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Community College Recruiting Through Facebook

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE RECRUITING THROUGH FACEBOOK

by

Wendy Saba Smith

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2016
ABSTRACT

COMMUNITY COLLEGE RECRUITING THROUGH FACEBOOK

by Wendy Saba Smith

May 2016

The purpose of this research study was to determine the ways in which community college administrators, faculty, staff, counselors, recruiters, and current students report using social networking - specifically, strategies related to recruitment were examined. There was an extensive review of the literature that included background, theoretical foundations, and pertinent research of social media. Along with data collection, there were also analysis reports, conclusions, recommendations for college personnel, and those for research.

The study was conducted to determine if there was a difference in social networking usage for community college recruitment, difference in the views about the effectiveness of social media as a communication tool, and difference in the opinions of this effectiveness, each across different demographics such as gender, age, and education attained thus far.

Participants of this research endeavor included 240 students and various faculty, staff, recruiters, counselors, and administrators representing the 15 community colleges in the state of Mississippi.

This research study revealed that the largest population of participants, that being 87.5%, use social media, and 82% of those who use social media also have a Facebook account. It was also determined through this research that the majority of faculty, staff, and administrators representing the 15 community colleges agree that Facebook is an...
effective communication tool for recruitment of college students. The majority of current students neither agreed nor disagreed that Facebook is an effective communication tool. Interestingly though the majority of community college counselors disagreed that Facebook is an effective communication tool.
COMMUNITY COLLEGE RECRUITING THROUGH FACEBOOK

by

Wendy Saba Smith

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
and the Department of Educational Studies and Research
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2016
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated foremost to my husband, Brian Smith, who has given me constant encouragement throughout this process; to my sons, Garrett, Zachery, and Houston, whom I have tried to show the importance of education to achieve their goals in life; to my parents, Holly and Allen Saba, who have shown me the example of never giving up, therefore inspiring me to be the first in our family to hold a doctorate degree; and to my husband’s parents, Jean and Hester Smith, who have unselfishly given their time and support to motivate me in the completion of this endeavor.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Several factors shape students’ current learning experiences by making students who they are and by determining their preferences related to learning. These factors are expectations, previous learning experiences, values and beliefs about learning, and dimensions that can be seen as part of a broader student social identity. A sense of belonging is a significant concept in a student’s social identity, meaning that a person feels at home, fits into the community, or can identify with a group. A student’s sense of belonging and community affect his/her decision of where to attend college, whether to stay in school, drop out, or transfer. School identification influences students’ willingness to continue the schooling process. Social identification is linked to understanding the effects of school climate and ‘connectedness’ on a range of aspects related to the well-being of the student, including stress, positive effect, self-esteem, aggression, and victimization. The influence of belongingness in a university community affects the psychological well-being of students (Bliuc, Ellis, Goodyear, & Hendres, 2011).

According to Tinto (2005), in order for students to be successful in college, the following conditions are essential: expectations, support, feedback, and involvement. First, students are more likely to succeed when expectations are clear. Second, students are more likely to succeed in settings that provide needed academic and social support, especially during the crucial first year of college. Third, students are more likely to succeed in settings where faculty, staff, and students are able to provide information and
feedback. Finally, students are more likely to succeed in settings where they are actively involved with faculty, staff, and their peers.

Background

The Internet and associated technological advances have transformed the way people communicate and interact with one another. In the last few years, blogs (online journals), podcasts (online recordings), and other online tools have dramatically changed the way people use the Internet. Users today upload and download documents, pictures, music, and videos. There is more interaction between the user and the Internet than in the past.

Of course, the Internet is not the only electronic tool used for sharing information. For example, cell phones, IPODS, MP3 players, digital cameras, and video recorders are also used for sharing text messages, photos, music, and videos. Twitter is used for sharing text messages and status updates; Flickr is used for sharing photos; YouTube is used for sharing videos; and social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn are used for sharing and collaborating with family, friends, coworkers, students, faculty, and staff (Jackson, 2009).

Social networking is a computer-based social structure consisting of people, groups, businesses, and institutions, who share common interests. These people are tied together by friendship, kinship, relationships, beliefs, knowledge, or prestige (Domain Development Corporation, 2009). Social Networking Sites (SNSs), such as Facebook, are communication technologies being used today by people of all ages and demographic backgrounds.
Founded in February 2004, Facebook is a social utility that allows people to communicate with their friends, family, and coworkers. Technologies are developed through Facebook that facilitate the sharing of information. Users can sign up for Facebook and interact with the people they know in a trusted environment (Facebook, 2011). There are more than 750 million active users, including entrepreneurs and developers from more than 190 countries, who build informational pages within the Facebook platform (2011). The most recent Facebook membership includes more than half of all Americans in the 20-30 age group (Weber, 2009).

Because of the sheer number of users, particularly within the population of young adults, the Internet, or World Wide Web (Web), is an important marketing tool and the most critical marketing environment; it is also replacing the traditional communication methods of radio, television, newspaper, magazines, and direct mail. This is true for many organizations, including institutions of higher education (Weber, 2009).

For example, the Internet provides a major avenue of research for a prospective student searching for a college or university to begin or further his or her educational pursuits. Therefore, colleges and universities can use the Internet to entice prospective students, to grow course enrollment including online courses, to recruit student athletes, and for alumni fund-raising. Jewitt (2006) states that as technologies develop and expand, colleges and universities may face a demand to incorporate more electronic tools in their recruitment of students. In a recent article by Keller (2011), colleges have begun overhauling their websites by tracking who their visitors are, what they are looking for, why they fail to find it, and how to gauge the cost of advertising. Many higher education institutions already have social networking pages that provide timely information for
students and parents. Colleges may utilize Facebook pages as an effective resource for recruiting students.

Yet, recruitment of higher education students typically relies on traditional communications, college and career fairs, mail-outs, brochures, and word-of-mouth (Jackson, 2009). Admissions representatives attend college fairs, but tracking students who show interest is nearly impossible. After a student expresses interest in an institution, a hard copy application is submitted, and this may take several weeks or months before the student is actually contacted by someone at the institution; whereas if interest is expressed on a social networking site, the admissions office has instantaneous access to that student and is there to guide the student through every step of the admission process.

Social networking allows admissions representatives to track students from recruitment, to retention, to alumni status. They can respond to and track students electronically, offering a high level of customer service as well as maintaining relationships with prospective, current, and alumni students. Social networking allows an admissions office to simplify the admissions process, be more responsive to inquiries, and improve marketing and outreach to students.

For the school to evolve with the changing generations, people associated with an institution may want to consider revamping their marketing and educational approaches by thinking beyond the hard copy, even beyond Web pages and e-mail messages. Parents and students today are looking for a school with which they have a dialogue, and one that is available and there for them 24/7 (Jackson, 2009). Many students today are in constant need of being connected through social pipelines in order to stay linked to their peers and
have access to digital information. This millennial generation and their parents expect to be informed and recruited by higher education institutions (Lindbeck & Fodrey, 2010).

School Websites and e-mail are probably the most favored technology because they are what most institutions are predominately using. Technologies such as social networking sites and mobile applications may be least favored due to the fact that most higher education institution officials are less familiar with how to effectively integrate these innovative technologies into the admission process. Students were asked which technology they used during the admission process and rated the usefulness. The two technology platforms experienced most in 2010 were website and email. It was evident with this study that the least used technologies for institutions tend to be the “newer” technologies, which are more commonly used and most likely favored by the millennial generation. Results of the study by Lindbeck and Fodrey (2010) cannot be representative of student perceptions nationwide; however, they do present interesting results and potential areas for further study.

Social networking is like the MTV show *The Real World* (Jackson, 2009). Students are not interested in the canned approach of the past; they want real life experiences. Students today want to know what the food is like, the sports are like, and what it is like to live on campus. Administrators may need to embrace this new generation, take a few risks, and give students the chance to express themselves and share their experiences. With freedom of expression come major concerns related to possible risks, especially when the MySpace and Facebook phenomenon have not always had the most positive reputation. However, in order to attract the attention of today’s college
student, colleges and universities may want to take notice and assume some of the risk (Jackson, 2009).

If an institution is ready to give social networking a try for its marketing and outreach needs, it may consider first listening to the parents, students, and alumni. If the parents, students, and alumni think the school is worth the investment, they will let that be known, and if they have concerns about school life and operations that will also be made known. An informal social site will honestly highlight the positive and negative factors of the school.

A first step in starting a college Facebook group is to recruit a staff member to register on Facebook or LinkedIn in order to become familiar with the sites and then open up a group as a way to promote the site. Social network users create status updates and check their pages constantly, so a school must ensure that the school site is updated and current. Facebook cannot only be used as a social network and communications platform, but should also be used as an ingenious tool that administrators can use to monitor what is being said about their school and makes changes as needed.

Statement of the Problem

Colleges today rely heavily on tuition dollars due to declining state funds which lead recruiters and college staff searching for effective ways to increase enrollment. Recruitment is even more important today than in the past. One possible recruitment tool that colleges might utilize to connect with the potential millennial student is social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) At present, however, there is very little information available concerning the extent to which these potential students would utilize social media in making a decision as to which college or university to attend.
Educators and administrators who embrace social networking may find that employing the same technology that students are using could possibly be one way to attract them into the educational realm. Social networking is currently being used by many colleges and universities, and the researcher has shown how this tool is being used by community colleges in the state of Mississippi for recruiting students.

The goal of this project is to determine ways in which community college administrators, faculty, staff, recruiters, counselors, and current students report using social networking. Specifically, strategies related to recruitment are examined.

Research Questions

This study examines three different areas in relation to social networking among members in a community college. These include actual usage of social networking, whether a relationship exists between usage and recruitment, whether these users differ in their opinions concerning social networking, and their perceptions toward social networking effectiveness as a recruitment tool. The specific research questions to be addressed in this study are:

RQ1. Is there a difference in reported social networking usage at the community college based on role (currently enrolled college students, prospective college students, counselors, recruiters, faculty members, staff members, and administrators) or based on demographics (gender, age, highest degree obtained, and date of last degree)?

RQ2. To what extent do participants report that social networking is being used for recruitment at community colleges?
RQ3. Is there a difference in the opinions about the effectiveness of social networking as a communication tool based on role at the community college (currently enrolled college students, prospective college students, counselors, recruiters, faculty members, staff members, and administrators)?

RQ4. Is there a difference in the opinions about the effectiveness of social networking as a recruitment tool based on role at the community college (currently enrolled college students, prospective college students, counselors, recruiters, faculty members, staff members, and administrators)?

Delimitations

Part of this study was delimited to current community college students. Student participants were enrolled in Mississippi community colleges during the Spring 2015 semester. Only community colleges in Mississippi were studied. On a broader level, the study overall, could have included participants who were computer illiterate and did not have access to the Internet. Some other delimitations were that there was no control over who responded (students, faculty, staff, counselors, administration), and their demographics (gender, age).

Assumptions

The researcher assumed that participants were given appropriate instructions to complete the survey questionnaire. The researcher also assumed that students actively participated in the testing and completed the survey honestly. Other assumptions included Facebook survey respondents were who they declared to be and had sought information from a community college either currently or in the past. Additionally, it
was assumed that participants took part in the study voluntarily and were not influenced in any way.

Justification

Recruiting prospective students with conventional methods such as “snail” mail, brochures, catalogs, telephone and fairs was sufficient in the past, but with the technological change in today’s millennial society, colleges and universities may be restructure the way they market their institution and recruit students. Moving to a twenty-first century method of recruitment requires knowledge and proper usage of such tools as social networking Websites, e-mail, up-to-date and user-friendly Websites, as well as any other technological tool that presents itself in the future in order to reach potential students and stay competitive with other institutions.

Whereas the use of social media for recruiting is certainly becoming more prevalent, the research regarding this phenomenon is still relatively scarce, particularly as it pertains to social networking and recruitment. For example, a recent search on Academic Search Premier yielded only 53 results, and the majority of these results were not pertinent to this study. Of those, one described a social network recruitment campaign for information technology bachelor studies students at a Norwegian university college who were invited to join a Facebook group related to the subject of interest (Fagerstrom & Ghinea, 2013). Several other studies were about recruiting international students, nursing students in South Africa, and student recruitment efforts at the University of Wollongong in Dubai (UOWD). Yet, very little information on recruitment of incoming freshman at United States colleges or, specifically, Mississippi community colleges has been provided. One article did address school President at Philander Smith
College, a historically black college who uses Facebook and text messaging to connect with his students. Five years after using social media, Philander Smith College’s reputation was on the rise as well as its retention and graduation rates (Masterson, 2010).

Community colleges in Mississippi have been promised increased funding from the state legislature since 2007. According to the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges Fiscal Year 2017 Legislative Recommendations, the association is seeking an increase in their 2017 budget of $83 million; a 31.4% increase in order to reach their promised funding that has never been fulfilled. Currently, community colleges receive less state funding per student than K-12 students in Mississippi (Amy, 2013). With decrease in funding comes higher tuition rates and lower student enrollment. In order for community colleges in Mississippi to remain competitive in the student recruitment market, they need to explore alternative methods of recruiting students. This study can benefit the community college administrators, recruiters, faculty, staff, and counselors by providing statistical and information as to how social networking may or may not benefit their efforts.

Summary

Many researchers have found that administrators at colleges and universities are beginning to see the need for changing the way they market their institution due to the new generation of incoming students who feel the need for constant contact and immediate feedback. This new generation of students uses technology for research and makes decisions about which college to attend. With this change comes a need for colleges and universities to go where the students are whether this is through e-mail, Websites, or social networking. Because such a large percent of the recruitment efforts
have been done using radio, television, newspaper, magazines, and direct mail, and whereas researchers have identified the need to utilize social networking as a tool for college recruitment. Currently the degree to which colleges and universities are actually using this tool for that purpose is not known.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In the fall of 2015, it was projected that there would be 21 million students enrolled in higher education in the United States. That number is expected to increase by 15% between fall 2010 and 2020 according to the Digest of Education Statistics. The traditional college-age population range is from 18-24 years, but the average age rose 12% between 2000 and 2010 with the entrance of more non-traditional students. Total college enrollment increased 37% during the same period (Digest of Education Statistics, 2012). This expected increase in the number of higher education students may prompt administration to rethink how they market their school to be competitive in the higher academia market.

E-learning is learning using electronic means to acquire knowledge and skill using electronic technologies such as computer and Internet-based courseware and local and wide area networks (E-Learning, 2014). E-learning made its entrance to higher education institutions in the mid-1990s and began the online commercialization of higher education with the addition of proprietary schools. E-learning took the form of Web 2.0 technologies, which encouraged the production of specific digital courseware and took advantage of multimedia presentations, social interaction, and simulation modeling (Guerlac, 2011). E-learning has become big business globally due to the demand for more knowledge in the ever-increasing technological innovative society, which is one of the reasons for the increasing diversity of postsecondary students in recent years.

