

The Journal of
Applied Research for
the Florida Association
of Community Colleges

VISIONS



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VISIONS: The Journal of Applied Research for the Florida Association of Community Colleges, Vol. VI, No. 1., ISSN 10879382, published by the Florida Association of Community Colleges (FACC).

VISIONS is published annually for the members of the Florida Association of Community Colleges and reports on issues that have implications for Florida's colleges. As such, VISIONS provides a professional forum for the exploration of issues endemic to Florida's colleges and provides a proactive voice for the Florida College System.

The views expressed in VISIONS are not necessarily those of the staff, editorial board, or the Board of Directors of the Florida Association of Community Colleges.

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FOREWORD



It is a pleasure to welcome you to this issue of *VISIONS: The Journal of Applied Research for the Florida Association of Community Colleges*. The general objective of research is to systematically increase the body of knowledge in a particular area. Research helps us to understand how

we can do things better. As it relates to academic study, research is important and vital to the way we educate, train, and learn. The resultant changes in methods or practices such as teaching methodology and pedagogy might help to develop curriculum paradigms, such as blended methods versus traditional in-class teaching. As you will note from the topics presented in this issue, the classroom has expanded and gone beyond the hallowed walls of our colleges. The featured research provides a glimpse into the challenges facing higher education and our students; along with new paradigms come new issues. More importantly, for this reason, *VISIONS* serves as the only journal devoted

former editor has changed. According to Dr. Charles Mojock (President, Lake Sumter Community College and former FACC President), “Jim set high standards for professionalism in his review of articles submitted for publication.” It remains the primary objective of *VISIONS* to provide an avenue for educators and others to inform, enlighten, and illuminate issues and problems that we are facing as we move forward in the 21st century. I’m sure you’ll agree that the same level of attention to featuring articles of high quality standards have been unerringly adopted by our current editor Dr. Will Benedicks (faculty member at Tallahassee Community College and Immediate Past FACC President). Without Will’s leadership, the clarion call for great articles and research would not have been fruitful and certainly, the revitalization of distinguished research would have no voice. The articles selected will undoubtedly be of added value to the literature and growing knowledge in our colleges. I hereby dedicate this issue to Dr. Benedicks in recognition of his dedication. A special note of thanks must be extended to each contributing author who spent untold hours in developing research and sharing their work. We also want

to acknowledge and recognize the FACC’s Executive Director and staff for their assistance in the production and promulgation of this publication.

I take this opportunity to invite you to submit articles that critically examine issues facing our colleges. Just recently, the White House held a summit to address

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to the critical examination of research matters that are of paramount importance to the Florida College System (formerly the Florida Division of Community Colleges). Florida remains on the cutting edge in educational leadership and quality teaching as well as advocating on behalf of the more than one million students enrolled throughout our system.

The long established goal for *VISIONS* has been to provide noteworthy research as we showcase exemplary practices and programs in the Florida College System. Very little in terms of the “vision” and high standards originally established for the Journal as set by Dr. James Wattenbarger (affectionately known as the “father of the community college system in Florida) who was our

such issues and call to the nation’s attention the role of community colleges in meeting the job training and education needs of the nation’s evolving workforce, as well as the critical role these institutions play in achieving the President’s goal to lead the world with the highest proportion of college graduates by 2020. I’m sure there are many stories that need to be told about Florida’s resolve to remain on the cutting edge of success in higher education. Won’t you share them with us? I look forward with renewed interest to subsequent issues of *VISIONS* and know that our contributions will lend much to the success of our institutions and more importantly our students.

Dr. Martha Williams
2010 FACC President

EDITOR'S NOTES



Welcome to the restart of *Visions*, the Journal of Applied Research for the Florida Association of Community Colleges. Like many things in life, bringing this project to fruition was easier said than done, but here it is. Our timing is serendipitous as Florida's educational landscape, expedited by technology, continues

to rapidly change. With these changes comes the need for dialogue; the need to address articulately, professionally and scholarly what and how; we teach, ensure student retention and success, and how we address the changes in technology, pedagogy, learning outcomes and institutional programs.

As a historian, I understand that history never actually repeats itself although it does have repetitive themes. In support, and with regard to Dr. James Wattenbarger, I respectfully paraphrase the concerns for Florida's community colleges that he articulated in *Visions* over a decade ago.

What are the major issues facing our institutions? Given our continuing economic problems, how do our institutions continue to do more with less while still meeting the needs of students? How do our institutions set priorities and make choices? What is the impact of those decisions on the community?

These are still valid questions facing us today, as is his observation that if you could just pick one issue and do the research and answer the question and share it with your colleagues, the Florida Great 28 will continue to maintain their enviable level of educational services to the communities they serve.

Simply put; we need your work. *Visions* needs articles written by Florida authors, articles that deal with Florida's educational concerns and that will stand the test of referees. From firsthand experience, I know of the cutting edge endeavors that Florida's community colleges are doing in all areas and fields. At the same time I understand how busy we all are in doing what we do best. Many times we feel that we are building the airplane as we are flying it, but if we are to continue as the foremost system in the nation, we need to take the time to share our experiences. I ask all of you to think about what your institution is doing, the novel or unique educational approaches and assessments you are taking and the successes you are making. Then, please take the time to submit your articles to *Visions*, because in the end, what you do, and how you do it, is what *Visions* is all about.

Dr. Will Benedicks

Chair, Journal Editorial Committee

FACC AD HOC JOURNAL EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

DUTIES: The FACC Ad Hoc Journal Editorial Committee solicits, reviews and selects articles for publication in the Association's Journal: VISIONS.

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT GUIDELINES: There are no specific guidelines in the FACC Bylaws or Standing Rules regarding appointment to this committee; however, it is customary for the Association President to appoint the Journal Editorial Committee in consultation with the Committee Chair (Journal Editor).

There is no set term for members of this ad hoc committee.

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FROM THE CEO/ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Two years ago, Dr. Will Benedicks and I sat down together to discuss the future direction of the FACC as I began my tenure as your Executive Director/CEO in January 2009, and as he was beginning his year as your FACC president. One of the things at the top of his list was to resurrect the dormant *Visions: Journal*

of Applied Research, last published in 2003. I shared with him my personal experience as managing editor for a journal with another organization that I belonged to and what I had done to get that going. We discussed the necessary steps that would be needed to resurrect this publication.

First, a lengthy search for editorial board members resulted in a star-studded cast of college and university leaders from around the state. Including Dr. Will Benedicks (TCC) who is the current managing editor, Dr. Judy Bilsky (DFC), Dr. Martin Gonzalez (PSC), Dr. William Bozeman (UCF), Dr. Kimberly Batty-Herbert (SFCC), Dr. Xiao Wang (BC), and Dr. Michael Reiner (FSCJ) have all committed their time and academic prowess to help us produce a quality and meaningful document. Serving in this role is no simple task. It takes time, and the willingness to read and critique all submissions. And for that we are grateful to our new Journal editorial board.

