LinkedIn recently launched its "Campus Initiative" (also known as #StudentVoices) to encourage university students to utilize the blog feature of LinkedIn. I have found this to be an excellent tool for the classroom and wanted to share my experience as I would suspect others may take an interest.

- I instruct MBA 292C-1 "Strategic & Sustainable Business Solutions" in which students are encouraged to engage with - and help shape - the ongoing discussions and debates about the role of business in society. I have come to find the LinkedIn blogging platform is excellent for this. As part of this course, students write a series of relatively short response pieces to questions like "What is the purpose of business?" or "What is your take on Michael Porter's concept of creating shared value?" Beginning this semester, I have asked the students to submit their responses as LinkedIn blog pieces. At the end of their submission, they include #StudentVoices @BerkeleyHaas #MBA292C so students and I can readily find and read everyone’s contribution. Moreover, the LinkedIn editorial team actively monitors all posts with #StudentVoices and they promote those they deem as particularly good. This leads to very high volumes of views for some of the student posts.

- In addition to high numbers of views, the students are also receiving a high volume of comments from other people on LinkedIn. Some of the student posts have garnered a few thousand views and a large number of very interesting (and provoking) comments. We bring these comments into the classroom for further discussion. This has put the students square at the center of the discussions and debates. Some examples of my student posts (with comments at the bottom) are:

  - "Misunderstanding Milton Friedman" by Sonya Hetrick, 2nd year Haas MBA
  - "Why I Left the Public Sector in Pursuit of Social Impact" Sydney Thomas, 2nd year Haas MBA
  - "Corporate Social Responsibility: From Silo to Systems Thinking" Megan Wong, 2nd year Haas MBA

- I also post my writing to LinkedIn and I bring comments and criticisms that I personally receive into the classroom for discussion. As example, I received over 7000 views for a blog piece I wrote about the subject of yesterday's class session focusing on benchmarking leading sustainability activities around the world with a number of positive and very critical comments. The comments and criticisms served as excellent fodder for the classroom.

- Students are also beginning to realize the opportunities this presents for their career search. Haas undergrad Tai Tran was named a Forbes 30 under 30 thanks to his influence blogging on LinkedIn. His post #RaceTogether: 3 Reasons Behind Starbucks' Failure went viral and Apple took note. Tai now landed a great job with Apple. Note: I have found very few undergrads have reservations about writing and posting to LinkedIn. Some of my MBAs expressed concern about posting to a public forum (eg. fear that a potential employer would disagree with a post) where I had to provide a private alternative. I have a hunch such reservations will dissipate as time goes on.

- It is very easy to begin using as it just requires students to have a (free) LinkedIn account. LinkedIn also has a good resource in Maya Pope-Chappell (mpopechappell@linkedin.com) who leads the Campus Initiative effort. I am also very happy to discuss further with anyone who may be interested. I feel this is a great tool for the classroom while helping to raise the profile of our wonderful students.
If you would like to read more posts, search on #StudentVoices @BerkeleyHaas #MBA292C as shown in the screenshot below:

My best,

Robert