

TOUR-IST ATTRACTION

Virtual YouVisit Offers a 360-Degree Online Look at UH Campus

BY CHRIS STIPES

"Imagine visiting the University of Houston — all the buildings, labs and popular gathering places that power the Powerhouse — from anywhere in the world."



ow, thanks to virtual reality, you can step inside M.D. Anderson Library or stand on the 50-yard line of TDECU Stadium all from the comfort of your couch. Launched last fall, the YouVisit virtual tour enables prospective students,

alumni and the current UH community to explore campus like never before across all major devices, including desktop,

The easy-to-use YouVisit provides prospective students, alumni and the current UH community a convenient and immersive way to explore campus from anywhere in the world.

mobile and VR headsets. Immersive 360-degree views make it feel as though you're physically there.

Featured prominently on the UH homepage, the narrated tour is split into two segments — a University Tour, which includes the Student Center, athletics facilities and multiple residence halls among its 17 stops, and an Academic Tour, which includes each of our 15 academic colleges and the interdisciplinary Honors College.

"For those of us who know the University well, our striking facilities, amenities and attractive landscaping in the middle of the nation's fourth largest city will come as no surprise. My hope is that our virtual tour will reach new audiences and establish a lasting connection," said Lisa Holdeman, UH vice president of marketing and communications.

So far, that's exactly what's happening.

In just the first month following the tour's launch, more than 10,000 virtual visitors from 91 countries and more than 50 states and territories — California, New York and Florida leading the way — took the tour. Nearly 20% either scheduled an actual campus visit, applied online or requested more information about the University. The new tour, also accessible on the UH Go mobile app and on the YouVisit website, is proving to be a valuable tool for reaching and recruiting new students.

"The virtual tour allows us to make an instant connection by bringing everything our amazing campus has to offer right to a prospective

student's front door. We hope it will spark their interest to come and take an actual tour or even apply," said Mardell Maxwell, executive director of UH admissions. "It expands our reach and engages students here and abroad who perhaps weren't even considering UH, and that's very positive because we have a terrific story to tell."

Led by the Division of University Marketing and
Communications, a virtual tour committee was assembled to

gather input from divisions across campus with a goal of creating an immersive tour with maximum user engagement. The Office of Admissions conducted a detailed focus group report of current and former UH students, staff, alumni and in-state/out-of-state high school counselors to determine what they, and ultimately prospective students, would like to see in a virtual campus tour. Alumni Relations conducted a similar survey. Once the tour destinations were selected, a YouVisit production crew spent several days on campus last fall visiting each location to capture compelling 360-degree panoramic images. The YouVisit platform is trusted by over 600 higher education institutions.

Loaded with a supplemental collection of photos and videos, the tour not only highlights prominent facilities, but also the numerous resources, academic programs and fun facts that make UH a Tier One public research institution. For example, did you know that the Conrad N.

Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management has a one-of-a-kind wine lab or that the College of Optometry is the only U.S. optometry college featuring an on-site surgery center educating students in pre- and post-operative patient care?

That's all in the tour, which is available in English, Spanish, Mandarin and Hindi. But no matter what language is being spoken, the basic message