The next step was to solicit content. This sounds simple on the surface but not so much in practice. Despite the fact that there is a myriad of research in the world of education, and a literal boat load in higher education

as a whole, there is relatively little that addresses current pedagogical issues and challenges of the traditional two-year college. After a six month period of solicitation and review, four significant pieces were selected for the new, resurrected *Visions*.

So, what you have in your hands is the beginning of what we hope will continue as an annual resource provided by your FACC. We know there is still a lot to do. We need to solicit more content, establish partnerships with researchers around the country, and assure that we cover a broad range of academic, student development, curriculum, and other matters designed to enhance and improve practice at our colleges. And we want your input. Please email Dr. Benedicks (benedicw@tcc.fl.edu) or me

...if an FACC member gets one good idea from our effort, and it makes a difference for that member in the workplace, then we have done our job well.

(mbrawer@facc.org) with your ideas, suggestions, and other input to help continually improve this product. Our goal through this publication is not to just have another member service with our logo on it. We want it to make a difference. As you may have heard me say before, if an FACC member gets one good idea from our effort, and it makes a difference for that member in the workplace, then we have done our job well. Enjoy.

Michael Brawer
FACC CEO/Executive Director

WHAT IS FACC?

The Florida Association of Community Colleges (FACC) was organized in 1949 as the Florida Association of Public Junior Colleges (FAPJC) by the presidents of Florida's first four public community colleges as a means of uniting the colleges for the purpose of helping the Florida Legislature understand the junior college and to advocate for Florida's public community colleges in the development of the state's long-range plan for higher education. In 1971, the Association became the Florida Association of Community Colleges.

Since 1949, the Association's mission and purposes have grown in scope as has the Association itself. Today, all 28 of the state's public community colleges support the work of the Association through institutional dues as do more than 8,000 individual community college employees through individual memberships and the sharing of their talents, time, and energy.

The Association is organized through an intricate network of Chapters, Commissions, Regions and a Board of Directors. Chapters represent the basic building block for the Association at the local level. Generally, each community college in the state has one FACC Chapter, however some have a Chapter at each campus. There are currently 30 FACC Chapters in the state representing all 28 community colleges.

Commissions provide an opportunity for community college employees with similar job responsibilities to enhance their professional skills and knowledge and to network, share and recognize exemplary practices with colleagues from other community colleges. Each commission has an elected board of directors to oversee and plan the commission's activities during the year, and the chair of each

commission serves on the Association's Board of Directors. Currently there are sixteen active commissions and one provisional commission functioning within the Association.

Regions provide another opportunity for community college employees to network and share. However, regions are organized by geographic boundaries instead of job or professional responsibilities so that colleges that are within proximity of each other have a formal mechanism for networking and sharing. There are five Regions in the state, each coordinated by an elected Region Director.

The Board of Directors of the Association includes each Region Director, Commission Chair, and several appointed Committee Chairs as well as an Executive Committee elected by the Assembly of Delegates. The Executive Committee includes the President, the President-Elect, the Vice President-Elect for Regions and Chapters, the Vice President for Regions and Chapters, the Vice President-Elect for Commissions, the Vice President for Commissions and the Immediate Past-President. The Board of Directors is responsible for setting the goals and objectives of the Association and for employing the Association's Chief Executive Officer.

Since 1949, the mission of FACC has evolved from that of promoting the development and advancement of Florida's public community colleges

to that of becoming the professional Association for Florida's 28 community colleges, their boards, employees, retirees, and associates. The mission of the Association is to actively promote and to represent, support, and serve democratically members and institutions in their endeavors to provide their students and the citizens of Florida the best possible comprehensive college educational system.



CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS



Dr. Robert Hill has been either going to school or teaching and working for schools his entire life. He taught high school English in the public school system for almost 10 years and has been working with adult learners in various higher education positions for the last seventeen years at different private colleges. Today he is a full-time program professor of Higher Education Leadership at Nova Southeastern University's (NSU) Fischler School of Education and Human Services where he regularly teaches doctoral-level courses in *The Dynamics of Student Services*, *Contemporary Challenges in Higher Education Leadership*, and *Strategic Planning*. He also serves as an applied-dissertation advisor and an online field associate.

He received his bachelor's degree in English Education from the University of Florida and a master's degree in Educational Administration and Supervision from the University of South Florida. Hill holds an Ed.D. degree in higher education administration from NSU where in 1993-1994, he was awarded one of the two annual national PHE graduate administrative fellowships at the university's main campus in Fort Lauderdale.

Dr. Hill is a member of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) and has presented at local, regional, and national education conferences. He has been the Co-PI on a National Science Foundation Grant, and he has been awarded Faculty Research Grants at two different private universities.



Since 1990, **Dr. Michele K. McArdle** has worked at Valencia Community College where she currently serves as the Dean for Winter Park Campus. She earned her doctorate in educational leadership from the University of Central Florida and a Master of Arts in Psychology from Duquesne University in

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Dr. McArdle completed both leadership programs from the Academy for Advanced Leadership and is a member of the campus team that was recognized by the Academy with the Outstanding Leader Award. She received recognition as a Who's Who Student while attending graduate school and has earned a Who's Who Award as a teacher. She is also the recipient of the NISOD Excellence in Learning Leadership Award.



Jean A. Wihbey, Ph.D. is the Provost for Palm Beach State College's Palm Beach Gardens campus. As the campus' chief executive officer she is responsible for providing leadership and inspiration to the campus so that its culture is vibrant and welcoming to the public it serves. Dr. Wihbey ensures the quality and relevance of the campus' academic programs, oversees campus daily operational activities, and motivates and leads through ideas and strong relationships.

Dr Wihbey's focus as provost is on student engagement, campus sustainability and social awareness, technology infused learning, student success programs and support services. To meet the needs of students, she inspires collaboration and promotes innovative, participatory leadership for decision making. She provides guidance for the campus' academic and workforce development goals by considering community and state needs, and educational trends.

Previous to her post as provost, Dr. Wihbey was the Dean/Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs at Northwestern Connecticut Community College (NCCC). At NCCC Dr. Wihbey offered a progressive academic vision and leadership that maintained a highly collaborative, student-centered environment.

Preceding her appointment to Northwestern Connecticut Community College, Dr. Wihbey was the Associate Dean of Learning, Corporate and Continuing Education and the chief administrative officer for the North Haven campus at Gateway Community College. Prior to joining Gateway, Dr. Wihbey served as the director of the Meriden campus of Middlesex Community College and has also held several positions at Naugatuck Valley Community College.

Dr. Wihbey holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Fairfield University and a Master of Science in Counseling from Southern Connecticut State University. She is a national certified counselor and has a Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut in Educational Psychology. Dean Wihbey is a member of the American Association of Women in Community Colleges where she was named *Tamarack Woman of the Year*. Due to her dedication and commitment to education and the community, Dr. Wihbey has also received the Institute of Staff and Organizational Development's *Teaching and Leadership Excellence Award*, Chair Academy's *International*

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Exemplary Leadership Award, Business Times New Haven's *Noteworthy Woman Award*, Connecticut Mental Health Counselors Association's *Outstanding Contribution Award*, YWCA's *Women in Leadership Award*, American College Counselors Association's, *National Graduate Student Meritorious Service Award* and the Connecticut College & University Counselor Association's *Graduate Student Service Award*.

