To Twitter or Not to Twitter

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Because of my research on social media, people often assume I am a cheerleader of these technologies. While I clearly see the benefit of using social technologies to connect with colleagues for professional development and for increasing student engagement, it is clear that these services are not for everyone.

As a senior student affairs officer (SSAO), no doubt you have been exposed to multiple pleas to join Twitter. The 2011 NASPA Annual Conference featured sessions designed to explain Twitter and what an SSAO can do with it, Twitter tutorials and colleagues sporting “Tweet Me” ribbons. If that exposure to Twitter was not enough, a close friend or a colleague may be cajoling you into setting up an account.

All of these circumstances might have you thinking: “Should I be on Twitter? I am a senior leader in the field, after all.” The honest-to-goodness truth is that you might not be ready to engage on Twitter and that’s okay. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. While you have heard the cheerleaders telling you why you should use Twitter, let me present some reasons why you should not:

- It is yet another thing you have to do. You are busy with meeting after meeting, an inbox that you can barely control, reports to write and people to supervise, all of which does not leave much time in your busy schedule. Twitter has a steep learning curve and once you are comfortable with the technical aspects of the platform, it requires ongoing attention.

- It will make you uncomfortable. Twitter is an environment very different from the world of an SSAO. From the start, the Twitter platform has democratized roles and relationships. For instance, it is not uncommon for a famous author to communicate directly with readers. Twitter blurs the boundaries of hierarchies and allows “the little people” to have as strong a voice as those in leadership positions.

Generally, this is not how the workplace operates. The student affairs office has a fine delineation between the entry-level workforce, mid-level managers, senior professionals and students. Imagine the ramifications of such a technology on campus – students can have both individual and collective voices stronger than your own. Whooa!

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- You will be challenged to consider, and in many cases respond to, new perspectives that have very little to do with your substantive work. While that sounds like a good thing in principle, imagine the cognitive dissonance it will create as well as extra work. I’m sure that when you were in graduate school, Sanford’s notion of challenge and support really resonated with you; however, these days, the challenges you receive are more often related to strategic planning or budget cuts. Engaging with others on Twitter might challenge you in insufferable personal and professional ways. That’s just not fun.

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- Backchannel communications are time killers. A backchannel is a running public dialogue on Twitter aggregated around a specific topic. It is called a backchannel for a reason – it is in the background and not typically noticeable. On top of all of your other responsibilities as an SSAO such as meetings, supervision, strategic planning and possibly even fundraising, Twitter can open the flood gates for communication with students and other constituents. Most universities have a backchannel, but students rarely share any feedback that a student affairs division could use constructively.

My Twitter followers agree, providing the following comments when I asked them why SSAOs may want to avoid Twitter:

- "All of the information sharing from other institutions and colleagues will just complicate things."

- "Why waste your time on Twitter when you can ask the same question in a meeting you attend with 20 people – who needs Twitter?"

- "[You’ll find yourself wanting to consult your network for a better answer than the one you’re getting in person."

- "You may have your way of thinking challenged and be forced to consider new, previously unconsidered perspectives.

- "You won’t like getting instant feedback from students."

So, my advice is to keep a level head and stay off of Twitter. Your e-mails are waiting.

Rey Junco is a social media scholar and an associate professor in academic development and counseling at Lock Haven University. You can try to reach Rey on Twitter, but odds are that he won’t respond.

If, after all the above admonitions, you still want to try Twitter, the following is a good starting point: montclaireduacademy.com

News In Brief

Dr. Reynol Junco visits Montclair State: "Surely! We’re going to use it for class?" Special Guest speaker visits Montclair State to discuss the use of social media in the classroom, addressing the faculty and student perspective. Featuring Dr. Reynol Junco, Purdue University.

The Research Academy for University Learning, in partnership with the Academic Technology Committee and with support from many Montclair State programs and departments, sponsored the special guest visit of Dr. Reynol Junco, Associate Professor of Library Sciences, Purdue University. Dr. Junco visited the Montclair State University campus on September 27, 2013.

Rey spent the day giving two talks to the campus community. The first was based on a chapter from his forthcoming book, Engaging Students through Social Media: An Evidence-Based Approach for Student Affairs, (Wiley/Jossey-Bass, March 2014), and was titled, "Surely! We’re going to use it for class?: Evidence-based approaches to using social media in the classroom." Rey spoke on the use of social media like Facebook and Twitter to support student learning, with a focus on research-based practices that can lead to deep learning outcomes.

Rey’s afternoon talk, "Inside the Educator’s Studio," took on a more interview-based format driven by audience and livestream viewer questions. It was moderated by Art Esposito, Associate Director of the Center for Advising and Student Transition.

