Friends and Colleagues,

It is a privilege and honor to have been selected to serve as the next Tech KC Chair. I am looking forward to the next three years as we create a new and exciting vision for technology in higher education. For anyone who has ever heard me talk tech, you know I am passionate about finding ways that we can incorporate tech into all elements and facets of our work. I believe strongly that technology is not a secret and hidden subsection of higher education but rather an integral component of how we manage our day-to-day work lives.

In addition to the goals that the Tech KC currently has, I would like to add some individual goals I have for the next three years; I believe they are straightforward and simple: I would like to see the Tech KC establish a more focused approach to our work. We need to advocate for technology as a professional competency area interwoven throughout our profession. The members of the Tech KC need to help our colleagues in higher education see that technology isn’t a big scary beast, but instead it is something meant to make our work easier and more efficient.

I see the Tech KC as needing to establish ourselves on the broader national scene and focus our mission and purpose. As Eric Stoller keenly observed in a blog post this spring on Inside Higher Education, our focus has become very broad. What are the one or two areas of technology that we can focus on? Can we find something to get behind and push for across the board? I think that answer is yes. But it is up to all of us to have those conversations about what that something is going to be for the KC.

As a collection of IT professionals and enthusiasts, what can we do to spread the good word about tech and how it can be integrated throughout all aspects of our profession? I truly believe that technology should be considered as a professional competency area in higher education. We have come to the point in the evolution of higher education that it is no longer acceptable to not be comfortable with basic technology skills. We all use technology every day. Consider taking notes in a meeting. Some of us will use an iPad, some will use a laptop computer, and some might even use the trustworthy pen and paper method. When you look at each of these options, each method uses some form of technology. Tech is in everything we do, and should be recognized as a professional competency in higher education.

We need to help remove the fear associated with technology and get people to see the value added opportunities that good technology affords. I think this can be achieved by starting people off with small steps forward. One of my personal favorite ways to get people introduced to great tech is to use some of my favorite open source technologies and share those with them. For instance, when planning a meeting time I might suggest setting up a Doodle Poll. This quick, easy and free technology often gets people excited about the possibilities of what can be possible. I might then follow it up with establishing our tasks and to dos on an Asana group. Again this free tool is a great way to get people excited about what tech can do. These are just two simple suggestions that have worked well for me in getting people to see that tech is there to help them, not hold them back.

As we move forward into the 2012-2013 school year, I encourage you to ask yourselves what can you do to help push tech forward on your campus and in our profession. I strongly encourage you to get involved with NASPA and other professional organizations and look for ways in which you can collaborate on your campus and across the domains.

In closing I would like to reiterate how excited I am to be a part of the leadership of this KC over the next three years. I believe that we are at a critical turning point in the evolution of technology in higher education and am thrilled to be making this journey with all of you. Let’s band together and make a difference in the lives of our colleagues and the future of our profession. I encourage you to get engaged with the KC through our social media channels: Facebook and Twitter (@NASPA_TKC), and share your favorite and informative links with us on our Delicious page. There is also the opportunity to chat weekly with other techies via the #SAtech chat. Each week we look at different aspects of technology in higher education; follow @SAtechTalk to keep up to date on the topics and times for each week.

I look forward to meeting many of you throughout the course of my term and collaborating with you all to spread the good work about tech and to firmly establish our KC in the larger realm of NASPA and higher education.

Cheers,

Matt Brinton, M.A. I Chair-Elect
Technology Knowledge Community
National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

Matt Brinton is the Interim Assistant Director of Student Activities for Campus Events and Programs at the Metropolitan State University of Denver in Denver, Colorado. Follow him on Twitter (@mcbrinton) or send him an email: mbrinton@mscd.edu.
Social Media Use and Student Engagement: The Potential for Student Affairs

Author note:
We want to acknowledge the intellectual contributions of our colleagues Sarah Drummond Hays and Gary Brown. Our thoughtful discussions around online learning and social media use inspired this paper.

Abstract

Today’s college-age students spend a fair amount of time engaging in social network use for both academic and non-academic means. Student engagement in social networks allows them to connect with fellow students and professors, gives them access to resources on campus, and extends learning outside the classroom, making it more relevant and engaging. The research supports the positive effects of engagement on student learning, development, and persistence - effects that can be translated to student engagement using social media. Fostering student engagement is the responsibility of all offices on campus and involves the efforts of students, teachers, and administrators alike. Student Affairs, through its online networks, is uniquely positioned to foster student engagement, but it must be intentional in its use of social media to engage students.