According to a recent Sloan Consortium report, online enrollments in the United States
are growing 17% annually, as compared to an overall higher education system enrollment increase of 1.2%. University missions are being restructured to include distance learning and using for-profit online learning institutions as their model to decrease per-student costs. Higher education institutions are faced with cuts in funding and a solution to doing more with less may be found in providing online instruction. E-learning is the apparent remedy to the problem of attrition rates and producing an increased number of degrees without an increase in resources (Guerlac, 2011).

The central role of knowledge in developing economies and societies including the digital world has been studied by social theorists in recent times. “Knowledge society” has been described by Guerlac (2011), as a new situation where knowledge, information and knowledge production have become defining features of relationships within and among societies, organizations, industrial production, and human lives. The social theory of the knowledge society explains how knowledge and the dissemination of knowledge influence economics, culture, and the politics of modern societies, and how higher education systems are strengthened or weakened by this knowledge. By observing an individual’s online social networking behavior, it may be found that there is or is not a relationship among social networking, socialization, and learning outcomes (Yu, Tin, Vogel, & Kwok, 2010). The areas to be discussed in this chapter are diffusion of innovations and social learning theory.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Everett M. Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations theory. Rogers (1995) defines innovation as an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or another unit of adoption. An innovation such
as social networking presents higher education institution staff with a new alternative for marketing their school. According to Rogers (1995), getting a new idea adopted, even when it has obvious advantages, is often very difficult. Many innovations take time to implement and adopt and may become a common problem for organizations in speeding up the rate of diffusion of this innovation. Everett Rogers has written five editions of his book, *Diffusion of Innovations*. The researcher began reading the fourth edition of the book and then realized Rogers had a fifth edition out. There were noticeable changes of innovations from the fourth to the fifth. Rogers changed the innovations studied in the fifth edition that covered more of the technologies our society uses today. This theory has proven to be relevant across many decades and changes in innovations from the hybrid corn study to mass media channels.

Rogers (1995) defines diffusion as the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. There are four main elements of diffusion and are the innovation, communication channels, time, and the social system. These elements are identifiable in every diffusion research study, and in every diffusion campaign or program (Rogers, 1995). The communication is special, in that new ideas are conveyed through messages that participants create and share with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding. The heart of the diffusion process consists of modeling and imitation by potential adopters of network partners who have adopted this process previously. Because of this, diffusion is a very special process (Rogers, 1995). Many technologists believe that innovations sell themselves and that the innovation will diffuse rapidly, however this seldom happens. Most innovations, in fact, diffuse at a disappointingly
slow rate. The most rapid and efficient way to inform an audience of an existing innovation or a new innovation is through mass media channels, such as radio, television, newspapers, and so on. Mass media enables a message to reach a huge audience.

As applied to higher education, the innovation-decision process is the process through which someone with authority at a higher education institution has first knowledge of using social networking as a recruitment tool to form an attitude toward using social networking as a recruitment tool, to decide whether to adopt or reject the tool, to implement and use this new idea, and later to confirm this decision. Knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation are the five main steps in the innovation-decision process (Rogers, 1995). Knowledge occurs when college personnel are exposed to the existence of using social networking for recruitment purposes and gains some understanding of how it functions. Persuasion occurs when college personnel form a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward using social networking for recruitment. Decision occurs when college personnel engage in activities that lead to a choice to adopt or reject social networking as a recruitment tool. Implementation occurs when college personnel executes social networking as a recruitment tool into use. Finally, confirmation occurs when college personnel seeks reinforcement of an innovation-decision already made, or reverses a previous decision to adopt or reject using social networking as a recruitment tool if exposed to conflicting messages about the innovation.

The innovation-decision process includes recognizing a problem or need, basic and applied research, development, commercialization, diffusion and adoption, and consequences. Recognizing a problem or a need begins with recognizing that there is a problem of a need, which stimulates research and development activities designed to
create or use an innovation to solve the problem or need. Basic and applied research is used to investigate opportunities to solve a problem. Basic research is an original investigation for the advancement of scientific knowledge that does not have a specific objective of applying this knowledge to practical problem; whereas, applied research consists of scientific investigations that are intended to solve practical problems, such as the case with this study. Development of using social networking as a recruitment tool is the process of setting this idea into a form that is expected to meet the needs of other potential adopters and users of this tool. Rogers (1995) states that this phase typically occurs after research but prior to the innovation that stems from the research. There is uncertainty in research and development. If the adopter of an innovation is faced with a high degree of uncertainty, the inventor-developer of a new idea must understand not just his or her own problems but also anticipate the problems of various other individuals and organizations who will be the ultimate adopters of the innovation. Information exchange about technological innovation is thus a crucial component affecting innovation.

Technology is a product of society and is influenced by the norms and values of the social system. Commercialization occurs after an innovation has been researched and is ready to be packaged for the end user. Not all innovations come from research and development; they may come from practice as certain practitioners seek new solutions to their needs/problems. Diffusion and adoption is the process of flowing messages through a communication channel and the potential adopter to make the decision to use the innovation. Finally, consequences are the changes that occur as a result of the adoption or rejection of an innovation. An example of the innovation-diffusion process was the Space Shuttle Challenger that exploded shortly after takeoff. Within 30 minutes of the
explosion, half of the sample surveyed had heard about the Challenger. How long would it have taken for news to spread using social networking (Rogers, 1995, 77)? One of the goals of this study is to research the diffusion of new communication technologies (marketing diffusion research) and the prediction of the rate of adoption for social networking for recruitment.

There are essential items to consider in implementing a social marketing campaign. The first is audience segmentation communication strategy that consists of identifying certain subaudiences within a total audience, and then conveying a special message to each of these subaudiences. In the case of this study, the total audience consists of all community colleges in Mississippi and the subaudiences are different departments of each community college such as athletics, band, career/technical, academic, etc. Next, formative evaluation research provides an audience orientation to the social marketing campaign. Then, the innovation is positioned relative to the intended audience’s meanings so as to emphasize certain desired aspects. The price of the innovation is kept very low, as the purpose of social marketing is to change behavior, not to earn profits. Finally, a social marketing campaign should utilize communication channels over which the campaign planners have control.

If an innovation has been researched and implemented, and then the decision is made to reject an innovation after having previously adopting it, this is called discontinuance. Two types of discontinuance are: (1) replacement and (2) disenchantment. A replacement continuance is a decision to reject an idea in order to adopt a better idea that it supersedes. There are new technologies constantly being introduced that may replace an existing practice. A disenchantment discontinuance is a
decision to reject an idea as a result of not being satisfied with the performance of the innovation. Dissatisfaction may occur because the innovation does not meet the objectives of the individual or organization.

In the case of using mass media channels to transmit messages to a large audience, the decision will have to be made by higher education personnel as to the effectiveness of such a medium. The mass media can reach a large audience rapidly, create knowledge and spread information, and change weakly held attitudes, but the decision has to be made whether to accept or reject this innovation. The decision process may include asking questions such as: (1) How is the Internet changing the nature of the innovation-decision process? (2) Is communication via the Internet more like mass media communications or interpersonal communication? and (3) Can Internet messages serve a role in the innovation-decision process similar to that performed by interpersonal channels?

The Internet allows people to reach many other people in a one-to-many process (similar to that of the mass media), but e-mail messages are like interpersonal communication in that they can be personalized to the individual. Common knowledge, that the Internet can largely remove the cost of communication across space. An e-mail message usually goes around the world in the same time and at the same cost as to someone next door (Rogers, 1995). For certain innovations, diffusion via the Internet greatly speeds up an innovation’s rate of adoption. For example, Hotmail, a free e-mail service launched on July 4, 1996, had spread to 12 million users eighteen months later, when it was sold to Microsoft for $400 million (Singhal & Rogers, 2001).
The rate of adoption of an innovation such as social media is the relative speed with which social media is adopted by members of a social system. Generally rate is measured as the number of individuals or colleges who adopt a new idea in a specified period, such as a year. The rate of adoption is a numerical indicator of the steepness of the adoption curve for an innovation. The perceived attributes of an innovation is one important explanation of the rate of adoption of an innovation. Most of the variance in the rate of adoption of innovations, from 49 to 87 percent, is explained by five attributes: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability (Rogers, 1995). Relative advantage is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes. The relative advantage of an innovation, as perceived by members of a social system, is positively related to its rate of adoption. Overadoption is the adoption of an innovation when experts feel that it should be rejected. Preventive innovations, defined as new ideas that an individual adopts now in order to lower the probability of some unwanted event, diffuse more slowly than incremental (nonpreventive) innovations. Compatibility is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters. Complexity is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as relatively difficult to understand and to use, which is negatively related to its rate of adoption. Trialability is the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis, and is positively related to its rate of adoption. Observability is the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others, and the results are also positively related to its rate of adoption.
In addition to the five perceived attributes of an innovation mentioned in the previous paragraph, there are other variables such as (1) the type of innovation-decision, (2) the nature of communication channels diffusing the innovation at various states in the innovation-decision process, (3) the nature of the social system in which the innovation is diffusing, and (4) the extent of change agents’ promotion efforts in diffusing the innovation, affect an innovation’s rate of adoption.

Moore and Benbasat (1991) developed fifteen scale items to measure the five main attributes (plus three other attributes) of an information technology, personal workstations (high-powered personal computers). With proper adaptation, these fifteen scale items can be applied to any particular innovation that is adopted by any set of individuals. Studies have been performed using these fifteen scale items to include studying college students adopting computer-based delivery of a university course, alcohol treatment, counselors adopting a computer-assisted counseling innovation, and so forth. Some diffusion scholars want to utilize existing scale items already developed by other investigators, but Rogers (1995), discourages this approach in favor of creating new scale items for each set of innovations to be adopted by a particular set of individuals. The specific ways in which the five attributes are expressed differs in each study, and so the measures of these attributes should be uniquely created anew in each investigation. However, the Moore and Benbasat (1991) scale items, and the sophisticated and careful methodology they utilized to develop their measures of the perceived attributes of innovations, may suggest other techniques to future investigators.

Some agencies generally have not realized the importance of what an innovation is called, at least until social marketing began to gain attention in recent years. Important
is to know who makes the innovation-decisions in a system. For example, although a school administrator may provide data about a school’s adoption of innovations, that individual’s personal and social characteristics may prove to have little relationship to the school’s innovativeness. Perhaps someone else or a set of other individuals, in the school’s organizational structure actually initiate or implement the innovations of study. Further research is needed on network influences on individual’s (and organizations’) innovativeness.

A social psychological theory with direct applicability to diffusion networks is social learning theory. Most psychological approaches to human learning look within the individual in order to understand how learning occurs. The intellectual leader of social learning theory is Professor Albert Bandura, a social psychologist at Stanford University.

There are three types of observational learning effects. The central ideal of social learning theory is the Modeling Effect in that one individual learns from another by means of observational modeling. That is, one observes another person’s behavior and then does something similar. The observer’s behavior is not exactly the same as the model’s that could be simple imitation or blind mimicry. Rather, in social modeling, the observer extracts the essential elements from an observed behavior pattern in order to perform a similar behavior. Modeling allows the learner to adapt the observed behavior (much like the re-invention of an innovation). The second type of observational learning effect is Eliciting Effect. The observer already knows how to perform a certain behavior, but seeing someone else engage in that behavior influences the observer to engage in that behavior too. The third type of observational learning effect is Inhibitory and Disinhibitory Effect. This involves observation of the consequences of someone else’s
behavior (sometimes referred to as “vicarious learning”). Inhibitory effects have to do with behaviors that are discouraged by society. An example of this is underage drinking. If a teenager observes another teenager consume alcohol and there is a negative outcome to that person (model) it will discourage drinking by the observer. The model gets in trouble or gets a bad hangover. In disinhibitory effects, the outcome to the person being observed is positive. So, the observer views there being no negative consequences to the model and this makes him/her more likely to engage in that behavior. For example, the underage drinker has a great time; maybe hangs out with a higher-status clique.

The basic perspective of social learning theory is that the individual can learn from observation of other people’s activities, so the individual does not necessarily have to experience a verbal exchange of information in order for the individual’s behavior to be influenced by the model (although of course interpersonal communication accompanies the nonverbal modeling in many cases). Thus, nonverbal communication (as well as verbal communication) is important toward behavior change. Because social learning theory recognizes external factors to the individual as important in behavior change, it is essentially “social” by viewing communication as a cause of behavior change. The individual can learn a new behavior by observing another individual in person or via the mass media (especially visual media such as television and film). Social modeling often occurs through a public display by someone with whom one is unacquainted (such as in a television program). Ideally, an individual learns more from a social model if the model is positively rewarded, rather than punished, for the behavior that is displayed.
Social learning and the diffusion of innovations have much in common. Both theories explain how individuals seek to explain how individuals change their overt behaviors as a result of communication with other individuals. Both theories stress information exchange as essential toward behavior change and view network links as a main explanation of how individuals alter their behaviors (Rogers, 1995).

After some years of believing that communication campaigns only have minimal effects, scholars began to realize that campaigns could succeed if they were carried out in a more effective manner (Mendelsohn, 1973). Successful campaign strategies consisted of (1) utilizing formative research, study of the campaign’s intended audience and the campaign’s messages in order to plan the campaign more effectively; (2) setting specific but reasonable campaign goals, (3) using audience segmentation, the strategy of dividing a heterogeneous mass audience into relatively homogeneous audience segments, and (4) designing the campaign’s mass media messages to trigger interpersonal network communication among members of the intended audience. A campaign can succeed if it is carried out in a way that is based on communication strategies like those above. Thanks to the Internet, the cost of communication across physical space has been practically eliminated. Virtual organizations would not be possible without the Internet.

Internet-related innovations have been a favorite topic of study in recent research on the innovation process in organizations. Instead of asking, as much past diffusion research has done—“What variables are related to innovativeness?”—future investigations need to ask, “What are the effects of adopting innovations?” Innovativeness, the main dependent variable in much past diffusion research, now becomes a predictor of a more ultimate dependent variable, the consequences of
innovation. Most past diffusion research stopped with an analysis of the decision to adopt a new idea, ignoring how this choice is implemented and with what consequences. Most past diffusion studies attempted to determine the first dimension of communication effects by pursuing the question “What are the effects of a communication activity to diffuse an innovation?” These effects are measured as the average change in the knowledge, attitudes, or overt behavior (that is, adoption) regarding an innovation by a set of individuals (Rogers, 1995).

Often the innovation of study was a new communication technology such as an e-mail system, a management information system, or some other computer-based technological innovation. Certainly, these new communication technologies have given new life to research on innovation in organizations.

The Social Structure of Social Networking

According to Domain Development Corporation (2009), social networking is a computer-based social structure consisting of people, groups, businesses, and institutions who share common interests. These people are tied together by friendship, kinship, relationships, beliefs, knowledge, or prestige.

