



Laura A. Wankel
Charles Wankel

Higher Education Administration with Social Media

Including Applications in Student Affairs,
Enrollment Management, Alumni Relations,
and Career Centers

CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGIES
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

HIGHER EDUCATION
ADMINISTRATION WITH SOCIAL
MEDIA: INCLUDING
APPLICATIONS IN STUDENT
AFFAIRS, ENROLLMENT
MANAGEMENT, ALUMNI
RELATIONS, AND CAREER
CENTERS

CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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VOLUME 2

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ADMINISTRATION WITH SOCIAL
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ALUMNI RELATIONS, AND CAREER
CENTERS**

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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CONNECTING ON CAMPUS WITH NEW MEDIA: INTRODUCTION TO HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Since the advent of the digital campus, numerous changes have occurred. In early developments, we were able to improve efficiencies and eliminate the need for human intervention to conduct routine activities. The power of processing massive amounts of data moved from mainframes to desktops and mobile computers. The transition to a ubiquitous computing environment was a relatively quick transition and one that has had a profound impact on the work we do and the way we do it. The presence of information technology has actually transformed the teaching, learning, and administrative environment in post-secondary education world-wide.

These technologies have not only revolutionized data processing and administrative tasks but also created new forms of interpersonal communication. The opportunity to connect and be connected has forged new frontiers in the development and transference of knowledge. Additionally, the emergence of social media technologies has brought an exciting new wave of innovation and opportunity to educators and administrators across the university campus. Leveraging these new forms of technology to communicate, market, inform and further the achievement of institutional goals is opening new venues within which universities can explore and innovate.

In addition to providing essential services, developing community has long been a fundamental element of university life programs. The potential opportunity to enhance university life and community development through the creative and effective implementation of social media technologies is an important and emerging phenomenon. Social media initiatives and activity are transforming the very nature of collegiate life.

As with all emerging technologies, an initial phase that seems chaotic will eventually give way to more integrated and mainstream applications. Consideration for the educational applications, efficiencies, and community development opportunities that attach to the leveraging and integration of social media technology is an important area for innovation and study. In the chapters that follow an overview of the diversity of applications of social media across multiple university-based functions will provide a mosaic of creativity and innovation in action.

In Chapter 2, “Hybrid Engagement: How Facebook Helps and Hinders Students’ Social Integration,” Bree McEwan examines the role of Facebook and other social networking sites (SNSs) in providing students with new ways to become socially integrated within a campus community. Considering the implications for social engagement that websites like Facebook provide is important for student affairs professionals because research has shown that the social adjustment of students within college communities is correlated with student retention rates. Understanding the potential of SNSs is an important consideration for student affairs professionals charged with the responsibility of fostering campus climates that support engagement and success. Monitoring the potential pitfalls and limitations that these SNSs may present in hindering social integration, the development of effective interpersonal communication skills and the development of meaningful friendships is also considered. McEwan also presents information pertaining to the current utilization patterns of SNSs of traditional and non-traditional students. Understanding the ways that students utilize social networking to form connections with resources and others will help guide practitioners in adapting programs and understanding the role of SNSs in the social integration of students on campus.

In Chapter 3, “Social Media for Social Research: Applications for Higher Education Communications,” Nicolle Merrill presents and tests new methods for conducting research on the use of social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook in outreach activities across universities in the United States. The author argues that despite the increase in utilization of these tools, the availability of information that identifies and validates best practices in higher education remain sparse. Merrill presents the case that digital ethnographic methods should be incorporated into the higher education researcher’s toolkit. Merrill conducted an exploratory online survey utilizing Twitter and LinkedIn to gather data on the use of social media in international higher education recruiting and outreach. The survey sought information on which social media tools were being used by university staff, the perceived benefits and drawbacks of social media use in

international recruiting and outreach, and how universities measured social media for international recruiting purposes. Using a digital ethnographic approach, Merrill gathered relevant, timely data from international higher education professionals and gained insight into the norms, rules and workings of social networking communities. Results point to new methods for understanding the evolution of higher education communications for researchers and university staff alike. Data from the exploratory study of international higher education communications are presented as an example of the rich amount of data obtained through this approach.

