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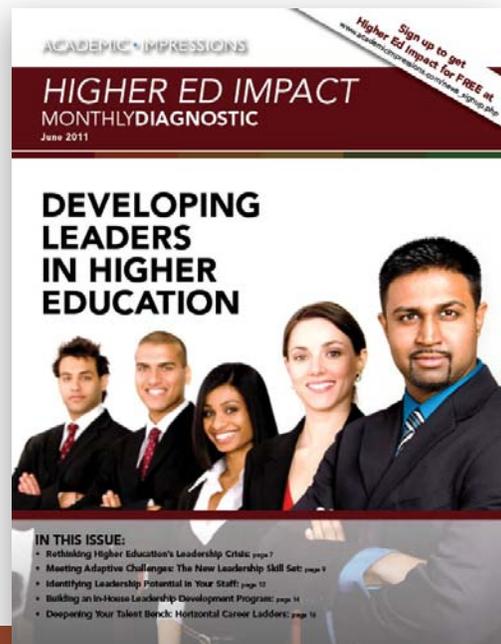
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A LETTER FROM AMIT MRIG PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC IMPRESSIONS

In the corporate sector and in higher education, organizations that have succeeded in using social technologies to move the needle on their strategic goals have done so by using these tools to enhance what they already do best – rather than treating social media as an entirely new effort.

To make effective use of social media, you don't need a new "social media strategy"; you just need to identify how these new tools can enhance your existing strategy. Can Facebook help you extend the reach of your current recruiting efforts? Can Twitter help you boost student engagement in large lecture halls? Social media represents an expansion of your tool kit for addressing perennial challenges.

Colleges and universities that have seen success with social media have also resisted the urge to centralize or restrict these new channels; they have instead focused on empowering users through centralized support and education. This has allowed them to both limit risk to the institution and maximize the potential good.

In this issue, we have brought together leading social media consultants and strategists, faculty developers, and forward thinkers in marketing and alumni relations to help you apply these ideas to your recruitment, fundraising, and teaching and learning strategies. We hope their advice will be useful to you.



FREE WEBCAST: SOCIAL MEDIA - FROM TACTICS TO STRATEGY

FEBRUARY 1, 2012 :: 1:00 - 2:00 P.M. EST

MONTHLY DIAGNOSTIC ONLINE

Download this PDF and read this issue's articles online:

<http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/social-media-tactics-strategy>

AI Contributors



Amit Mrig

PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC IMPRESSIONS

Amit co-founded Academic Impressions in 2002 to provide a variety of educational products and services that help higher education administrators tackle key, strategic challenges. Since 2002, AI has designed and directed hundreds of conferences and has served representatives from over 3,500 higher education institutions. Besides designing and leading events for cabinet-level officers focused on strategic planning, budgeting, and leadership development, Amit leads Academic Impressions' ongoing research into the five- and 10 year challenges facing higher education and plays a lead role in outlining each issue of *Higher Ed Impact: Monthly Diagnostic* to highlight how college and university leaders can take an institution-wide approach to answering those challenges.



Daniel Fusch

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS, ACADEMIC IMPRESSIONS

At Academic Impressions, Daniel provides strategic direction and content for AI's electronic publication *Higher Ed Impact*, including market research and interviews with leading subject matter experts on critical issues. Since the publication's launch in 2009, Daniel has written more than 150 articles on strategic issues ranging from student recruitment and retention to development and capital planning. Daniel previously served as a conference director for Academic Impressions, developing training programs focused on issues related to campus sustainability, capital planning, and facilities management. Prior to joining Academic Impressions, Daniel served as adjunct faculty for the University of Denver. Daniel holds a Ph.D. in English.



Tunde Brimah

SENIOR CONFERENCE DIRECTOR, ACADEMIC IMPRESSIONS

Tunde specializes in Academic Impressions' professional development offerings in instructional technology and academic affairs. His work with AI has included innovative and practical professional development offerings on emerging topics such as accountability for student learning, creating significant teaching and learning experiences, copyright compliance, formative/summative faculty evaluation processes, online/blended and mobile learning, and social media in teaching and learning among others. He researches conference topics, designs the curricula, and selects faculty to offer in-depth and interactive in-person and Web conferences.

Tunde's educational background is in educational technology, leadership innovation, and policy. His professional experience includes years of teaching at the college and graduate level. He has also worked with national, state, and local legislatures as a researcher/policy analyst on educational, health, and legislative management issues. Tunde is a Ph.D. candidate in educational leadership and innovation with a concentration in administrative leadership and policy studies at the University of Colorado Denver. He holds an MPA and MA from UCD and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, respectively, and a BA from Loyola University Chicago.



Courtney Gulden

CONFERENCE DIRECTOR, ACADEMIC IMPRESSIONS

Courtney is responsible for creating online and in-person conferences in the area of advancement, including needs research, program design, and subject matter expert recruitment. Her focus within advancement is targeted at alumni relations, annual giving, social media, and development communications. Courtney has been with Academic Impressions since 2008, and is currently writing her dissertation on the story of Samson and Delilah. She has taught several courses on subjects such as apocalyptic literature and translation theory and was a Teagle-Wabash Teaching and Learning Fellow at The Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA, where she honed her practical teaching skills and curriculum design capability with a mentor professor for one academic year. She is an occasional giver to her alma mater, Colgate University, and is a Federal Club Member of HRC Colorado.

