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# Niagara University Administrator Trends On Twitter

March 14, 2014 | by Michael Freedman

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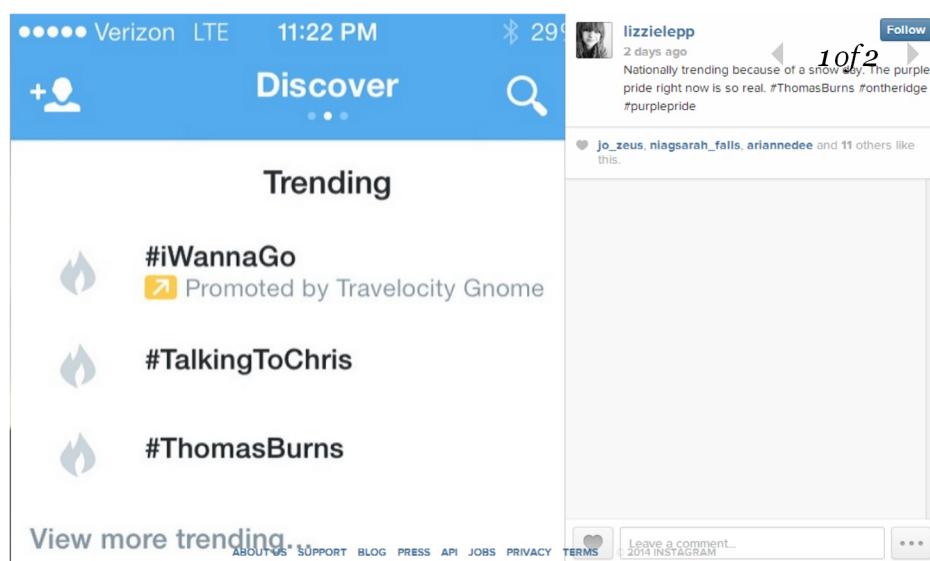
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What began as a routine class cancellation notice Wednesday evening quickly escalated into a [Twitter](#) (<http://www.twitter.com>) “trend.”

Niagara University students, upon receiving an email informing them that all daytime classes would be canceled the next day to allow for campus snow removal, took to the social networking site to thank the person whose name accompanied the notification.

Tom Burns, NU's associate vice president for communications, sent the email at 10:04 p.m. By just after 11 p.m., the hashtag #ThomasBurns was an international trending topic on Twitter, a designation typically reserved for major world events (e.g. Boston Marathon bombings) and pop culture icons (e.g. Justin Bieber, Kim Kardashian, etc.).

According to Twitter, "Trends are automatically generated by an algorithm that attempts to identify topics that are being talked about more right now than they were previously. The Trends list is designed to help people discover the 'most breaking' breaking news from across the world, in real-time. The Trends list captures the hottest emerging topics, not just what's most popular."

The #ThomasBurns hashtag has been included in more than 4,400 tweets, according to [Topsy](http://www.topsy.com) (<http://www.topsy.com>), and made its way into the snow outside of O'Shea Hall.

The messages began with expressions of gratitude:

*Snow day classes cancelled -NU put students safety first – hats off no I mean hats on mittens on boots on TB right on #ThomasBurns*  
<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23ThomasBurns&src=hash>

*– pennyforyourthoughts (@pennyforyourth2)  
March 13, 2014 (<https://twitter.com/pennyforyourth2/statuses/444100154899972096>)*

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*These #ThomasBurns (<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23ThomasBurns&src=hash>) tweets are making my night. Reasons why I love going to NU #purplepride (<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23purplepride&src=hash>)*

— Lizzy Kern (@lizzzyKORN) March 13, 2014 (<https://twitter.com/lizzzyKORN/statuses/443972616333066240>)

As the night went on, they became increasingly imaginative:

*#ThomasBurns (<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23ThomasBurns&src=hash>) rides a unicorn to work. #justnottomorrow (<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23justnottomorrow&src=hash>)*

— Bradeen Walders (@bradeenwalders) March 13, 2014 (<https://twitter.com/bradeenwalders/statuses/443968863894376448>)

*Royal British guards break their silence for #thomasburns (<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23thomasburns&src=hash>) — Sebastian Mallein (@DxeSeaBass) March 13, 2014 (<https://twitter.com/DxeSeaBass/statuses/444169123267092480>)*



Monteagle Ridge (<http://news.niagara.edu/nu-welcomes-students-back-to-monteagle-ridge/>) September 7, 2013



Niagara University Professor Teaching Students History 140 Characters at a Time (<http://news.niagara.edu/niagara-university-professor-teaching-students-history-140-characters-at-a-time/>) September 12, 2011



Niagara University Holds Grand Opening Celebration for Tim Hortons (<http://news.niagara.edu/niagara-university-holds-grand-opening-celebration-for-tim-hortons/>) April 1, 2011

*So my university got #ThomasBurns  
(<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23ThomasBurns&src=hash>)  
trending internationally. I don't know if I should  
be proud or scared.*

— James | StarsKri (@StarzKri) March 13, 2014  
(<https://twitter.com/StarzKri/statuses/443971585733832704>)

Burns' photo was inserted onto images of the Statue of Liberty and a \$100 bill.

Even students from other colleges were compelled to join the fun.

*Seriously resisting the urge to retweet  
#ThomasBurns (<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23ThomasBurns&src=hash>) tweets  
because I don't go to NU but they're gold*

— Erika Zambotti (@erika\_zam27) March 13, 2014  
([https://twitter.com/erika\\_zam27/statuses/443958287944257536](https://twitter.com/erika_zam27/statuses/443958287944257536))

Earning a spot on Twitter's trending list, however, is no laughing matter. Multinational companies hire consultants to help them land there as a way to get their brands in front of millions of people.

In fact, last fall, the microblogging website began selling "Promoted Trends" as a way to generate revenue around its initial IPO in November. CNBC reported (<http://www.cnbc.com/id/101032604>) that Twitter has asked brands to "pay \$200,000 a day in the U.S. if they want to feature a trend – usually a hashtag – of their choice."



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March 9, 2011

For Niagara University, all it took was a snow day.

“This is really another great example of the power presented by social media,” said Michael Freedman, NU’s associate director of public relations and manager of online content. “Whereas not long ago, the opportunity to reach a large number of people was only available through traditional media, determined groups of individuals can now get their messages to the masses in other ways. We’ve seen it used whimsically, as was the case here, and we’ve seen it used in times of tragedy, like in Boston last April. Whether or not you embrace it, social media has become a form of mainstream media.”

Niagara University maintains an active presence on Twitter. Its primary account, [@NiagaraUniv](https://twitter.com/NiagaraUniv) (<https://twitter.com/NiagaraUniv>), has more than 4,200 followers.

• *JRS*

Awesome. So proud. #classof83

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<http://www.purpleeagles.com>

Education

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