In Chapter 4, “Social Media Use by Enrollment Management,” Phillip Griffiths and Anthony Wall investigate two different uses of SNSs within the same higher education institution (the University of Ulster). While both were primarily focussed on retention, one SNS attempted to communicate with students whilst they were still making their choices about where and what to study, whereas the second aimed to create a medium for students to interact with one another before arriving at university. The chapter first outlines the theory behind SNSs before highlighting both the rationale behind the decision to use them and the experience of both users. It then describes how lessons learnt led to changes being made in the following year, both in the way the sites were managed and changes to the SNSs used. The authors found that the creation of a dedicated SNS needs to be carefully planned, designed, disseminated, and monitored. Project managers need to closely monitor progress on all activities throughout the life-cycle of a project to ensure its success. Additionally, since the potential for inappropriate postings and cyberbullying exists, policies and guidelines for dealing with inappropriateness need to be considered. The authors recognize the potential and widening accessibility of SNS applications and see value in encouraging their use as a learning/reflecting tool; they are less certain that students will adopt university-sponsored SNSs as a means to find and prepare themselves for a course at the university.

In Chapter 5, “Second Life: The Future of Education is Here Today,” P. Charles Livermore discusses the value of Second Life (SL) as an educational tool that he argues will be increasingly utilized for the education of students at all levels. He believes that the use of virtual environments are destined for expanded use as a result of the growth in online and distance education in both high school and post secondary education, the relationship between SL and games or gaming along with the interest of college students in gaming; the similarity between education and the problem-solving nature of games, the transition and sophistication of computers from simply being a “tool” to that of “team member,” and the increase in

online databases and decline of physical use of libraries. The author describes how one might participate in SL, how he conducts library sessions with students, identifies multiple sites that are available to educators in SL and argues for the expansion of adoption of SL by educators. The author provides a vivid description of islands, avatars, SL sites and experiences using SL in instruction. The author concludes that SL offers an excellent opportunity for today's educator to experiment with the future.

In Chapter 6, "Mentoring 2.0: High-Tech/High-Touch Approaches to Foster Student Support and Development in Higher Education," Melanie Booth and Arthur Esposito argue that Web 2.0 technologies are resulting in great shifts to networks from institutions, out of vertical structuring into horizontal structures, from bureaucracy to individual judgment, from centralization to decentralization, and from constrained territories to working with the world. Considering how these shifts apply to their experiences advising and mentoring students in higher education, they do not think it is a stretch to say that when these technologies are employed thoughtfully and strategically these shifts likely do occur in particular ways and can, in fact, facilitate student support, development, and learning in new ways. Though they use a variety of social media applications to facilitate their practice as mentors and advisors, they acknowledge concerns about technology and information overload yet value the solutions that technology provides for community in the time of globalization.

In Chapter 7 "Learning Together: Using Social Media to Foster Collaboration in Higher Education," Neil Ford, Melissa Bowden, and Jill Beard focus on how social media tools can be used to enhance collaboration in higher education and the benefits and challenges that this can bring. They investigated how two social media tools, social bookmarking and microblogging, can be utilized to foster collaboration and determine why this is important in contemporary higher education. Case studies of social media use at Bournemouth University show how social bookmarking and microblogging have already yielded benefits.

The case studies are grounded in the challenges facing higher education in 2010. They explore how social media has been used in the context of a need to enhance academic excellence and drive efficiencies in the face of funding constraints and changing demographics. The case studies illustrate: first, how social bookmarking has been used to foster group cohesion, reflective practice and evaluative skills in students, as well as being used at an institutional level to drive professional and administrative efficiencies; and second, how microblogging has made a difference in promoting reflective learning, group cohesion, and professional awareness in students and how

this style of social networking has contributed to enhancing academic and professional networks. While the tools, uses, and stakeholders vary, the case studies show how social media has enabled collaboration between, students, academics, librarians, learning technologists, and even professional groups beyond the institution. They conclude that, when used appropriately, social media can facilitate the collaboration that will be essential to overcoming the challenges facing higher education.