The majority of today’s college-age students hail from the millennial generation (born after 1982) where they use technology and social media to engage in the world. At least 90% of college students use social networking sites (Noel-Levitz, 2012, Dahlstrom, E., de Boor, T., Grunwald, P., & Vockley, M, 2011; HERI, 2007). “Students today network with each other using technology as much as, if not more than, face-to-face communication” (p. 19) (Heiberger & Harper, 2008). Students spend significant amounts of time on social networks: 94% of college freshmen spend at least one hour per day on social network sites (HERI, 2007); 92% of college students log in to Facebook daily (Heiberger & Harper, 2008); 95% of college students use, on average, Facebook 238 minutes per week, Twitter 101 minutes per week, MySpace 65 minutes per week, and LinkedIn 63 minutes per week (Student Monitor, 2011, as cited in Marklein).

College students spend a fair amount of time engaging in social network use for both academic and non-academic means. Students report that technology allows them to connect with fellow students and professors; gives them access to resources on campus while allowing them to track their academic progress; and extends learning outside the classroom, making it more relevant and engaging (Dahlstrom, et al., 2011). The research supports the positive effects of engagement on student learning, development, and persistence - effects that can be translated to student engagement using social media. The relationship between student engagement, success, and development is well documented. What matters to student success are relationships with faculty, students, and staff; experiences with diversity; involvement in co-curricular activities; and satisfaction with the institution (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, Hayek, 2006). All these contribute to student satisfaction, persistence, and what students gain from college (Kuh, et al, 2006). Student involvement in campus-supported social media outlets can promote student engagement in campus activities, foster relationships, expose students to diverse communities, and extend the classroom to the world.

Recent, but few, studies have examined the effects of social media on student engagement. Junco, Elavsky, and Heiberger (2012), the only empirical study, examined the effects of Twitter on college student academic success and engagement. Students who were randomly assigned to a Twitter group had significantly higher end-of-semester grades and increased engagement as compared to the non-Twitter group. In addition, several correlational studies have reported an impact of other forms of social media on student engagement.

Results from a national study of college freshmen and their use of online social networking sites (HERI, 2007) showed that students who were more involved in using social media were also more involved in face-to-face social networks, reporting greater involvement in student organizations and connections to others. Heiberger and Harper (2008) found positive correlations between students’ use of social networking sites and campus engagement: students who spent more than one hour per day using social networks reported greater connection to their institutions, greater involvement in student organizations, and greater connection to friends. Junco (2012) reported that time spent on Facebook was a significant, positive predictor of time involved in campus activities.

Growth in college students’ social media use is paralleled by similar increases by higher education institutions. For example, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Marketing and Research study on the usage of social media by colleges and universities in the United States found that 100% of colleges and universities, in their study, used some form of social media to recruit students, including Facebook (98%), YouTube (86%), Twitter (84%), blogs (66%), LinkedIn (47%), and podcasting (41%) (Barnes & Lescauliat, 2012). Data, for this study, were collected through 456 in-depth interviews forms those who manage social media at their institutions, and represent schools in all 50 states, including public and private, various school sizes and tuition ranges. In an informal review of Portland State University’s approved Student Affairs social media sites, 21 of approximately 35 departments have a departmental Facebook page, and 45 student groups and clubs have pages; 10 departments and 14 student organizations have active Twitter accounts; and student services has a presence on the university’s Flickr, Google+, YouTube, Vimeo, and Foursquare sites. Student Affairs, through its online networks, is uniquely positioned to foster student engagement.

Student Affairs must be intentional in its use of social media to engage students. As with any good assessment or communication plan, student affairs administrators need to begin with “the end” in mind in determining what students need to know, how to engage them, and how best to convey information. Student Affairs can begin to engage students long before they enter the university. Before students arrive on campus, orientation offices can use Facebook to create online communities students can join such as “Class of” or “Residence
Hall floor” pages. Entering students can be linked to each other via blogs, Facebook, and Twitter, while returning students can serve as online mentors for new students to aid them in their transition to college. Clubs and student organizations can use social media to recruit new members. Entering students can link to faculty or to an academic area of interest. Social networks can be created that link student services’ staff to students who are first generation, transfer, or international. In addition, Student Affairs could require new students to complete a campus involvement survey as a way to better match students to activities, events, clubs, and service learning opportunities. Once students are on campus, student affairs offices can create multiple opportunities for engagement based on students’ interests. All student affairs websites should have an online “comment box” where students can leave feedback about their experience. Office websites should also utilize online video tutorials or online learning tools, such as Adobe Captivate, to teach students how to navigate through policies and procedures. In addition, transactional offices can provide an live online format, such as Skype, or FaceTime, for students to quickly get questions answered by interacting directly with a staff member online.

