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About 14,000 students took the A-level examinations last year and will receive their results today. This is the first of a three-day series on the various tertiary institutions and what they have to offer.

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Besides a two-day open house this weekend, SMU also runs half-day immersion camps for prospective students interested in accountancy and information systems management, allowing them to learn about the programmes through various activities such as games. -- ST PHOTO: DANIEL NEO

Live Facebook chats with university deans, immersion camps that offer prospective students a glimpse of campus life, and pop-up trucks and double-decker buses that ferry student ambassadors to junior colleges islandwide.

In recent years, the six universities here, which offer more than 150 full-time degree programmes in all, are using novel ways to stand out from one another and get students to pick them.

Competition for the best students has heated up, with the opening of Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) in 2010, and Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) a year later.

Past marketing efforts centred on open houses, information talks, workshops, and advertisements in newspapers and at bus stops and MRT stations.

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Singapore Management University (SMU), for instance, will introduce a series of live chats on Facebook later this month for prospective students to interact with its deans and undergraduates.

Besides a two-day open house this weekend, the university also runs half-day immersion camps for those interested in accountancy and information systems management, allowing them to learn about the programmes through various activities such as games. On Saturday, more than 30 junior college students participated in the second systems management camp.

Mr Alan Goh, vice-president of corporate communications and marketing at SMU, said: "The notion of promoting a university in the traditional way needs to change. The new age and new rage lie in engaging prospective students and their parents intimately."

At SUTD, about 150 undergraduates travelled to nine high schools and junior colleges on pop-up trucks and double-decker buses in January to promote its programmes. At each college, the students manned booths displaying their innovations, such as electric vehicles, and held workshops in areas such as the making of silkscreen prints.

Ms Corinna Choong, SUTD's senior director of marketing and communications, noted: "As a young university, we need to raise awareness of how our programmes are taught differently."

In recent years, publicity initiatives also focus on social media outlets, such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram.

Nanyang Technological University (NTU), for example, produced a 45-second video in which a student takes viewers around the campus.

It has garnered 31,000 views since its release in January.

Professor Kam Chan Hin, its senior associate provost of undergraduate education, said: "There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to coming up with activities to reach out to students. With students these days being more tech-savvy, we need to rely on social media platforms.

"At the same time, conventional methods like open houses are still relevant, so students can tour the university.

"Filling up the places is not an issue, but we do want to get a fair share of the best students."

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