In Chapter 8, “Using Social Media in Study Abroad,” Penny Schouten discusses how NAFSA: Association of International Educators recognizes that their membership needs training in technology and social media. The author asserts that social media helps international educators and study abroad service providers do their job more effectively and efficiently. She provides evidence that social media helps to keep advisors up-to-date with world events with immediate news reporting, and lowers advertising costs. Schouten describes how using social media can reduce time spent on general inquiries, increase an advisor’s access to industry experts and resources, strengthen relationships among partnered institutions abroad, reduce travel costs, and facilitate fundraising efforts by cultivating donor groups.

The author argues that social media and study abroad programs share the commonalities of connecting the world, and being able to share and unite across cultures and continents. Schouten concludes that as technology continues to evolve, study abroad professionals will need to adapt to effectively deploy these technologies and, in so doing, are much like their students studying in foreign countries who must adapt and evolve in their newly adopted cultures and environments.

In Chapter 9, “Using Social Networking Sites during the Career Management Process,” Nancy Richmond, Beth Rochefort, and Leslie Hitch describe how higher education professionals and college students can use SNSs and technology to manage their careers. Recognizing that individuals can expect to change careers several times in a lifetime, they point out the importance and role of social networks as a central component to the career management process. They discuss how individuals’ communication and interactions on SNSs plays an important role in one’s career development. The authors examine SNSs as an important resource in exploring career options, learning, networking, searching for jobs, professional development, and making career decisions. They also discuss the importance of maintaining a professional image online. A model is presented on using SNSs to gather information and feedback during the career management process. Scenarios and examples are provided from higher educational professionals, hiring managers, college students, job

seekers, and career changers. The chapter envisions the future of career management specific to higher education and addresses how higher education career advisors can respond to SNSs and technology.

In Chapter 10, “Amplification and Analysis of Academic Events through Social Media: A Case Study of the 2009 Beyond the Repository Fringe Event,” Nicola Osborne provides an overview of the use of social media tools across higher education describing how Twitter hashtags, live blogs, Facebook events, and Flickr groups are becoming a regular feature of academic conferences and events. Osborne reflects on the experience of planning, moderating and analyzing social media amplification of the 2009 “Beyond the Repository Fringe” event organized by EDINA, the Digital Curation Centre (DCC) and the University of Edinburgh School of Informatics. The author describes how this “unconference format” with a physical audience of approximately 90 individuals was broadened through online participation with colleagues, peers, and interested onlookers accessing live coverage of the event through Twitter, CoverItLive, a live blog, an event Wiki, video feeds, and a Flickr pool. Osborne, based on this experience, raises several important issues regarding social media usage and provides a series of practical guidelines for planning amplification of higher education events.

In Chapter 11, “Connecting Fans and Sports More Intensively through Social Media,” Karen Weaver discusses strategies used by contemporary intercollegiate athletics programs to promote their teams. Weaver provides an understanding of the use of social media to engage fans, stakeholders, prospective student athletes, and donors in the high stakes game of revenue generation. She guides the reader to understand the evolution of social media as it applies to athletics external relations. Weaver’s analysis includes the leveraging of video technology across multiple “platforms” – television, broadband, and mobile applications – and demonstrates how these allow departments to deepen the ties between fans and teams.

In Chapter 12, “Engaging Alumni and Prospective Students through Social Media,” Eric Kowalik argues that the Web is changing the focus of modern advertising, which for many years was focused on drawing associations from the physical qualities of products to the unfulfilled yearnings of potential customers. The author asserts that although emotion continues to play an important role in marketing, the web has created a new type of customer who is becoming immune to the hard sell of traditional marketing. In fact Kowalik states that if you need to sell it, it may not be worth buying. He goes on to say that Web, blogs and social media have enabled a customer revolt. The Web is a more rational space and it thrives in open, questioning cultures.

The author discusses that according to McGovern, a new type of customer is emerging. This customer is less emotional and more rational. This customer does not believe in blind faith. They are on the Web to research, compare, to find out for themselves what they need to know to make a rational, rather than an emotional choice. Kowalik urges that the modern customer should be treated as an inquisitive stranger to achieve marketing success. Consequently, marketing one's institution should focus on engaging with the customer and showing them the desirable products, services and/or experiences that connect to the university. Through the use of "The Conversation Prism," created by Brian Solis, the author represents the evolution of social media's multiple channels as they emerge, fuse and dissipate conversation. Kowalik describes how social networks can be used to build trust and relationships. He discusses how recognizing that one's message exists within a larger ecosystem that is often beyond control.

