

I. SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

(Commonly referred to as MySpace, Facebook and others)

- A. Essentially online hangouts or communities that provide students the opportunity to interact with a large number of people. A relatively new forum for students to communicate with each other.
- B. Sites allow three things:
 - 1. To blog, or to diary publicly.
 - 2. To instant message.
 - 3. To post multi-media (photos, videos and songs).
- C. Most familiar sites.
 - 1. MySpace.
 - a. Approximately 70 million users.
 - b. Recently, the 6th most popular website in the world.
 - 2. Facebook.
 - a. Created in 2004 by then 19 year-old Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg using yearbook type photographs of the incoming freshmen at Harvard. The site required a harvard.edu account for accessibility, and became an instant success. Caught on and was funded. Moved to other colleges, to high schools, to work networks, and last year, became available to everyone.
 - b. Approximately 55 million users.
 - c. Membership is growing at 3% a week.
 - d. Referred to by founder Zuckerberg as a “utility tool” to facilitate information flow between users (friends, family members and professionals). A world changing idea of unlimited potential. A social graph that links us all.

II. CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS

A. Consequences.

1. This is a generation that shares publicly without necessarily considering the consequences.
2. While there is a right to free speech and free expression, those expressions are judged legally and in accordance with college policies.

B. Privacy.

1. There is no presumption of privacy.
2. One should not post what he/she would not want his/her grandmother, employer, instructor, etc. to see. Keep this in mind when creating a profile, when joining or creating groups or when posting pictures.

C. Freedom and Responsibility.

1. With freedom comes responsibility. Be responsible to self and to others.
2. Posting a "fact" about someone that is untrue. May be defamation or libel.
3. Post unfavorable pictures of others. May be construed as an invasion of privacy.

D. Impact on Future.

1. What seems witty, spontaneous and fun at 19 might not be the case in a few years when looking for a job (and potential employers are looking at these profiles), applying to law or graduate school, running for public office, etc.
2. Students should think in terms of their marketability. If something is posted on MySpace or Facebook for a day or two, and taken down, it is still available on the internet. Google and other search engines cache the information, and an individual must actively engage Google's policy to remove it.

E. Safety Concerns.

1. The internet is open to the world, and there are all kinds of people on these sites; i.e., stalkers/others who may pose physical danger.
2. Identity theft has become rampant.

- F. Legal Implications.
 - 1. Implications of file sharing.
 - 2. Copyright infringement.
 - 3. Potential for litigation.

III. CONSIDERATIONS FOR COLLEGES

- A. Students.
 - 1. Simply another means of communication.
 - 2. When misused, probably prohibited by policies and laws already in place, such as student conduct codes, computer use policy, harassment policies, libel and privacy.
- B. Faculty/Administration use of sites.
 - 1. An opportunity to promote college programs and services.
 - 2. Post office hours, etc. Allows you to be more accessible to students.
 - 3. Be cognizant of the following:
 - a. Professional Standards.
 - b. Copyright/ Intellectual Property.
 - c. Federal Electronic Discovery.
 - d. FERPA.
 - e. Academic Freedom.
 - f. Public domain.
- C. Should colleges actively monitor these sites?
 - 1. No duty.
 - 2. Impractical.
 - 3. However, if you become aware of conduct, these sites are a perfectly appropriate source of evidence; think in terms of an investigative tool.

D. Student Organizations.

1. Review national policy of organization regarding electronic postings.
2. Review pages of members of group to ensure that they are not violating policies of organization
3. Monitor groups that use name to ensure that they are not violating policies of organization.

Presented to the Academic Officers of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges

December 13, 2007

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