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***Curricular and Cocurricular Use of
Social Media to Transform Learning
Outcomes in Higher Education***

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With the immediacy of information and access to populations far beyond our physical reach, social media has forever changed how one learns, interacts, conveys information, and shares personal experiences. Vercic and Vercic (2013) identify a major shift from more traditional forms of media interaction to the social platforms and their impact on information consumption. Ninety percent of participants utilize social media more than one time per day, with only 50.8% identifying television as important form of communication (Vercic & Vercic, 2013). This finding highlights a shift in the way that information is consumed and how communication is valued in the daily lives of media consumers. The transition to daily interaction using social platforms has allowed for the exponential growth of the more traditional forms of “word of mouth” based communication (Williams, Crittenden, Keo & McCarty, 2012). While much of the literature focuses on the use of social media and the implications on marketing, sales and business development, the media platforms allow for direct person-to-person connections that were not previously possible. While all generations are accessing digital content at a rate greater than ever before, the focus on instructional uses for social media has been focused on digital natives, or those that do not know a time before ready access to digital media (Wesner & Miller, 2008). Digital natives have highlighted the need for access, information, and speed of communication. They have also begun the transition from the more traditional belief of knowledge derived experts to the collection of personal experiences as a form of knowledge development (Krishen, Berezan, Agarwal & Kachroo, 2016). These interaction and experiential learning opportunities have begun to shift not only how one thinks about learning but also how learning design is being considered across educational programs.

Generation of Digital Natives

From online dating to social platforms to shopping from home, the generation colloquially deemed “digital natives” live in a web-based world. From how the learner thinks about the educational process to how they conceptualize their place in the world, the digital native concept has been debated in relation to its significance on the teaching and learning process (Bennett, Maton & Kervin, 2008). These authors highlight two critical factors that set this generation and future generations apart from those that came before them; (1) their deep understanding of the use and implications of information technology, and (2) their learning preferences in relation to this understanding (Bennett, et al., 2008). This shift in the use of social media has led to the development of a gap between instructor and student in the thinking processes and learning needs within modern learning environment, further highlighting the need for change.

Thompson (2013) identified the foundation and physiological impact of digital learning in the contemporary educational environment. As a student is exposed from an early age, their mind can build the neural connections to support learning through technology-based learning experiences (Thompson, 2013). As these learning opportunities are supported and reinforced at a higher rate with each new technology introduced into the learning interaction, other forms of neural connections begin the process of decay (Kleim & Jones, 2008). As these learners are introduced to technology from very early life, they are metaphysically programmed to consume digital content with greater ease when compared to other forms. As these technology-based learners are approaching more advanced educational opportunities, their brains are hardwired to accept learning through technology at a greater rate and with greater ease than through any other medium of instruction. The modern student who is a “digital native” have clear physiological differences than previous generations.

As the digital native approaches learning, it remains important to consider the wide scope of variance in this overgeneralization of a population of students and learners and to not assume all learner have equal access or skills in the digital learning process. A critical finding in the study of technology use among digital natives is that there is very limited scope of technology use, focusing on the general web for content and the use of social mediums (Thompson, 2013). This limitation further highlights that although this generation is better prepared to consume learning through technology, they are not actively engaging social media as a learning medium. As such, the use of technology to increase learning even within the population of digital natives must be targeted and focused on the mediums they access and prefer. This results in the use of technology in learning as a subliminal form of content consumption rather than an overt learning interaction. Prensky (2001) identified the introduction of technology-based lessons to increase motivation and interaction in the learning objectives. While this is thought to be true in most modern learning environments, studies are beginning to uncover that the motivation for learning through technology alone is not impacting motivation or performance, as was assumed both in prior studies and in the popular press narrative (Thompson, 2013). This, once again, highlights the need for the instructional experience to take place in the area, technology and platform that the digital native is using rather than forcing them outside of this for a learning interaction. Social media is the key pivot point for learning to take place, inside and outside of the traditional educational process.