In Chapter 13, "Am I Invited? Social Media and Alumni Relations," Heather M. Makrez focuses on the initial implementation of social media as it pertains to alumni relations, along with the relevance it plays within the advancement world. Makrez discusses social media strategies that are a creative and powerful way to connect, educate, and energize those interested in the university. The author describes how this technology and related change in interpersonal behavior allow us the capabilities to create a complex, tightly-woven, and diverse university community – a hotbed for innovative ideas, energetic conversation and practical networking. This chapter outlines the implementation of social media initiatives for someone at any comfort level. It explores the societal norms and beliefs that need to be institutionalized before one can be truly successful in implementing a strategic investment of time, money and brainpower. The chapter discusses the experimental uses of social media within the context of a diverse alumni community – which connects seamlessly to emerging campus-wide initiatives. It will challenge the reader to think out-of-the-box when it comes to finding an answer that suits their specific institutional goals. The author hopes to inspire a creative, fun, innovative and interactive flow of ideas, along with the courage to try new things. Be bold. Be brave. Be here. Yes, you are definitely invited!

In Chapter 14, "Twitter in Higher Education: From Application to Alumni Relations," Jon Hussey provides an understanding of the rapid growth of Twitter use as a marketing tool or means to communicate directly with prospective and current students as well as alumni. This chapter provides a broad outline on what Twitter is, how it can be used in higher education, and how some professionals are already using it. Hussey walks

you through the unique opportunities for engagement that Twitter offers and how to build a university-wide Twitter strategy to successfully develop relationships in all aspects of university life.

Twitter use in higher education is not going away, and the 30.7 percent of higher education professionals using Twitter are the trendsetters leading a new era of real-time, interactive communication. They may have started a university Twitter account a couple of years ago to test the waters and explore its uses. When they started, Twitter – or social media in general – was probably not part of their job description. Today, universities are following the success of businesses like Comcast – which has 10 employees dedicated to social media – by adding social media skills to job requirements and recreating Web sites to include social media plugins and Twitter landing pages. As more higher education professionals begin to see the value of Twitter, so do the 300,000 people joining the service daily. Hussey discusses the continued growth and evolution of Twitter as it continues to meet the demand and needs of new users with expanded features and better usability. He asserts that ongoing development make Twitter easier to use, easier to understand, and more effective as a business and communications tool. More importantly, he describes that Twitter's success is linked to its accessibility and that it enables everyone in a higher education community – students, faculty, alumni, and staff from every office across campus – to *act*, *interact*, and develop a community.

Implementing the use of a new networking technology, whether it be through Google Apps, Skype, or other Web 2.0 platforms can be a learning experience whether or not a full-blown initial success. It is incumbent upon members of our university communities to arrive in the future by taking the path to it. That path includes the use of social media with their sustainability, cost, agility, and range. Indeed it will become increasingly impossible to be competitive while using the communications media of the past.

Laura A. Wankel
Charles Wankel
Editors

PART I
SOCIAL MEDIA AND
ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

HYBRID ENGAGEMENT: HOW FACEBOOK HELPS AND HINDERS STUDENTS' SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Bree McEwan

ABSTRACT

The social integration of students within a campus community is vital in enhancing their college experiences. Researchers have sought to determine how best to promote successful social integration for university students. Traditionally, on-campus orientations and residence hall activities have been used to foster student social integration. However, Facebook and other social networking sites (SNSs) can be used for social integration among students in ways that were never before possible. It is important that student-affairs professionals explore the supportive roles for this that SNSs like Facebook might play, since successful student adjustment within a campus is positively correlated with student retention rates.

College students are already using Facebook to bolster their social networks within the university, but it is worth considering the advantages and disadvantages of promoting the use of SNSs for social integration. Facebook is favored because it offers low levels of self-disclosure in social interactions, it increases the social capital of the university, and it offers students with a unique means of acquiring academic support from both

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their professors and their peers. Unfortunately, extensive Facebook use can also create a social skills deficit in students, lead students to experience information overload, and cause them to shirk their academic responsibilities.

