

Social Networking in a Graduate Industrial/Organizational Program

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While social networks proliferate, insight is lacking about how graduate students, faculty, and administration collaboratively engage such networks. In early 2011, University of Phoenix rolled out what has become the world's largest, single institution, educational social networking site, *PhoenixConnect*. The authors examined graduate student, faculty, and administrator contributions and interactions within this university social network.

Participants from the graduate program in Industrial/Organizational (I/O) Psychology were given qualitative interviews during bimonthly face-to-face classes to investigate the ways participants from different cohorts used social networking. The results revealed different patterns and frequencies of use by students, faculty, and administrators.

Student participants made the heaviest use of social networking, with the major source being the I/O forum followed by Facebook. Contrary to Head and Eisenberg's (2009) research using undergraduates, the I/O graduate students on *PhoenixConnect* did not report being multi-taskers who worked on academic assignments while constantly monitoring their Facebook accounts. Instead, they reported using RSS feeds, checking when an email message appeared, or kept an informal once-a-week schedule. Most faculty reported having *PhoenixConnect* accounts but being much less attached to them and less responsive to postings than were the students. Faculty and administrators preferred using LinkedIn to other social networking sites. A few faculty members maintained multiple accounts and developed specialized lists of friends related to particular interests or projects. Most faculty keep their personal contacts separate from their academic and student contacts. Administrators' use of social networks was less frequent than that of faculty but similar in structure.

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Reference:

Head, A. J., & Eisenberg, M. B. (2009). Finding context: What today's college students say about conducting research in the digital age. (Project Information Literacy Progress Report, February 4, 2009). Retrieved from http://projectinfolit.org/pdfs/PIL_ProgressReport_2_2009.pdf