Both talks can be viewed on the Research Academy for University’s Ustream channel: ustream.tv/channel/teachlearn.

5th Annual University Teaching and Learning Showcase scheduled for May 2, 2014

The Research Academy for University Learning is happy to announce that the date has been set for the 5th Annual University Teaching and Learning Showcase at Montclair State University. In its fifth year, the Showcase will feature a diverse array of faculty presentations focused on current practices and emerging research on teaching and learning, as well as featured keynote speaker, partner and sponsor kiosks and special giveaways and exhibits. The call for proposals will open soon, so please save the date, and visit our website for more information and resources related to the annual University Teaching and Learning Showcase. This event is free and open to the public: montclair.edu/academy/events/university-showcase.

Interim Director of the Research Academy for University Learning

The Research Academy is pleased to announce that Dr. Milton Fuentes will serve as the Interim Director of the Research Academy for University Learning for the 2013 fall semester. Dr. Fuentes is an Associate Professor in the Psychology Department and has been with the University since 1999. He has been a long-time supporter and participant in many of its programs, including the Engaged Teaching Fellows Program.

The position of Director is active and we invite you to apply and share this opening with your colleagues. This position is open until filled and available for immediate start. Please see the position description below and visit our website to view the full listing.

Position description:

Montclair State University is seeking a dynamic and experienced Director for its Research Academy for University Learning (RAUL). Through creative and innovative programs, RAUL supports University faculty in developing their full potential as teachers, mentors, and motivators who can ignite a passion for learning in their students. The Director will be a leader in faculty development who can successfully promote excellence in teaching and learning through interactive workshops, the Engaged Teaching Fellows program, and other RAUL-sponsored programs. She or he will provide leadership in developing a community of awareness and practice around teaching. Additionally, the Director will be in charge of developing and offering faculty development programs to promote interdisciplinary collaborations throughout the University. As the name suggests, the Director of the Academy will promote research opportunities for faculty that can lead to contributions to the literature on effective pedagogy and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

For detailed job description and qualifications, please read the full job posting here: https://oit-app2.montclair.edu/hr/jobposting/details.php?id=351
We achieve digital wisdom by enhancing our brain's capacity through the appropriate use of technology. This is Marc Prensky's major argument in Brain Gain (2012). Although many of my generation continue to labor in the traditional classroom setting, with its emphasis on the transmission of knowledge through face-to-face (F2F) lectures, others are exploring the use of technology for teaching content as well as language skills. In our continuously evolving high tech society, employment opportunities are being redefined as part of a global tech society, employment opportunities are being redefined as part of a global tech society, employment opportunities are being redefined as part of a global tech society, employment opportunities are being redefined as part of a global tech society.
were doing well in three of the courses.

A successful classroom project for English language learners involved tutoring partnerships between students majoring in Linguistics and their counterparts in Shanghai, China. I had remained in contact with Shufa Li and her first name would be too difficult to pronounce. When connecting with students who are not native to the English language, everything must be simplified, not only for them but for the native speaker as well. I never thought we would become as close as we have. We still communicate and talk frequently over email and FaceTime.” (Gabrielle’s blog: scatoshanghai.wordpress.com.)

Another project participant, Jonathan Williams, also found these language learning partnerships rewarding, though he chose to work with Skype rather than FaceTime.

Technology made these global projects possible. It is also changing the dynamics of learning subject matter and languages. Online and hybrid courses afford students and teachers opportunities to learn beyond the confines of the traditional classroom at convenient times for all involved. In addition, mobile communication tools (i.e., notebooks, iPads, tablets, smartphones, etc.) have made video calls or emails possible. It is also changing the dynamics of teaching-learning, but also in the degree of interconnectivity in multiple environments, which include school, work, neighborhoods, communities of practice and nations. The future of education at all levels offers exciting opportunities for learning with technology and managing time wisely so that we can all eventually attain digital wisdom.

References


"How to be a Better Learner." By Geraldine Sealey in Real Simple. Available online at realsimple.com/work-life/life-strategies/better-learner-00100000108560/index.html


"Reacting to the Past: Pedagogical Introduction." Published by Barnard College’s Reaching to the Past Reacting Consortium (RC). Available for download at reacting.barnard.edu/cuicurriculum.


Books and Articles

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Search free resources within Academyl earning mini-lessons or true/false quizzes to their smartphones. Other creative uses of technology in ESL classrooms involve the use of videos. I have witnessed how technology-savvy ESL students have effectively collaborated with classmates in the creation of videos for classroom projects that were successfully uploaded to YouTube and shared with a wider audience. This approach allows ESL students an opportunity to use their second language in context in order to effectively communicate with others and accomplish a variety of goals.