Contributors



Mike Barzacchini

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING SERVICES, HARPER COLLEGE

Mike has worked in marketing communication and public relations for more than 20 years. Currently, he directs the marketing department for Harper College, a large, metropolitan community college outside of Chicago. He developed the college's first branding campaign and leads the institution's integrated marketing, Web, and social media initiatives.



Alisa Cooper

ASSISTANT CHAIR AND PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, GLENDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In her role as assistant chair and e-courses coordinator for the English department at Glendale Community College, Alisa works with faculty to create and improve online and blended courses. She currently serves as a technology specialist for the Maricopa District, providing a podcasting and vodcasting series and teaching with technology and mobile learning workshops for the Maricopa Center for Learning and Instruction. Alisa previously served as interim instructional technologist for the Title V Grant at Phoenix College.



Kimberly Eke

SENIOR MANAGER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING INTERACTIVE, ITS TEACHING AND LEARNING, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

Kimberly oversees two primary and interrelated services: the digital delivery of instructional materials and the development of custom interactive instructional content. Prior to joining ITS Teaching and Learning, Kimberly developed online courses at Penn State's world campus and Michigan State's virtual university.



Andrew Gossen

SENIOR DIRECTOR FOR SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY, ALUMNI AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Andrew came to Cornell in early 2010 to spearhead the integration of social media and mobile technology into the division's strategic plan. Previously, Andrew spent eight years with the Princeton University Alumni Association in a number of diverse roles. He sits on the CASE Commission on Alumni Relations, co-chairs the CASE Task Force on Social Media, and will chair the 2011 CASE Social Media and Community conference. Andrew holds a bachelor's degree from Princeton University and a doctorate in social anthropology from Harvard University.



Tim Jones

INTERIM EXECUTIVE CREATIVE DIRECTOR, NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

Tim provides vision, direction, and strategy at the intersection of the Web, design, marketing, and media to cultivate and implement innovative ideas for North Carolina State University. Tim previously served as the interim chief communications officer at NC State, transitioning University Communications to a business value-focused organization with a profound ability to influence outcomes through high-quality, creative marketing and communications. Tim started at NC State in 2007 as the director of Web communications, where he established and evolved the university's social media presence on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and location-based platforms. Tim has worked in higher education for 10 years, working at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, VA for six years before arriving at NC State.



Patrick Powers

DIRECTOR, DIGITAL MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS, WEBSTER UNIVERSITY

Patrick provides leadership for the development and implementation of integrated marketing and communications strategies designed to attract students and enhance the university's reputation through the Web and new media. Previously, he served as the interactive media manager for six years and established and maintained Webster's presence on social media networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube.



Ray Schroeder

ASSOCIATE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ONLINE LEARNING, AND FOUNDING DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR ONLINE LEARNING, RESEARCH, AND SERVICE, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SPRINGFIELD

Ray has numerous national presentations and publications in online and technology-enhanced learning to his name, and he has published the popular Online Learning Update and Educational Technology blogs for the past decade. Ray was a 2002-03 Sloan Consortium Distinguished Scholar in Online Learning, recipient of the 2002 Sloan-C award for the "Most Outstanding Achievement in ALN by an Individual," the University of Southern Maine "Visiting Scholar in Online Learning" from 2006-09, and co-founder of the New Century Learning Consortium. Most recently, he was named the inaugural 2010 recipient of the Sloan Consortium's highest individual award – the A. Frank Mayadas Leadership Award. Ray is an inaugural Sloan Consortium Fellow.



Jason Simon

**DIRECTOR, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION SERVICES,
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SYSTEM**

Jason joined the University of California System in 2009, managing the reorganization of its communication group. He oversees the system's marketing efforts and manages a group tasked with branding, advocacy, recruitment, and Web/outreach strategies. Prior to joining the UC System, Jason was the executive director of marketing and creative services at North Carolina State University. There he oversaw the launch of an integrated branding campaign, a new enrollment strategy, and the launch of a billion-dollar capital campaign.



Norm Vaughan

**ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, FACULTY OF TEACHING AND
LEARNING, MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY**

An educator and researcher with interests in blended learning and faculty development schooling, Norm's teaching background includes graduate and undergraduate courses in educational technology, K-12 education, technical training, and English as a second language. He recently co-authored the book *Blended Learning in Higher Education* and has published a series of articles on blended learning and faculty development. Norm is the co-founder of the Blended Online Learning Design Network, a member of the Community of Inquiry Research Group, and the associate editor of the *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning*, and he is on the editorial boards of the *International Journal of Excellence in e-Learning*, *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology*, the *Journal on Centres for Teaching & Learning*, and the *Learning Communities Journal*.



Alan Webber

**INDUSTRY ANALYST AND MANAGING PARTNER,
ALTIMETER GROUP**

Alan's research and client efforts focus on understanding and thriving through disruptions at the intersection of organization, culture, and technology. Alan is a recovering cubicle warrior with more than 18 years of experience working for and with commercial and government clients around the globe. Prior to his work with Altimeter, he was a principal analyst at Forrester Research, where he covered the B2B online user experience, digital engagement, and disruptive technologies in government. Before Forrester, Alan led various strategic planning, performance management, and e-government initiatives for the federal government, served as a technology and management consultant, implemented enterprise-wide ERP and business systems, and managed the accounting department for a Fortune 500 subsidiary.