Dr. Wihbey has been an adjunct instructor in the Graduate School of Education, Counseling and School Psychology department at Southern Connecticut State University. She was an accreditation site visitor for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and has participated in all aspects of the accreditation process. Her research interests and presentations are on workplace ethics, trust and organizational culture, and inspirational teaching.



Katherine Emmons, Ph.D. has served in higher education for over 20 years (in the US and abroad), and began teaching and developing online courses ten years ago. She is an adjunct faculty member at three accredited online universities.



Kim Manning, Ph.D. is an Instructional Technologist at Tallahassee Community College. She has served in higher education for seven years and has also served as an adjunct professor at several accredited online and traditional universities. Her research interests focus on student persistence in hybrid and online learning environments. In addition, Kim has completed graduate certificates in Instructional Design for Online Learning and Teaching Online. She has been teaching and designing traditional and online instruction since 2006. Kim has also served as a corporate trainer for the federal government.



Rivka Spiro will earn an Ed.D in Higher Education Leadership from Nova Southeastern University in December 2010. Dr. Robert Hill, with whom she co-authored this article, served as her dissertation chair. She holds an M.A. in Linguistics from Columbia University. In her professional career she has been a journalist, as well as a public relations and media relations expert. Currently she is the public relations specialist at Broward College in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Spiro has been invited to give a presentation in March 2011 at the NCMPR (National Council for Marketing & Public Relations) annual conference in Philadelphia on the topic of creating a communications plan for outreach to student veterans.

Guidelines for Submitting Articles

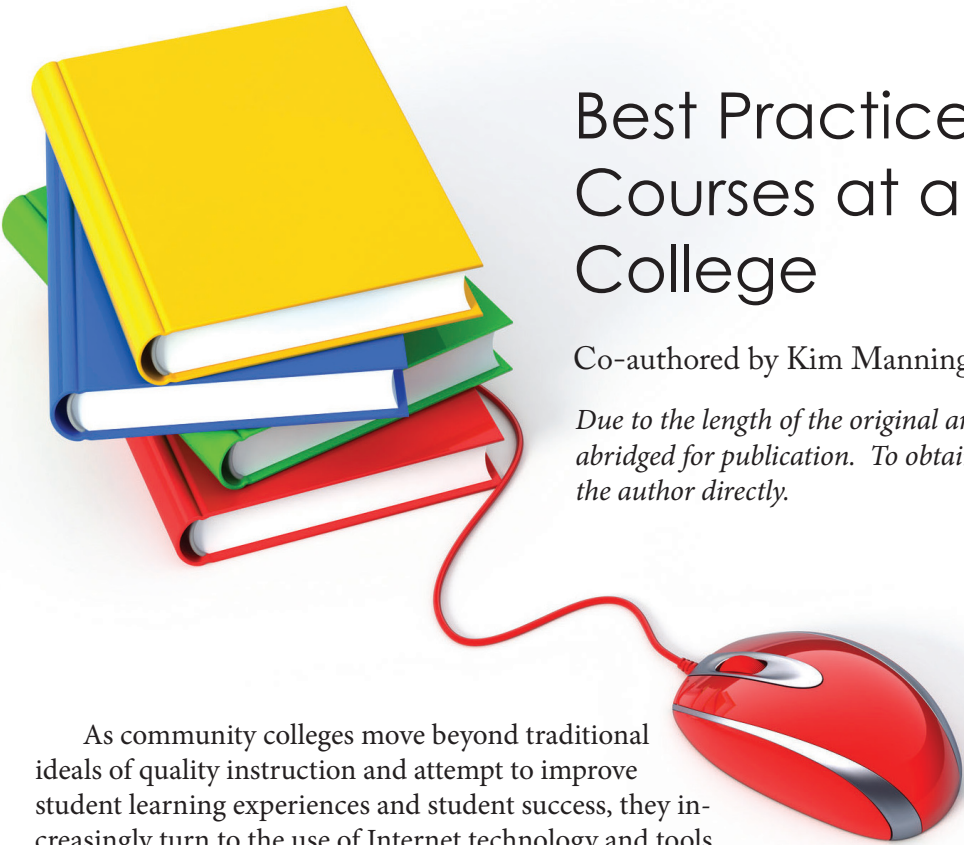
Articles submitted to *Visions* should be approximately 1,500 to 2,500 words in length. The style of each article submitted should be guided by the current APA (American Psychological Association) Style Manual and written in clear and concise language that presents the research with clarity of purpose and rationale. All articles submitted will be referred to the *Visions* Editorial Board and must include a short summary outlining three or four implications of the study/research for the college system. Articles submitted for consideration must also include a short biographical statement describing the author and a signed copyright release statement. Articles submitted will not be returned unless they have been accepted for publication and then only for the final revisions.

Permission to reprint must be obtained from the Florida Association of Community Colleges, 113 East College Avenue, Tallahassee, FL 32301; 850-222-3222. Articles for consideration by the Editorial Board may be submitted at any time for inclusion in the next available issue.

Best Practices in Blended Courses at a Community College

Co-authored by Kim Manning, Ph.D. and Katherine Emmons, Ph.D.

Due to the length of the original article submission, this article has been abridged for publication. To obtain a copy of the entire article please contact the author directly.



As community colleges move beyond traditional ideals of quality instruction and attempt to improve student learning experiences and student success, they increasingly turn to the use of Internet technology and tools. Quality instruction is demonstrated by faculty actions and characteristics, including educational activities, pedagogical assumptions, and teaching skills. These influence student involvement in the learning process and can translate to student success and retention (Tinto, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980, 1991; Tinto, 2006).

Study Focus

The use of the Internet for instruction has expanded the possibilities of teaching and learning to blended, hybrid, Web-enhanced, and Web-assisted courses (Graham, 2006; Rooney, 2003; Sands, 2002; Ward & LaBranche, 2003; Young, 2002). In the context and setting of this study, web-assisted is the term used for face-to-face courses that are supplemented with online instruction and online resources. As Web-assisted and blended courses have become a rapidly growing instructional strategy in educational institutions, questions can be raised about the implications for quality instruction, student success, and student persistence in such settings. Such questions have not been adequately addressed in research. Thus, our focus on faculty perceptions of best practices of instruction as they relate to retention in Web-assisted courses was an attempt to address a small portion of this research gap. We undertook this as a Delphi study, the purpose of which was for a panel of faculty experts to reach consensus on the instructional best practices that influence student persistence and retention in Web-assisted courses at a mid-sized community college in Florida.

The scope of this paper will reveal our findings on the instructional best practices that expert faculty members used in their Web-assisted courses, and how they used

these best practices. The findings reported in this paper were previously reported as part of a larger study (Manning, 2010).

