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Pilot Project: Use of Wikis to Supplement Student Orientation

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Background

During the orientation process, new students are often inundated with manuals, maps, and other materials essential to their success as students. The experience can leave students feeling overwhelmed, unable to sift through the substantial amount of information that has been given to them. Wikis, in contrast, are well-suited for facilitating user-interaction with vast amounts of diverse information.

Objective

According to Uses and Gratifications Theory, users are goal-oriented in their use of media and use media according to their needs. The objective of this project was to provide information pertinent to new and incoming students, as a supplement to information received during orientation, in a format that allows users to easily find necessary information.

Methods

A wiki containing 5 sample pages was created and sent to all School of Public Health students currently enrolled at the San Antonio regional campus. Page content varied and included variety of media. Students were asked to visit the wiki and complete an online survey evaluating its overall effectiveness.

Results

A link to the wiki was sent to 53 students, 10 of which visited and evaluated the wiki. Though not statistically significant, the responses were generally positive in nature. Out of 10 users, 7 agreed strongly that wikis are an appropriate technology for the type of information being presented. Furthermore, 8 out of 10 users either agreed or agreed strongly that a wiki would be a good supplement to orientation.

Conclusions

Wikis illustrate well the desire of users to have more control over how they use media. Despite the apparently positive responses to this wiki, a larger sample size is necessary to adequately judge the appropriateness of this application of the technology. Future projects will incorporate public content editing and a wider-range of information types and formats.