Facebook is neither a panacea for student engagement nor a signal of the end of meaningful interpersonal connections on campus. Student-affairs professionals should become aware of the ways that students engage with SNSs to leverage opportunities for furthering student integration while remaining aware of the limitations for community building that SNSs present.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education researchers and practitioners have spent considerable effort researching and implementing strategies to facilitate students' social integration (Astin, 1993; Bean, 1990; Christie & Dinham, 1991; Skahill, 2003; Stoecker, Pascarella, & Wolfe, 1988; Thomas, 2000; Titus, 2004; Tinto, 1993, 2000). Successful social integration requires students to create and maintain university-affiliated social relationships. Traditional means used by students to build their social networks include activities such as befriending residence hall mates or joining campus organizations. However, the internet- and computer-mediated communication technology provides modern students new ways to build social networks. Students can create and maintain university-affiliated connections by communicating via online social media websites such as MySpace, Twitter, and of course, Facebook. These types of social media allow students to post information about themselves and interact with "friends" who have also created profiles. Social media has allowed the university social community to become what Aleman and Wartman (2009) term a "hybrid environment" meaning that students are able to interact with their social networks both on- and offline (p. 50). Social media websites provide a unique opportunity for students to connect with multiple, intersecting social networks. Students could potentially "friend" new university classmates, roommates, fellow campus organization members, as well as family members and high school friends.

Social networking sites also create new challenges and potential pitfalls for student engagement professionals. Websites such as Facebook may help students engage in relationship-building communication, increase social

capital, and provide increased access to academic resources. However, such sites may also contribute to a diminished communication skill, information overload, problems associated with disconnecting from the pre-university network, and decreased academic performance.

SOCIAL INTEGRATION, ADJUSTMENT, AND UNIVERSITY RETENTION

An important concern for educators is how students adjust academically to the university. Academic adjustment is certainly a critical part of adapting to the university environment. Furthermore, academic advancement should be the primary goal of any higher educational experience. However, for students to be able to achieve academically they must also socially adjust to the university community (Giannini, Hamilton, & Spitzberg, 2007). Researchers have found that student social integration into the university community plays a large role in student retention. Higher education researchers have defined retention as whether students persist at a particular university until graduation (Astin, 1993; Berger & Milem, 1999; Hays & Oxley, 1986; Napoli & Wortman, 1998; Skahill, 2003; Tinto, 2000; Titus, 2004). Lack of student retention is a widespread problem for higher education. Nationally, more students leave their first higher education institution before degree completion than those who persist (Carey, 2005; Tinto, 1993). Statistics collected by American College Testing Programs (2009) indicate that 55% of college students leave their institution before receiving a degree. Although some students are forced to leave the university due to academic failure, Tinto (1993) found that over 75% of students who leave do so voluntarily and for nonacademic reasons. It seems, as Bean (1990) argued, “the social environment is crucial to forming the attitudes associated with fitting into and staying enrolled in school” (p. 160).

Social adjustment is a particular concern for students who are new to the university and for the student affairs professionals who care about such students’ ability to succeed. Research has found that social adjustment may help students cope even better with their new university life than academic adjustment (Giannini et al., 2007). First year students face the challenge of breaking away from their pre-university social network and establishing a new university-affiliated network (Paul & Brier, 2001). The friendships that make up a student’s university-affiliated social network are critically important for their adjustment to the university (Chapman & Pascarella, 1983). These friendships can provide the resources students depend

on to remain engaged in university life and persist until graduation (Grant-Vallone, Reid, Umali, & Pohlert, 2003–2004; Samter, Whaley, Mortenson, & Burlison, 1997; Skahill, 2003; Thomas, 2000).

One concept that helps illuminate how students utilize social network connections to adjust to the university is the idea of social capital. Social capital refers to resources individuals perceive are available through their network of acquaintances (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). Putnam further delineated social capital as two distinct types; bridging and bonding social capital. Bridging social capital refers to accruing resources from individuals with whom one shares a loose social connection. These loose connections are also termed weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). Bonding social capital refers to resources that are available from close relationships such as family or close friends. Student affairs professionals interested in freshmen adaptation and integration into the university environment should be particularly interested in bridging social capital. As freshmen come into the university, their initial connections are likely to be weak ties. The resources available from these weak ties may drive how connected freshmen feel to the university community. These feelings of connectivity may in turn drive freshmen persistence and success.