CONTENTS

Social Media: Not a Brave New World 10

Social Media and Student Recruitment 14

In and Out of the Classroom: Using Social
Media in Ways that Matter 17

Social Media and Alumni/Donor
Engagement 22

Providing Central Guidelines and Support
for Social Media 26

Social Media: From Tactics to Strategy



SOCIAL MEDIA: NOT A BRAVE NEW WORLD

Although most postsecondary institutions now leverage social media channels to some extent for marketing and communications, alumni engagement, and teaching and learning, many of these efforts remain ad hoc and largely unintegrated with key strategic efforts within each division. An [April 2011](#) survey of professionals at research institutions conducted by Slover Linett Strategies Inc. and mStoner in collaboration with the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) found that:

- Only 36 percent of professionals surveyed would describe social media use within their unit as “planned” (as opposed to “spontaneous”), and 65 percent would like to see the amount of planning increase
- 62 percent regard their unit’s use of social media as only “somewhat successful” in achieving strategic goals

Because social media tools are new, it’s easy to assume that they require a new approach or a new “social media strategy.” Yet what is actually needed isn’t a new strategy, but rather a close look at your current strategy and a thoughtful analysis of how social media tools can be brought to bear on some of the challenges you face in meeting specific, strategic outcomes – such as increasing student yield, boosting the engagement of students in hybrid or online courses, or engaging alumni.

Social media isn’t a “brave new world” – it’s a set of new communication and collaboration tools you can apply to what you are already doing to help you do it better.



We have to recognize that social media efforts are never going to make sense organizationally if we pretend social media is in its own silo, separate from the goals and strategy of your division. How do your communications via social media supplement and enhance your other efforts?

Andrew Gossen
Senior Director, Social Media Strategy
Alumni Affairs and Development
Cornell University

IN THIS ISSUE

To walk you through what integration of social media into your strategic initiatives might look like across various divisions of your institution, we've interviewed experts in marketing and communications, faculty development, and institutional advancement at a variety of institutions – a statewide university system, a private liberal arts university, a community college, and a public research institution. In this issue of *Higher Ed Impact: Monthly Diagnostic*, we'll help you think through:

- How to leverage social media channels in service of student recruitment priorities
- Opportunities for harnessing social media tools to meet specific pedagogical and student engagement challenges
- Integrating social media channels into your alumni and donor engagement strategies
- How to provide central support for these decentralized efforts – even on a limited or zero budget

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION: BEYOND THE BASICS

MARCH 19 - 21, 2012 :: BOSTON, MA

USING CLOUD-BASED TECHNOLOGY FOR LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

FEBRUARY 27, 2012 - 1:00 TO 2:45 PM EST

USING FACEBOOK ADS IN THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

APRIL 5, 2012 - 1:00 TO 2:30 PM EDT

FREE WEBCAST: SOCIAL MEDIA - FROM TACTICS TO STRATEGY

FEBRUARY 1, 2012 :: 1:00 - 2:00 P.M. EST

FACEBOOK AND ADVANCEMENT: USING ADS TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT AND GIVING

FEBRUARY 23, 2012 - 1:00 TO 2:30 PM EST



SOCIAL MEDIA AND STUDENT RECRUITMENT

In student recruitment, social media tools present opportunities to extend your reach, but you'll see the best results when you use these channels in ways that are both targeted and closely aligned with your communications in other media, with very specific outcomes in mind. Jason Simon, director of marketing and communications services for the University of California's Office of the President, recommends asking these questions up front:

- What organizational objectives or priorities are you using social media to support? (e.g., increased yield, increased application rate)
- How does your use of social media complement your other efforts to achieve that objective?
- Are there gaps in your strategy that social media tools could enable you to address?

Rather than simply drive to get a number of Likes on your institution's Facebook page, focus on one of the outcomes that really matter to your department (such as number of applications completed) and identify specific opportunities to use social technologies to complement your other efforts toward that goal.

Here are two case study examples of how other institutions have integrated social media effectively into their larger efforts.

EXAMPLE A: MULTI-CHANNEL CAMPAIGN TO RECRUIT OUT-OF-STATE STUDENTS

North Carolina State University makes a fascinating case study because of the high level at which the institution has integrated social media technologies into its existing efforts, without any separate budget or staff dedicated to social media. Tim Jones, the interim executive creative director for university communications at NCSU, explains one recent initiative:

"In December 2010 at North Carolina State University, we implemented a multi-channel recruitment campaign targeting admitted out-of-state students. We employed several different communication channels, including email messaging, printed invitations, campus events, a custom "Go to NC State" Facebook tab (<http://on.fb.me/xuE2cJ>) accessed via the university's official Facebook page, and a recruitment landing page. An HTML email provided the initial touch, directing students



to complete their online applications, join the Wolfpack, or visit the custom admissions landing page (<http://admissions.ncsu.edu/apply-join/>) for more information. We promoted the custom Facebook tab in several places, including direct email, admissions landing page, university homepage, and several other online locations. The Facebook tab was built in-house using free tools and basic Web code, but provided a nice, vibrant, stylized, on-brand presence inside of Facebook, with clear, direct calls to action.”

