

Researchers: Twitter can increase student engagement, boost grades

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Tweet this: Using a social networking platform such as Twitter as a tool in university courses can increase student engagement and boost grades.

That's the conclusion of a study involving university students published Nov. 12, 2010, in the *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*. Find an online abstract of the article [here](#).

Authors Rey Junco of Lock Haven University, Greg Heiberger of South Dakota State University and Eric Loken of The Pennsylvania State University carried out the research.

The fieldwork used a group of 125 students — 70 in the experimental group that used [Twitter](#) and 55 in a control group — taking a first-year seminar course for pre-health professional majors.

“The idea that [student engagement](#) can be increased outside of the classroom in a low-credit course through the use of technology is one of the key findings. Students are able to engage with faculty regularly in short exchanges,” said Heiberger, coordinator of pre-health professional programs in SDSU’s Department of Biology and Microbiology. “It was a one-credit course and the contact we had with students was daily. That’s not common with many one-credit courses.”

In the experimental group instructors and students used Twitter for various academic discussions. Researchers measured engagement by using a 19-item scale based on the National Survey of Student Engagement.

Results showed that the experimental group had a significantly greater increase in engagement than the control group, as well as higher overall grade point averages for the entire semester. Analyses of Twitter communications showed that students and faculty were both highly engaged in the learning process in ways that transcended traditional classroom activities. This study provides experimental evidence that Twitter can be used as an educational tool to help engage students and to mobilize faculty into a more active and participatory role.

"It was clear that students were highly engaged with us and with each other on Twitter and that had a significant effect on their overall academic success," said Junco.

“To some extent, it does add to the faculty member’s level of commitment but it allows for them to leverage technology to directly connect with students throughout the day,” Heiberger said. “Faculty

could Tweet five minutes after dinner and answer a couple of quick questions. Communications outside of class, such as these, are important factors in student engagement and success.”

Heiberger said Twitter not only increased students’ contact with instructors, but also their contact with each other. That made it made it possible for students to support each other in a vibrant virtual learning community.

Such [social networking](#) technologies raise new possibilities for cooperative/collaborative learning, learning communities, media in education, post-secondary education, and teaching/learning strategies, Heiberger said.

Heiberger and his colleagues are currently conducting follow-up studies on the impact of social media on retention of college [students](#) in their first and second years.

Provided by South Dakota State University

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