Social Cognitive Theory in Social Media

Initially discussed by Bandura (1986), the concept of psychosocial function is constructed from the interaction of a tirade of determinants; (1) personal, (2) environmental, and (3) behavioral. With the advent and immersion of the social constructs through social media platforms, the impact that mass media has on the way that people think, act and understand the world around them has begun to see a major shift over the past 10 years (Bandura, 2001). While Bandura (2001) highlights the causal impact of social interaction in human understanding, the author denotes that this paradigm has begun to shift as a direct reflection of the changing ways in which people interact. What this shift emphasizes is both the new form of social interaction and the new way in which the human experience can be altered using alternative forms of cognitive interaction.

In the past, an individual had to physically experience an interaction to gain the social construct through which their understanding of the world was formed. Through the expansion of immersive social media platforms, the ability of the individual to interact with experiences vicariously has become possible. As Bandura (2001) identifies, this alternative form of interaction allows for the individual to modify self-development and adaptation, and changes become embedded in the social systems that are now possible from a distance or through virtual interaction. This finding highlights that social media is not only changing how we consume experience but also how we think of ourselves as humans, the constructs through which we develop understanding and the social interactions through which one can derive learning.

Vicarious capability. Bandura (2001) notes that psychological theories of human development have focused on the learning that takes place from one's actions. This, while remaining a key attribute to self-realization and understanding, does not consider the impact of mass communication and that of social media. Through the interactions with mass media, the individual constructs meaning from their experiences, exchanges and knowledge acquisition (Bandura, 1986). As the individual interacts through social media they are continually exposed to concepts, experiences, and interactions far beyond their personal lives. As such, the individual can form new ideas, values, behavioral patterns, and social practices through a more global and diffused social modeling structure (Bandura, 2001). The individual can live, experience, and gain understanding through the lives or models of lives portrayed through the mass media outlet and social media platforms.

While this reality presents areas for concern, social control, and social engineering, it equally presents an opportunity for expansive knowledge acquisition in the learning process. Only a generation ago a student had to travel to see the artwork and exhibits of a museum. Now through a few clicks of a mouse or taps of their finger, the knowledge is presented to them in live time. Through this modern reality, a compression of experience and knowledge is possible. Students can experience interaction that has never before been possible. Educational innovator Tom Whitby notes that while learning has not shifted, the access of learning interactions has seen a major shift in the past 10 years (Personal Communication, 2018). Whitby (2018) notes that learners of any age now have direct access to the information, the authors, researcher, and interactions that will facilitate learning far beyond any textbook or classroom lecture. This live interaction has resulted in a need for pedagogical shifts in the learning process, yet it has allowed authentic learning to take place across time and space as never before. Using social media and mass media platforms learning becomes; accessible, real-time, interactive and authentic in a way that without the platform would be impossible. Whitby (2018) notes education is entering a time of digital revolution and experiential learning is the product that will shift the outcomes of the next generation of learner across the world.

Setting Objectives and Providing Guidelines

Before using social media for learning or student engagement, it is important to do two things. First, set clear objectives for how social media will play a role in student learning objectives and second, set clear parameters. For example, students can use social media to:

- Engage in conversations about a topic to deepen understanding

- Share experiences with other students and/or the public
- Increase awareness of social issues
- Build connections, community and camaraderie
- Gather feedback or conduct research about a topic
- Impact the brand of the educational institution

Interaction and engagement are the cornerstone to successful social media use. To better facilitate conversation, consider creating daily or weekly themes or prompts. This can help guide the student in engaging in appropriate and learning-centered conversations online.