A successful classroom project for English language learners involved tutoring partnerships between students majoring in Linguistics and their counterparts in Shanghai, China. I had remained in contact with Jie Chen, a professor of English at Shanghai Institute of Technology who was a student in a course that Shufa Li and I had remained in contact with Shufa Li and her first name would be too difficult for me to pronounce. When connecting with students who are not native to the English language, everything must be simplified, not only for them but for the native speaker as well. I never thought we would become as close as we have. We still communicate and talk frequently over email and FaceTime.” (Gabrielle’s blog: scatoshanghai.wordpress.com.)

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The proposed CB/PAR Think Tank will be modeled upon the NIH-funded Science Project’s Critical Participatory Action Research Summer Institute, which is designed to introduce participants to the theory, methods and ethics of community-based/critical participatory action research. The Think Tank is scheduled for the upcoming fall semester, will be comprised of three evening seminars and will serve as a study/taught team where participants discuss their projects while learning more about the best practices and tenets of CB/PAR.

Faculty are encouraged to join the Research Academy and Service-Learning and Community Engagement on the following dates to become involved in this critical research initiative:

November 8: 5-8 p.m., Adelina Lounge November 11: 5-8 p.m., TBD

To get involved, please contact Bryan Murdock, Director of Service-Learning and Community Engagement at murdock@montclair.edu or by calling 973-655-6831. ...Continued from page 3

Think Tank project

The Research Academy for University Learning is proud to announce they are co-sponsoring the Community-Based/Participatory Action Research Think Tank project offered to faculty this fall by the Service-Learning and Community Engagement program.

In order to integrate its civic engagement efforts with the intentional and explicit democratic dimensions described and called for in the Crucible Moment, the Service-Learning and Community Engagement program in collaboration with the CURY Global and the Service Learning Project is implementing the Community-Based/Participatory Action Research Think Tank (CB/PAR) with a $1,000 grant funded by Bringing Theory to Practice.

The proposed CB/PAR Think Tank will be modeled upon the NIH-funded Science Project’s Critical Participatory Action Research Summer Institute, which is designed to introduce participants to the theory, methods and ethics of community-based/critical participatory action research. The Think Tank is scheduled for the upcoming fall semester, will be comprised of three evening seminars and will serve as a study/taught team where participants discuss their projects while learning more about the best practices and tenets of CB/PAR.

Faculty are encouraged to join the Research Academy and Service-Learning and Community Engagement on the following dates to become involved in this critical research initiative:

November 6: 5-8 p.m., Adelina Lounge December 11: 5-8 p.m., TBD

To get involved, please contact Bryan Murdock, Director of Service-Learning and Community Engagement at murdock@montclair.edu or by calling 973-655-6831.
Meet the 2013-2014 Engaged Teaching Fellows Program Fellows and Mentors

Fellows:

Ndidiamaka N. Amutah, Assistant Professor, Health and Nutrition Sciences
M. Laetitia Cairoli, Adjunct Professor, Anthropology
Joseph Donnelly, Professor, Health and Nutrition Sciences
Elaine Gerber, Associate Professor, Anthropology
Thomas Herold, Assistant Professor, Modern Languages and Literatures
Haci-Murat Hubey, Professor, Computer Science
Marie Keem, Adjunct Professor, Family & Child Studies/Health and Nutrition Sciences
Archana Kumar, Assistant Professor, Marketing
James Rotonda, Adjunct Professor, Psychology
Quinn Vega, Professor, Biology and Molecular Biology

Mentors:

Ikechi Ekeledo, Associate Professor, Marketing and International Business
Jerry Alan Fails, Assistant Professor, Computer Science
Eva Goldfarb, Professor, Health and Nutrition Sciences
Mark Kay, Marketing, Associate Professor, Marketing
Lyndal Khaw, Assistant Professor, Family and Child Studies
Christine Lemesianou, Associate Director, School of Communication and Media
Kirk McDermid, Assistant Professor, Philosophy and Religion
Marissa Silverman, Assistant Professor, School of Music
Dirk Vanderklein, Associate Professor, Biology and Molecular Biology

Submission guidelines

To submit an article or essay for publication, please send a one-paragraph prospectus to Julie Dalley at dalleyj@mail.montclair.edu or a draft manuscript proposed for publication.

We welcome a variety of submissions that address the many topics concerning higher education teaching and learning, and encourage you to write and discuss your experiences, practices, research and emerging scholarship. We print essays, articles, book reviews, and research summaries. We do accept certain items that have already been published, with the proper permissions included with the submission. All essays and articles should be a maximum of 2200 words, including a brief bio of the author and a complete list of works cited. We reserve the right to accept or decline to publish any one piece based on our publishing policies and criteria.

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