Brief Theoretical Framework

One well-known framework of best instructional practices is the *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* (Chickering & Gamson, 1987) based on over 50 years of research in quality instruction. These best practices help instructors improve instruction through “activity, expectations, cooperation, interaction, diversity, and responsibility” (Chickering & Gamson, 1987, ¶ 4). Chickering and Ehrmann (1996) expanded the use of the seven principles to include effective instruction through computers and other technologies. Chickering and Ehrmann (1999) further explained, “If the power of the new technologies is to be fully realized, they should be employed in ways consistent with the seven principles” (¶ 3).

Martyn (2003) studied the implications of the seven principles for an “online hybrid model” and found that the factors contributing to student success included a hands-on practice of instructional and assessment tools prior to use, community building, and use of computer mediated communications, such as e-mail, chat, and threaded discussions. In one study, there was almost a 100% course completion rate as a result of building community in the first class meeting (Martyn). Thus, these two models were used as a foundation for this study.

Participants

Eighteen full-time and adjunct professors responded to the request for participation in the study. The Delphi panel members were considered to be expert by virtue of several criteria: educational level, experience as full-time or adjunct professors, training in distance learning, teaching experience with distance or Web-assisted courses,

and employment status at the community college. These faculty experts represented five of the six different academic divisions of the community college.

Nine faculty had taught Web-assisted courses for more than six years, and nine had taught for five years or less. The nature of their instructional involvement in Web-assisted courses varied. Of the 18 expert participants, eight taught with a majority of face-to-face instruction, but included some online instruction, as well as online activities and course materials. Six others use entirely face-to-face instruction, but supplemented it with online activities and course materials. Finally, two of the participants taught with a majority of online instruction, supplemented with a few face-to-face instruction.

Data Collection and Analysis

Three rounds of data collection were undertaken through a Web-based survey. The first round of the Delphi method provided qualitative data on the instructional practices in Web-assisted courses. The second round produced quantitative data to help support and explain the findings through descriptive statistics.

Findings were based on the collective opinions and perceptions of a panel of faculty teaching Web-assisted courses.

Best Practices Used in Web-Assisted Courses

The larger Delphi study (Manning, 2010) consisted of three main research questions. The first question will be addressed in this paper to highlight the best instructional practices demonstrated in Web-assisted courses. The question sought to explore, “What best practices do a panel of expert faculty use in their blended courses?” The Delphi panel experts responded to this question and arrived at consensus in Round 2. As a result, the top six emergent practices in descending order of agreement were the following:

1. Foster critical thinking and higher order thinking
2. Provide course guidelines; faculty expectations; course information; faculty information; and FAQs
3. Create online activities for student interaction with content
4. Provide opportunities for stu-

dents to be actively involved in the learning process

5. Foster student engagement with assignments, readings, and exam preparation
6. Provide prompt feedback to students on performance, questions, and concerns

In Round 2, the panel ranked the entire list of best practices in order of importance. Five of the six best practices shown on the agreement list emerged as being among the most important best practices in Web-assisted courses. The one outlier was “create online activities for student interaction with content,” which ranked in positions 9 and 10. According to the panel of experts, one of the least frequently found best practices in Web-assisted courses was “enforce time on task” which is one of the principles cited by Chickering and Gamson (1987).

The following table aligns the best practices cited by the faculty experts to the principles for good practice outlined by Chickering and Gamson (1987), as well as with Martyn’s (2003) online hybrid model.

Table 1. Delphi Study Findings of Best Practices Compared against Literature

Chickering and Gamson (1987) Principles for good practice	Martyn (2003) Blended instruction	Delphi study findings (best practice ranking)
Student–faculty contact	Student contact with and feedback from the instructor can help build motivation and student success.	Provide prompt feedback to students on performance, questions, and concerns (6)
Cooperation among students	Collaboration among students and the instructor helps students develop higher order thinking skills, critically reflect on topics and apply their newly acquired knowledge and meaning to real life.	Foster critical thinking and higher order thinking (1)

Table 1. Delphi Study Findings of Best Practices Compared against Literature (continued)

Chickering and Gamson (1987) Principles for good practice	Martyn (2003) Blended instruction	Delphi study findings (best practice ranking)
Encourages active learning	Active learning is tied to constructivism. Use online group discussions to help students engage in deeper reflection. Students are actively engaged in authentic and interactive learning experiences.	<p>Create online activities for student interaction with content (3)</p> <p>Provide opportunities for students to be actively involved in the learning process (4)</p> <p>Foster student engagement with assignments, readings, and exam preparation (5)</p>
Gives prompt feedback	Feedback through asynchronous methods: self-assessments, online assessments, e-mail for contacting a student privately, graded discussion board forums or threads, and instructor feedback on assignments submitted online.	Provide prompt feedback to students on performance, questions, and concerns (6)
Gives prompt feedback	Blended courses provide flexible and alternative learning environments for those who have other life demands. Maximize the time that students have to complete their course work outside of the face-to-face environment in the online venue.	<p>Provide opportunities for students to be actively involved in the learning process (4)</p> <p>Foster student engagement with assignments, readings, and exam preparation (5)</p>
Communicates high expectations	Set the tone and pace for courses. Instructors inform students of what is expected of them in the face-to-face and online learning environments. Use a well-developed pacing schedule with all course objectives, activities, and assessments.	Provide course guidelines; faculty expectations; course information; faculty information; and FAQs (2)
Respects diverse talents and ways of learning	Expand the possibilities for all students in the blended learning environment to have time for reflection before providing responses; thereby becoming equal participators and cocreators of knowledge.	Provide opportunities for students to be actively involved in the learning process (4)

The best practices cited by the faculty experts aligned with the principles for good practice outlined by Chickering and Gamson (1987) and with Martyn's (2003) online hybrid model. These results revealed that the panel members were already using some of the key instructional practices cited in the literature for teaching their Web-assisted courses. The low mean score for the best practice of "enforce time on task" was an unexpected finding, as it is listed as one of the best practices for effective instruction as cited in the literature (Bangert, 2004; Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996, 1999). This score appeared to contradict the literature as time management and the timely completion of assignments were important skills cited for students to master in blended courses (Martyn, 2003).

Recommendations for Practice

Several recommendations from this study could apply to the practices of both faculty and administrators:

1. The best practices from this study can be provided in the training of new faculty members for use in their courses and to help influence student success. They could serve as a foundation for faculty training in Web-assisted classes and as a benchmark or evaluation tool to assess faculty performance. New instructors need institutional guidelines and best practices to help them teach their Web-assisted classes.

2. The best practices as outlined here can serve as success indicators to measure the extent to which the practices are being used in Web-assisted courses. Initial data can be collected on student success rates; however, no inferences can be drawn without additional research.
3. The findings of the study can help inform policy for the college-wide hybrid course implementation that may already be underway at an institution. As the institution undergoes the transition to hybrid instruction, the Delphi findings can be used to confirm or finalize the definition of hybrid courses and supporting policies surrounding their implementation.
4. The identified best practices can serve as a foundation for helping design quality hybrid courses. While the faculty members in this community college setting already use some of the best practices of instruction and persistence in their courses, the Delphi results can be integrated into future designs of quality hybrid courses. The best practices in this study can serve as quality benchmarks in course design.



