

Caution! Beware of Pitfalls

Office of Career Services

With the freedom to post what you want online comes the responsibility to do so in your best interests not only for today, but also for who and what you want to be tomorrow. Recent estimates say as many as 80-90% of students on campuses where Facebook has been adopted have profile pages and the majority of those student members check their Facebook daily.

Think about who you might want to be in five to 10 years when you post an “identity” on the Internet. Just because it is a popular technology does not absolve you of the responsibility to use it in legal and appropriate ways — including taking into account your obligations regarding proper conduct as a citizen of the University.

Who's Looking at You?

Because it services students, Facebook may provide a false sense of security. Many students believe they can mingle with their peers free from intruders. However, social networking sites not only make no guarantees that people who don't belong stay out, but that because of its popularity it's become something of a target for a bevy of surprise visitors. Stories abound about how everyone from marketers, to job recruiters, college admissions counselors, teachers and even law enforcement are using Facebook to see what students are doing.

Who's Looking at You?

- Employers use social networking sites to research applicants for internships, co-ops and part- and full-time jobs
- Law enforcement agents have raided college parties after they were posted on social networking sites
- College admissions officers research applicants
- Teachers and administrators have made scanning Facebook for mentions of their school or students

Things to Think About

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Cyberspace can have the effect of creating an illusion of intimacy that could prove dangerous for you in reality.

Use the manners and mores of behavior in physical space both in how you present yourself and how you interpret other people online as a guide. Think not only about what identity you create for yourself online, but also how you represent others. At the very least, be sure that you take their feelings and reputation into account.

Invincibility

Before the advent of Facebook, there was a student at a university who used a chat room to post some facts about the size of his penis. What a surprise when he went for his first job interview, all nicely tailored in a new suit and armed with a good GPA. He was rejected. There was a friendly alumnus on the search committee who told him the reason: the HR person on the hiring committee had looked him up on the Internet and found the posting! Frantically, the student called university officials asking them to remove it. They could not help him because a commercial ISP was the domain of the posted information. In time, the student learned about the procedure in which he had to engage in order to have the posting removed. It never occurred to him that a relatively harmless boast could cause him so much trouble.

Invincibility

This example is just one of many. Other examples from around the country include:

- Students whose posted pictures of themselves partying bolstered the administrations case when the underage students were charged with alcohol abuse
- A student who applied to be a resident advisor but was rejected because staff reviewing applications found material the student had posted inappropriate
- Students reprimanded for extreme and possibly libelous statements that they made about a professor

Caching

- In the days before Google became a dominant search engine for the Internet, ISPs that sported chat rooms had policies regarding caching information. Nowadays, Google is a major corporate entity with which one deals when it comes to cached information. To date, Google has tended to be good about removing material within a certain number of days pursuant to a proper request. But let's take a step back and see what caching means.
- Caching, in effect, means that if you post something on Facebook, let's say for a day or two, just to be funny or to make a point, even if you take it down or change it, it remains accessible to the rest of the world on the Internet anyway.

Caching

Take a moment to think about how you want to "brand" yourself on the Internet. Almost everyone is more complex of a person than a single label can explain, but for most people it takes time and effort, if not real friendship, to get to know people's complexities. Don't give people an excuse to think of you in a single dimensional way. Instead of trying to fit into a single group, think about yourself as an interesting person with depth of personality and character. What you put out on social networking sites about yourself should be an invitation to the rest of the world to get to know you better.

Caching

Then consider what it takes to get something removed from Google. You must go through their policy process for removing information from their caching technology. Not only is that a lot of bureaucracy, but also you should know that while Google is the dominant search engine on the Internet today, it might not be tomorrow. Moreover, other search engines operate on the Internet and so it is not just Google whom you might have to contact in order to remove a page.

Caching

Think about how much you would be willing to have to go through the bureaucracies of at least three to five search engine companies to remove cached material before you post something about yourself online.

Employers Do Their Research

When screening job candidates, 1 in 4 employers uses the Internet to acquire personal information, and 1 in 10 uses or has used social networking sites like Facebook or MySpace for the same purpose, according to a survey released by Careerbuilder.com.

Employers Do Their Research

View the link below to watch a CBS news story on employers using social networking sites to research job applicants :

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=1735934n&tag=related;photovideo>

Employers Do Their Research

Of the hiring managers who used social networking sites to research candidates, the majority (63 percent) did not hire the person based on what they found, according to CareerBuilder.com's survey. The factors that deterred employers, the survey said, ranged from a candidate bad-mouthing a previous employer to them posting information about drinking or drugs, to their having an unprofessional screen name.

Employers Do Their Research

- In today's world of social networking, job seekers are just as likely to have an account on Facebook as they are on Monster.com and more employers are reviewing these accounts as part of the hiring process.
- According to Seth Rothberg at College Recruiter, up to 75% of employers now search Facebook and other social networking sites as part of the background/screening process.
- While it's one thing to search and review these accounts, a recent CareerBuilder survey also found that 34% of respondents admitted using the information obtained from these various sites to disqualify the candidate. Top areas of concern included:

Employers Do Their Research

- 41% - candidate posted information about them drinking or using drugs
- 40% - candidate posted provocative or inappropriate photographs or information
- 29% - candidate had poor communication skills
- 28% - candidate bad-mouthed their previous company or fellow employee
- 27% - candidate lied about qualifications
- 22% - candidate used discriminatory remarks related to race, gender, religion, etc.
- 22% - candidate's screen name was unprofessional
- 21% - candidate was linked to criminal behavior
- 19% - candidate shared confidential information from previous employers

Moral of the story: anything you post online is now in the public domain, so think twice before you post photos from last weekend's events. The job you save may be your own.

Sources

- **Employers Will Disqualify You Based On Your Facebook Content;**
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Contact the Office of Career Services to schedule an appointment for a mock interview, discuss career options, or get assistance in writing your cover letter and resume, and other career-related matters.

Monday, Wednesday 12-4:00pm

Tuesday, Thursday 9:00am-1:00pm

Friday 10:00am-12:00pm

SBE Suite 230 or 672-1205

www.uncfsu.edu/CareerServ/