Social networking sites are designed to emphasize social ties and have enormous prevalence in younger age cohorts between the ages of 14 and 22 years. Online interactions typically reinforce offline social relationships. Social network sites have featured an introduction of a new organization framework for online communities and with it, a vibrant new research context (Pasek, More, & Romer, 2009). A listing of social networking Websites found on Wikipedia.org lists 132 different sites, several of which are used in the college setting. The most common Websites are Facebook with over one
billion users, followed by Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, etc. Social networking can be used as a way to help spread knowledge to a varied audience. Social network sites are defined by Domain Development Corporation (2009) as Web-based services that allow individuals to construct a semi-public profile within a bounded system and articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection. Users view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Social networking sites support a wide range of interests and practices. Most sites support the maintenance of pre-existing social networks, but others help strangers connect based on shared interests, political views, or activities. Some sites cater to diverse audiences, common languages, and/or shared racial, sexual, religious, or nationality-based identities (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

With Facebook and Twitter having over one billion users each and YouTube having over 645 million users, many individuals access such platforms on a daily basis. This targeted social media substantially aids in the recruitment process. It acts as an alternative to traditional methods with no associated financial costs. The authors of the article, “Social Media and Internet Driven Study Recruitment: Evaluating a New Model for Promoting Collaborator Engagement and Participation,” provide a practical model for designing future recruitment campaigns, and recommend Facebook, Twitter and targeted websites as the most effective alternatives for increasing recruitment and maximizing cost-effective recruitment (Khatri et al., 2015). On social networking sites, users create profiles, set personal privacy settings and invite, accept, or reject friends. After a profile has been created, information is posted and shared on their wall for all friends to see.
Groups can be set up to fine tune their clusters of friends and share what they want with specific groups such as family, coworkers, students, teachers, etc.

The Web is broken up into separate spaces used for different tasks. A secret space is a place for short messages and instant messages. Facebook is used for group space; Blogs and YouTube are used for publishing; Second Life is used for performance; meetings and event sites are used for participatory activities; and lectures (podcasts) are used for watching and learning (Davies & Lee, 2008). Twitter is used for providing short updates; LibraryThing is for books a person are reading; and Delicious is for bookmarks and others discussed previously. FriendFeed is a web service that allows a person to add all his/her updates from social media websites, social networks, blogs and social bookmarking and micro-blogging services into one place, along with the more common feed types like RSS and Atom. There are so many different tools available that the experience can become confusing, and FriendFeed helps a user to consolidate all of these services by pulling content from multiple social networking sites into one location.

FriendFeed has one major benefit, which is the ability to carry on a threaded discussion on a specific topic and to respond to several different people instead of just one, as is the case with other social networking sites. Groups can be established with FriendFeed for the purpose of discussing single topics or themes and with the collaboration of all the other tools, photos, videos, and pictures can be viewed in one location and discussed. Another great feature with FriendFeed and many other social networking sites is the option to set a room to private or public, giving a teacher more control. The administrator of the group can also decide which features to feed in and which to keep out. The more services fed into FriendFeed, the better for facilitating
deeper discussion on specific topics. FriendFeed takes a little more time setting up, but is an excellent way to generate more conversation, networking and sharing among students and faculty (Carscadden & Harris, 2009).

ALA Connect is another social networking tool used primarily by librarians. ALA Connect is much like FriendFeed that allows a conglomeration of different tools used together in one location. ALA Connect has opened its membership to non ALA (American Library Association) members from different backgrounds and experiences that has created a more diverse forum for discussing current trends and issues (Rethlefsen, 2009).

MySpace was very popular social networking site that focused more on creativity and music. For librarians, MySpace was a place where students and faculty discussed literature with authors, saw new events, featured books, and music, or simply located places for help (Rethlefsen, 2009). Social network sites are unique in that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks, make connections that might not have been made otherwise, and communicate with people who are already a part of their extended social network.

Social network sites feature a mechanism for users to leave messages on their friends’ profiles, send private messages (similar to Webmail), share photos and videos, and display publically their connections. The social network is primarily organized around people, not interests (Pasek, More, & Romer, 2009). Social networking is currently being used in the college setting and this study plans to determine what factors influence the decision of college students on which college to attend.
Benefits of Social Networking

The benefits of social network sites are impression management, self-presentation, and friendship performance (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Impression management is a goal-directed process in which people attempt to influence the perceptions of other people about a person, object or event; they do so by regulating and controlling information in social interaction. In other words, a person may attempt to influence the way others see him/her through the use of social networking. Self-presentation is behavior that attempts to convey some information about oneself or some image of oneself to other people. Finally, friendship performance is defined as how people utilize social media to gratify their social needs to maintain their friendships.

Impression management, self-presentation, and friendship performance are all associated with online behavior and are important to this study as the researcher attempts to determine how social networking fits into the life of a college student. The social network primarily supports pre-existing social relations and a networked public that supports sociability. Development of friendship is the main benefit giving the opportunity to maintain existing offline relationships and solidify offline connections as opposed to meeting new people (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

In the last few years, social networking tools such as blogs (online journals), podcasts (online recordings), and more have changed the way people use the Internet. Users today upload and download documents, pictures, music, and videos. There is more interaction between the user and the Internet than in the past (Jackson, 2009).

Common characteristics and features of social networking sites that entice students are free Web 2.0 services and user-driven content that allows individuals the
opportunity to connect with each other via the Internet (Davies & Lee, 2008). Web 2.0 is a term popularized by Tim O’Reilly in 2005 and is defined as the difference of emerging communities compared to earlier forms of online communities to include technology, attitude, and philosophy. Social networking communities are an example of a Web 2.0 service. Web 2.0 is a philosophy and not a specific technology and is based on a common vision of its user community. The objective of all Web 2.0 services is to mutually maximize the collective intelligence of the participants and distribute the knowledge within a group (Hoegg, Martignoni, Meckel, & Stanoevska-Slabeva, 2006). Within a higher education setting, social networking has improved communication among students, recruiters, faculty, staff, administrators and parents, which in turn have established a sense of community. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), flexibility and timeliness are other key benefits to the social networking world as they give more people the chance to enter into the world of higher education.

Generational Differences

The impact of today’s community college on the millennial generation (individuals born after 1982), also known as Generation Y, is that this generation of students expect instantaneous information and answers with the click of a mouse. They respond favorably to technology and expect instruction to match the stimulation to which they have grown accustomed to in everyday life with the use of Powerpoint, Blackboard, and interactive learning through video clips, software applications, and simulations. Students are more menu-driven, meaning that they are used to pressing a button and choosing from a list of choices, and lack critical thinking skills, according to Nealy (2009). Further, millennial students prefer digital messaging over human contact
(Wendover, 2010). College students all over the world are utilizing social networking Websites for sharing photos, videos, instantaneous status updates and blog entries that express their thoughts, concerns, opinions, interests and dislikes on every subject imaginable (Nealy, 2009). Stebleton, Soria, and Mixon (2011) state that new college students face entering a new phase of life and the transition from high school to college and that some of the struggles students face are developing a social identity, managing interpersonal relationships, and making decisions about the future. Identity also seems to be an issue when some people realize they have a dual life: one online and the other in real life. There appears to be positives and negatives of interactivity and engagement, and connections with others may become weak, hollow, or superficial (Boon & Sinclair, 2009).

Tools for Recruitment

The more traditional college, whose faculty and staff still rely on older forms of communication such as mail or phone, may find it harder to stay in touch with the millennial student. Santovec (2006) states that many students who live on campus do not have landline phones; instead, cell phones are the communication tool of choice. E-mail is not a reliable source in reaching students because most rarely check their e-mail, and more effective forms of communicating are podcasts and Facebook, with Facebook being the most effective method of communication. These methods are favored because of limited and short announcements made. Some schools have tried community building Website portals but found them not to be as effective as Facebook (Santovec, 2006).

During orientation, students can be made aware of Facebook groups available that match their activities and interests. Facebook can also be used to engage students academically
and build relationships with faculty. Faculty and staff can use Facebook as a tool for learning student interests and how they are getting along in college. On the other side, some students want to know more about their mentors and can learn about them via Facebook (Santovec, 2006). As technologies develop and expand, colleges and universities may face the demand to incorporate more electronic tools in their recruitment of students (Jewitt, 2006).

In summary, Facebook is a social network, communications platform, and resourceful tool that administrators can use to monitor what is being said about their school and make changes as needed. The Web is becoming the most important marketing tool and the most critical marketing environment around. Social networking is replacing the traditional communication methods of radio, television, newspaper, magazines, and direct mail. Impression management, self-presentation, and friendship performance are all associated with online behavior and is important to this study as the researcher attempts to determine how social networking fits into the life of a college student.

Faculty, Staff, and Administration in the Social Network

Facebook has become so popular that many faculty administrators and university administration have made the decision to join (Nealy, 2009). With more faculty and staff presence on these social networking sites, students should beware of what is being posted for all to see. Of the millions of students on Facebook, there are only a few who use poor judgment in what they expose on the Internet and in the eyes of academic leadership. The majority of students are knowledgeable about the consequences of posting inappropriate photos, videos, or comments and use good judgment (Nealy, 2009). A
student panel, at Sun Microsystems’ Worldwide Education and Research Conference in 2007, encouraged colleges to promote student use of the Internet through more hybrid classes and telecommuting. Some students post excessive amounts of personal information that may embarrass them or the university they attend, but instead of banning student use altogether, students are asking to be educated on its proper use (“Logged on to the future,” 2007). Universities that have already begun to use social networking as a collegiate tool and universities that are considering such may want to consider defining and implementing a code of conduct for social networking within the context of school. The code of conduct may include a mandate “that students maintain respect for order, morality and personal honor, and the rights of others” (Nealy, 2009, p. 13). Students should also be educated on the do’s and don’ts of social networking to include negative or violent behavior online.

Students who use poor judgment in what they post on the Internet may suffer the consequences their school imposes, but administration is not scouring the Internet looking for improper conduct. If a university were to scan all of their students’ Facebook and Myspace pages for distasteful pictures, videos or illegal offenses, and discipline them accordingly, administrators would be within legal limits. Realistically, administrators would not go back to look at each and every one of their students’ social networking sites. Universities are following the same discipline guidelines for offline behavior, as well as online behavior. For years, administrators have been unsure of how to handle digital behavior, but are beginning to realize they cannot control all online behavior and must focus on the student’s behavior and not the medium of communication. Social networking, like any other form of communication has its disadvantages and advantages,
but in this digital era, administrators must find a way to make the digital form work in the college setting because social networking is the main mode of communication for college students (Lipka, 2008).

Ithaca College in New York created a Facebook task force to develop policies and procedures for guiding students through Facebook and other social networking sites in an ethical manner. They also created a Website dedicated to publicizing the rules of “digital citizenship.” This citizenship encourages students to behave responsibly, respect the rights of others on their computers, cell phones and other digital communication tools (Nealy, 2009, p. 13).

Adults in the 35 years of age and older category are jumping on the Facebook bandwagon at an increasing rate. With this action, younger generation is beginning to migrate away from Facebook in search of other ways to communicate digitally (Rethlefsen, 2009). Facebook has become a strange combination of teenagers, college students, parents, teachers, administrators, and coworkers discussing a variety of topics on a daily basis (Rethlefsen, 2009). The social network is transforming from a network that is merely social to a more collaborative network bringing together students and teachers, family and friends, and coworkers in an educated, personal, and business environment, sometimes all at the same time (Rethlefsen, 2009).

Social networking sites are becoming the digital hallway allowing students and faculty a place outside of the classroom to converse and observe certain behaviors. When a student appears to be struggling, a caring instructor is probably going to stop and ask questions to find the cause of the insecurities. People using Facebook create status updates throughout the day, which range from where they are, what they are doing,
and/or what is going on in their lives at a particular moment. If instructors have access to their students’ Facebook profiles, they can observe problem areas and jump in to help as soon as they see a student who needs help. For example, a student is confused about an assignment and posts that as a status update; the instructor notices the status and asks the student to further explain the problem. This creates an ongoing dialogue between student and teacher that helps create solutions and clearer understandings of what is expected throughout the course. Instructors also have the opportunity to maintain relationships with their students even after they graduate should they choose to follow the student through their professional career (Schwartz, 2009).

There may need to be boundaries set for digital dialogue as they should be set for face-to-face dialogue. Teachers have access to their students by text, e-mail, and instant messaging as well as social networking. Teachers should set guidelines for times they will respond to messages and when to draw the line if a conversation is headed in the wrong direction. Also, if a teacher feels that speaking on the phone or in person would better clarify a situation, that mode of communication should be used instead. Setting guidelines and letting students know what your rules are should be of top priority.

Allowing students to view a professor’s Facebook profile is a personal decision. Facebook can be used as a course management system and a way for instructors to go where the students are. If students need help and they are online at the same time as their instructor, both can chat live any time of the day or night. At the end of the semester, the instructor may want to “defriend” students and start over again the next semester (Parry, 2009). A concern of allowing students and faculty to be “friends” on Facebook is requiring students to friend their professor on Facebook as a course requirement. Peter
Juvinall, a business instructor at Illinois State University, decided that the best way to communicate with his students was to go where they are, and he used Facebook as a course management system in his classes requiring his students to “friend” him on Facebook. Mr. Juvinall insists that the reaction to how he teaches his courses is “99.9999 percent positive.” The small percentage of students who have a problem with the medium are instructed on how to adjust the privacy settings of Facebook in order to limit what their teacher can see. He also insists that he does not browse their profiles. Students use Facebook to post questions on the “wall” of his profile, submit assignments on their profiles, and chat with the instructor live. The main message Mr. Juvinall teaches to his students is that they should see their Facebook page as a digital resume as potential employers have been known to peruse potential employees pages before hiring (Parry, 2009).

Social networking is literally changing the way we interact with one another and the method we use to interact with one another. Social networking offers many benefits to a college or university. It provides a sense of community, shared experiences, and an avenue for helping one another. Participation is completely voluntary, but there seems to be tremendous interest in the use of social networking. Colleges and universities may want to consider embracing these new ways of connecting and communicating with their current students, prospective students, faculty, administration, and alumni. However, they should be selective about which applications are appropriate for the intended goal(s) and keep an open mind to adapt when something else comes along in the future (De la Paz, 2009).
In the article “Higher ed recruiters hesitant to use newer platforms,” Longnecker shared study results from the 2014 E-Recruitment Practices Report that showed the social mediums popular among high schools students is changing constantly and is expected to continue. Longnecker stated, “With so many social media options available, colleges should experiment with new trends, but it’s also important to track effectiveness to see what works best for them and their individual recruitment goals” (Longnecker, 2014).

Social networking is computer-based, but is a social structure that consists of people who share common interests. For example, if a group of people share sports as their common interest, those people will build a social structure surrounding athletics. Schools may create separate athletic Facebook pages and use them to highlight college athletes, share photos and videos of games and provide information about games in progress, such as scores and statistics.

The topic of social networking as a tool for recruiting is beneficial to higher education administrators because many higher education institutions already have social networking pages and are using them to provide timely information such as admissions, athletic and special events information, as well as staying connected to alumni with special alumni pages. This research project strives to determine how effective this tool is or has been in communicating with students and prospective students.