What North Carolina State University achieved in this example was a thoughtful and well-planned integration of Facebook into its broader recruitment strategy – as one of multiple channels for reaching prospective students. Because NCSU was able to align one message across these varied channels, the institution was able to maximize its reach and the response:

- Mailed invitations contributed to a 125 percent increase in traffic on the Facebook tab
- Email invitations saw a click-through rate of just over 60 percent
- Every “Experience NC State” event was at full capacity

The end result of this strategy was a 44 percent increase in the number of early-action, out-of-state students intending to enroll at NCSU.

EXAMPLE B: A LANDING PAGE WITH ONLINE VIDEO TO INCREASE APPLICATIONS FROM ADULT STUDENTS

Because enrollment policies and practices have long been tailored to traditional-age students (especially at four-year institutions), efforts to recruit and enroll adults offer special challenges. Mike Barzacchini, director of marketing services for Harper College, has adopted an approach that has helped the institution see a significant boost in lead generation for adult students.

Barzacchini noted that traditional university websites often leave adults bewildered and unable to locate easily the information they want most: where and how to complete an application, what programs of interest are available, what financial aid may be available, and what the experience of other adults has been like at the institution. In an effort to keep the application process both transparent and streamlined for adult students, Harper College established a landing page for adult students, which:

- Walks them through the application process in quick, easy steps
- Includes only the information they most need: how to request more information, how to complete an application, how to complete a FAFSA
- Includes an online copy of Harper College’s information session, with testimonials from adult students that answer frequently asked questions

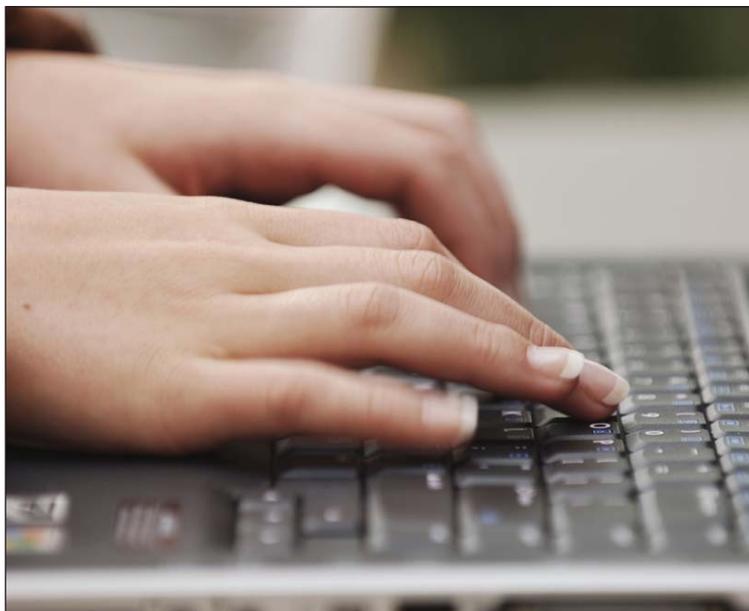
Harper College used social media – in this case, online video – to relay the testimonials on the website. Barzacchini realized that adult applicants want to hear from other adult students, and expanded the video testimonials to include interviews with students who could tell stories about how they overcame barriers to their success, including classroom anxiety and balancing work, life, and education. These video interviews support the key messages of the website: that adult students can be successful, and that they can be successful at Harper College.

For institutions hoping to try a similar landing page, Barzacchini recommends asking your admissions and outreach officers what concerns they are hearing from adult students. “Start with a lot of listening,” he advises. This will allow you to produce videos that address specific challenges and perceived challenges that adult learners may find daunting.



LEARN MORE

Read our articles **“Marketing with Online Video”** and **“Increasing Adult Student Enrollment”** in Higher Ed Impact.



A SIMILAR EXAMPLE: BLOGGING AT MIT

A few years ago, the admissions office at MIT integrated a new element into its strategy for boosting student yield by converting its undergraduate admissions website into a “Web portal and community” (<http://www.mitadmissions.org>) featuring student, staff, and alumni bloggers. Besides the positive impact on student yield, this approach creates a uniquely open channel for members of the campus community to communicate the brand and their own pride in the institution – and an opportunity for applicants and admits to connect with members of the campus community before their arrival.

Both of these examples, at NCSU and Harper College, illustrate how effective social media tools can be when integrated intentionally with your other efforts. Because social media extends the communications tools and channels available to you in meeting your recruiting objectives, the critical question to ask is not “How can I develop a Facebook strategy?” but “How can I develop a strategy to increase yield (or applications / or inquiries from a specific demographic) using the tools available to me (direct mail, email, telephone, website, Facebook, YouTube, other)?”



IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM: USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN WAYS THAT MATTER

Because so many students use social media tools – and because so many faculty use the same tools in their personal or professional lives – it can be tempting to bring social media into the classroom almost by default, on the assumption either that social media technologies are needed to engage students or that they will boost student engagement simply by their use. But social media technologies aren't silver bullets – they are tools that can support efforts to address common pedagogical challenges.