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Military Veterans Face Challenges in Accessing Educational Benefits at Florida Community Colleges

Co-authored by Rivka Spiro, M.A. and Robert Hill, Ed.D.

Abstract

Florida's community colleges are seeing an influx of students who face unique challenges. They are the men and women who served in the military after the attacks of September 11, 2001, and who are now attending college on the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, with its greatly enhanced educational benefits, and on the expanded, old Montgomery GI Bill, which remains in effect. This paper will explore the growing population of student veterans, the challenges they may face in adjusting to academic life, and the role played by community colleges in veterans' education. These issues will be framed in a national context.



Influx of Student Veterans

Military veterans, Reservists and members of the National Guard are enrolling in Florida's community colleges in record numbers, thanks to the new Post-9/11 GI Bill which provides greatly enhanced educational benefits. But as their numbers increase, so do the challenges they may face in making the transition to academic life (DiRamio, Ackerman & Mitchell, 2008). According to the annual report issued by the Florida State College System and reprinted in *Current*, the journal of the Florida Association of Community Colleges, the number of student veterans in the 28 institutions in the system increased by 76 % (*Current*, 2010, p. 5). This staggering statistic reflects the enrollment numbers of fall 2009 (*Current*) compared with the same term in 2008. However, the new GI Bill was implemented for the first time in

August 2009, indicating that this influx has only just begun. Under the new GI Bill, "veterans with three years of active service are qualified to receive numerous benefits, including full tuition and fees, a monthly housing allowance and \$1,000 a year for books and supplies" (*Current*, p. 5).

In the fall of 2008 in Florida, there were 7,994 (Amy Albee, personal communication, January 4, 2010) student veterans on the old, Montgomery GI Bill enrolled at the 28 community colleges in the state system according to the coordinator of outreach and access at the Division of Community Colleges of the Florida Department of Education, renamed the Florida State College System. One year later, in the fall of 2009, there were more than 14,000 (Amy Albee, personal communication, January 4, 2010) student veterans and their dependents enrolled under the old and new GI Bills in Florida community colleges.

Nationally, as of September 30, 2008, there were about two million (American Council on Education, 2008b, p.1) U.S. service members who had been deployed since September 11, 2001, and could be the eligible beneficiaries of the new GI Bill as they return home to civilian life. The State of Florida has the second-highest number of armed forces in the country deployed after 9/11; there were 185,766 (Schupp, 2009) who had been deployed as of April, 2009. Among the 416 (Scroggins, 2009) postsecondary institutions in the U.S., with more than 300 (Scroggins) student veterans each, in the fall of 2009, there were 37 (Scroggins) in Florida, comprising 9% (Scroggins) of the national total.

Increasing Challenges

The following are the eight major types of problems facing student veterans in the post-9/11 era, according to the available literature: 1) bureaucratic obstacles (American Council on Education, 2009b), 2) lack of information (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchel, 2008), 3) nontraditional traits (American Council on Education, 2009a), 4) PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder)/hidden disabilities (Ford, Northrup, & Wiley, 2009), 5) physical disabilities (Burnett & Segoria, 2009), 6) getting academic credit for military training (American Council on Education, 2009d), 7) lack of student services (Rumann & Hamrick, 2009), and 8) disruption of education due to deployment (Johnson, 2009). Though none of the literature cited specifically studied student veterans at community colleges, nor was it conducted after the

actual implementation of the new GI Bill, it is the most recent on this topic, and all that is currently available.

The patriotic young men and women who enlisted in the all-volunteer U.S. military, Reserves, and National Guard at the turn of the 21st century were motivated, to a large extent by the promise of money to finance their education (Military.com, 2008). In fact recruitment brochures and pitches emphasized, “Defend Freedom. Earn Money for College” (U.S. Army National Guard, 2009, para. 1). The idea that military service would be rewarded by GI Bill benefits, including payment of tuition, had been prevalent since the original GI Bill, named the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, was enacted in 1944, as WWII was drawing to a close. The original GI Bill expired in 1956, and subsequent versions of the federal legislation became less generous, and eventually, inadequate (American Council on Education, 2009b; MacLean, 2005). That is, until the new GI Bill was enacted in 2008 and became effective in 2009.

Prior to that, despite the allure of the recruitment pitches, many veterans who wished to become students discovered when they returned home from their deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq, and after being discharged from service elsewhere, that the reality was quite different from what had been promised. They often found that the Montgomery GI Bill, then in effect, provided inadequate funding for tuition and fees, confusing rules, and insufficient time-limits, to name just a few of the difficulties (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008). Many student veterans also found that there was nowhere to turn for information or help in navigating the bureaucratic system to obtain certification for benefits, because there were few knowledgeable counselors at the postsecondary institutions, or not enough personnel dedicated to the role of veterans’ affairs advisor (American Council on Education, 2008a).

The Role of Community Colleges

Given that the old Montgomery GI Bill provided less-than-adequate educational benefits, about 38% (American Association of Community Colleges, 2009b, para. 2) of veterans at the top 500 postsecondary schools serving them in 2007 were enrolled in local community colleges due to the lower tuition and fees, as well as other reduced costs, such as living expenses while at home. In general, community college students accounted for 46% (American Association of Community Colleges, 2009a, para. 1) of all undergraduates in the nation. The choice of community college as the entry point for higher education by veterans was the continuation of a trend that began in 1944 with the original GI Bill. Community colleges, or junior colleges as they were known in the past, were “the best option” (Witt, Wattenbarger, Gollatschek, & Suppiger, 1994, p. 126) for returning WWII veterans who wanted to stay close to home while pursuing a higher education, who were not ready to do university-level work, or who were interested in earning a certificate to qualify for a career (Witt, et al.). In the three years following the implementation of the original GI Bill, “junior college enrollment nearly doubled, from 251,290 in 1944 to half a million in the 1947 academic year” (Witt, et al., p. 128). In 1946, “nearly 43% of all junior college students were veterans” (p. 128). This statistic was an interesting comparison to the most recent data gathered as of September 2008, showing that 43% (American Council on Education, 2009b, p. vi) of student veterans attended public two-year institutions and 47% (p. vi) of all student veterans were pursuing an associate’s degree at a community college.

The Yellow-Ribbon Program

The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides student veterans tuition equivalent to the most-expensive state (public) college or university where they live, as well as

stipends for living books, and supplies. In addition, the Yellow Ribbon Program gives veterans the opportunity to study at the traditionally more expensive private universities where they live. American higher education, long the envy of the world due to the sheer number and diversity of institutions and students, cannot be generalized as a “one size fits all.” The tapestry of American colleges and universities can be classified as either public or private, not-for profit vs. for-profit, religious affiliation vs. independent, four-year vs. two-year; a small liberal arts college vs. large land grant research university, etc. Each accredited college, regardless of whether public or private, offers something for everybody and degree programs to serve a diverse public. Since private universities generally do not get state funding from the legislature, the tuition is generally higher than at the public institutions. To off-set this added financial burden, the new Yellow Ribbon Program will give the student veterans options where they can attend or transfer, and not just at the schools with the lowest costs since the private college’s contribution toward a veteran’s education is also matched by the Yellow Ribbon Program, to help with the difference in costs. On the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) website for the State of Florida, the fourth-largest state, there is a list totaling five pages in length of all the private universities participating in the voluntary Yellow Ribbon program, including both South Florida schools: the University of Miami (UM) and Nova Southeastern University (NSU), the two-largest private higher education institutions in the state (GI Bill, 2010).