Providing students with membership to online campus engagement networks such as OrgSync or Facebook helps connect students to organizations, programs, events, and departments on campus in an online community. Building school spirit and pride can be achieved by sharing photos of faculty, staff, and students wearing school colors through Flickr, Twitter, and Facebook. Moreover, out-of-the-classroom learning and discussions can happen by posing questions to online followers such as “What is your ultimate dream job?” “Where were you on 9/11?”, “Where is your favorite place to be on campus?,” and “What do you think of the occupy movement?” student affairs offices can also bolster survey response rates using social media. For example, at Portland State University, three benchmark studies were recently conducted. In addition to emailing students the survey link, one of these studies was disseminated on social media sites and saw a 50% increase in response rate.

Fostering student engagement is the responsibility of all offices on campus and involves the efforts of students, teachers, and administrators alike. “We focus on student engagement because it represents aspects of student behavior and institutional performance that colleges and universities can do something about, at least on the margins” (p. 8) (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). The goal of any higher education institution is to retain the students we work so hard to recruit. Student persistence in college is related to student engagement, and social media provides a set of tools for fostering this engagement.

References


Vicki L. Wise, PhD serves as Coordinator for Assessment & Research at Portland State University (PSU) where she oversees assessment, planning, and reporting for the Division of Enrollment Management & Student Affairs. Prior to PSU, she held the positions of Director of Assessment and Evaluation for the College of Education, Assistant Director for Institutional Research, and Assistant Professor/Research Administrator in the Center for Assessment and Research Studies all at James Madison University. She earned her PhD and MA degrees at the University of Nebraska in Psychological and Cultural Studies and Educational Psychology, respectively.

J.R. Tarabocchia serves as the Outreach & Advancement Coordinator for the Division of Enrollment Management & Student Affairs at Portland State University. His focus has been to enhance the learning opportunities and development of students, especially those that may not have had every advantage. He earned his Juris Doctor and Masters of Intellectual Property from the University of New Hampshire and his Bachelors from Rhodes College.
In August of 2011, I joined Michigan Technological University as the Coordinator of Marketing and Multimedia for Housing and Residential Life. It was a new position with one key element as its focus; create a marketing campaign for housing re-contracting for the 2012-13 school year. The idea seemed simple enough; get students to stay on campus. It wasn’t until I realized the importance of on campus housing that this “simple” task really hit me. I had 4 months to put something together and the only thing I had to work with were the old campaign materials.

All of the previous materials were all to poster boards sorted by year. It was clear that each board had its own theme and color scheme. They consisted of traditional posters, info sessions, and advertisements that were all had the same general style and template. Something about these didn’t sit well with me. I remembered being a student in this hall and completely ignoring that year’s re-contracting materials. So how would I take hold of a campaign that I ignored myself when I was a student here?

I felt completely stuck with no hope in sight. That is when I was pulled aside by my boss, who asked if I would be interested in going to a NASPA conference. He gave me a postcard for the first annual #NASPAtech Conference in Newport, RI. As a new Student Affairs professional in the technology and communications field, this conference seemed like it was created specifically for me. I always felt a little left out since I wasn’t directly working with housing operations or directly with the students, and I had hope that I would find others in a similar position as myself. I signed up and was off to Rhode Island.

The conference was an amazing experience for networking and the information shared was truly priceless. During one session in particular, the idea finally came to me. While at “YouTube This!” (#NASPAtech29), Debra Sanborn and Silas Pippitt brought up how they were able to prompt student engagement utilizing social media tools, specifically YouTube. Students were required to create engaging videos for class and the results were clearly a success. You could see that the students enjoyed creating the videos, which then proved to provide a more successful project. This was clearly the new and innovative idea I was looking for. If I let the students lead the housing sign-up campaign, it would be their voice to other students, not an administrative side of the University.

The concept was formed: students would create videos to market on-campus living. A colleague of mine helped work out the ideas for branding and after bouncing ideas around we realized we could play off of YouTube. We would call it YouToo, because on-campus housing wasn’t just for first year students, it was for everyone. With the basics figured out, the next step was how to encourage students to make these videos. Students who didn’t already have a passion for video...
or public speaking traditionally wouldn’t take the time to create a video project unless there was some incentive, which meant using the “keys to success” in student affairs, give away cool prizes or offer up free food.