CASE STUDY: TWITTER IN AN ITALIAN CLASS

Perennial challenges in traditional (non-immersive) foreign language courses include a) how to best encourage student practice outside the classroom, where students have limited access to conversation in the new language, and b) how to aid students in moving beyond language “exercises” toward conversational fluency while within a classroom environment. In an intermediate Italian course at Montclair State University, Enza Antenos-Conforti had her students tweet to each other, in and out of the classroom, in 140-character strings of Italian. Antenos-Conforti then invited native Italian speakers she knows to join the tweeting, in effect adding an element of immersion to the language course.

In her paper on the subject (<http://chss.montclair.edu/~antenose/mytwitter.pdf>), Antenos-Conforti documented the results of this pedagogical innovation:

- 90 percent of the students reported that posting tweets boosted their confidence in writing Italian, and 79 percent reported that tweeting and conversing online with native speakers and with their peers boosted their motivation to learn the language
- While conversing in tweets, students corrected one another's Italian, leveraging their peers to boost the speed with which they acquired proficiency in the language

Antenos-Conforti's example illustrates the efficacy of a well-planned application of a social media tool to address specific challenges in teaching and learning:

- Extending the learning outside of class sessions
- Creating opportunities for more immersive learning to increase the speed of acquiring proficiency in the course's subject matter
- Enabling the instructor and students to provide each other with real-time feedback

Ray Schroeder, professor emeritus and director of the Center for Online Learning, Research, and Service (COLRS, formerly OTEL) at the University of Illinois Springfield, and Norm Vaughan, assistant professor in the Department of Education, Faculty of Teaching and Learning at Mount Royal University and co-author of the book *Blended Learning in Higher Education* (Jossey-Bass, 2008), suggest coaching faculty on the pedagogical affordances of social media tools. Assist faculty in defining their learning objectives and identifying the tools (whether social media or other) that will best help meet the objectives. If a faculty member is contemplating using Google+ in class, for instance, several questions have to be asked at the outset:

- What teaching and learning challenges are likely to be most critical to address for this course to help students be successful? (For instance, is there a need to increase the instructor's social presence in an online or blended course? Is there a need to create a more interactive learning environment? Foster collaborative study?)
- In what ways will this specific tool (or other, alternative tools) aid a larger pedagogical strategy for meeting those challenges?

Here are several examples of courses at varied institutions that have piloted specific uses of social media to address specific teaching and learning challenges.



CHALLENGE A: INCREASING STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN LARGE CLASSES

Verbal class discussion is often limited to a handful of students, and the participation issue is exacerbated in larger class settings. Teaching 90-student history courses at the University of Texas at Dallas in 2009, Monica Rankin decided to draw more students into discussion of the course content by starting the discussion (in real time) in written rather than verbal form. She used a Twitter backchannel to get students discussing the content; displaying the backchannel on a projected screen made it possible for both faculty and students to respond verbally to the discussion as it developed. Commenting on the example, Ray Schroeder notes:

- In the time it takes for one student to raise a hand and be called on by the instructor, multiple students can be tweeting back and forth on the class channel in earnest discussion of a point
- Those students who are often either too shy or too introspective to participate significantly in a live class discussion often feel less shy about tweeting their questions and thoughts
- A backchannel can be reviewed by the students and instructor even after the session has ended; besides recording a lively class discussion, the instructor can also review the backchannel to identify and highlight teachable moments



As more of the students interacted on the backchannel, this use of the social media platform increased the in-class opportunities for collaborative learning. This video (<http://rww.to/9gxTS3>) reviews her experiment.

THE “MUDDY POINT”

Besides encouraging students in large lecture halls to engage in animated (digital) discussion, Twitter can also be applied to help address the challenge of getting an instructor timely feedback on the lesson from a large number of students. Ray Schroeder suggests this use of Twitter: during a lecture attended by a large body of students, open a Twitter backchannel and invite students to tweet the points in the lecture that leave them confused. In this adaptation of the popular “muddy point” assessment exercise, the instructor can monitor the live feed, noting what points in the material require elaboration or clarification and responding in real time.

CHALLENGE B: BOOSTING INFORMATION LITERACY

As research on gaps in college preparedness continues to emerge, fueling debates in both academic and public forums, most postsecondary institutions have taken some measures to assist undergraduates in developing a higher degree of information and digital literacy, and to prepare students better for conducting academic research.

Norm Vaughan suggests using social bookmarking tools as part of structured assignments that encourage students to share, assess, and comment on one another's research. For example, he cites one case in which a course assignment required two groups of students to collect resources related to a particular issue. Groups A and B collected and shared their resources via social bookmarking, then the groups were charged with preparing for an in-class debate in which Group A would argue from Group B's point of view using Group B's bookmarked resources, and vice versa.

Frequently, colleges and universities have sought to prepare students to conduct informed research by adopting various strategies for embedding a librarian in first-year courses. Baylor University recently piloted embedding a librarian into a class via a Twitter channel. The librarian, functioning as an "information concierge," responded to student ideas and questions during the class, suggesting reference materials, online links, or other resources where students can look to pursue the answers they need. While Gardner Campbell and Ellen Hampton Filgo, who collaborated on the pilot project, noted its potential for improving students' academic performance, questions remain about how to scale a project that requires a substantial time commitment from the reference librarian.