Delayed Payments, Emergency Payments

Financial problems faced by student veterans and by institutions of higher learning due to recent delays in VA payments after the new GI Bill took effect, were added to the list of

bureaucratic obstacles both at the VA and the schools (McBain, 2009). As a result of federal and state-wide problems in implementing the new bill, many student veterans who were certified as eligible throughout the nation did not receive their benefit checks for book stipends and housing allowances and many colleges and universities did not get paid by the VA for tuition and fees months after these payments were due (McBain; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2009). A tremendous backlog in processing 300,000 (Scroggins, 2009) applications for certification resulted in payments for the housing allowance and book stipend being made to only 80,000 (Scroggins) of the 108,260 (Scroggins) student veterans who had been certified and had already enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the fall of 2009. Not all who were certified enrolled right away. The enrollment number was an increase of 70% (Scroggins) over the previous year.

Starting on October 2, 2009, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) began to issue emergency advance payments of up to \$3,000 (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2009) to eligible student veterans who had not been paid. The thousands of student veterans who travelled to the VA's regional offices across the country to immediately get a check in person, as the VA had suggested, found that many banks were reluctant to cash the odd-looking, hand-written government emergency checks, and the VA had to appeal to the banks to call a special phone number, which had to be set up to verify the legitimacy of those checks (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2009).

The main reason for delay was due to outdated technology that required manual processing of applications, and separate processing for tuition, for books and for housing (McBain, 2009; Scroggins, 2009). As of Sept. 11, 2009, the VA had not yet processed 72,000 Post-9/11 GI Bill (McBain, p. 1) claims of the 260,000 (p. 1) received

nationally. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki, speaking at the ACE annual convention on March 9, 2010, acknowledged that, in terms of the new GI Bill, "We got off to a rocky start" (American Council on Education, 2010, no para.). He asserted that the VA was rapidly catching up on processing applications for educational benefits, and that by the end of 2010 the system would be fully automated. Shinseki stressed that enrollment was merely the beginning, and that only graduation rates would be the true measure of success. He said, "The challenge for them and for us is to get them through this transitional experience...from military life to campus life" (American Council on Education, 2010, no para.).

Efforts to Help

Before the first semester of college had even concluded since the implementation of the new GI Bill, worry was mounting about the compounded difficulties anticipated for the following semester, in spring 2010 (Maze, 2010). In fact, the chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee's oversight and investigations panel, the Arizona Democrat Rep. Harry Mitchell, said he feared that there would be veterans who might decide not to enroll at colleges and universities at all, due to the delayed payments and other obstacles (Maze). It may never be possible to determine how many veterans were deterred from pursuing a higher education because of problems they encountered. What is possible is for institutions of higher learning to provide solutions to the known challenges faced by student veterans.

What can be done to assist veterans in transitioning into students? Some community colleges in Florida, and elsewhere in the nation, have hired a designated veterans affairs coordinator, created a veteran's information page on the website, planned special open-houses and benefits' fairs, instituted orientations specifically for newly-enrolled veterans, and created a

one-stop-shop for veterans' services, to name a few initiatives. Model programs and best practices for assisting student veterans must be adapted and developed by Florida's community colleges to meet the challenges faced by this unique population. All institutions of higher learning throughout the state and the nation would also be well advised to do so, as the population of student veterans will continue to grow on American campuses.

Conclusions

All state colleges or universities, public or private, should be proactive and exercise good, old common sense in treating these new, nontraditional students with the dignity and respect that they deserve. Best practices can be shared in new student, staff, and faculty orientations and in future professional development. Moreover, if the student veterans end up transferring from the community colleges to the state universities for their upper-division coursework, it needs to be a seamless transition and not a whole, new start in having to navigate another bureaucratic system.

As Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki, speaking at the ACE annual convention noted, the Post-9/11 GI Bill is much more comprehensive than other previous versions, and it gives us an opportunity to repeat history once again and re-energize the nation's economy and repair the country as did the original GI bill after WW II. However, the real test or return on public investment is that the student veterans need to graduate and go on to successful second careers for it be to truly worthwhile for them and for the country. Colleges cannot and should not be merely passive onlookers to this, as yet another federal initiative. The key to that ultimate barometer of success, college graduation, will be how the colleges prepare for the returning veterans and assist them in the transition to and reintegration into student life when they arrive on our college campuses and in our classrooms.

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Lessons For Community College Leaders in the Development of a Cooperative Learning Community

By Michele McArdle, Ed.D.

Advice From the Past

Teng's (2007) article entitled "Lessons Learned from Initiating a Community College Learning Community Program" provided a foundation for community college leaders who are interested in working with faculty in creating a learning community on campus. Teng (2007) listed the five lessons that may be useful guidelines to other colleges who are about to embark on this endeavor. The five lessons are: 1) Solicit faculty input during the planning stage; 2) Assess the campus culture prior to formulating the goals of the program; 3) Manage the conflict of interests among divisions; 4) Create broad participation in program development; and 5) Specify roles and responsibilities of program staff.

A Cooperative Learning Community in Action

The lessons learned from Teng's (2007) community college project were similar to some of the lessons learned from a similar project at a small campus of a large metropolitan community college. This second project, the cooperative learning community (CLC), had a unique twist to the usual concept of a learning community: linking, pairing, or clustering courses. The link for the CLC was a bond among faculty members of diverse disciplines; in particular, three faculty members involved represented the developmental courses in English, Mathematics, and Reading. The mission of the CLC was to provide students in these targeted courses the resources and the supports they needed to complete the course in their first attempt. The four program objectives of the Cooperative Learning Community were to:

1. Assist students so they achieve academic success
2. Help students establish academic and social support networks
3. Encourage faculty integration and development of an integrated curriculum
4. Bring faculty, staff, and students together in meaningful ways.

The professors worked collaboratively to develop a curriculum that integrated study skills and personal achievement skills with course content. The scope of the program was broadened to include personnel from all areas of the campus. It was believed that this inclusive strategy would benefit the preparatory student by providing them with additional academic and social support and it would enhance the development of a campus community.

The CLC was a faculty-created project so it fully attested to the lesson of the need for faculty input during the planning process. In fact, the original idea for the program was a project developed by mathematics faculty five years prior. The lessons learned from this initial project help to establish the CLC.