Social Media Channel Selection

After determining how social media is expected to align with learning, the social media channel that is most appropriate can be selected. Facebook is among one of the most commonly used social media channels. According to Pew Research Center (2018), most adults in the United States use Facebook. For classroom or co-curricular use, Facebook Groups can be a solid option for private discussion and engagement. To protect student privacy, a Closed or Secret group would be the best option. With Closed groups, the public can view the group and see who a member is, but only posts can be viewed. With a Secret group, the administrator will have to send students a link for them to request to be added to the group. Non-members will not be able to see any of the group's information. Facebook groups are a solid option for facilitating conversations. It can be a good alternative for Blackboard discussions. Students may be more active because they may use Facebook on a more regular basis and Facebook has notification and tagging capabilities that could encourage students to engage more often.

Twitter is another popular option for student learning. According to Anderson and Anderson (2018), 45 percent of adults between 18 and 24 use Twitter. With Twitter, students can engage in conversations and share links. It is a solid option for students to discuss both shared and individual experiences and opinions. Other students and the public can follow along when students use a hashtag. When selecting a hashtag, be sure to search to see if it is already being used. If students use a hashtag already in use by other people outside of the university, it can be harder for tweets and conversations to be tracked. Tweets will be viewable by the public if the student has their account set to public. If the student has their account set to private, the student will have to allow other students and faculty to view their content through following.

More than 70 percent of people ages 18 to 24 use Instagram, according to Anderson and Anderson (2018). For classes and co-curricular activities that are visually engaging, Instagram can be a good channel for student learning and engagement. This channel also uses hashtags. Instagram is particularly useful for student experiences that have a visual component, such as Alternative Breaks or an internship.

Nearly three-quarters of all adults in the United States use YouTube and vlogging has increasingly become a popular activity (Anderson & Anderson, 2018). Vlogging may be a way to allow a student to share their personal experiences in a new way with their peers via video. Not all students will be comfortable creating and publishing their own content on a channel such as YouTube. Students should be able to adjust the privacy settings -- only allowing their professor to view a vlog if they are uncomfortable sharing it

with the world. Traditional blogging on a platform such as *Wordpress* may be a better option for these students.

Pinterest allows users to curate content, particularly links and images, onto boards. Over 40 percent of women use Pinterest, though it is used much less often by men (Anderson & Anderson, 2018). The platform lends itself well to visually-driven class projects, such as an interior design project, or to curate boards of portfolio pieces to ideas for children's activities for teaching students.

Curricular Use of Social Media

The use of social media in the college classroom has evolved significantly over the past ten years; however, as with any new instructional technology, this implementation has been slow. While many faculty see this new tool as a means to enhance the learning environment and a useful teaching and learning technology, not all faculty have embraced the use of social media. Privacy concerns, the blurring of professional and personal boundaries, lack of technical skills, logistical issues, and a sound understanding of the purpose or reason for using the technology can all impact a higher education instructor's decision to include social media activities in the college classroom. To connect with these digital natives, 100% of accredited colleges and universities use some form of social media (Davis, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, & Canche, 2012). Millennial and Generation Z social media usage ballooned from a mere one-third to more than 70 percent in three-years (Botterill, Bredin, & Dun, 2015).

While barriers related to the use of social media should be recognized and addressed, this new instructional technology provides a variety of opportunities for curricular development. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, as well as wikis and online discussion forums provide faculty with a variety of tools to use in the classroom to enhance learning, increase participation, and boost engagement. Moore (2016) argues that from a constructivist point of view, social media can be used in the college classroom to deepen a student's active participation in their own thinking, learning, and understanding of the course material. A question posted by faculty online (Twitter, for example), using agreed upon class hashtag, might solicit well-thought-out responses from students, particularly introverted students who might want time to process and think about the question at hand. In addition, Junco and Chickering (2010) posit that as digital natives, college students today are part of the Net Generation, and "meeting students where they are" in the social media space can help support and motivate students as they adjust to academic life. However, with respect to specific classroom activities, the use of social media might not be all that intuitive for students.