LEARN MORE

To review some forward-thinking strategies for encouraging information literacy, read our October 2011 article "Information Literacy and the First-Year Student" (<http://www.academicimpressions.com/news.php?i=235>)

CHALLENGE C: EXTENDING LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASS SESSION

The key is to encourage metacognition – help students learn how to learn, help them co-create knowledge and take ownership of their learning. When students are creating and contributing to knowledge, learning becomes more than just checking off boxes on the way to graduation.

Norm Vaughan, Mount Royal University

The NSSE research has documented how much learning takes place outside the classroom – not merely in private study but in social settings, where students have opportunity to compare notes, "test-drive" their ideas or positions before a familiar audience, and solicit input and feedback from their peers. You can leverage social media technologies in targeted ways to engage students in learning and knowledge creation as social acts.

Norm Vaughan offers these suggestions:

- Use **Google Docs** to support collaborative work outside of class. A student working in Google Docs can choose who they share the document with (not just classmates, but potentially others on campus or at other institutions or even the general public) and can invite both critique and editing. “Writing is challenging to begin with,” Vaughan notes, “and often students spend the majority of their academic years writing for an audience of one. They write for the instructor, and they write what they feel they need to write in order to go through the hoops and get the grade. Consider the power of giving them a larger audience. Students are empowered when they realize that writing can be a social action, not just an assigned task.”
- Use **wikis** and other collaborative writing tools to have students write their own textbook over the course of the term; have them add new content, dispute, and revise
- Use **Wikipedia** to encourage students to act both as critical readers of the resources available to them and as active contributors to public knowledge; for example, the University of Rhode Island’s graduate school of oceanography is engaged in updating dozens of Wikipedia entries on oceanography
- Use **YouTube** to have students publish and share online videos – such as interviews, student documentaries, dramatic readings, or even student-created tutorials on math or science





SOCIAL MEDIA AND ALUMNI/DONOR ENGAGEMENT

CASE STUDY: COMMENCEMENT

Spring 2011. We wanted to find ways to increase engagement around commencement. We have a thriving community of students and alumni on Facebook, but rather than jamming that channel with content, we asked one simple question about memorable professors. 200 responses came back sharing memories. We asked one question, started a conversation, and received a rich body of content plus a list of names of rock-star faculty to feature. That was the only thing we posted during commencement. We looked for the best opportunity to leverage our users, our content, and the time of year.

Tim Jones, North Carolina State University

The findings from an April 2011 CASE survey (<http://bit.ly/AnMpEC>) suggest that the majority of institutions use social media channels as “megaphones” for broadcasting content, rather than as tools for enhancing engagement strategies. The majority of institutions surveyed use an “umbrella strategy” for all audiences, with only 29 percent

tailoring their social media strategies by target audience. Recognizing the largely untapped potential of these communication tools for expanding engagement with high-priority constituencies, we asked Andrew Gossen, senior director for social media strategy for alumni affairs and development at Cornell University, for advice on how development and alumni relations professionals can rethink social media use to leverage social networks in service of more strategic, targeted efforts.

MEGAPHONE VS. ENGAGEMENT

“If you think about social channels as a megaphone,” Gossen notes, “it can feel very efficient to blast your content out to however many channels you maintain - Facebook, Twitter, Google+. The problems with doing that are that you punish people who are following you on multiple channels and who now get replicated content, and you aren’t paying sufficient attention to the unique characteristics of each of these audiences. Your Twitter audience, your Facebook audience - these are not generic audiences. These are unique sets of constituents that we need to understand better.”

Online communities represent an exciting opportunity because they are often large, geographically diverse, and populated with

potential volunteers who have digital skills that can be employed on your institution's behalf. Perhaps most importantly, members of an online social community such as a Facebook group are already opted in to engagement with your institution.

To determine how best to mobilize these communities in support of specific strategic objectives, you need to:

- Invest time up front in defining these communities' demographics in as much detail as possible
- Experiment with content to determine what content prompts the most response
- Use that content to mobilize these constituencies in support of university priorities

RESEARCH: WHAT SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES DO YOUR ONLINE COMMUNITIES REPRESENT?

Gossen recommends prioritizing studies of your social media constituencies, by reviewing the demographic data provided by the platforms themselves, by surveying your "fans," and by correlating your follower data with your own prospect database. For example, beyond looking at Facebook's demographic data, can you identify:

- Where your fans live
- How old they are
- What their majors were
- How many degrees they have achieved
- What percentage of them give to your institution

Say it turns out that 80 percent of those who Liked your Facebook page are already annual fund donors. In this scenario, it would be clear that Facebook is not a good venue for making impassioned appeals for annual fund donation. Your Facebook fans are already giving. But Facebook does become an excellent channel for stewardship - you can post content on how the annual fund is supporting student life and particular initiatives on campus, where their funds are making a difference.

Andrew Gossen, Cornell University

By doing this homework as early as possible, you will be able to make more strategic decisions on content, enabling you to use your limited time and resources to greater effect.

