Engaging Students Through Social Media in the Health Sciences

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Introduction

• Teaching in a diverse, urban community college, it has become apparent that students spend most of their free (and classroom) time participating in social media.
• In response, we decided to incorporate social media, blogs specifically, as a way to increase student engagement, retention and achievement.
PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. The participants will view our blog and learn techniques we used to enhance it.
2. The participants will work on creating a blog that fits into their curriculum and developing materials for a blogging experience that they can incorporate in a class.
3. The participants will learn how to create assignments, reflective writing and critical thinking activities that they can use to link the blogging project to their course goals.
What are Blogs in the Academic Community?

• Blog is a term short for "web log" and is simply the name for an online diary or journal, or the activity of writing thoughts in that journal.

• Social media, including blogging, represents the future of higher education and it enables educators to provide students with a tool that is enjoyable yet educational.

• Education becomes no longer a fact-based learning process; instead, it’s student-engaged, cognitive.
Healthy Eating and Healthy Living Blog

• [www.qcc.cuny.edu/hped/hehl](http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/hped/hehl)

• Goals for this blog:
  – Help students create positive change in their lives, and making those changes last.
  – Help students increase exam scores, learn the course materials more efficiently and translate the health education into a service learning component.
Procedures

• Students were first asked to search the blogosphere and rate the health blogs they found.

• Students were then asked to create their own health blog on such topics as nutrition, reading food labels, cooking techniques, alternative therapies, current issues in health or health care.

• Students drew on course materials, and other academic resources to ensure the accuracy of their blogs.
The Relationship between Service Learning and Blogging

• Translating health education via blogging is an important service learning tool that helps students learn while actually performing a service to their community.

• Service learning has been an important part of higher education and pedagogy for over 20 years because it adds richness and reality to an academic experience for both students and faculty.

• Students get to know their communities, develop new skills and integrate knowledge of course materials into an authentic setting.

• What was most significant in using blogs was students’ abilities to apply the knowledge and skills learned in one setting to another.
Benefits of Blogging

• Blogging is cross-curricular.
• Blogging is a publishing tool.
• Blogging takes writing assignments into the real world.
• Blogging is a useful networking tool.
• Blogging encourages collaborative, team work.
• Blogging creates student engagement.
• Blogging enhances communications techniques.
Tips for Blog Success

• First, student blog entries must relate back to the course objectives.

• Second, students need to feel they are providing accurate, easy-to-understand information.

• Instructors need to allow for a draft process so the student’s final product is a blog they are comfortable with and is academically appropriate.

• Lastly, making sure there is adequate technical support for the blogs is key.

• Instructors should decide ahead of time what type of platform to use. If not, blogs may be difficult to upload, or lack accessibility.