Through their study of a significant revision of a technology-related course where "the boundaries of the classroom were extended into the online environment," Stoerger and Krieger (2016) discovered that while college students today may be digital natives, it took time for the students "to embrace new assignments and activities that encouraged them to become co-constructors of knowledge and co-owners of their learning" (p. 11). As students and educators pay attention to their own social media accounts, they should also begin to reflect on how social media, in general, can be used effectively to create a transformative classroom environment.

When pursuing this kind of classroom transformation, faculty can use social media in the classroom in a plethora of ways. The first step is to determine the purpose of the activity or assignment. Will the activity be structured in a way to enhance student participation, collaboration, reflection or feedback? Or will it be used simply as a medium for faculty information sharing like reminding students about deadlines and requirements? Abe and Jordan (2013) note that

... teaching students to use social media in an educational context could be as simple as a modeling of its use as an instructor. For example, an instructor could openly share with students' what scholars they follow via Twitter or a professional Facebook page built to attract individuals to a specific cause. Further, assignments can be built around the use of social media. (p. 18).

For example, one of the authors of this chapter asks students to use Twitter to post articles and provide feedback that is related to the in-class discussions using an agreed upon class hashtag. As previously discussed, this approach continues the learning outside of the traditional classroom and provides an alternative vehicle for student responses and sharing of information.

Additionally, social media can be used to supplement the content and materials of the course. In a business course, for example, social media campaign failures might be examined to supplement materials related to ethical online communication and messaging. Screenshots of contemporary companies whose social media approaches essentially backfired and did not accomplish their intended strategies are particularly interesting to analyze and critically evaluate. With this kind of discussion, students gain a deeper understanding how the course material is real-world and relevant. This kind of approach brings the class discussions and readings to real life. As a follow up to this kind of approach, students can reflect on the discussion and synthesize their understanding of and solutions to the case in a written assignment.

In terms of discovery, students can use social media in real time in the classroom. Social media platforms often are the go-to source for information about social movements, events, or important news about the world. Much like the use of Wikipedia as only a starting point for information, social media platforms can serve as starting points for students' deeper understanding of issues. Students can work in teams or individually to further investigate a concept or idea and then report out in class to connect the discovery to the course content. In addition, assignments like this can also provide students the opportunity to think critically about the credibility of the information found on a social media platform, considering the source of the information and the potential bias of the source (Junco & Chickering, 2010).

Another example of collaborative learning includes an assignment wherein students create a social media policy for their college or university (see Figure 1.). A social media policy specifically related to registered student organizations did not exist; therefore, one of the authors created an assignment providing students the opportunity to assess important issues that impact the institution. As students learn about planning, organizing, and writing persuasive messages through the course content, they have the chance to put those skills to practice in drafting a social media proposal and policy which could be sent to university administration for review.

You should include a policy statement and a rationale in the report to persuade the director that this is an important issue and the policy should be adopted for students and RSO's. You may decide to include a cover memo persuading the Director to adopt the policy and then attach the policy to the memo. Or, you can imbed your persuasive rationale in the policy/guidelines document itself, as done with the faculty/staff guidelines.

To further clarify, the statement of purpose for the report is: To educate and persuade the director to adopt the policy, which is detailed in the report, on CMU student use of social media/social networking. Use any and all resources to find information about this report: phone, laptops, computer labs, interviews, Twitter, Facebook, national memberships, or other sources.

Sample issues from the three chapters to consider include: how to build credibility with the director, what are the audience expectations, how to gather information needed, what kind of organization to use for the report, use of the direct or indirect approach, what kind of logical arguments fit, what references or supplemental parts of the report to include.