Social networking is currently being used by many colleges and universities as an instrument for tracking students from recruitment to retention to alumni. This tool is providing the institution with the latest technology that is already being used by college students of all ages for offering a higher level of customer service, as well as maintaining relationships with prospective, current, and alumni students. Moving to a twenty-first
century form of recruiting requires knowledge and proper usage of such tools as social networking Websites, e-mail, up-to-date and user friendly Websites, as well as any other technological tool that presents itself in the future to reach potential students and remain competitive with other institutions. This research study plans to show how this technology is being used by colleges and universities in the state of Mississippi for recruiting students.

According to a research study by Gartner Research, “there are red flags that higher education administrators don’t “get” social:

- They start telling you how their kids use social media
- They ban access to social media because ‘someone might say something bad about us.’
- They put a student in charge of the social media ‘projects.’
- They agree to do social, just run everything by PR and legal.
- Every communication must be approved before it is posted.
- They think that creating a Facebook fan page is a social media strategy

(Gartner Social Media Survey, February 2011, p. 25).

According to the Gartner Social Media Survey (2011), the most significant barrier or challenge toward adopting social media and collaborative tools in education is the lack of strategy or understanding of social media among the 798 respondents. The researcher would like to see what percentage of Mississippi higher education administrators feel the same way, and if so, training on social media and its importance to the higher education institution may be needed.
Junco and Mastrodicasa (2007) suggest that administrators may need to consider the significant policy and management implication of these tools of technology, and be able to maintain authenticity while making real connections with students, parents, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community through social media. Using the tools of technology will not come easy and poses a significant challenge as administrators need to understand how to bridge the physical world with the virtual world in a way that is mutually reinforcing. One hurdle is to provide relevant, timely and interesting content as students are easily enticed by other online entities (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007).

Uses of the Internet by Higher Education Administrators

The Internet is a major source of research for prospective students searching for a college or university to begin or further their educational pursuits. The Internet is also used as a marketing tool for higher education institutions. Colleges use social networking sites for university recruiting marketing campaigns. Effective use of social media lends to greater communication with students because they are going where the students are already. Social media is a great avenue for posting school announcements, recruiting for student organizations, uploading photos, and surveying students on different topics (Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman, & Witty, 2010). Colleges and universities also use the Internet to entice prospective students, grow course enrollment including online courses, recruiting student athletes, and for alumni fund-raising. Higher education administrators are strategizing how to effectively use one part of the Internet called social media for recruitment purposes; however, they are questioning how to best take advantage of this technology (Kolowich, 2009).
Many college administrators are apprehensive about using the social Web because they do not know much about the medium while others are enthusiastically using it without a strategic plan: an approach that experts say could leave them at a greater disadvantage (Kolowich, 2009).

Recruitment of higher education students typically relies on traditional communications such as mail-outs, college and career fairs, brochures and word-of-mouth. The most common form of recruitment is mail which is transparent, superficial, and costly, meaning that most prospective students can see through the marketing gimmicks of mail-outs and know that they are just a name on a mailing list. The majority of students who plan to attend college after high school use some kind of book or online material for information, not a piece of mail, according to Jackson (2009). Admissions representatives attend college fairs, but tracking students who show interest is nearly impossible. After a student expresses interest in an institution, a hard copy application is submitted, and this may take several weeks or months before the student is actually contacted by someone at the institution; whereas, if interest is expressed on a social networking site, the admissions office has instantaneous access to that student and can guide the student through every step of the admission process (Jackson, 2009).

For the school to evolve with the changing generation, people associated with an institution may want to consider revamping their marketing and educational approach by thinking beyond the hard copy, or even beyond Web pages and e-mail messages. Parents and students today are looking for a school they can dialogue with: one that is available and accessible 24 hours a day (Jackson, 2009).
Some colleges use methods other than traditional mail to notify recruits of their admissions status. Some use text messaging if the student chooses to receive notifications that way instead of through mail, while others use podcasting. Podcasting enables the college to send a link to a podcast featuring the college president telling them that they have been accepted into the university. The link can be played from a computer and shown to family and friends. Some colleges are taking the podcast a step further by creating more podcasts guiding a new student through the entire admissions process and recruiting cycle (McCafferty, 2006).

Social networking allows admissions representatives to track students from recruitment to alumni status. They can respond to and track students electronically offering a high level of customer service, as well as maintain relationships with prospective, current, and alumni students. As reported by Chimes and Gordon (2008), social networking allows an admissions office to simplify the admissions process, increase inquiries, and improve marketing and outreach to students. Alumni relations can be improved while keeping alumni informed of the latest developments and research at the institution.

Colleges use several different methods for recruiting students. Another way colleges try to recruit students is through campus visits. Most would think that this would be an ideal way to get to know a college, but as stated in a journal article by Chimes and Gordon (2008), comments of admissions officers and student guides are confusing and sometimes contradictory, leaving the students more confused than informed. Web sites are considered the best tool for learning about a college because they usually include details about visiting campus, special Open House programs, the
application process, and a profile of last year’s admitted class. However, from a student’s perspective, Web sites and tech integration do not seem to play a primary role in the college marketing process mainly because of the scant use of these tools in admissions and marketing due to lack of technological understanding, according to Chimes and Gordon (2008). Frequently, Web sites have too much text or buttons on one page, making it difficult to navigate. Some college Websites are differentiated from other college Websites by fully integrating technology tools such as podcasts providing sample teacher lectures or student testimonials to give students a more realistic tour of the school (Chimes & Gordon, 2008).

Some schools use social networking to recruit and research prospective students. Colleges and universities may review an applicant’s social networking sites before granting scholarships or admission into specific programs (Davies & Lee, 2008), “A significant proportion of schools are beginning to research students via search engines (26 percent) and social networks (21 percent)” (Barnes, 2009, p. 11). If students place damaging material online, they may suffer the consequences of not being admitted to a particular college. In her study, Barnes (2009) reports that admission officers used search engines and social networking sites to verify information or research students who were candidates for scholarships or entry into high demand programs with limited spaces. Schools are using this form of screening to protect themselves from potential embarrassment. Admissions staff report that social media is very important to their future strategy. Many schools are embracing these new communication tools and are eager to use them, but there are other schools that are not using these technology tools to
their potential. Schools using social media should strive to learn the “rules of engagement” in the online world in order to maximize their effectiveness (Barnes, 2009).

There is a fear of students posting negative comments about their school, but this fear should be seen as an opportunity to have dialogue and be active as well as proactive. As more and more young people spend increased amounts of time on online networks, an institutional presence will be mandatory. There are obviously many risks and rewards to recruiting with social media. Among the risks, for example, are that negative comments about faculty on social networking sites may affect recruitment. Yet on the positive side, United Kingdom universities have used Web 2.0 technologies as a means of helping students make contact with each other prior to formal enrollment. Other research is ongoing, investigating how social networking sites can help students settle into university life (Davies & Lee, 2008).

In a study performed by Barnes (2009), 53% of 243 schools reported monitoring the Internet for posts, conversations, and news about their institution (Barnes, 2009). Some universities are using Facebook as a means for helping students make contact with each other prior to formal enrollment in the hopes that this helps students make a smoother transition and comfortably settle into a university (Davies & Lee, 2008). Hence, college-bound students are using social networking sites for connecting, communicating, and collecting information (Joly, 2007). Together, students and parents are looking for an online conversation to discuss particular aspects of university life (Barnes, 2009).

While Facebook and other social networking sites are widely used by students, they are seen by many adults as student-only spaces where administrators or professors
are not welcomed. Facebook groups have been used as a way to promote programs, post comments, and share videos as a way to target a specific population. Some administrators have strayed away from the public social networking sites, such as Facebook or My Space, and attempt to create their own private social networking site by using an external vendor. There are legal reasons why administrators are concerned about using Facebook because even though Facebook is public, it is not a public service and there are no guarantees about what may happen to the Facebook business, who may buy it, or what may happen with the data. A solution to this concern could be to involve student ambassadors to control the Facebook page instead of administration to avoid invasion of a student’s privacy by an administrator (Joly, 2007).

Transformation of the Students

Students have little or no connection to an institution if they feel that no one can or will help them. Transforming from a high school student to a college student is a major step in becoming a successful college student. But, for transformation to occur, the student must have a purpose and must make a choice to begin the college journey and finish. If a person finds that purpose and meaning, he or she will assume responsibility and search further for a deeper purpose. Individuals find meaning in three primary ways. First, meaning may be found by doing something worthwhile or of personal importance through work, school, or other daily activities. Individuals may also find meaning through the development of social relationships. The third approach for finding meaning is determining how to cope with and overcome suffering (Terris, 2009).

Recently, the Johns Hopkins Class of 2016 created and tweeted a blog that offered advice to high school seniors on how to best navigate the college admissions process.
They offered a support system for prospective students, particularly those underserved students who often require more guidance in order to better transition through the collegiate experience. "We all know that the social component for achievement is profound. Social networks that appear supportive are going to be really important so that students can find a like-minded cohort," (Lesesne, 2013).

Students use technology for higher education purposes. They use it to seek out information about institutions, form connections with peers, and determine their potential fit in a university. There are challenges of using social media on campus. Sometimes, students find difficulty in maintaining their authenticity and make real connections with others. Another challenge is the void of relevant and interesting content on their social network page. Advantages of using social networking include supporting a wide range of interests and practices, varied cultures, and the maintenance of pre-existing social networks. Social networking helps strangers connect based on shared interests, political views, or activities with a diverse audience and a common language. Other students can share racial, sexual, religious, or nationality-based identities with their network group (Henig, 2006).

Students’ use social networking to build relationships that may help them succeed in their academic career or to advance their future careers and employment opportunities (Peluchette & Karl, 2010). Small Facebook groups created by students have more meaningful two-way dialogue (Carter, Foulger, & Ewbank, 2008). Digital spaces, such as Facebook, offer students a place to be creative, expand their personalities, and provide opportunities for learning and communication. Higher education institutions around the world have begun to realize the benefits of this opportunity, allowing potential new levels
of engagement, increased inter-activity, and experiences that go beyond the classroom walls.

Facebook

People join Facebook either because they were invited via e-mail by an acquaintance or asked to join as part of an academic cohort or class. The result of joining may be a new process of socialization that has not been experienced before by academic cohorts. A person’s presence on Facebook may not be the same as that person’s presence in an office or classroom at a university. Facebook allows a person to put as much or as little information on display for others to peruse at their leisure in a relatively short amount of time, whereas when meeting a person face-to-face, that person chooses what information he/she wants to provide and usually does so in small packets, not all at once (Carter et al., 2008). Some people are uncomfortable with online identities and wonder if it is appropriate for what they are supposed to be doing. Others will not question this experience, feel uncomfortable, and actively engage in the process of creating and defining new digital selves.

Race, ethnicity, and family play an important role in predicting which social network students will join. Social and class lines may have an impact on which social networking site a person will join, sometimes called the digital divide. According to a 2014 Pew Research Center survey, latinos, blacks, and whites use social media networks about equally, but there are some differences in their preferences for specific social media sites. Eight out of ten latinos, blacks, and whites use at least five social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Twitter). Facebook is the most widely used social media site regardless of race and ethnicity. But there are differences by race
and ethnicity in the use of other social networking sites. The majority of Latinos and
African Americans find Instagram more popular, whereas Caucasians find Pinterest more
popular (Krogstad, 2015). The virtual community is a battle between lower costs of
collective actions and expanding individual’s social networks vs. reduction of social ties
and drawing users into a cycle of depression and loneliness. Neither has proven
dominant. Research reflects a medium that has some positive influences on users’ social
ties. The Internet is used as a socializing tool, provides instant information, is a mass-to-
mass communication tool, and affords considerable civic potential (Paske et al., 2009).
Not everyone is comfortable with using social networking as a way to socially engage
with others, which leads to issues dealing with online social engagement.

Summary

With an expected increase in the number of higher education students,
administration may be prompted to rethink how they market their school to be
competitive in the higher academia market. University missions are being restructured to
include distance learning and using for-profit online learning institutions as their model to
decrease per-student costs. Recruiting higher education students has become more
competitive in the global market. Social networking is currently being used in the
college setting and this study plans to determine what factors influence the decision of
college students on which college to attend (Guerlac, 2011).

The benefits of social network sites are impression management, self-
presentation, and friendship performance (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Common
characteristics and features of social networking sites that entice students are free Web
2.0 services and user-driven content that allows individuals the opportunity to connect
with each other via the Internet. As technologies develop and expand, colleges and universities may face the demand to incorporate more electronic tools in their recruitment of students. Impression management, self-presentation, and friendship performance are all associated with online behavior and are important to this study as the researcher attempts to determine how social networking fits into the life of a college student. Social networking, like any other form of communication has its disadvantages and advantages, but in this digital era, administrators must find a way to make the digital form work in the college setting because social networking is the main mode of communication for college students.

The social network is transforming from a network that is merely social to a more collaborative network bringing together students and teachers, family and friends, and coworkers in an educated, personal, and business environment, sometimes all at the same time. The topic of social networking as a tool for recruiting is beneficial to higher education administrators because many higher education institutions already have social networking pages and are using them to provide timely information such as admissions, athletic and special events information, as well as staying connected to alumni with special alumni pages. The Internet is a major source of research for prospective students searching for a college or university to begin or further their educational pursuits. The Internet is also used as a marketing tool for higher education institutions. Many schools are embracing these new communication tools and are eager to use them, but there are other schools that are not using these technology tools to their potential.
Transforming from a high school student to a college student is a major step in becoming a successful college student. But, for transformation to occur, the student must have a purpose and must make a choice to begin the college journey and finish.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

While many U.S. colleges and universities are communicating with prospective students via the social network, whether this action yields a positive outcome is not evident (Joly, 2009; Truong, 2010). Part of the problem may be the difficulty in measuring success. This research attempts to understand the relationship between social networking usage and recruitment at the 15 community colleges in Mississippi to determine if the medium is an effective communication tool in the recruitment process. This chapter describes the research questions for the study. It also includes a rationale for the research methodology and design, and discusses the participant population and sample, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis. A survey was conducted to address the research questions presented in this chapter. This study was conducted in April of 2015.

Research Questions

The researcher used a quantitative approach with several open-ended response items. This study was guided by the following questions:

RQ1. Is there a difference in reported social networking usage at the community college based on role (currently enrolled college students, prospective college students, counselors, recruiters, faculty members, staff members, and administrators) or based on demographics (gender, age, highest degree obtained, and date of last degree)?

RQ2. To what extent do participants report that social networking is being used for recruitment at community colleges?
RQ3. Is there a difference in the opinions about the effectiveness of social networking as a communication tool based on role at the community college (currently enrolled college students, prospective college students, counselors, recruiters, faculty members, staff members, and administrators)?

RQ4. Is there a difference in the opinions about the effectiveness of social networking as a recruitment tool based on role at the community college (currently enrolled college students, prospective college students, counselors, recruiters, faculty members, staff members, and administrators)?