Previous research on university retention has examined a variety of ways that students build social capital offline. Student engagement studies have found a wide range of social capital building behaviors to be correlated with institutional commitment and retention. These behaviors include joining student organizations (Tinto, 1993; Titus, 2004), interacting with peers (Astin, 1993; Berger & Milem, 1999; Grant-Vallone et al., 2003–2004), work-study (Tinto, 1993), participating in extra- and co-curricular activities (Tinto, 1975; Stoecker et al., 1988), creating study groups (Titus, 2004), attending religious services (Astin, 1993), and engagement with other types of student affairs programming (Stoecker et al., 1988).

Similarly, retention scholars have found that the availability of social support or social capital from one's social network is also related to university retention. Social network variables found to be related to retention include the size of a student's social network (Hays & Oxley, 1986; Skahill, 2003), social network structures (Thomas, 2000), types of friendships (Bean, 1990), and availability of social support (Napoli & Wortman, 1998). Other research has examined students' perceptions of their own sense of belonging (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007), feelings of social integration (Napoli & Wortman, 1998), feelings of a sense of congruence with campus values and norms (Berger & Milem, 1999), and sensing an available student community (Astin, 1993).

The earlier variables are useful for examining how today's college students engage with the university community. However, modern students have a new world of technology at their fingertips. Communication technologies can further students' ability to engage in specific behaviors related to retention, maintain their social network, and also increase their sense of belonging and community. Students can find student organizations, peers, and extra-curricular activities using message boards and social networking sites. They can utilize email, instant messaging, chat services and social networking sites in order to form, build, and maintain both their university-affiliated and external social network. These activities may in turn lead to greater feelings of university integration. Social networking sites provide students with a variety of the communication tools listed earlier. Students can use these websites, to form groups, send private messages that are similar to email, engage in one-on-one chat, as well as post public messages to other students' profiles. Currently, one of the most popular websites students use to manage their social networks is Facebook. The remainder of this chapter focuses specifically on college students' use of Facebook and how the popular social networking site may contribute and detract from social engagement.

COLLEGE STUDENTS AND FACEBOOK

More and more college students are turning to social network sites to help them build and maintain friendship networks (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). Boyd and Ellison (2007) defined social network sites as:

Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (p. 1)

As stated earlier, one of the most popular social network sites for today's college student is Facebook.com. Facebook meets all of Boyd and Ellison's criteria for social networking sites. Individuals on Facebook construct a profile using Facebook's standardized template. Although users can set privacy settings (and some research suggests that students are becoming more savvy in regard to privacy settings; Lenhart et al., 2010), their profiles are generally open to their selected list of friends. These "friends" are the list of others with whom the user has chosen to share a connection. Users may seek out "friends" by searching for a specific person or by browsing categories. Facebook will also suggest possible new friends based on the

networks of users' current friends. Finally, students can share information about their extended peer network (Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2008). Through Facebook, individuals can view friends of friends and depending on privacy settings click through to those individuals' profiles and pictures.

Mark Zuckerberg founded the Facebook.com in 2004 as a way for students at Harvard University to connect with each other online. By May 2005, Facebook.com supported 800 different college networks. In 2006, Facebook began to allow nonuniversity-based users. Today, Facebook has 500 million international users from both university and noneducational networks. The average user has approximately 130 friends and spends about 55 min a day on Facebook (www.facebook.com/facebook).

Students could use Facebook and other social networking sites to connect with individuals anywhere in the world. In reality, they tend to use social networking sites to keep track of their current social network. Rather than supporting purely online relationships, Facebook may be another way that students attempt to build and maintain their offline social networks to fulfill their need for companionship (McMillan & Morrison, 2008; Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008). Thompson (2008) argued that individuals use Facebook to connect with people with whom they already share proximity. Several other researchers have also found that people use Facebook primarily to communicate with individuals whom they already know offline (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Joinson, 2008; Lampe et al., 2008; McMillan & Morrison, 2008). However, there seems to be two specific types of relationships young adults have with those they add to their Facebook friend list. One, they add people who they already know well. Second, young adults add contacts that they have recently met and think that they may wish to interact with more in the future (Bryant & Marmo, in press; Lampe et al., 2008). Lampe, Ellison, and Steinfield (2006) termed this activity social searching. Social searching refers to using Facebook to keep track of people one already knows offline. Social searching is in contrast to Lampe et al.'s (2006) term social browsing. Social browsing involves attempting to form online connections to people whom one does not already know. Lampe et al. (2006) found that first year students were more likely to use Facebook for social searching than social browsing. Students rarely report using Facebook to find new friends whom they have never met offline (Lampe et al., 2008; Subrahmanyam et al., 2008).