MOBILIZING ONLINE AND OFFLINE COMMUNITIES: AN INTEGRATED OUTREACH

Once you have good data on who your online communities consist of, identify opportunities to extend the reach of your current efforts to those communities. Gossen advises, "Our engagement efforts and our annual cycle is built around offline, physical events ... reunion, homecoming, etc. ... and our staffing is often allocated to serve those events. We support the growth of alumni communities and clubs because they connect alumni to each other and to the university in beneficial ways. We need to think about online communities in the same way, and find opportunities to extend what we are already doing."

For example, Cornell University has begun live-streaming annual events to its Facebook page, providing opportunities for members of their Facebook community to interact with one another in the comments. The results are measurable (3,500 unique viewers from 58 countries), and the live stream allows Cornell to broaden the impact of efforts in which the institution is already invested.

Offline, we are already offering high-value events with content of interest to our alumni. We're already investing in these, we know they work, there's no guesswork involved. So it is an easy and inexpensive step to extend that to our online community, greatly expanding the opportunity for engagement and expanding the audience for the event's message. Use social media to enhance what you already do well.

Andrew Gossen, Cornell University

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION: BEYOND THE BASICS

March 19 - 21, 2012 :: Boston, MA

Learn how to set social media strategy, broaden your tactical reach, and cultivate supportive and engaged communities.

Now that every institution has at least one Facebook page, Twitter feed, LinkedIn group, and YouTube channel, and the value of social media is widely understood, colleges and universities need to think more strategically about their presence across all channels. The barrage of new communities, platforms, and ways to connect has the potential to overwhelm even the most savvy social media butterfly. Only when an institution steps back to structure a fully formed strategy can it push its online tactics to a better-coordinated and more productive end.

When asked to walk us through one particular example, Gossen illustrated how an alumni relations office might employ social media tools to enhance and extend the reach of a reunion event:

- Beyond just tweeting and posting reminders about the upcoming event, use a Twitter hashtag to encourage conversation among alumni before they arrive on campus
- Tweet actively to a backchannel during the event
- Have staff - or trusted volunteers - active during the event, taking pictures, shooting video, and otherwise gathering content that can be pushed out via social media channels (Flickr, Facebook, YouTube) to the larger alumni community even as the event progresses

In fact, Gossen suggests considering a new category of alumni volunteer - alumni who are responsible for capturing content at alumni and university-sponsored events beyond the campus. In the case of Cornell University, which has a global alumni community, alumni volunteers can capture content around the world - something the institution's alumni relations office is not equipped to do.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Often, the million-dollar question has been: How do you document ROI for social media? When you are integrating social media into your current engagement strategy and using these channels to enhance your existing efforts, this question becomes easy to answer. Rather than trying to quantify an inherent value to the number of Likes on a Facebook page, you can demonstrate that you gave X number of alumni in X number of countries access to a live event, at minimal cost.

Andrew Gossen, Cornell University



PROVIDING CENTRAL GUIDELINES AND SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

It's crucial that social media communications across your institution support your institution's brand and mission. Aligning multiple channels (both social and traditional) to tell the same story about your institution in varied voices is powerful; multiple and uncoordinated channels telling different stories about your institution is problematic. It's also a missed opportunity.

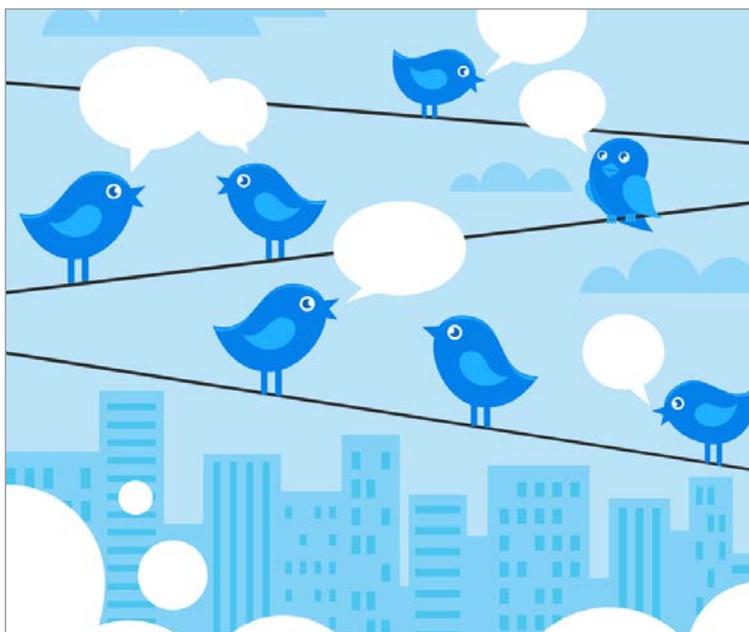
Yet studies over the past year (such as CASE's April 2011 survey (<http://bit.ly/AnMpEC>) and an .eduGuru study entitled *The State of Higher Ed Media 2011* (<http://bit.ly/zO5fuL>)) found that aside from guidelines around branding and graphics, most units do not have policies or guidelines related to content management, privacy issues, response to negative postings, or legal and ethical issues; and only 16 percent of professionals said a coordinating group exists within their institution to guide social media use.