Research Design and Procedures

This study used a quantitative design, including several open-ended response items. Data were collected from currently enrolled community college students, faculty, staff, counselors, recruiters, and administrators representing the 11/15 community colleges in Mississippi that approved survey participation for their school. A survey instrument was created by the researcher and centered on whether or not social media is an effective tool for communicating information to students for the purpose of recruitment. The open-ended response portion of this study was chosen because it provided a more in-depth look into the perceptions of student, faculty, staff, counselor, recruiter, and administrators’ regarding their opinion of Facebook as a social media tool today, as a tool for college recruitment, and how they envision the use of Facebook in the next 10 years, as well as the use of Facebook by colleges in the next 10 years. The variables in this study were social networking usage for community college recruitment, relationship between social networking usage and recruitment, perceptions of the
effectiveness of social networking as a communication tool, and perceptions of the effectiveness of social networking as a recruitment tool.

Approval of the study was granted through The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Research Board (IRB). The IRB approval form is attached as Appendix A. To carry out this study, the researcher submitted an application to conduct research on Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges (MACJC), institutions from the Presidents’ Association. The application form is attached as Appendix B. Permission was granted by the MACJC Chair. After permission was granted, a request was sent to the Director of Institutional Research at each community college for approval to e-mail the survey to faculty, staff, counselors, recruiters, administrators, and students. Eleven out of the fifteen Mississippi community colleges approved the survey to be mailed to their employees and students. The other four community colleges declined to participate. After approval was granted from each community college, the Director of Institutional Research e-mailed the survey link to all faculty, staff, counselors, recruiters, students, and administrators and a sample of this population responded. Employees and students at each college chose whether to respond to the email or not. If they responded favorably, they clicked on the survey link which was embedded in the email and were taken to the Qualtrics website where the questionnaire began. The survey was open from March 25, 2015 through April 21, 2015 and 240 participants responded.

Participants

The purpose of this study was to determine ways in which community college administrators, faculty, staff, recruiters, counselors, and current students use social
networking, specifically, strategies related to recruitment and the effectiveness of using social media for recruitment.

All participants (faculty, staff, recruiters, counselors, administrators, and students) were volunteers in the study and gave their consent to participate by completing the survey. The participant cover letter and the informed consent document for participants are attached as Appendix C. These documents explained to faculty, staff, counselors, recruiters, administrators, and students that participation was voluntary and confidential. Although some demographic information was sought, no identifying information was needed. Demographic information was used in the statistical analysis of the data. Out of 321 respondents, 240 actually completed the questionnaire.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was the Attitudes and Effectiveness of Social Networking as a Communication Tool for College Recruitment. Due to the lack of availability of an instrument with content that aligns with the goals of the study, the instrument was developed by the researcher. The instrument is attached as Appendix D.

In order to gain information about the participants and the perceptions of the effectiveness of social networking as a communication and recruitment tool, the instrument contained demographic items that contained how the participant heard about the survey, and their gender, ethnicity, age category, highest level of education completed, and present job title.

The Facebook section of the survey addressed whether or not the participants ever used social media, created a profile, signed up for Facebook, and how many times they access Facebook each week. The Facebook section also addressed if the participants
were “friends” with Mississippi community colleges and depending on the participant role if they used Facebook to obtain information, evaluate, or compare Mississippi community colleges. The section also contained information on adequacy of admission offices providing enough information in the Facebook posts for a student to make a decision about attending a particular college as well as how admissions information on Facebook impacted the student’s decision to attend a particular college. The next section addressed friends and postings on Facebook in relationship to family and friends, work, education, or anything other than family, friends, work related, or education related.

Finally, the last items on the instrument were open-ended response items. These asked for participants’ opinions on Facebook as a social media tool today and why the medium is good, bad, or indifferent. This section also inquired their opinions of Facebook use as a tool for college recruitment, and where they see Facebook in the next 10 years.

**Demographic Items**

The first section of the instrument (items 2-8) contained demographic questions. These demographic items were developed based on two considerations. Some were created because the data that they supplied was needed in order to answer specific research questions. Others were created because the researcher had concluded, based on the review of the literature, that the data would be useful criteria in determining how to develop a representative sample.

Participants were asked how they heard about the survey (E-mail, Social Networking Sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc., Word of Mouth, or Other). Respondents were asked for his/her gender and ethnicity. Participants were asked what
age category they fell in (18-29 years, 30-45 years, 46-64 years, or over 64 years). Respondents were asked for the highest level of education completed (High School/GED, Some College, Associate’s Degree, Bachelor’s Degree, Master’s Degree, Doctoral Degree, or Professional Degree). Participants were asked in what year he/she received their highest degree. Respondents were finally asked for present job title (Administrator, Staff Member, Counselor, Faculty Member, Recruiter, or Student).

Facebook

Items 9 and 10 were designed to measure participants’ use of social media and whether or not they ever created an online profile. If they answered “yes” to item 10, they were prompted to answer an open-ended question, which social networking website they use most often. If they answered “no” to item 10, they were jumped to question 18. Item 12 asked if the participant had a Facebook account and if they responded “yes”, they were asked in item 13 what year they signed up for a Facebook account. The responses to this item were categorized into three groups: 1997-2000, 2001-2010, and 2011-2015. If they responded “no”, they were jumped to item 18. Item 14 asked the participants, on average, how many times they accessed their Facebook account each week (several times a day, about once a day, every few days, once a week or less often, or never). Item 15 was an open-ended question asking how many friends the participant had on Facebook, which was a quantifiable response was put into categories of 0-50, 51-100, 101-500, 501-1000, and 1001-5000. Item 16 asked if the participant was friends with any Mississippi community colleges on Facebook and Item 17 was an open-ended question asking how many colleges the participant had friended.
Items 19-33 were designed to measure participants’ activity on Facebook and these items used a Likert-type scale format and included response options ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. Items 19-21 were developed to obtain participants’ perspectives regarding how they used Facebook to get information from prospective community colleges and how they evaluated and compared prospective community colleges. Items 22-23 were designed to measure participants’ perceptions regarding contacting potential colleges to get answers to questions and whether the college gave enough information in their Facebook posts for them to make a decision about attending that institution. Item 24 was designed as a Likert scale with a possible score of 1=Less than 20%, 2=21-40%, 3=41-60%, 4=61-80%, 5=81-100% and was designed to measure participants’ perception as to how much information from college Facebook posts impacted their decision of which college to attend. The participants answered item 25 based on their perception of whether Facebook was an effective tool for colleges to use when communicating with prospective students using the previously described Likert Scale with a possible score of 1-5 (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree).

Items 26-29 were designed to measure the percentage of friends on Facebook who were friends or family, work related, education related, or anything other than friends, family, work, or education related. Items 30-33 were designed to measure the percentage of postings on Facebook related to friends or family, work related, education related, anything other than friends, family, work, or education related. The participants answered the questions using the previously described Likert Scale with a possible score of 1-5 (Less than 20% to 81-100%).
Items 34-37 were open-ended response items that asked the participants to write down their opinion of using Facebook as a social media tool and as a tool for college recruitment. They were also asked to write down their opinion of how they envisioned the use of Facebook over the next 10 years and how colleges will use Facebook over the next 10 years.

Of the final questions, item 38 asked participants which department on campus was responsible for creating and maintaining the college’s Facebook page (Administration, Admissions, Athletics, College Departments, Finance, or Human Resources). Items 39-40 asked the participants if their college had a Facebook page and if their college was utilizing Facebook to recruit college students (yes or no). If the participants’ answer to item 40 was “yes”, they were directed to answer how many years the college had a Facebook page (1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, 5 years or more, or I Don’t Know), and finally whether Facebook was accessible on the campus (yes or no). If the participant’s answer to item 40 was “no”, they were directed to answer the final question to determine if Facebook is accessible on the campus (yes or no).

Instrument Reliability and Validity

Once the IRB approved the study, reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot study of the approved instrument. Permission was requested from The University of Southern Mississippi email system administrator to send the online Qualtrics questionnaire pilot study link to all employees and students of the University. The study included 30 participants at The University of Southern Mississippi. Upon completion of the pilot study, necessary changes were made to the instrument. The statistical program SPSS was used to analyze data from the pilot study. Cronbach’s alpha
was used to test the internal consistency of the instrument. An adequate Cronbach’s alpha (.843) was attained for seven related items on the pilot study.

Data Analysis

The statistical program SPSS was used for the analysis of quantitative data collected from respondents. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and cross tabulations) were run on all the variables within the study with the exception of items 34-37. The descriptive statistics allowed the researcher to draw conclusions gathered regarding the participants in the study.

Results from the open-ended response items (34-37) were analyzed to find positive, negative, and neutral themes. As survey responses were reviewed, the responses were studied to determine positive, negative, or neutral responses and categorized in that manner in order to be reported.

Summary

Four research questions were presented in this chapter. It was explained that a quantitative study was used to conduct the research. One sample was used for this research consisting of community college students, counselors, recruiters, faculty, staff and administrators. A web-based survey was given to participants and included 5-point Likert scale questions, yes/no questions, open response, and demographic questions.

Before the research was conducted, permission was requested from The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Mississippi Association for Community and Junior Colleges President’s Association, and each individual community college. The purpose of the IRB was to ensure that no person participating in the research would be harmed or have his/her privacy compromised.
Once approval was obtained, the survey was placed on Qualtrics.com and pilot tested by a small group for the purpose of ensuring that the instrument measured what it was supposed to and that there was consistency across multiple applications. After obtaining an adequate Cronbach’s alpha score, the survey link was sent out by the researcher from her community college E-mail account asking for users to participate in the study. The survey was available for a total of four weeks. After that time, data was collected and downloaded into SPSS software and analyzed via appropriate statistical measures.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine ways in which community college administrators and faculty report using social networking. Specifically, strategies related to recruitment were examined. The study was conducted in April 2015. The Recruiting Community College Students with Social Media questionnaire was e-mailed to the Directors of Institutional Research at 15 community colleges across the state of Mississippi, and 240 students, faculty, staff, and administrators responded. The participants were asked to complete demographic items, four open-ended questions, and an instrument that consisted of multiple choice items and write-in responses.

Demographic Information

The participants were asked how they heard about the survey. The largest number of participants heard about the survey through e-mail. Table 1 lists the percentages for gender, ethnicity, and age. The ages of the participants were broken down into five categories: 18-29 years, 30-45 years, 46-64 years, and over 64 years.
Table 1

*Demographic Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>81.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
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<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age of participants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-45</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-64</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 64</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 1 (continued).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heard about survey</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>98.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking Sites</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education Background

Participants were asked their highest level of education and the year their highest degree was obtained. There were 18 (7.5%) participants who earned a high school degree or GED, 45 (19.1%) had some college, 31 (13.1%) of the participants held 2-year college degrees (AA), 32 (13.5%) of the participants held a 4-year college degree (BA or BS), 85 (36.0%) of the participants held a Master’s degree, 21 (8.9%) of the participants held a Doctoral degree, and 4 (1.7%) of the participants held a Professional degree. The year highest degree obtained was transformed into a new variable (years since graduation), and then computed into a new variable or graduation year category with the following categories: 1963-1996, 1997-2006, and 2007-2015. Since 1997 was the year Facebook began, the categories were created around this date with those graduating before Facebook started being one category and the remainder split into two categories of the
early Facebook users and then later Facebook users. The participants in the 1963-1997 graduation category were 69 (31.2%), 49 (22.2%) were in the 1998-2006 category, and 103 (46.6%) were in the 2007-2015 category.

Job Title

Participants were asked their job title at the community college. Of those who completed the survey, 17 (7.2%) reported that they were administrators, 65 (27.4%) reported that they were staff members, 6 (2.5%) reported that they were counselors, 83 (35.0%) reported that they were faculty members, and 66 (27.8%) reported that they were students.

Social Media Background Information

Participants were asked if they use social media. Of those who completed the survey, 215 (91.1%) reported using social media and 21 (8.9%) reported not using social media. Participants were also asked if they had ever created their own profile on-line that others can see, such as on social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook, or LinkedIn. Of those who completed the survey, 203 (94.0%) reported creating a social media on-line profile and 13 (6.0%) reported never creating a social media on-line profile. Those participants who answered yes to creating a social media on-line profile were then asked which social networking website they used most often. Of those participants responding, 167 (83.1%) created a Facebook profile, 7 (3.5%) created a Twitter profile, 23 (11.4%) created an Instagram profile, 2 (1.0%) created a Snapchat profile, and 2 (1.0%) created a LinkedIn profile.

Participants were asked if they have a Facebook account and out of those responding, 198 (98.0%) replied yes and 4 (2.0%) replied no. For those who reported
they had, they were also asked what year they signed up for a Facebook account. Those participants who answered yes to having a Facebook account were placed into one of three categories: 1997-2000 (1), 2001-2010 (2), and 2011-2015 (3). Of those responding, 2 (1.1%) reported signing up for a Facebook account between 1997-2000, 139 (79.0%) reported signing up for a Facebook account between 2001-2010, and 35 (19.9%) reported signing up for a Facebook account between 2011-2015. Table 2 provides frequencies and percentages for these data.

Table 2

*Frequencies and Percentages of year signed up for a Facebook account, (N=176)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997-2000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2010</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>79.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2015</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants were asked on average, how many times they access their Facebook account each week. Of those responding, 115 (58.4%) reported several times a day, 41 (20.8%) reported about once a day, 19 (9.6%) reported every few days, and 22 (11.2%) reported accessing their Facebook page once a week or less often.

Participants were asked how many friends they have on Facebook. These responses were placed into five categories: the 0-50 category, 51-100 category, 101-500 category, 501-1000 category, and 1000-5000 category. Of those participants responding,
approximately 10% had either 0-50, 51-100, or 1001-5000. Nearly half reported 101-500 friends. Figure 1 provides percentages for these data.

![Figure 1. Total Facebook friends.](image)

**Relationships**

Survey participants were asked what percentage of the people they were friends with on Facebook as friends and family. Of those responding, approximately 32% answered 61-100%, and approximately 12% answered 0 – 60%. They were also asked what percentage of the people they were friends with on Facebook that happened to be work related. Of those responding, approximately 56% answered less than 20%, 34% answered 21-40%, and approximately 5% answered 41-80%. Participants were asked what percentage of the people they were friends with on Facebook were education related. Of those responding, approximately 56% answered less than 20%, 23%
answered 21-40%, 9.5% answered 41-80%, and 2% answered 81-100%. Finally, participants were asked what percentage of the people they were friends with on Facebook had been anything other than family and friends, work, or education related. Of those responding, approximately 70% answered less than 20%, 15% answered 21-40%, and approximately 5% answered 41-100% (Table 3).

