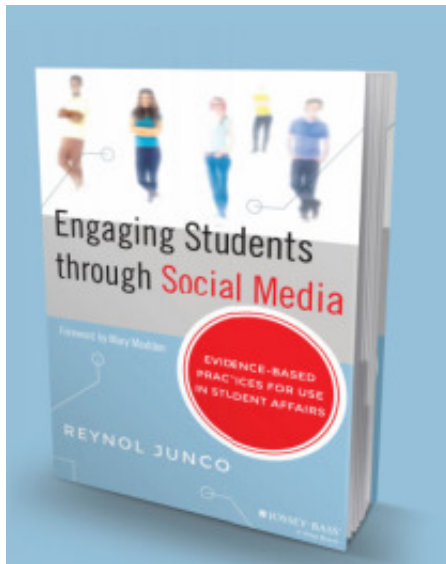


Engaging students through social media is focus of new book

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Reynol Junco is using Facebook and Twitter to help college students succeed. Instead of seeing social media as a distraction in the classroom, Junco says it helps him connect with students. In his new book, "Engaging Students Through Social Media," Junco encourages student affairs professionals and other educators to use social media to do the same.

Contrary to popular belief about the negative effects of social media, Reynol Junco is using Facebook and Twitter to help college students succeed. Instead of seeing social media as a distraction in the classroom, Junco says it helps him engage and connect with students. In his new book, "Engaging Students through Social Media," Junco encourages student affairs professionals and other educators to use social media to do the same.

Junco, an associate professor of education at Iowa State University, has studied college [students'](#) online behavior and habits to better understand how they are using social media. His research shows students who use social media are more engaged in class and campus activities. The

caveat is how they spend their time online.

For example, Junco found students who used Facebook to play games, post photos or chat were less involved in campus activities. However, students who used Facebook to create or respond to events and comment on or view photos were more engaged. The benefits are reflected in academic performance and face-to-face interactions with peers on campus.

"Decades of research show that student engagement in the classroom and interaction with faculty and peers predict a host of educational outcomes for students and also predict how well an institution will educate and graduate students," Junco said. "I think that social technologies are lumped in with all educational technologies and seen as detracting from this; however, that's furthest from the truth. In fact, integrating social media into active learning and 'flipped classroom' activities only serves to promote faculty-student interaction and [student engagement](#)."

And engaging students improves retention. Through follow-up interviews, Junco found students who were required to use Twitter for class were more likely to stay for a second year than students who did not. Unfortunately, Junco says many faculty members are still reluctant to use social media. He would like to see educators at all levels use it more in the classroom.

"In K-12 settings, teachers are forbidden to use social media with students and these sites and services are often blocked on campuses. It's a subtle way of sending a message that the only reason teachers would use social media with students is to cross the boundaries of the professional relationship. Continuing to have such fear or animosity toward social technologies makes us miss great opportunities to meet students where they are," Junco said.

How to make it happen

As with any change, it doesn't happen overnight. Simply creating a Facebook page or Twitter feed will not automatically lead to results. Junco says educators and student affairs professionals must set clear goals and develop a plan for implementing any social media strategy. Incorporating social media in class must be a requirement for students to guarantee participation. He also cautions against using social media as the only channel to engage students.

Technology has made it easier for students to connect through social media 24-7. Nearly 80 percent of teens have a cell phone, and almost half of those own smart phones, according to a 2013 study by the Pew Research Internet Project. However, Junco explains in his book that not all students have the technology to access and use social media. Part of the planning process should include how to reach these students.

Junco talks more about how to plan and assess [social media](#) interventions in the video above. A free book chapter is posted here. "Engaging Students through Social Media" is published by Jossey-Bass and available through online retailers. Junco is also the author of "Using Emerging Technologies to Enhance Student Engagement" and "Connecting to the Net.Generation."

Provided by Iowa State University

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