To align those social media communications already happening, at varied points throughout your institution, take these critical steps:

- Treat your institution's key contributors of social media content as "brand ambassadors" for your institution, educating them with best practices and guidelines for representing the institution
- Establish and communicate a clear, campus-wide social media policy to address legal and privacy issues
- Develop guidelines for faculty syllabi for courses using social media

EDUCATING YOUR BRAND AMBASSADORS

It's key to recognize that those members of your campus community who are producing social media content – your bloggers, your tweeters, the alumni who maintain active Facebook groups – are already acting as the faces and voices of your institution. These are potential brand ambassadors and advocates for your institution's mission and key messages. While you do want to ensure that you have a policy addressing legal and privacy issues related to social media, make sure that your institution is equipping brand ambassadors with resources and best practices, rather than policing.



Social media is still new enough that users are starved for leadership. If you can provide them with best practices and examples of what effective communications in social media look like, most people are very willing to make improvements. Give them examples of what works, and communicate what you are doing as an institution, why you are doing it, and what benefits your approach can create.

Patrick Powers, Digital Marketing and Communications, Webster University

Webster University, seeking to support social media users across 108 campuses, has relied heavily on live streaming of social media workshops, webinars, and tutorial videos to quickly share and disseminate guidelines and best practices. There is a wealth of online tutorials on effective social media communication already available through YouTube. You can also assemble several examples of effective social media communications from your own institution, discuss them in brief videos, and share that resource out widely across your institution. This has the dual effect of both providing effective examples and celebrating and rewarding your brand ambassadors.

CULTIVATING A FACULTY COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Similarly, faculty adopters of social media tools can drive innovation in teaching and learning that will help your institution remain competitive and effective in achieving its teaching mission. While it will be important to offer guidelines to faculty, it is also important to provide resources and support for faculty innovation.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT: DON'T JUST TRAIN FACULTY ON THE TOOL, TRAIN THEM ON THE AFFORDANCES

To learn more about supporting faculty in using online technologies in the classroom, read these articles from Higher Ed Impact:

[Tips on Training Faculty on Teaching with Technology \(November 2009, with Patricia McGee\)](#)

[Training and Preparing Faculty for Teaching Online \(June 2010, with Charles Dziuban\)](#)

While these articles are focused on faculty development for online courses, much of what is advised also applies to supporting faculty in integrating social media technologies into their classes.

Kimberley Eke, senior manager of the Teaching and Learning Interactive division at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, recommends moving beyond faculty development workshops on social media to cultivate a community of practice for faculty who are using social media and other Web 2.0 technologies in their classes. “Foster a community of faculty adopters who are providing resources, tools, ideas, and attested solutions to each other,” Eke suggests. “And resist the urge to think of this as just an interdepartmental community. It can be inter-institutional. Use social media to invite contributions from faculty elsewhere in the world, via Twitter, Skype, or blogging.”

If your campus doesn't currently have an e-learning community of practice, an easy way to initiate one is to hold a faculty charette, at which:

- Several faculty provide examples of innovative pedagogical strategies they have tried that were enabled by social media tools
- Faculty brainstorm (perhaps at round tables or in small groups) ways to integrate these strategies into their own classes, additional strategies to try, alternatives, or next steps

Via a blog or online video, the results of the charette can be made available online to the larger group of the institution's faculty.

ESTABLISHING A CLEAR POLICY AND GUIDELINES

Given the decentralized creation of social media content, it will be important to establish and communicate a central policy addressing social media use in relation to legal issues (FERPA, HIPAA, copyright, and

fair use), as well as guidelines for how to represent the institution well. In the absence of guidelines, institutions miss not only the opportunity to limit potential risks to reputation by reminding social media users of the public nature of social media sites, they also miss the opportunity to educate and empower brand ambassadors to serve as more unified, effective voices for the institution's mission, vision, and key strategic messages.

For a close look at establishing campus-wide guidelines, read our past article “Managing the Risks of Social Media.” (<http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/managing-risks-social-media>)

For examples of central social media resource hubs and guidelines, check:

- The University of Oklahoma's “Web Communications” site: (<http://bit.ly/yvid2B>)
- The University of Oregon's social media best practices: (<http://webcom.uoregon.edu/socialmedia>)
- Webster University's social media guidelines: (<http://www.webster.edu/socialmedia/>)



GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY

Alisa Cooper, assistant chair and e-courses coordinator for the English department at Glendale Community College, suggests establishing additional guidelines specific to syllabi and coursework, in collaboration with representative faculty. These guidelines don't need to be long; they just need to be clear. For example, Glendale Community College's guidelines are centered on just four points:

- Emphasizing that students can't be obligated to provide personal information on the Web as part of a course assignment – faculty need to allow students to either opt out of an assignment or use pseudonyms
- Ensure that syllabi clarify the public nature of social media to students
- Ensure that the use of social media in the course is clarified in the syllabus, and that students are immediately aware of what is optional, what is mandatory, and how it's related to their graded assignments
- Ensure that students aren't being graded in any public fashion

“These are rules faculty already know,” Cooper notes. “The purpose of the guidelines is to serve as a reminder, and to help faculty manage the increasingly blurry line between the public and the private sphere in their classes.”