Table 3

_Frequencies and percentages of friends and family on Facebook, (N=175), work related friends on Facebook, (N=174), education related friends on Facebook, (N=172), and other than family, friends, work related, or education related friends on Facebook, (N=174)_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Friends/Family</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>Valid %</td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>Valid %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 20%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-40%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-80%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-100%</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Facebook Postings

Survey participants were asked what percentages of their posts on Facebook were related to family and friends. Of those responding, approximately 29% answered 61-100% and approximately 14% answered 0-60%. They were also asked what percentages
of their posts on Facebook had been related to work. Of those responding, approximately 80% answered less than 20%, 9% answered 21-60%, and approximately 1% answered 61-100%. Participants were asked what percentages of their posts on Facebook were related to education. Of those responding, approximately 74.5% answered less than 20%, 18% answered 21-40%, and approximately 2.5% answered 41-100%. Finally, participants were asked what percentages of their posts were related to anything other than family and friends, work, or education. Of those responding, approximately 76% answered less than 20%, and approximately 6% answered 21-100% (Table 4).

Table 4

*Frequencies and percentages of Facebook postings related to family and friend, (N=173), work related friends, (N=174), education related friends, (N=174), and other than family, friends, work related, or education related friends, (N=175)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Friends/Family</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq Valid %</td>
<td>Freq Valid %</td>
<td>Freq Valid %</td>
<td>Freq Valid %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 20%</td>
<td>27 15.6</td>
<td>140 80.5</td>
<td>128 73.6</td>
<td>131 74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-40%</td>
<td>15  8.7</td>
<td>21 12.1</td>
<td>31 17.8</td>
<td>15  8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60%</td>
<td>31 17.9</td>
<td>10  5.7</td>
<td>8 4.6</td>
<td>12  6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-80%</td>
<td>43 24.9</td>
<td>1  .6</td>
<td>6 3.4</td>
<td>10  5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-100%</td>
<td>57 32.9</td>
<td>2 1.1</td>
<td>1  .6</td>
<td>7  4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>173 100.0</td>
<td>174 100.0</td>
<td>174 100.0</td>
<td>175 100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>64 66.7</td>
<td>63 66.7</td>
<td>63 66.7</td>
<td>62 66.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Colleges Recruiting with Facebook

Participants were asked what department was responsible for developing a Facebook page and uploading news events for the Facebook page. Of those responding, approximately 36.5% thought administrators and college departments were responsible for developing a Facebook page and uploading news events for the Facebook page, and approximately 9% believed this to be admissions, athletics, and human resources departments (Table 5). When asked the question, does your college have a Facebook or other social networking page, 166 (88.3%) responded “yes”, 2 (1.1%) responded “no”, and 20 (10.6%) did not know with 49 missing responses. Participants were asked if their college utilized social networking for recruitment of students. Of those responding, 102 (60.4%) answered “yes”, 6 (3.6%) answered “no”, and 61 (36.1%) answered “I don’t know”, with 68 missing respondents. If participants answered “yes” to the previous question, they were asked how long their college used social networking websites. Of those responding, approximately 64% did not know, 12% responded 3 years or 5 years or more, and approximately 4% answered 1-2 years or 4 years (Table 6). Participants were asked if they were encouraged by their supervisor to utilize social networking for the recruitment of students. Of those responding, 38 (20.1%) answered “yes”, 73 (38.6%) answered “no”, and 78 (41.3) answered not applicable. Finally, participants were asked if Facebook or other social networking sites were available on their campus. Of those responding, 139 (73.9%) answered yes, 6 (3.2%) answered “no”, and 43 (22.9%) answered I do not know.
Table 5

Frequencies and percentages of responsible department for developing a Facebook page and uploading news events for the Facebook page, (N=173)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Departments</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

*Frequencies and percentages of how long their college used social networking websites, (N=154)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years of more</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Don’t Know</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Missing 83

Major Research Questions

**RQ1. Is there a difference in reported social networking usage at the community college based on role (currently enrolled college students, prospective college students, counselors, recruiters, faculty members, staff members, and administrators) or based on demographics (gender, age, highest degree obtained, and date of last degree)?**

To answer the first major research question, the data were split at question 18, (present job title) and frequencies were run for item 9, (do you use social media), item 10, (have you ever created your own profile on-line that others can see, like on social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook, or LinkedIn), item 11, (if “yes”, which social networking website do you use most often), item 12, (do you have a Facebook account),
item 13, (if “yes”, what year did you sign up for your Facebook account), item 14, (on average, how many times do you access your Facebook account each week), and item 15, (how many friends do you have on Facebook).

When asked if administrators used social media, more than three fourth reported “yes”. The great majority has created their own profiles on-line that others can see (see Table 7). Of the administrators who responded that they had created an on-line profile, they reported using Facebook the most, followed by Twitter, and Snapchat. All administrators reported having a Facebook account, and they all signed up for a Facebook account between 2001 and 2012. Administrators were asked how many times they accessed their Facebook accounts each week on average, and approximately 35% responded several times a day or every few days, and 15% responded about once a day or once a week or less (see Figure 2). Administrators, who responded, reported having between 200 and 981 Facebook friends.

When asked if staff members used social media, almost all of them reported “yes” and very few reported “no” (see Table 7). The majority of the staff has created their own profiles on-line that others can see, while few have never created their own profile on-line. The staff members, who responded “yes” to creating an on-line profile, reported using Facebook the most, followed by Twitter, and Instagram. Of the staff members responding, the majority have a Facebook account, while very few do not have a Facebook account. Of those staff members, who have a Facebook account, they range starting from 1995 – 2014. Staff members were asked on average, how many times they accessed their Facebook accounts each week and a little over a half responded several times a day, almost one fourth responded about once a day, and the other one fourth
responded every few days or once a week or less often (see Figure 2). Staff members, who responded, reported having between 20 and 2000 friends.

When asked if counselors used social media, the majority reported “yes” and a minimal amount reported “no” (see Table 7). All have created their own profile on-line that others can see with the exception of one missing response. The counselors, who responded “yes” to creating an on-line profile, reported using Facebook the most, followed by Instagram. Of the counselors responding, all have a Facebook account, with one missing response. Of those counselors, who have a Facebook account, they range starting from 2000 – 2010. Counselors were asked on average how many times they accessed their Facebook accounts each week and less than half responded several times a day or once a week or less often, approximately one fourth responded about once a day (see Figure 2). Counselors, who responded, reported having between 30 and 900 friends.

When asked if faculty used social media, the majority of them responding reported “yes” and very few reported “no” (see Table 7). Of the faculty members who responded, the majority reported using social media, and very few reported never using social media. Of those responding, the majority reported creating their own profile on-line that others can see with a minimal amount reporting that they have never created an on-line profile. The faculty members who responded “yes” to creating an on-line profile, reported using Facebook most of the time, followed by Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. Of the faculty members responding, the majority has a Facebook account and very few do not have a Facebook account (Table 7). Of those faculty members, who have a Facebook account, they range starting from 2000 – 2013. Faculty members were asked on average how many times they accessed their Facebook accounts each week and a little
over one half responded several times a day, about one fourth responded about once a day, and a minimal amount responded every few days or once a week or less often (Figure 2). Faculty members who responded reported having between 25 and 1200 friends.

When asked if students used social media, the majority reported using social media and very few reported never using social media (see Table 7). Of those responding, the majority reported creating their own profiles on-line that others can see with very few reporting that they have never created an on-line profile. The students who responded “yes” to creating an on-line profile, reported using Facebook a little over one half of the time, followed by Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Of the students responding, the majority has a Facebook account and very few do not have a Facebook account. Of those students, who have a Facebook account, they range starting from 2005 – 2014. Students were asked on average how many times they accessed their Facebook accounts each week and about one half responded several times a day, and the remainder responded about once a day, every few days, or once a week or less often (see Figure 2). Students who responded reported having between 3 and 4993 friends.
Table 7

*Social media usage*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Social Media Usage</th>
<th>Facebook Usage</th>
<th>% Created Online Profiles</th>
<th>% Have Facebook Account</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Members</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>98.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>91.6</td>
<td>90.4</td>
<td>96.1</td>
<td>97.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>97.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2. On average, how many times do you access your Facebook account each week?

RQ2: To what extent do participants report that social networking is being used for recruitment at community colleges?

Survey participants were asked if they were friends with any Mississippi community colleges on Facebook and, if so, how many. Of those participants responding, 152 (77.2%) were friends with Mississippi community colleges on Facebook. Of those participants responding “yes” to being friends with Mississippi community colleges on Facebook, 84 (60.0%) reported being friends with one community college, 30 (21.4%) reported being friends with two community colleges, 12 (8.6%) reported being friends with three community colleges, 8 (5.7%) reported being friends with four community colleges, and 1 each (0.7%) reported being friends with five, six, eight, or 12 community colleges, and 2 (1.4%) reported being friends with ten community colleges.
Currently enrolled college students were asked if they used Facebook to acquire information from prospective Mississippi community colleges. Of those participants responding, approximately 50% strongly disagreed or disagreed, whereas approximately 30% agreed or strongly agreed (Table 8). Survey participants were asked if they used Facebook to evaluate prospective Mississippi community colleges. Of those participants responding, approximately 60% strongly disagreed or disagreed, whereas approximately 20% agreed or strongly agreed (see Table 9).

Survey participants were asked if they used Facebook in order to compare prospective Mississippi community colleges. Of those participants responding, approximately 59% strongly disagreed or disagreed, whereas approximately 22% agreed or strongly agreed (see Table 10). Participants were asked if they would use Facebook to contact a potential college to get an answer to any question they may have. Of those participants responding, approximately 67% strongly disagreed or disagreed, whereas approximately 25% agreed or strongly agreed (Table 11).
Table 8

Frequencies and percentages of using Facebook to get information from prospective Mississippi community colleges, (N=49)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>188</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9

*Frequencies and percentages of using Facebook to evaluate prospective Mississippi community colleges, (N=49)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>188</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10

*Frequencies and percentages of using Facebook to compare prospective Mississippi community colleges, (N=49)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>188</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11

Frequencies and percentages of using Facebook to get an answer to a question from a prospective Mississippi community colleges, (N=49)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>188</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Admissions Information

Participants were asked if college admissions offices provided enough information in their Facebook posts for prospective students to make a decision about attending their institution. Of those participants responding, approximately 40% strongly disagreed or disagreed, whereas almost half neither agreed nor disagreed (see Table 12). They were also asked how much the information from college Facebook accounts impacted their decision of which school to attend. Of those responding, the majority answered less than 20%, (see Table 13).
Table 12

*Frequencies and percentages of college admissions offices providing enough information in the Facebook posts for a student to make a decision about attending a particular college, \(N=49\)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>188</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13

Frequencies and percentages of how admission information on Facebook impacted a student’s decision to attend a particular college, (N=49)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 20%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-40%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-80%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-100%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>188</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data were split at the question, “For the following questions, are you responding as a (1) currently enrolled college student, (2) prospective college student, (3) counselor, (4) recruiter, (5) faculty member, (6) staff member, or (7) administrator.”

The participants responding as a currently enrolled college student started using Facebook, n=54, minimum = 2.00 (2001-2010) and maximum = 3.00 (2011-2015) with an average year category of 2001-2010. These participants, n = 53 have a range of total friends from 3 to 4992, with a mean of 685.83 and standard deviation of 817.216. Figure 3 displays the participant responses categorically to the following question Item 25, “Facebook is an effective tool for colleges to use when communicating with prospective students.”
**RQ3**: Is there a difference in the opinions about the effectiveness of social networking as a communication tool based on role at the community college (currently enrolled college students, prospective college students, counselors, recruiters, faculty members, staff members, and administrators)?

To answer the third research question, the data was split at question 18 (for the following questions, are you responding as a currently enrolled student, prospective college student, counselor, recruiter, faculty member, staff member, or administrator?) and frequencies were run on question 25 (Facebook is an effective tool for colleges to use when communicating with prospective students.) Results regarding effectiveness of Facebook as an effective tool for colleges to use when communicating with prospective students were based on responses from currently enrolled college students (N = 49), counselors (N = 4), faculty members (N = 64), staff members (N = 47), and administrators (N = 9).
Figure 3. Facebook is an effective tool for colleges to use when communicating with prospective students.

A crosstabs report was also used to analyze the differences among all groups in relationship to gender (see Table 14). The majority of males and females responded that they agreed or strongly agreed that Facebook was an effective tool for communicating with prospective students.
Table 14

Effective tool and gender crosstabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A second crosstabs report was used to analyze the differences among all groups in relationship to age (Table 15). In the three oldest age categories, the majority agreed or strongly agreed that Facebook was an effective tool for communicating with prospective students. For the younger group, the percentage was lower at 40%.
Table 15

*Effective tool and age crosstabulation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>18-29</th>
<th>30-45</th>
<th>46-64</th>
<th>Over 64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A third crosstabs report was used to analyze the differences among all groups in relationship to education level (see Table 16). Of education levels, approximately one-third of participants holding a Master’s degree strongly disagreed, half of the participants holding a Master’s degree disagreed, approximately one-third of the participants with some college reported neither agree nor disagree, almost one-half holding a Master’s degree agreed, and approximately one-third of participants holding a Master’s degree strongly agreed that Facebook was an effective tool for colleges to use when communicating with prospective students.
Table 16

*Effective tool* *Education crosstabulation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High School/ GED</th>
<th>Some College</th>
<th>AA</th>
<th>BA/BS</th>
<th>Master</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
<th>Professional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Open Ended Responses

*RQ4. Is there a difference in the opinions about the effectiveness of social networking as a recruitment tool based on role at the community college (currently enrolled college students, prospective college students, counselors, recruiters, faculty members, staff members, and administrators)?*

*RQ4: Is there a difference in perceptions of the effectiveness of social networking as a recruitment tool*
The final research question was answered with four open ended questions requiring survey participants to write in their responses. The questions were:

1. What is your opinion of Facebook as a social media tool today and why?
2. What is your opinion of Facebook as a tool for college recruitment today?
3. How do you envision use of Facebook in the next 10 years?
4. How do you envision use of Facebook by colleges in the next 10 years?

All responses to each question were broken down into three categories: positive, negative, or both (Table 17).

Table 17

Major Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories and sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Opinion of Facebook as a social media tool today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Opinion of Facebook as a tool for college recruitment today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Both</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. Facebook usage in the next 10 years
   a. Positive
   b. Negative
   c. Both

IV. Facebook usage by colleges in the next 10 years
   a. Positive
   b. Negative
   c. Both

Opinion of Facebook as a social media tool today. There was an overwhelming positive response to Facebook being used as a social media tool today with more than one half responding positively. Facebook was reported to be good for communication with a broad, global audience where millions of people use it every day. Following are some of the positive comments about Facebook being used as a social media tool today. It is very useful and valuable as a communication and information tool because most people use it daily and have instant access to most people. It is an effective means of sharing information about people because it is quick and easy to use and allows a way for people to get involved and in the know. Some find it to be a way to look for news about anyone passing away or to find out local news and also spreading the word about anything. Facebook is a great way to reconnect and stay in touch with friends and family and get a good glimpse into other people’s lives. It can be used as a good tool to interact with
colleagues, families, and friends about education, family reunions, and friends to chat with about issues of life.