Campus culture has been addressed by the leaders of the campus. The foundation for the culture was to build relationship with trust as the root. Miller and Boote (2004) described this foundation when they wrote: "Professional learning communities are impossible without trust. Without trusting relationships, people will avoid risk taking, productive conflict, and collaboration. Increasing trust builds moral, emotional, and professional support that increases the individual's and community's capacity for coping with change" (p. 11).

One of the most difficult lessons to master was the lesson of managing conflicts among the divisions. In fact, it seems that this lesson presented a continual learning opportunity. It was interesting to observe the resistance that surfaced among the participants and to trace the roots to issues from the past that were unrelated to the CLC. Another source of conflict seemed to generate from the different styles of faculty members. As a consequence, time must be spent with each faculty member individually to reassure them about the strengths they bring to the community. DuFour and Eaker (1998) advise:

Those who attempt to transform their schools into professional learning communities should recognize that change is difficult but not impossible. They must be prepared for the anxiety, the discomfort, and the ongoing conflict that always accompany change initiatives, particularly in the early stages of the process. (p. 55)

The fourth lesson, creating broad participation in program development, was a key goal for the CLC as well. A kickoff event was held that enabled the staff and faculty of the campus to personally experience some of the aspects of the new curriculum. As an example, they had the opportunity to take the Barsch Learning Style Inventory so they could determine their individual preferred style of learning. The CLC offered the opportunity for every staff member on campus to be involved by accepting the role of success coach for the students in the program. Faculty from

disciplines in addition to the three primary ones, were encouraged to participate by integrating some of the activities in their courses.

The last lesson listed in Teng's (2007) article was the need to specify roles and responsibilities for the program staff. The coordinator of the CLC had a job description and received reassigned time for this work. The faculty members had a list of responsibilities including the creation of a curriculum notebook that would be used as a resource for future faculty members. They received a small stipend for this work. The success coaches had three assignments that they completed with a small number of students in the program. The success coaches used their normal work hours for this time with the students. They had written guidelines and training sessions for their work and a rubric to use to assess the students' work on educational and career plans.

Based on the five years that the campus worked to create and to implement the CLC, there are a couple additional lessons that could be added to Teng's (2007) list. It is clear that Collins's (2001) advice to get the right people on the bus is a critical issue. When faculty members work collaboratively to design an integrated curriculum they are going against the normal flow of teaching where the faculty member is the sole designer of the classroom experience. They are therefore, asking each other and themselves to let go of their preconceived values and individual philosophy of teaching. This can be too much to ask for some faculty members. In other words, flexibility is a key ingredient for the members of the team. . Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1996) reported: "Life uses processes we find hard to tolerate and difficult to believe in – mess upon mess until something workable emerges... It takes a lot of repeated mess to get it right" p. 17). We must find faculty members who can live in the mess until a workable process is discovered.

A deeper layer in finding the appropriate people for the work; is to find the appropriate person for the specific task. The faculty member who has created the vision for the project may not have the skills to implement the project. The creator may be too close to the vision to allow for change in the process of development. A

currently underway in contemporary American education" (p. 54). The Cooperative Learning Community described above had a positive impact on campus culture by enabling the professionals to find new meaning and a sense of purpose to their work. It was a powerful tool that infused passion in everyday campus life.

The Cooperative Learning Community described above had a positive impact on campus culture by enabling the professionals to find new meaning and a sense of purpose to their work.

perfect implementation of the original vision is not likely to occur and the creator may not be able to allow for the input of others if it does not support his/her original vision. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) refer to this concept as casting. "If you want to turn talent into performance, you have to position each person so that you are paying her to do what she is naturally wired to do" (p. 148).

A third lesson from the CLC was to implement the core of the plan in the beginning. It was a mistake to implement secondary items at the same time as the core implementation. Keeping the implementation simple in the beginning will help the group to stay focus and energized. Implementing too much too soon destroys momentum.

Summary

Jacobson (2005) proposed that the establishment of learning communities is critical for community colleges: "Learning communities and organizational partnerships are among the most promising reforms

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College Student Social Networking: Its Importance and its Issues



By Jean A. Wihbey, Ph.D.

College Students' Social Networking

Millions of contemporary young adults use social networking sites. However, little is known about how much, why, and how they use these sites (Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert, 2009). Questions are being asked about the impact of social networking use on development of identity, morality, relational interaction, and self-disclosure. The most popular and favorite of these sites by teens and young adults is Facebook. While linking people and contributing to personal development are the highlights of this social networking phenomenon, most strikingly is the fact that most relationships are unsubstantiated and facilitated by the revelation of personal information. Students and other users will post any personal information from their full name, address and class schedule to what type of shampoo they just used and their in-the-moment craving.

Most traditional age college students communicate regularly on social networking sites such as, MySpace, Facebook, Friendster, Bebo, and LiveJournal (Fogel & Nehmad, 2009; Jaschik, 2009; Pempek, et al., 2009). These are member-based internet communities that allow users to create a username, enter personal profile information, post photographs and communicate with others in innovative ways. Users post lists, personal announcements, videos, links to other web content, and surveys on everything from music compatibility to favorite shoes. This allows students to define themselves almost instantly, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Users connect to dozens or hundreds or thousands of friends and friends of friends (Hayward, 2008). The way it is done is users send a message to other members, known as "friends" asking them if they are interested in becoming a "friend." Once the invitation is accepted, the new friend has access to your profile and adds you to their network. Any updates to a person's profile are automatically distributed to the network. This social networking communication allows for a one-to-many style of communication, or more appropriately described, a connection that is loosely real in the true sense of friendship intimacy.

From the Nielson/Net Ratings surveying the number of users on the top ten networking sites, there were 46.8 million users reported in 2005 which subsequently grew to 68.8 million in 2006. As of January 2009, the New York Times reported over 150 million Facebook users alone (Quenqua, 2009).

The use of these sites by college students is considered widespread and universal (Pempek, et al., 2009) and is very important to social norm construction, identity development,

and informal learning. Rosen (2007) describes Facebook as a social utility that connects people with "friends." Interestingly, Facebook's connection driven objective has changed the essence and taxonomy of what the word friend has traditionally come to mean. Friendships typically hinge on privacy, reciprocity, trust and revelation of intimate information within a specific cultural and social context that are concealed from the rest of the world. However, online social networks can list hundreds of direct "friends," suggesting acceptance of weaker social links and a very low threshold to qualify as a friend on someone's network (Gross & Acquisti, 2005).

Social Networking sites are open access, and the goal is to captivate a potential audience through the maintenance of one's profile content that is then broadcast to all the friends in the user's network. This, for many is a constant preening and exhibition in a boundary-less context, and a redefinition of friend as a real companion. This new medium for friendship and connection may provide some users with greater contact with existing strong relationships yet provides a different kind of emotional and social support that friendship, in its true sense, has previously required.

As far as privacy and risk taking are concerned, those who post profiles are more comfortable with the risks associated by their information being seen by others. Men have far greater risk taking attitudes and behaviors than women. Women have greater privacy concerns and post less identity information than men when surveyed. Men have more friends collected than women and are more likely than women to post their cell phone and instant messaging information (Fogel & Nehmad, 2009). Would teaching adolescents and young adults the perils of their disclosures matter and thus lead to behavior changes online?