The break down of the contest was to have students submit videos in two categories, either individual or group, about why they chose on-campus housing. We were able to showcase our own services through posters and the traditional ads, however the new component would be taking advantage of social media tools that haven’t been utilized on our campus before. The trick became how to get this information out to the students in a blitzkrieg fashion.

Thanksgiving break was just around the corner and I knew I was running out of time. I had to catch the students’ attention before they left, knowing I would only have one month before semester break. So I decided to take a path directly from my undergrad marketing class and introduce the campaign with a minimalist approach. Posters were created with the campaign’s logo on it, the title “YouToo: Michigan Tech”, a URL/QR Code, and the basic university required information. I printed these on 11x17 and hung them all over campus the week before break. I then sat back and waited. Using Google Analytics, I watched the student, staff and faculty’s curiosity spike checking out what this “YouToo” was all about, with over 188 visits the first day that the posters were out.

After break, we launched materials detailing the contest, the prizes, and our general information about on-campus living. To help advance the contest, we purchased point-and-shoot cameras that students could checkout to help film their videos. We also linked multiple resources on our website for editing software. We arranged a red carpet awards show with one of our residential student organizations to help hype up the event as well. We decided to showcase the winning videos and award the prizes live in front of their peers. Once this information was released, interest in the contest skyrocketed.

As the campaign grew, we received more attention from the University as a whole. I had numerical metrics from the website that, for the first time, could provide insight into the students interest in re-contracting. As we continued to grow we incorporated dining services into the campaign as well, by offering YouToo discounts at the residence hall café. To try to capture the students one last time before the end of the semester, we included snacks and mechanical pencils branded with the YouToo logo not only to keep YouToo on their minds but also to provide them with some treats before finals.

Once the students returned for Spring, we had one week to go until the awards show. Students began sending in their video submissions and the pressure was on. All of our marketing materials were focused on pushing the students to vote. I was able to write a voting program that utilized a Michigan Tech email address for validation. This allowed students, staff, faculty, and alumni to vote once for each category. When the voting was complete, we were able to instantly get the break down of votes and discover the winners.

As a department, we wanted to take this campaign go up one more level. We setup two projectors and a stage with a long red carpet leading up to it. The excitement became very evident. Students poured in for the awards show and completely filled up the room we were using. The presentation was set so it would play each video to announce the winner and then we brought the students on stage to accept their prize, a certificate, and give a short speech about their inspiration or challenges while filming. Overall the entire contest was far more successful then I could have ever hoped for.

The following week re-contracting opened up. We had the highest number of students re-contract on the first day and our totals were record setting for the past 7 years. Our new apartment building tripled and filled compared to the previous year. The success and student interaction with the “You Too” campaign truly took housing sign-up to a new level. The Board of Control, Administration, and Housing & Residential Life department couldn’t have been more pleased. It was a great feeling to realize that I owed all of this success back to #NASPAtech and TKC. Without that time spent with other SA professionals and the interchange of ideas at the conference, I wouldn’t have had the ideas and support to create such a successful program. With the popularity of the campaign and contest, I even had students ask me about next year’s theme for YouToo. I wasn’t even planning on continuing the contest into next year, but after polling our students and student staff in Housing, it is something they are already looking forward to. I can’t wait to attend #NASPAtech again for a chance to discover new and great ideas once again.

If you would like to view some of the video submissions from the contest, please visit http://www.mtu.edu/youtoo

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A few months ago I was given the great task of leading a social media committee. The biggest task was to create a new Facebook page for the Office of Residence Life. So as the leader of the group I went out and searched for the best looking Facebook Pages from other Residence Life offices. That is when we found the University of Florida’s Facebook Page. We were all very impressed with their Facebook Page. We even had the chance to visit with Amy Jorgensen about how she created the page. Amy was very beneficial in helping us build our new page from the ground up. The biggest tips she offered us was the less number of tabs on the page the better. Amy also stressed the importance of “Branding” our page. So when we started building our Facebook Page we kept all these tips in mind. After our visit with her, we settled in and started hashing out plans for our Facebook Page.