Facebook use appears to be nearly ubiquitous on college campuses (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008; Lampe et al., 2008). Although in the not-too-distant past freshmen might not have become aware of Facebook until they

reached the college campus (Lampe et al., 2006), today's freshmen typically enter the university already aware of and comfortable with use of social networking sites. A report by the Pew Research Center found that 73% of American teenagers with internet access already use social networking websites (Lenhart et al., 2010). Young adults simply continue this use in the college environment. Seventy-two percent of young adults aged 18–29 use social networking sites and 45% of young adults aged 18–29 visit a social networking site at least once on a typical day (Lenhart et al., 2010). Data collected by the Higher Education Research Institute in 2007 showed that 94% of first year students had spent some time on a social networking site and that most students spent between 1 and 5 h a day on such sites. Other recent studies show a similar rate of use. For example, Lampe et al. (2008) found 96% of Michigan State University students reported they were Facebook users. Lampe et al. also found that Michigan State students spent an average of 82 min a day on Facebook. Barkhaus and Tashiro's (2010) participants reported accessing Facebook anywhere from once to 20 times per day (5.3 times per day on average). A majority of Joinson's (2008) participants reported visiting the site at least once a day and also spent between 1 and 5 h on Facebook. The amount of time that students spend on Facebook may increase even more as the availability of online access increases. These days students are able to access Facebook continually throughout the day not only through stationary desktop computers, but also via laptops, and increasingly their mobile phones (Thompson, 2008).

Facebook seems to be particularly important for students just joining the university. Researchers have found that freshmen and sophomores tend to use Facebook more than upperclassmen (Aleman and Wartman, 2009; Ellison et al., 2007; Lampe et al., 2008). Other studies have also found that younger students have heavier Facebook use than older students (Joinson, 2008). One explanation for this effect is that younger students may be more comfortable with adopting social network technology. However, given that Facebook's spike in popularity is approximately 2007 (when today's seniors, Class of 2011, were freshmen) an alternative explanation for this effect might be that Facebook is particularly important for students who are in the process of growing their university-affiliated social network. Once these networks stabilize students may become less dependent on social network sites.

In fact, Facebook may be just one strategy that freshmen use in order to build their social networks. The Higher Education Research Institute (2007) found that the more time students spent on Facebook the more likely they were to report partying and alcohol consumption. It is likely that

this correlation is spurious with neither Facebook use driving alcohol consumption nor partying driving Facebook use. Rather these activities may all be strategies that students use to try to engage with their university peers. Although parents and educators might frown on students engaging in any of these activities, Astin (1993) found that both attending parties and alcohol consumption were positively related to university retention. It may be that students who possess the time to invest in developing a rewarding and diverse social network are more likely to spend a considerable amount of time engaging in a variety of social strategies.

The research reviewed above investigating Facebook usage suggests that college students are indeed using Facebook as a strategy to build and maintain social networks. However, the question remains, Is such a strategy a productive one? Throughout the history of the expansion of communication technologies, scholars have expressed fears that improvements in technology would weaken interpersonal contact and community (see Hampton & Wellman, 2003 for a review). Such fears include that online interaction will prevent people from engaging in the “real” community and that Internet driven or supported communities are not as meaningful as offline connections. Bugeja (2005) also argued strongly that electronic communication might complicate relationships and prevent us from truly connecting with others. However, others (including Hampton & Wellman) have argued that communication technologies may help bring people closer together. It is likely that student use of social networking sites might both facilitate campus engagement as well as detract from the student experience, and ultimately retention and persistence rates.

