differentiating through immersive tech

For example, a prospective student can put on a pair of 3D smart glasses with motion tracking sensors and immediately find himself in the middle of a college campus, walking along the quad. Looking to the left, the student might see a trio of modern dorms, while up ahead, he might see the Physics building. The student might then virtually walk into the Physics building and explore a lab and a lecture hall. If something sparks his interest, he can zero in on it using a hand gesture. If he wants more information, he might activate the audio feature, or use hand gestures to open a door to a classroom to see what's inside.

Creating immersive AR/VR campus tours is just good business for higher education institutions. In a recent [report](#), Gartner found that a strategic investment in and commitment to these technologies increasingly will become one of the ways campuses will differentiate themselves. It noted that immersive technologies like these “should be on the strategic radar of all CIOs in higher education, regardless of size or type.”

Glasses that allow users to experience virtual and augmented reality have come a long way in the past few years. Today, these fairly lightweight smart glasses have powerful processors, sharp OLED digital displays, motion-tracking sensors and high-resolution cameras, allowing users to experience what they see in 360 degrees.

Smart glasses aren't of much use, however, without rich media content to view. That's where content creation platforms and application developers come in. There are plenty of developers who specialize in creating applications for augmented reality, but it's important that the developer is familiar with the plug-in or Software Development Kit (SDK) for the vendor's hardware.

By using the device plug-in or SDK, developers can create content for the platform that includes functionality like object and image recognition, instant tracking and location-based augmented reality, and can integrate peripherals like positional tracking sensors or natural human interfaces. That's why it's important to choose a hardware vendor that has established relationships with augmented reality application developers experienced with the vendor's plug-ins or SDKs.

When it comes to choosing a college, students have a lot of choices. Finding a way to excite students about your campus no longer requires expensive, time-consuming site visits—unless students want to do so. By offering virtual campus tours that emphasize the most important and exciting aspects of campus life, colleges and universities will have their pick of great candidates.

Learn more about [Epson's products for augmented reality.](#)

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