Eastern Connecticut State University
TITLE III Grant

Report

Social Media as a Tool for Admission, Retention, and Graduation in the Health & Physical Education Department

May 20, 2012

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Health & Physical Education

Eastern Connecticut State University
Social Media as a Tool for Admission, Retention, and Graduation in the Health & Physical Education Department
REPORT: May 20, 2012

Introduction

The premise of last year’s Title III proposal was that the creation and expansion of an Eastern Connecticut State University HPE-specific Facebook page would increase student admission, retention and persistence within the PE and SLM majors and at the University.

Item 4.0 General Scope of Services

The HPE Facebook page has become an information sharing and community-building device for all students, alumni, parents, administrators, and faculty within the HPE major programs and University. Virtually all department events, policies, requirements, deadlines, reminders, and other pertinent information are posted on a regular and almost daily basis.

This has enabled our “fans” to not only stay abreast of the news and facts they need to know, but has also enabled them to find and interact with others of similar background and interests, keep up with friends, join special interest groups, and share links, information and videos. It has also enabled the HPE Department to engage students in their majors, attract students to the programs, and permit the exchange of personal and academic ideas.

https://www.Facebook.com/pages/Easterns-HPE-Department/203879376316669?sk=wall

Item 4.1

In the words of the 2011 Title III Grant RFP, the writer contends that the HPE Facebook page has “develop[ed] effective cohort support programs that develop or create major learning communities, increase student faculty interaction, assist students to succeed in major gatekeeping courses, or other approach for the purpose of increasing student retention and timely graduation in the major”

Item 4.3

Only an extended period of time will truly tell how effective the use of social media will be in the admission, retention, and graduation rates of HPE students. A survey was administered to all HPE majors via email in April 2012. A brief summary of the survey results is included in this document.

Item 6.0 Budget:

Second year request for funding: faculty stipend for N. Williams: 1500 USD
**Item 8.2 Proposed Plan: (please refer to the August 2011 Title III proposal)**

The plan of action included, but was not limited to:

- September - December 2011: Facebook page postings every second or third day; collection of data for “fan” use, numbers of page views, anecdotal information
- October - November 2011: blast emails to incoming transfer and first time students for Spring 2011
- January 2012: announcements during the first week of classes
- Spring 2012: continuation and repetition of the appropriate steps above with “specific attention,” if possible, to cohorts of students of color, and low-income and first-generation students
- February 2012: administration of a general pilot survey of HPE Facebook users
- April 2012: administration and data analysis of a survey; identification of cohorts of students of color, low-income and first-generation students. Also identification of student opinions re: Facebook and “community,” retention within the major, and retention within the University
- May 20, 2012: grant report submitted: **all of these goals were met**

Action planned for 2012 – 2013:

- continuation and repetition of the appropriate steps above with attention, if possible, to cohorts of students of color, and low-income and first-generation students
- administration of survey in February 2013

**RESULTS**

The **HPE Facebook page has become THE primary and almost exclusive source of HPE information dissemination to our students.** What we have learned anecdotally:

- students read the HPE FB page frequently and talk to each other about it
- students value the posts with PDP* information and alumni profiles
- students value the posts with news of their classmates and faculty: these draw the greatest amount of feedback and comment
- students value frequent posts (~ daily); an FB page without frequent posts will not attract faithful fans and have reduced impact
- students want, like, and need to have items of importance re-posted
- students give closest attention to posts with images, particularly photos of their classmates; photos are easy to get with current cell-phone technology; appropriate clipart is plentiful, free, and easy to find

**HPE FACEBOOK FACTS AND FIGURES for May 2011 – May 2012:**

- current HPE Facebook “fans”: 240 (we had “zero” in May 2011)
- page views during the first year: >120,000
- number of HPE FB followers on Twitter: 28
- number of HPE FB posts by N. Williams in 12 months: >260
- number of students and staff who have told NW they “love” HPE FB: lots
Results of the April 2012 HPE Facebook Survey

(n = 41)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minority Students</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Generation</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-Economic Status (self-perception)</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency visiting FB page:</th>
<th>61% several times per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is HPE FB useful?</th>
<th>Usually/Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does HPE FB build community?</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community regardless of academic success?</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community regardless of socio-economic status?</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPE FB a positive force in your retention w/in major?</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPE FB a positive force in your retention at Eastern?</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Written comments (unedited)

1. HPE facebook is the bomb! [note from NW: this means the person likes HPE FB]

2. I absolutely love the fb page. The updates I get that I wouldn't get otherwise as a commuter makes my life so much easier! Hope you keep it!

3. I love the HPE/SLM page. It gives information regarding the PDPs that is helpful for graduation.

4. Love the HPE Facebook page and twitter account so helpful! Keep up the great work!

5. Very useful and reliable.

6. professors should advocate and/or show the page to students during class. just briefly
7. I think it is very informative to let students know what is happening in the HPE/SLM major on a daily basis

8. Love it!! :) good info, makes dates easy to remember!!

9. No comments

10. I have not visited the HPE Facebook page so I can not comment on many of these. I would imagine it is useful for students though.

11. I don't generally visit the page, but I always read any posts that show up on my newsfeed. I'm definitely glad that HPE has a page, it gets the word out about most events.

12. I no longer have a facebook.

13. I like how they show PDP opportunities

* **PDP** = Professional Development Points: points are required for certain upper level classes. They are earned and accumulated by students when they attend special events related to the major but not as part of a class requirement (e.g. a University Hour lecture on violence toward women; a panel discussion of ESPN broadcasters)