Figure 1. Example of a social media policy development assignment

In a review of curricular practices of business faculty, Sapkota and Vander Putten (2018) found that, faculty should use social media in the classroom to

... ensure that students (a) master foundational communication skills, (b) know their target audience, (c) choose the appropriate communication channel, (d) continually engage their customers, (e) distinguish between personal and professional social media use, (f) are aware of what personal information they disclose, (g) consider the impact consumers can have on a business's social media presence, and (h) provide real-life examples. By using these recommendations as a foundation, faculty members will prepare students to graduation. (p. 345-346)

At best, students should understand the difference between having a social media presence and how to effectively utilize social media to benefit the organizations they will serve in the future.

Finally, at a minimum, to encourage instructors in using social media in the college classroom, professional development programs should be available to faculty. Many institutions offer instructional support through their respective teaching and learning centers. Successful faculty can come forward and offer their expertise, best practices, and failures so that more can learn how to use this new and developing instructional technology. To be successful, discussions around how social media enhances the learning environment and the effective use of it in the classroom are critical. The university teaching and learning center of these authors provides several workshops and learn at lunch sessions related to this and other instructional development topic areas. Still, in higher education, learning also takes place outside of the classroom setting.

Out of Class Learning and Social Media

Higher education is focused on developing, educating, and training the entirety of a student, academically, socially, spiritually, etc., as learning takes place both in and outside of a classroom (Keeling, 2004). Faculty and staff share in the educational process as learning transcends the classroom setting and can be applied to the world in which students live and function (Keeling, 2006). Contemporary, traditional aged students in

higher education settings tend to blur the lines between their social and academic identities and learning now takes place throughout the cycle of day, not just while sitting in a classroom. While some may choose to create alternative social media identities for academic endeavors, most will use their personal accounts to post while participating in an out-of-class learning endeavors such as service projects, cultural events, lectures, and other post-worthy engagements.

Some campus departments entice social media postings by creating and providing hashtags and then circulating the hashtags to students for use before, during, or after an event. This process broadens what a student learns in a classroom while merging that content with a real-to-life experience. However, students using their personal social media accounts to post about an out-of-class experience may not always focus on their learning. Therefore, there is room for more teaching and learning to take place regarding the merging of learning and social media.

Researching the #Hashtags

Buschlen, Esterline Perkins, and Kiurski (2018) conducted a qualitative content analysis while examining a four-year sample ($n = 3,012$) of public domain posts related to an out of class service program. The program, in this case was known as Alternative Breaks, founded by the organization known as *Break Away*. *Break Away* works with campus partners and connects groups of students with a community partner for a weeklong service experience. These events are either issue based (hunger, homelessness, poverty, HIV/AIDS) or connected to a labor-related experience (zoo renovation, wetlands renewal, property revitalization). The collegiate student teams travel to a faraway community and dedicate a week of time to the site. This study examined the posts found on three popular social media sites: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Buschlen, Esterline Perkins, & Kiurksi, 2018) while students were serving others. In this case, a campus department created and asked students to utilize hashtags while they were onsite. The basic goal was to offer the students the ability to share their story. However, what students posted in this study seemingly reflected on other aspects of the trip versus an honest reflection on the student service engagement focused on their ability to create positive social change. The data showcased a potential disconnect between the posts that students make on social media using a provided hashtag and the service they are providing for a site (Buschlen, Esterline Perkins, & Kiurski, 2018). This led the research team to outline future best practices, also found below.

Traveling/Sightseeing = 30%

This largest group of posts included photos or selfies in a vehicle, maps, signage, vehicles, recognizable cityscapes, along with photos of sightseeing, accommodations, and of food. Sample: “Driving through the Everglades. #wwwAWB.”

Personal Reflections = 25%

This second largest theme related to signing up for the trip, discussing site localities, etc. Sample: “It’s remarkable how much can be put into view in a week. I’ll never forget this journey and the remarkable people we met. #wwwAWB.”

Service in Action = 18%

The third largest theme focused on posts which highlighted students actively engaged in an event or act related to their service site. Sample: “I’m grateful for the chance to serve @wwwVolunteers.”