FACEBOOK FACILITATION OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Student affairs professionals know that students’ social integration is crucial for their success at any institution of higher learning. Facebook and other social networking sites provide a rich opportunity for students to form and maintain the network connections that may lead to greater social integration. In order to fully capitalize on the opportunity provided by Facebook, student affairs professionals should familiarize themselves with the multitude of ways Facebook can facilitate integration into a university-affiliated social network.

Facebook and Disclosure

According to social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), individuals attempting to create new social relationships must engage in low levels of self-disclosure. Social media provides students with novel ways to engage in this type of self-disclosure (McElvain & Smyth, 2006). The perception of social distance provided by computer-mediated communication may allow students to feel more comfortable reaching out to others in their new social environment (Ellison et al., 2007). Social networking sites such as Facebook constitute an extremely casual form of communication. Messages can be sent, received, replied to, and even ignored quite easily (Barkhaus & Tashiro, 2010). In face-to-face communication, students may be tentative to engage in self-disclosure because such disclosures may be face threatening. Individuals experience face threats when others in their social circle disagree with the identity the individual has chosen to present (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Expressing self-disclosures to new acquaintances is both necessary to form new social connections but also fraught with potential complications. Individuals are sometimes hesitant to disclose for fear that those whom they are disclosing to will not be understanding. However, the casualness of the medium of social networking sites allows students to transmit and control their social communication and disclosures in ways that may feel less face threatening because they are less immediate.

Another communication behavior that is considered face threatening is requests for individuals to engage in a desired behavior (Brown & Levinson, 1987). These types of requests are called negative face threats. Negative face threats are considered face threatening because the requested individual might not wish to engage in the behavior. These types of requests could be asking for favors or compliance. However, a request to be someone's friend or acquaintance could also be considered a negative face threat. Again, the ability to present a social request via a social networking site might be considered less face threatening than attempting to make such a request in person or even over the phone. Indeed, Barkhaus and Tashiro (2010) found that students often used Facebook to reach out to recently formed acquaintances in situations where before they would not have communicated with this person at all. Before Facebook the potential cost of face-threatening behaviors, such as running the risk of being turned down when inviting someone to a social event, may have prevented the formation of these social connections. The mediation of Facebook as a message channel may seem to remove the direct threat to face. In fact, research has shown that Facebook may be particularly useful for students who feel

uncomfortable initiating direct contact due to shyness and low self-esteem (Barkhaus & Tashiro, 2010; Ellison et al., 2007). However, computer-mediated communication is quickly becoming a default method of communicating for all students. As one of McMillan and Morrison's (2008) participants commented, "[the internet] is the only real way to contact someone at college" (p. 83).

In addition, following similar things on Facebook may provide students with an updated version of "watercooler" talk. Freshmen using Facebook have a wealth of information to fall back on when starting conversations with fellow students. It is not uncommon in the halls of academia to hear two students conversing about "so-and-so's" Facebook update, relational status, or tagged photos. This phenomenon is similar to what Hampton and Wellman (2003) discovered in their ethnography of a wired Toronto suburb. Neighbors in "Netville" had ready-made conversation starters available from their common email listserv.

Increased Social Capital

When students stay connected to university-affiliated social ties they have an increased sense of involvement at the institution (Kavanaugh, Carroll, Rosson, Zin, & Reese, 2005). Students use the status, messaging, and wall post functions of Facebook to spread information and news about both the social network and the university (Aleman & Wartman, 2009). This type of communication may help students feel a greater sense of belonging to the university community. There is also evidence to suggest that increased Facebook use is associated with increased involvement with campus groups. Heiberger and Harper (2008) found that 78.1% of students who spent more than an hour a day on Facebook participated in at least 1 student organization whereas only 63.3% of students who spent less than an hour a day on Facebook participated in at least one student organization.

Students can connect to campus organizations as well as learn about a variety of other university-affiliated social activities by using Facebook. Indeed, student affairs professionals are beginning to utilize Facebook to promote university clubs and activities. In general, research has found that the internet can provide an easy way to communicate about community events (Hampton & Wellman, 2003). Facebook is designed to further facilitate this use of the internet by providing mechanisms for community building. Many students report using Facebook as a way to plan gatherings and keep track of social events (Aleman & Wartman, 2009; Barkhaus &