Some reported using Facebook for entertainment and as a great tool for ministry and useful for communicating mass information such as prayer requests and changes to schedules, etc. Other responses were, “It is also a great way for businesses to get more business. Facebook is considered an excellent, effective, and worthwhile tool that many members are affiliated with and reaches many people. There is an easy access and way to connect with people through Facebook. It is also seen as a great media tool and social networking service.” Facebook was reported to be a valuable tool and resource because of its market share as one person commented. “It is an open forum that allows members to communicate and allows one a way to express their opinion on things they are concerned about and allows them to see the opinion and concerns of others who agree and disagree with them.”

Some of the responses were that Facebook was a great way to reach new students and one respondent reported that it was a great tool because “I have gotten several graduates jobs by talking to them through Facebook.” This same person also shared that once s/he has more say so in what went on in his/her department, “the department will have a Facebook page and students will be required to work together on it. Keeping up with former classmates and friends that live in other towns is another way participants use Facebook.”

The opinion of Facebook being used as a social media tool today was reported negatively by a little over one tenth of survey participants. Participants, who responded negatively reported Facebook as dangerous, did not use this medium for communication.
Some of the negative comments were as follows, “there is too much information and rarely used for positivity.” “People are too negative and tend to use Facebook to brag, spread negative opinions, and be nosey.” “Facebook users are misusing Facebook, and using it for the wrong reasons.” “The opinion of some is that too many people depend on Facebook for news and information and it is overused.”

Some other responses were “older adults considered ‘drama llamas and creepers’ are using Facebook more so than the younger folks who are graduating from high school.” “Facebook is declining in popularity with the younger generation and no longer what it started out to be.” “It is considered boring because it is old.” “Most of what is put on Facebook is really a waste, dramatic, and has a lot of nonsense in it, such as what a person had for lunch.” “Facebook causes too many problems and takes up too much time.” The one and only educational response was that there are too many disadvantages to utilize in classroom setting with too many possible liabilities.

Facebook can be both positive and negative depending on how one uses it, and it was reported that people must be very careful. Following were some of the positive and negative comments about using Facebook as a social media tool today. “It can be effective and informative when used properly, but very dangerous if misused.” “Some examples of Facebook misuse are venting, battling ground, exploitation of others, offensive, disgraceful, and a lot of drama.” “Facebook can be a great tool, but ignorance of people causes problems in its effective use.” “Facebook is an effective and good way for reconnecting and maintaining relationships with family, friends, classmates; especially ones living far away to keep up with information, but is sometimes abused by users.” “Facebook is for old people and young people do not use it anymore; they are
running away from Facebook and going to other sites, such as Twitter, Instagram, so forth.” Some adults use Facebook to brag on their students and children and Facebook is considered to be an effective media tool for a certain age group. Some see it as being replaced by the latest fad. According to one respondent, Facebook should be used recreationally as a social tool, but not educationally, “there is heavy use of Facebook, but heavier misuse and can be very good if used wisely with etiquette.” One respondent replied that Facebook could be useful if the owner checked the settings often and understood that whatever was posted will be there forever, “Facebook is great for sharing updates and accomplishments, but not extremely personal life details; many people list too much drama and personal detail of their lives.” “It is great to use as one outsource and resource tool, but not the only one and should be used in moderation for some things.” “Facebook seems to be mediocre, losing ground and problematic at times, but still considered effective.” “With Facebook, there is too much media at once; people need to slow down the instant gratifications and talking face to face needs to be taught.” “Facebook can be very informative, but can’t give a person the warm and fuzzy feeling that most desire.”

Opinion of Facebook as a tool for college recruitment today. The opinion of Facebook being used as a tool for college recruitment today was reported positively by the majority of survey participants. Good, useful, effective, helpful, smart, logical, important, underused, great advertisement, best recruitment tool, and available were just a few of the words participants used to describe using Facebook as a college recruitment tool. One person mentioned that “because college students pay attention to social media, Facebook is an excellent way to communicate, but colleges have to get students to their
page.” The word “reach” was used several times in the responses to this question.

Following were just a few of the positive opinions to using Facebook as a tool for college recruitment today.

“The main goal of Facebook for college recruitment is to reach prospects and their parents and to distribute information about the college.”

“Facebook is an excellent choice for reaching the demographics of prospective students.”

“In advertising with Facebook, images can pop up on a person’s Facebook page that may entice them to click and explore.”

“Because of the amount of time people spend browsing Facebook, it is believed to be a useful recruitment tool. Also, when students are “tagged” in a picture, their friends see the post making Facebook a way to reach more people than face to face recruiting.”

One respondent replied that she thought Facebook was a good idea and that her own enrollment in college had certainly captured the attention of many friends and family members, especially her own children, “another advantage of using Facebook as a recruitment tool is that it helps a potential student see what the student body is like before attending.” Another respondent stated that it was a good idea to use social media because we constantly have our phones in our hands and most will check their phones before checking the mail as one person said, “Facebook is easy to use and a great addition to the list of recruitment tools” and another mentioned “It allows one to see different choices available to them.”
The opinion of Facebook being used as a tool for college recruitment today was reported negatively by approximately one-fifth of the survey participants and they did not think Facebook was an effective tool for college recruitment. They reported that it was not professional, not very useful, and weak for recruiting prospective college students. One student answered the question with a resounding “no” in that he did not get on Facebook to look for college recruiters. In his opinion, it was an unprofessional way of introducing himself and he preferred e-mail over Facebook. This form was not something that he would prefer to base his choice of college from. Another responded that Facebook lacked the personal touch that a visit would include.

As with any other college recruitment tool such as mail outs, college fairs, visits, etc. Facebook had its ups and downs. Some respondents reported that Facebook was losing ground, but was still effective in recruiting college students. Schools should be very careful in using this tool and it should probably not be used as their main option. It was uncertain if students would even follow a particular school and schools may be wasting time advertising to a group that may not even be there. However, some felt that Facebook was a necessary tool and, if updated, would be great for recruitment. One respondent stated that his/her college used Facebook extensively for recruiting; however, it has only seen enrollment decrease for the last five years despite the increased use, “it can be beneficial, but there are other forms of social media besides Facebook.”

One participant responded indifferently, but was concerned that by recruiting using Facebook, colleges will examine student’s profiles. Another respondent did not like the idea of recruiting using Facebook unless the recruiter was not in high school, had never attended college, or currently not in college. The majority responded that
Facebook was okay to use for recruiting students, but should not be used exclusively as it was not as popular with teenagers as in the past, “Facebook is used by older people more than the younger generation and Facebook has been surpassed by other social media tools like Snapchat, Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter, etc.” Another person mentioned that “the younger person probably has a Facebook account, but may not use it as often as the others.”

**Facebook usage in the next 10 years.** The opinion of how people envision the use of Facebook in the next ten years was reported positively by approximately one third of the respondents. Facebook was seen by many respondents to be evolving, more ubiquitous and integrated with other forms of social media. Some reported that Facebook would probably get much bigger and it was envisioned that everyone will be using Facebook, even children. More businesses will have a Facebook page to obtain more business and to communicate with people. It was also the opinion of many that Facebook would be more useful, promote more social media interaction, continue to grow, and be even more innovative than it was today, as one person said, “Facebook will evolve and change into different social media beyond what my brain can see or grasp.”

It is interesting to see the many different responses as to the purpose of Facebook as a continuing social media tool over the next ten years. Some respondents saw Facebook replacing most search engines, being even more innovative than it was today, and being the only means of advertising or used for targeted advertising – One person said in regards to this, “Facebook will continue to be used for communication and appointment reminders, and scheduling. It will also be used as a blog/newsfeed delivery
system. It could at some point in time be a replacement for employees who travel a lot. Of course, it will always be used just for fun.”

The opinion of how people envision the use of Facebook in the next ten years was reported negatively by a little less than one half of the respondents. One respondent stated that Facebook would dramatically decline, like MySpace before it. Another responded, at this point in time, believed that Twitter was overtaking Facebook. The majority of respondents saw Facebook as a trend that would be nonexistent or totally eliminated by young folks over the next ten years. Others saw Facebook taken over by drama and a catastrophe with people using it for the wrong reasons as someone mentioned that “people put their business on Facebook, so in the next ten years, their children will be doing the same thing. Facebook will be a place for bullying, more vulgar, and less safe.” The most interesting comment was, “to be honest, if people don’t get any better as to bringing all their drama on it, then it might as well be called messy book.” Others see Facebook becoming more commercial as a place for all advertisements and videos. Twenty out of 134 (14.93%) responded both positively and negatively on their opinion of how they envision the use of Facebook in the next ten years. A summary of the responses is discussed in the next paragraph.

The majority of respondents think the use of Facebook would be more prevalent, but the use of other social media tools may be a lot more popular. One person said that “Facebook may either diminish in usage and be replaced much like MySpace was when Facebook came out, or it will be the most powerful industry in the country.” Some responded that they think it would still be around, but not as the social media platform of choice, especially for younger people, “Facebook will probably be replaced with another
more appealing social media website catering to the teenage population. Facebook may adapt more and more to change or be replaced by something even more proficient.”

Several respondents felt that Facebook would fade away or stay the same, while others felt that social media was here to stay and Facebook would still be used and be around ten years from now. One respondent replied, “I hope it stays the way it is, but with technology you never know, but I think it is the best social media out there; very user friendly for the young or the old.” Another respondent wrote that it was not as popular and possibly used by grandparents more to see and share photos and updates of their grandkids, “Facebook is becoming more and more a place for the older generation, but will still be active; just not as big a hit with society like it has been in the past.”

**Facebook usage by colleges in the next 10 years.** There were more than one half of respondents who reported positively about the future of Facebook use in colleges. These respondents stated that Facebook would continue to be used for announcements, news, and teacher-student communication, “it will probably be used to influence students of which college to attend and there will be more interaction with prospective students and students in general.” Some anticipate more social media contact and even easier access to information. One respondent said, “I imagine that schools and colleges will use it more because it is trendy and the younger student’s classes will use it more than ever.” Another commented that “growth will be evident, but with so many other applications created for iPhone and iPad to enhance Facebook use.”

Facebook could be a way to communicate for classroom purposes. One person mentioned that “colleges may be using Facebook as an LMS (Learning Management System) or as a regular platform for school wide communications.” One respondent saw
Facebook being used as a way for classes to connect and learn together all the time as he/she stated, “some students who already do all their studies online see Facebook as continuing to be a great way to introduce online courses and possibly being used as a substitute for platforms such as Blackboard and Canvas which will make it more education based in the future.”

A few of the respondents stated that Facebook may be used more by colleges and the usage will increase. Several mentioned that Facebook continued to be a great recruitment tool and recruiters may increase the amount of information they post for their colleges. One responded, “I think Facebook would be the main source other than the college’s website for students to find information about the college they are interested in.” One respondent mentioned the use of Facebook over the next 10 years to maintain connections with alumni. Overall, the respondents stated that usage would continue and possibly become even more greatly used.

Those reporting negatively to how they envision the use of Facebook by colleges in the next 10 years were approximately one fourth. These respondents stated that they believe colleges would not use, and be nonexistent, obsolete, and shut down. Some reported that colleges would begin using this medium less due to liability issues. Others did not see colleges using it in a very effective way in the next 10 years if they continued using. Several stated that Facebook would be replaced and that it may not even be relevant to colleges. Some believed colleges would find something more innovative and Facebook would be replaced, especially as more popular sites take priority such as Instagram. They would have moved on to the next great social media site.
Less than 10% responded both positively and negatively. One respondent stated
“It is believed that Facebook will be used to report on events, awards, post photos of
activities on campus which can all help with recruitment, but I do not think it will be the
primary tool for recruitment.” Another said that “If colleges are not using social media,
like Facebook, they are missing opportunities to connect with their audience. Colleges
should have more individuals posting to their pages. One office alone cannot post
everything that is happening on campus.”

Younger people get a majority of their daily information, news, political, social,
community, and individual news from social media sites like Facebook. If colleges are
not using Facebook, they may have missed out on a group of potential students.
Technology is changing fast and reaching out to the younger population; colleges have to
be proactive, depending on the population they are trying to reel in. Some responded that
Facebook would be used more than it was now, unless something better comes along.
Others saw Facebook as a phase and used primarily for public relations at the most.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary of the Purpose and Results

The purpose of this study was to determine ways in which community college faculty, staff, counselors, recruiters, students, and administrators report using social networking. Specifically, strategies related to recruitment were examined. Participants from 15 community colleges in Mississippi were asked to complete a survey instrument entitled Recruiting Community College Students with Social Media Survey. Their responses to the survey instrument produced quantitative data and open-ended responses for this study. Included in this chapter are a summary of the procedures and findings, a discussion of the results, and recommendations for faculty, staff, counselors, recruiters, and administrators, and future research. This study is unique to be the first to examine using Facebook in the community college as a recruitment process.

Summary of Procedures

The data collected in this research study were acquired from 240 questionnaires completed by students, faculty, staff, counselors, recruiters, and administrators representing 15 community colleges in Mississippi. The researcher secured permission to conduct the study from The University of Southern Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). After IRB approval was granted, permission to conduct statewide institutional research was given by the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges – President’s Association as well as each individual community college. Prior to conducting the final study, a pilot study was conducted to test the reliability of the
survey instrument. An adequate Cronbach’s alpha was obtained in the pilot study for a related grouping of survey items.

The survey instruments were e-mailed by each community college’s institutional research department during April 2015 to members of the fifteen colleges that included students, faculty, staff, counselors, recruiters, and administrators. Once the questionnaires were completed, data were downloaded from Qualtrics into the statistical program SPSS database for analysis. The data from the open-ended response items were analyzed using grounded theory and thematic code development.

Major Findings

The majority of participants were white (81.9%) females (76.7%) in the 30-45 age category (34.7%). The largest proportion of participants (35.0%) was composed of faculty members. Participants were asked if they used social media and the majority (91.1%) reported using social media. Of those using social media, nearly all reported creating a social media on-line profile with Facebook being the number one social media platform. The majority of participants who created a Facebook account had created one during 2001-2010. The participants were asked on average, how many times they accessed their Facebook account each week, and the majority (58.4%) reported accessing several times a day. Nearly half of all participants have between 101-500 friends on Facebook. Of those friends, about one third responded that 61-100 of their Facebook acquaintances were friends and family; the majority responded that less than 20% of their Facebook acquaintances were work related, or education related. An overwhelming majority responded that less than 20% of their Facebook acquaintances were anything other than family and friends, work, or education related.
Survey participants were asked about their activity in using Facebook and who or what their posts relate to. Of those participants, less than one third answered 61-100% of their posts on Facebook were related to family and friends, the majority answered less than 20% of their posts on Facebook were related to work, education, and anything other than family and friends, education, or work.