Group Connections = 17%

The next category communicated group-based events, not travel or service related. Examples cooking together, mingling, and/or exclusive communication. Sample: “Telling each other bedtime stories #wwwAWB.”

Promotions = 7%

The fifth theme related to the department, home campus, hosting site, teamwork for raising money toward the trip, and/or any sort of media coverage. Sample: Post of individual or groups of students dressed in university-specific shirts.

Other = 3%

The smallest theme was a catch-all category for posts that seemingly did not fall into one of the categories nor made up a large enough grouping for a specific category. Sample: “Playing video games at 2am because who needs sleep? #wwwASB.”

This research delineated a possible disconnect as students may not fully realize how to associate their out of class learning and service to others while mashing learning with social media. In other words, what they are posting may not fully capture the fullness of their experiential learning. Similarly, this situation may outline a challenge for higher education administrators who desire to incorporate social media with out-of-class learning. Some may argue that highlighting travel cities, its food, its sights through posts and pictures creates a much more broad-based story versus simply focusing on the act of service. Similar posts tend to attract future students to volunteer in a future program while highlighting the tenets of free speech and expression. Still, others may wonder how posting about “playing video games at 2:00 am” while using the provided hashtag truly meets the goals of the program?

Despite these findings, Buschlen, Esterline Perkins, and Kiusrki (2018) suggest that the process of using hashtags for out of class learning persists, but also support modifications based on this data set and from field experts. The research team also believes, if done correctly, that social media can provide both programmatic and learning-based assessment data. Assessing student learning has been a long-standing practice in higher education, with regards to classroom learning and has recently shifted to also include out of class learning (Buschlen, Warner, & Goffnett, 2014). The most viable learning events must offer cogent and reliable linkages between learning outcomes, the setting, curriculum, learning activities, and the final assessment of student learning (Goffnett, Helferich, & Buschlen, 2013). *Learning Reconsidered* embraced educating the entirety of the student, both in and out of a classroom setting (Keeling, 2004). *Learning Reconsidered 2* urged higher education administrators to assess learning and growth outside of the classroom (Keeling, 2006). Campus administrators who are interested in measuring out of class learning should follow a common process and choose to repeat it. Assessment of out-of-class learning should be fluid, process oriented, and ongoing (Keeling, 2006). An example of this process is defined in *Learning Reconsidered 2* (Keeling, 2006) and summarized below:

- Create a Strategic Plan

- Create Goals
- Collect Data
- Analyze Data
- Make Decisions
- Implement Changes
- Document Results
- Return to Strategic Plan: Repeat

The focus of this section is to outline ways in which social media can serve to collect data related to student learning. If higher education administrators provide students with hashtags for use while participating in an out-of-class learning event, these best practices might yield stronger results.

Best Practices for Social Media in Higher Education

The following represents several ways to enhance the process of using social media while students learn and function both inside and outside of a classroom.

Learning Outcomes

Student learning objectives and social media objectives must align with the social media channel selected. In most cases, Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram will be the best channels for student engagement on social media. However, depending on the goal or assignment, YouTube or Pinterest could also be a fit.

Guidelines and Parameters

Set guidelines and parameters for students so they understand the expectations surrounding the assignment of using social media. It should be clear to students how often they are expected to post, whether their posts should be viewable by the public and what hashtags they should use. Other basic guidelines for students may include: editing and proofreading tips, prohibiting clothing and logos from other educational institutions in photos, and explaining inappropriate or ineffective use of the hashtag. For example, students may be inclined to share irrelevant content or inside jokes, which would not align with the learning objectives.

Student and Faculty Training

Provide students with a brief training session to outline how best to tell their story using the provided hashtags. During the session, provide examples of both good/acceptable posts and poor/unacceptable posts. Prior to the event, consider having a student leader discuss social media posting expectations with other students. The same applies for faculty. Centers for teaching and learning can provide workshops and programs to guide faculty in the effective, in-class use of social media. Expert faculty can highlight simple activities that align with the learning objectives.