We knew to keep it basic, but at the same time make sure that we could attract students to our page. The first thing we had to do before we started building the Page was to come up with our Brand. After looking over some Brands that we could use from the University we decided to go with a Brand of our own. We knew this way we could use it and not have to continually get permission from the University to use one of theirs. So after we figured out our Brand we then moved onto step two. This was starting to create the Page. We had a lot of ideas of things we wanted to add to our Facebook Page, but we knew we wanted to keep that simple feeling. So we settled on using only five tabs on our Page. These tabs are Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), Pictures, Our Facebook Policy, Videos, and Residence Halls. The fun thing about our Residence Halls is that when someone clicks on any of the pictures of the halls that will take them straight to the Facebook Page of that hall. We were able to launch the Facebook Group in April. We finished adding items to the Page in the middle of May. It was a great group effort.

To go along with this Page we also every year have a Living at Southeast Group. This is more geared towards entering freshman. So after we created the Office of Residence Life Facebook Page, we got started on creating the Living at Southeast Group. This did not take as long to create, which was nice. We were given a goal of having 500 people like the page. As of August 30, 2012 we have 601 likes. I think the thing that we like the most is that we can help answer student questions about living on campus, but also point them in the right direction to get an answer to any other question they might have.

I would like thank Bruce Skinner, Gwen Duncan, TJ, Michael Rockicki, and Nikki Ciarlette for all of the great help in creating these amazing Facebook Pages. And a huge thank you to Amy Jorgensen for all the help she gave us in starting our Pages.

Zachary Singleton is a Hall Director in the Office of Residence Life at Southeast Missouri State University. He can be reached at zsingleton@SEMO.EDU

New Facebook Pages are a Big Hit
Welcome to the fall issue of Digital, the Technology Knowledge Community’s official newsletter. In designing the layout, we wanted the newsletter to be clean, crisp and attractive, much like an Apple computer. We wanted it to take advantage of hypertext links, QRs, and other doo-hickies that are available for online newsletter editions. Our cover photo is used via Creative Commons and is attributed to: Ed Yourdon

With Digital, we hope to provide an opportunity for Student Affairs and Information Technology professionals to participate in dialogue via this newsletter and on line via our Twitter hashtags. In deciding what goes in to each issue, we look for articles that would be of interest to not just Student Affairs professionals, but to the often forgotten community within higher education…the I.T. professional. We hope to provide in these pages articles on new social media applications, new technology hardware, current trends in social media and technology and articles on the law and the Internet. We also want to highlight articles on great student development programming currently going on campus all across NASPA’s six regions. For this, we created a section entitled: Tech Geeks of the Quarter. In essence, we will highlight Student Affairs and IT folks utilizing technology in a cutting edge way.

If you are attending #NASPAtech or are planning on presenting a workshop at the national conference on social media or technology, we want to hear from you. Consider writing an article for the conference issue of our newsletter!

Technology has been a hot buzz topic in student affairs these past few years and will continue to be on the forefront and impact everything that we do within student affairs; the Technology Knowledge Community plans to be on that forefront, so do not get left behind. Take part and participate by submitting your article for consideration to Digital. If you would like to write an article for the newsletter or have recently completed research on technology and student development or would like to review new software or technology…by all means, please submit your work. Our deadline for the winter issue of Digital is Friday, February 16, 2013.

ARTICLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Articles should be no less than 300 words and no more than 2000.
All articles should be relevant to the mission and purpose of the Technology Knowledge Community.
Articles should include the name of the author, job title, email and school affiliation.
Anyone with an article that is time sensitive should inquire with the Newsletter Editor for deadlines at odelvall@calpoly.edu
Please take the time to proof read and edit your work.
The higher the quality of submission, the less work the Newsletter Editor has to do cleaning it up.
All work should be saved in .doc (Word) format.
Photos and artwork should be sent as high quality JPG, PNG or GIF files.
All submissions must be sent to Osvaldo Del Valle at odelvall@calpoly.edu

Submit an article to Digital!

The Technology Knowledge Community exists to provide structure for members to explore and collaborate within the topic of technology. Given the history of technology, its great breadth, and potential for rapid change, we provide a venue for discussion, research, and the distribution of information about technology. The goals for the Technology Knowledge Community are to:

1. Explore technology’s impact on and relationship with student development, behavior, values, and decision-making
2. Identify and support technology’s role in providing student services and developmental programming
3. To inform the profession about new research and practices regarding the development and use of technology administration
4. To offer technical and creative assistance to colleagues as they explore technology resources for their campus

We welcome the participation of any individual within our KC and we hope to be place for discussion, learning, and innovation. We hope to make the Technology Knowledge Community a wonderful opportunity for graduate students, faculty, and Student Affairs professionals to come together and share knowledge, experience, and our passion for Technology.

The NASPA Technology Knowledge Community’s Mission
The 2012-13 Technology Knowledge Community Leadership Team