

# Inspirational session 14

Session's theme: Students for students

Paper number: 33

Presenters: Wies Allemeersch, Sofie Hiels, Anne-Sophie Seghers, Herman Van de Mosselaer

Presenters' Organisation: Plantijn University College

Session's chair: To be announced later.

Session title: Facebook as E-learning Platform? A higher education student perspective

Abstract:

Facebook as E-learning Platform? A higher education student perspective (ongoing research project). Social network sites (SNS s) have since 2004 emerged as key platforms for social interaction, drastically changing the way young people interact, exchange information and organize events in the process. Studies have shown that higher education students use these SNS s on a daily basis (Pempek et al. 2011) and that these SNS s have a great potential for improving the on- and off-campus experience of especially first year students. They also influence the pedagogical relationship between students and their student counselors and institutions (Selwyn, 2009). This explorative study aims at discovering the current roles of SNS s (limited to Facebook) in the academic experience of higher education students. Using the theories of Social Capital and Social Constructivism as background, this study departs from the perspective of the student on the relationship between Facebook and school.

Key questions that will be answered are:

- How do students use Facebook in academic contexts?
- How valuable do they assess their academic Facebook use?
- Do they welcome this emerging pedagogical application of Facebook?

The study plans to answer these questions through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods in which students of a Belgian university college reflect on their academic related Facebook use. The results can function as a starting point for further research and debate in this area.

# Inspirational session 14

Session's theme: Students for students

Paper number: 34

Presenters: Baljit Gill

Presenters' Organisation: Aston University

Session's chair: To be announced later.

Session title: The role of Peer Mentoring in the transition of international students to university

Abstract:

This session will share the experiences of one UK University in enhancing the student experience through peer support. The Peer Mentoring programme at Aston University offers support for students, by students across the student lifecycle, providing information, advice and guidance at critical points of their university career. It is promoted as a positive support mechanism, moving away from the deficit model for struggling students, and participation in the programme is viewed by staff and students as a mechanism for taking responsibility for their learning and playing an active role in their own development.

While aiming to provide additional support for students from a wide range of backgrounds eg older learners, overseas students and first-generation students the programme is inclusive to all students. Our programme takes a student lifecycle approach, believing that university is a series of transitions and subsequently offers student-to-student support from pre-entry through to graduation and beyond. This well-established programme has been running for seven years, and in that time has developed in response to student feedback and consultation, from a small-scale pilot to a centrally managed activity functioning across the university in all disciplines, to meet both student expectations and student needs.

This session will discuss the benefits of peer mentoring, focussing specifically on the provision of pre-arrival peer support for overseas students, and will explore the data obtained via pre- and post-mentoring questionnaires to evaluate the impact on both mentors and mentees. On-going monitoring of the programme and student feedback indicate that it is perceived as a valuable mechanism of support in enhancing the student experience and supporting successful transition to and through university.