Create Policy

Bring together a team of students (users of social media), faculty, a campus social media expert, and a campus administrator team to discuss a policy statement that will help align student postings with student learning. Also, involve the students in the creation of the hashtag to infuse the appropriate purpose while also linking to community partners and/or the specific program (lecture, presentation, service learning, etc).

Model Behavior

Leading up to the learning event, be sure to model acceptable social media practices by using the hashtag in advance of the event. Ask students to utilize the hashtag before, during, and after the event. Faculty can do the same in the classroom by modeling and showcasing their own social media platforms, highlighting thought leaders, and demonstrating the use of social media in research.

Engage in Social Listening

Administrators and faculty engage in “listening” to the posts on social media. If the post is not related to the event, the learning endeavors, etc., the post may be removed; however, both administrators and faculty should consider the context of the post and make the appropriate determination here. If the issue persists, the monitor can reach out to specific student and refer to the policy.

Post Gatekeepers and Collaborators

For co-curricular events, some administrators might utilize student or office staff gatekeepers to review posts using the hashtag prior to making the post public. Some institutions have rules within their communications and marketing departments. Before implementing a social media campaign, it is important to check in with these departments as they often can provide additional guidelines, advice and support.

Pictures are Worth a 1,000 Words

Ask for daily photo updates that showcase how the student or team is progressing at the site. This can also be set up as a daily photo contest.

Storytelling

Ask student to highlight how service can be more than just a hammer and a paintbrush. Ask them to focus on highlighting how they are making a difference and learning about society while learning about themselves in the process.

Go Live and Take Followers Along

Another process that creates an immediate connection with followers of the hashtag is going “live”. This will allow followers to see video clips while the events are happening or whenever they log on to see the clip.

Prompt-based Assessment

Through a full understanding the creation of student learning outcomes, prompts related to programmatic and curricular assessment can be used to measure student learning via social media. Administrators can create prompts directed at student learning and push the prompts out to the students in the field using hashtags. Student reflections and responses can be collected, analyzed, and compared to the department’s student learning outcomes (Buschlen & Reusch, 2016). The data can be used for annual reports to move past anecdotal evidence.

Program Assessment

Social listening will also create situations where posted messages may suggest needs for future pre-site visit preparation, team related challenges, difficult sites and/or difficult site partners, and other prominent comments (Buschlen & Reusch, 2016). Departments can push out questionnaires using the hashtag related to pre-trip training, marketing, registration, etc., and see input from student users. In cases like these, it is suggested to also convene a focus group or host a personal meeting with respondents to

insure the authenticity of the author's posted message(s) prior to making any widespread changes.

Manage Conflict

Because faces are hidden behind screens, unforeseen conflicts can arise between users on social media. Disagreements among students may take a negative and unproductive turn, or a member of the public could comment in a negative way. When dealing with conflicts on social media, it is important to keep in mind that freedom of speech will apply in some cases. Each channel has terms of service that guides its use and posts can usually be reported. If a student or member of the public posts on social media in a way that begins a conflict, do not respond emotionally. It is easy for social media conversations to get out of hand or to be interpreted in unintended ways because users are not face-to-face. After acknowledging the conversation, offer to take it offline either by email, on the phone or in person.

Conclusion

Social media can be an effective tool in education -- both inside and outside of the classroom. College students, many of whom have grown up using digital channels for communications, are often excited and comfortable to use social media to share what they have learned, engage with peers in discussions, assess programs, and conduct research. Depending on their goals, faculty, staff, and administrators can use social media to help educate and engage students and facilitate discussions and learning. This chapter outlined some clear pitfalls to the inclusion of this practice along with some straightforward best practices to mitigate these issues. Using social media is a personal choice to be made by the faculty or staff managing either an academic or out of class events. Integrating social media into the higher education setting, like any other new process, will bring with it both pros and cons.

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