Reasons for Social Networking

Students communicate about themselves, their friends, their movements and actions on a daily basis as a form of self-expression. This self-exposure is done through a variety of tools and applications that social networking websites offer, and privacy concerns are virtually non-existent among college students (Fogel & Nehmad, 2009; Lenhart, A. & Madden, 2007). A study conducted in 2008 at Arizona State University revealed that there were relatively few instances of social networking sites being used to interact with faculty members for communication purposes or to post assignments. For academic work, students use the sites for staying in touch with classmates or working in groups (Guess, 2009) but not for learning. So why are so many college students

using Facebook and MySpace?

The role of peer socialization develops during preadolescence and early adolescence. In addition, concern with social self-presentation and impression management increases during this period along with the need for conformity to peers in general (Behrmester, 1990). Since Facebook encourages communication among “friends” it fits into the early understanding of adolescent development behavior that includes many conversations devoted to scrutinizing and evaluating the social behaviors of their peers (Hibbard & Behrmester, 1998). These conversations assist with defining themselves through mutual activities, relational risk taking, and effectively managing conflicts. Not too long ago, those conversations took place on the phone or face to face. It is no longer that way today.

Issues of Identity and Self-Disclosure

Rosen (2007) claims that we have created this social networking phenomenon to find friendship, love, and an ambiguous modern kind of connection. The ambiguity of connection is the core conundrum of this communication platform. On the one hand it provides for and encourages self-disclosure that has created a mass of hollow networks. Yet, intimacy is equated with the depth and breadth of self-disclosure. Clearly, the information on social networking sites is full of private self-disclosure and much is intimate in nature. So why is it so vacant in truth? In Behrmester, (1990), Reiss and Shaver (1988) “indicated that the core process of intimate interaction is not disclosure, per se, but rather the experiences of feeling understood, validated, and cared for that accompany self-disclosure” (p. 1101).

Others have described intimate relationships as a collaboration, and portray intimately allied friendships as involving taking part in mutual activities and reciprocal feelings of satisfaction with the relationship. This “friending” in social networking

is a red flag since the current practice involves very low expectations and effort for intimacy, especially with depth and profundity for young adults. Yet through this medium they can derive consensual validation, social support and coping assistance.

Creating and refining one’s values and identity, and the evolution of engagement with others through social interaction is an important part of college student development. Does building connections on Facebook make students feel like they belong and are accepted? The answer is a resounding yes (Ellison, 2008; Jaschik, 2009). And why not, through one’s personal profile, people present carefully constructed, attractive descriptions of themselves that they constantly “manage.”

Identity challenges of adulthood may be addressed through self-disclosure with peers. Bushmaster and Prager’s (1995) model of self-disclosure suggests that adolescents can resolve issues through social input from others. Self-disclosure can serve a dual purpose of: 1) identity development, where external feedback from peers may help the individual to clarify his or her sense of self; and 2) intimacy development, where the relationship with the disclosure partner is strengthened” (Pemek, et al., 2009, P.6). This validates the existence of an important relationship online with a low level of closeness that is required for intimacy.

Implications of social networking site use include the development of identity and peer relationships (Ellison, 2008; Pempek, et al., 2009) compared to those who have the traditional experience of face to face only interaction with peers. In person contact versus on-line association has many differences, such as the personal content disclosed, the amount of time invested in the relationship, and the number of people and level of intimacy with those included as friends, among many other things. However, Pempek, et al. (2009) claim that developmental aspects of adolescence are held constant, such as identity

formation, development of intimate relationships, and peer group power influences, suggesting that online connection may not be as influential to development as others suggest.

To examine social interaction style, one can take into account an individual’s motivations or goals, or actual behaviors and communicative habits (Hibbard & Behrmester, 1998). Today, the powerful social mediums these sites present challenge ethical decisions about social propriety, self-disclosure and acceptable behavior. Some believe the online world is a dreamland for deviant behaviors. Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin (2008) reject this idea since Facebook is an environment where users have to reveal their real name and other personal information, and most users do (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007; Gross & Acquisti, 2005).

A large amount of this research is done with college student participants (Calvert, Oblinger & Hawkins, 2006; Educause.edu/eli; Fogel & Nehmad, 2009; Pempek, et al., 2009). It should be more than just a consideration for the real concerns regarding students’ standards and approaches to honesty, privacy, trust and risk taking. While college student risk taking behavior may be developmentally in alignment, this new medium maintains records of behavior. Yet, in spite of the pictures of drunkenness and sexually charged content, along with a motivated person’s ability to reconstruct social security numbers from profile information, many college students lack judgment and discretion. These characteristics are hallmarks of maneuvering into adulthood, yet the consequences known by both male and female students are not compelling enough, especially for the men, to maintain caution.

Anonymity

Early research on online self-presentation mostly focused on identity constructions in anonymous online environments. Such studies found that

individuals did tend to engage in role-play games and anti-normative behaviors in the online world (Zhao, et al. 2008). No one really knows how much information is untrue, withheld, or exaggerated online.

With social networking technology, the construction of identity, for many, has become a public process in the form of an announcement and people can play act or hide undesirable features (Zhao, et al., 2008). Face to face identity construction has many more constraints than the online persona. Anonymity is maintained if one chooses to withhold information or make things up. Zhao and colleagues believe that "online role playing can be an empowering process that allows disadvantaged people the ability to bypass the usual obstacles that prevent them from constructing desired identities in face-to-face settings" (2008, p. 1818). This role identity empowerment has interesting implications for issues of trust and authenticity, asking the question of the consequences of fantasized ideal selves. Does the social networking on-line environment desensitize peoples' connection to face-to-face reality and honesty?

Iacovelli and Valenti (2009), after studying a group of female college students, posit that when women excessively use the internet for communication, they sacrifice the benefits of face to face encounters, displace strong ties, and experience higher levels of depression and inhibition than average users. They also experience emotional and social loneliness, which may be the cause of excessive use. Additionally, this line of research for college women can address a connection between a higher use of college counseling services, psychopathology and its links to likeability and rapport seeking through internet usage.

Conclusion

Since Facebook is open to all, and not just college students as it originally intended, so many people have engaged in the trial or experience of using the networking site. Just this taste alone should be enough for the proliferation of specialized sites for target audiences to grow with new forms of relationships, new pathways to self-identity and connection. As far as being an educational platform, there is no evidence that this is the case currently. There are too many unknown consequences and privacy issues with professors and student interaction with social networking sites. Students do not want their teachers "skulking" around in their private, connected space. It may be likened to picking up the extension on a teenager's phone conversation.

College students' issues of trust and privacy, self-disclosure, and true social connection related to psychosocial behavior are areas that need further examination. Nevertheless, at their core, social networking sites have become highly valued places for students and are changing the social fabric of college life (Ellison, 2008; Hayward, 2008). They do offer a vast array of possibilities for connection and communication with shared interests. Quickly, we will get to see what happens next.

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