Participants were asked what department on campus was responsible for developing a Facebook page and uploading news events for the Facebook page. Of those responding, the largest proportion of the participants thought that administrators and college departments were responsible for developing a Facebook page and uploading news events for the Facebook page. The majority of the participants answered “yes” to their college having a Facebook page or other social networking page.

Participants were asked if their college utilized social networking for recruitment of students. Of those responding, the largest proportion answered “yes” and the majority of the participants responded not knowing how long their college had used social networking websites. Participants were asked if they were encouraged by their supervisor to utilize social networking for recruitment, and the majority answered not applicable.

Research question 1 asked: “Is there a difference in reported social networking usage based on role at the community college (currently enrolled college students, prospective college students, counselors, recruiters, faculty members, staff members, and administrators) or based on demographics (gender, age, highest degree obtained, and date of last degree)?”
The majority of all participants used social media with Facebook reported as the most widely used social network and the majority of all participants reported having a Facebook account. It is interesting that all administrators reported using Snapchat 9.1% of the time. The researcher found this interesting because Snapchat was a more recent social media tool introduced a couple of years ago and seemed to be predominately used by young adults. The researcher wondered if this meant that current administrators were trying to utilize what most of the target population were using or, they just heard about this tool and got on the bandwagon as early adopters. Of course, this could be further studied at another time.

Participants were asked how often they checked their Facebook pages and the overwhelming response was several times a day. Because of this, the more updates a college can post, the better for those viewers to not lose interest in a particular page. Because there were so many posts on a typical Facebook page, postings have a tendency to get lost in the mounds of information posted throughout a day, so strategically posting newsworthy items about a school throughout the day would be a good practice for schools to adopt.

In regards to demographics, 20% of males reported using social networking, whereas 71.1% of females reported using social networking. In the 18-29 year age group, 26.8% reported using social networking, 31.1% of the 30-45 year age group and 29.4% of the 46-64 year age group reported using social networking. Respondents with a master’s degree had the highest percentage of 33.2% who use social networking followed. Finally, 56.3% of the respondents whose last degree was obtained between 2001-2015 reported using social networking.
The second research question explored the extent to which participants used social networking for recruitment at community colleges. Approximately three fourths of all participants responded that they were friends with at least one community college. Currently enrolled college students were asked if they used Facebook to obtain information from prospective Mississippi community colleges and of those participants responding, half disagreed. The same participants were asked if they used Facebook to evaluate prospective Mississippi community colleges and again the majority strongly disagreed or disagreed. Currently enrolled college students were asked if they used Facebook to compare prospective Mississippi community colleges and once again approximately two thirds strongly disagreed or disagreed. Finally, participants were asked if they would use Facebook to contact a potential college to get an answer of any question they may have and approximately 66% strongly disagreed or disagreed.

As part of the second research question, participants were asked if college admissions offices provided enough information in their Facebook posts for them to make a decision about attending their institution and approximately half neither agreed nor disagreed and nearly half strongly disagreed or disagreed. They were also asked how much information from college Facebook accounts impacted their decisions of which school to attend, and of those responding, approximately 74% answered less than 20%. Finally, participants were asked if they considered Facebook an effective tool for colleges to use when communicating with prospective students and one third of those responding agreed. These results lead the researcher to believe that current students believe Facebook is an effective tool for colleges to use in recruiting but colleges are not using this medium to their fullest potential to market their school.
The third research question explored whether or not there was a difference in the opinions about the effectiveness of social networking as a communication tool based on role at the community college (currently enrolled college students, prospective college students, counselors, recruiters, faculty members, staff members, and administrators). Overall, the majority of counselors strongly disagree that Facebook was an effective communication tool. The majority of currently enrolled community college students neither agreed nor disagreed that Facebook was an effective tool for colleges to use when communicating with prospective students. The majority of faculty members, staff members, and administrators agreed that Facebook was an effective communication tool.

It was identified through this study that the majority of males neither agreed nor disagreed that Facebook was an effective communication tool with the majority of females agreeing that it is an effective communication tool. The majority of all age categories with the exception of the 18-29 year olds agreed that Facebook was an effective communication tool. The final category was education, and the majority of high school or GED graduates disagreed that Facebook was an effective communication tool. The majority of the participants who have had some college education and with a two year Associates of Arts degree were neutral. The majority of the participants with a Bachelor’s degree, Master’s degree, and Doctoral degree agreed that Facebook was an effective communication tool, whereas those with a professional degree were neutral as to Facebook being an effective communication tool. These results showed that the more education a person had, the more they agreed that Facebook was an effective tool for communicating with prospective community college students.
The final research question was answered with open ended questions. Survey participants were asked about their opinions of using Facebook as a tool for college recruitment today and the majority reported positively. These participants reported that utilizing Facebook as a recruitment tool was good, useful, effective, helpful, smart, logical, important, underused, great advertisement, available, and the best recruitment tool. Because college students pay attention to social media, Facebook is an excellent way to communicate, but colleges first have to get students to their pages.

Most innovations diffuse at a slow rate, and data from this study has shown that administrators are using social media, whether it is to understand this phenomenon and be prepared for use by their college or they are just using for recreational purposes. I saw firsthand a college President interacting with a group of faculty and staff responsible for their departments Facebook pages. After seeing and hearing how it is being used to promote and market the college, it is my opinion that more Presidents will be ready to adopt and implement this innovation.

Jewitt was telling us ten years ago that colleges may need to incorporate more electronic tools in their recruitment. It seems that now, ten years later, schools are picking up on this and using technology more. According the Gartner survey in 2011, the most significant barrier or challenge to adopting social media and collaborative tools in education is lack of strategy or understanding. The results of this study prove this as counselors do not see the effectiveness of social media for recruiting. There is a huge disconnect between counselors and other school employees. A large percentage of students are not using social media to get information, evaluate, compare, or ask
questions and this may be because there is limited social media strategy for using this tool to recruit students.

Discussion

The majority of administrators, faculty, staff, counselors, recruiters, and current students use social networking to reconnect and maintain relationships with family, friends, classmates; especially ones living far away to keep up with information. Social networking is mainly used for posting positive comments, but some use it to post negative, offensive comments. Some use social networking to brag about their students and children. A few of the parties in this study responded that social networking should be used recreationally as a social tool, not for educational purposes. Facebook is also used for sharing updates and accomplishments, but not for sharing personal life details.

Over the past five years working at a community college and researching social media as a recruitment tool, it has been noted by the researcher that colleges have come a long way in having a social media presence. At the same time, colleges have a long way to go. According to Pasek, More, and Romer, social networking is currently being used in the college setting, whereas Santovec states that some colleges have tried alternate methods of Facebook, i.e. community building website portals, but they were not being used like Facebook and was a failure.

Some colleges in Mississippi are hiring social media directors to help create exciting and enticing posts filled with video, pictures, and information for current students and prospective students, while others let their pages stagnate. A good Facebook presence must be updated several times a day with appropriate, pertinent information to keep the interest level up for their school.
When looking at the differences among administrators, staff, counselors, faculty, and students, data was found that administrators use social media the least and students use the most. Faculty and staff were very close to the usage of students with counselors somewhere between administrators and faculty/staff. This was surprising finding as counselors were the main employees responsible for recruiting students. Counselors are the ones that go into the high schools throughout the year speaking to seniors about attending their college and also the ones who setup and attend college fairs. Recruitment would be advantageous if counselors try and utilize social networking a little more and use this tool as a way to communicate with prospective students.

There was minimal difference in all respondents who created online social media profiles. Again, administrators reported the least, but all others were very close in their responses which showed that there was most definitely an online presence for all involved. Surprising was that all administrators and counselors reported having a Facebook account, but they reported using social media or creating online profiles the least. Almost all of the remaining respondents reported having a Facebook account.

It is important to notice how many times social media accounts are accessed on a daily basis. Because there are so many posts written throughout the day, the posts are likely to become hidden unless someone actually takes the time to scroll through their entire newsfeed to see what has been posted throughout the day. Those who access several times throughout the day are more likely to see the majority of the posts and know what is going on. Again, far fewer than half of the administrators and counselors reported accessing Facebook the least amount throughout the day (way less than 50%). Another surprising finding was that only about half of the students accessed Facebook
throughout the day. All respondents except students reported using Facebook as their major source of social media. Even though students reported using Facebook 64.9% of the time, it was found that the students were moving to other forms of social networking, such as Instagram which had the next highest percent of usage among students.

In looking at the relationship between social networking usage and recruitment at community colleges, the majority of respondents were friends with Mississippi community colleges on Facebook, but not utilizing this social media platform to obtain information, evaluate, compare, or ask questions of the colleges for recruitment purposes. The question could be asked, “Why are students not using this platform to gain information in order to make a decision of which college to attend.” In this researcher’s opinion, colleges may want to consider creating more vibrant postings on their social media pages to attract prospective students and create more robust advertising campaigns to include all social media that students are using on a daily basis to attract them to their colleges.

In the analysis of difference in views on the effectiveness of social networking as a communication tool across different demographics such as gender, age, and education, there was a major difference in gender as the majority of the males neither agreed nor disagreed and the majority of the females agreed or strongly agreed on the effectiveness of social networking as a communication tool. In the age categories, the 18-29 year olds neither agreed nor disagreed, and all other age groups agreed that using social networking as a communication tool is effective. Finally, those respondents with a high school diploma or GED, some college background, Associate of Arts degrees, and Professional degrees neither agreed nor disagreed on the effectiveness while respondents with a
Bachelor’s degree strongly agreed and respondents with a Master’s degree or Doctoral degree agreed.

The opinion of the researcher is that more females use Facebook than males, so they have more information to base their opinions on the effectiveness of social networking as a communication tool. It seems like everyone over the age of 30 agrees Facebook is an effective tool, but the students we are targeting are indifferent. With the exception of the Professional degree respondents, the high school, some college, and associate degree students are probably the same age group that are indifferent because they probably fall into the 18-29 age category.

The open ended responses provided insight into the future of social media and its use in colleges for recruitment purposes. The majority of respondents were positive in their opinions of using Facebook as a social media tool as well as being used for college recruitment. They also envision Facebook still being an integral part of social media over the next 10 years and being used by colleges for recruitment purposes.

Colleges may want to consider finding something new to interest people, then plan and advertise super fun events to entice students. Students can then see what activities are happening on campus, different club activities, and how the athletic department is doing. Schools can use Facebook to their advantage by learning the character of those students and to advertise appropriately. Facebook can be useful to promote events and activities and encourage community interest/participation. This is a great opportunity because prospective students will know what is going on around campus and see things they may want to be involved with. The use of Facebook is a great way to make presence known and build an institutional image. Facebook is a great
medium for reaching a large volume of people at no cost. The majority of students in today’s society use social media more often than traditional forms of interaction; therefore, more prospective students can be reached via social media marketing. College recruitment needs to be prepared to access a variety of social media outlets to reach potential college applicants. Being innovative, flexible, and always willing to learn a new media is essential.

In summary, social media serves a purpose, is wide known, and is a place to stay in the know and up to date with important things happening in their lives. Most anything can be found out through social media. It is the most effective, free marketing tool for colleges and universities. The literature states that social networking is a social structure with its main purpose being to tie people together by their interests.

Limitations

The findings of this study were limited by several factors. Participant sites were limited to 15 community colleges in Mississippi and the sample size produced 240 respondents. Although that was an adequate number of schools and participants to yield useable results, the participant pool is a small representation of the number of community colleges in the United States. The study was also limited to the fact that only community colleges participated in the study. Perhaps University faculty, staff, counselors, recruiters, administrators, and students would have different perceptions of how social media is used for recruitment purposes. In addition, current community college students were invited to participate in the survey, but no prospective community college students responded to the survey.
Recommendations for Administrators, Faculty, Staff, Counselors, and Recruiters

If a person searches community colleges on Facebook, there may be several different pages that appear in the results leaving one to guess which one is the official school Facebook page. Colleges may want to consider assigning a Facebook administrator for their school’s Facebook page to ensure that official data is placed on the page and they are responding to questions and comments made throughout the day. As has been shown by this research, the majority of people who use Facebook check their page several times a day and if college personnel post sporadically, most users may never see the postings unless they actually go to the school’s official page. Sometimes there are several different Facebook pages for a college which makes it hard for the user to know which one is the official page of the school. Another recommendation is to combine all departmental Facebook pages under the main school Facebook account so that all related pages are together for that school. Colleges should review their current social media in their marketing strategy to prospective students using results collected from this study. Finally, data collected from this study could be included in reviews of each community college’s strategic plan as to their use of social media for recruitment purposes.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations for future research arose from the findings of this study. Researchers interested in the topic of social media, specifically for the purpose of recruitment, could focus on one or more of the following recommendations:

1. The study should be replicated to evaluate the impact of social media in the recruitment of incoming freshman or prospective students.
2. Future studies should be conducted with additional questions including more than just getting information from students of how they make their decision to enroll and attend a community college in Mississippi.

3. Research should be conducted with parents and their interactions/feelings toward community college’s use of social media for recruitment purposes.

4. Research should be conducted with nontraditional students, transfer students and international students and their interactions/feelings toward community college’s use of social media for recruitment purposes.

According to past research and results from this study, social networking has the ability to make an impact on recruitment at community colleges. Each social networking site is unique and can serve different purposes. It is important to conduct further research on marketing strategies, accommodating students’ needs, and providing parents with appropriate information to effectively use social networking as a tool to reach out to prospective students.

Social media is growing at a faster rate than ever could have been imagined. Soon, the research discovered in this dissertation will become out of date, due to the sheer level of growth in the topic. In order for community colleges and individuals to remain at the forefront of technology, constant improvement needs to be made with regards to the use of social media.

One of its main benefits and also, notably, part of its downfall is the need for social networking to be managed every minute of every day. Information that was once channeled through mail, television, radio, and paper is now channeled through social
media. The world has changed, and that change has empowered people to want and need information readily available at their fingertips any time of the day or night.

The majority of students have access to a computer or smartphone and have access to Internet. Students can access school apps, email, Facebook account, Instagram, etc. immediately at any time. It is up to the schools to keep sites updated with pertinent, informative, entertaining, and exciting news about their school.
APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPLICATION

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH APPLICATION FORM

HUMAN RESEARCH APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Use this form to apply for IRB review. IRB approval is required before human subjects research can begin.

- Before completing this form, review the information included on the sample consent forms and FAQ section of the IRB website: http://www.usm.edu/research/institutional-review-board.
- Department chairs and, if applicable, research advisors must review the completed form and provide authorization where indicated.
- Department chairs must submit completed versions of this form with all necessary authorizations to irb@usm.edu using their Southern Miss email address.

SECTION 1: INVESTIGATOR INFORMATION

Project Title: Recruiting Community College Students with Social Media

Principal Investigator: Wendy Smith
Phone: (601) 276-2985
USM Email: wendy.a.smith@eagles.usm.edu

Campus ID: W452310
College: Education and Psychology
Department: Educational Studies and Research
Department Phone: (601) 266-4621

Research Purpose (check one):

- Undergraduate project
- Graduate project
- Faculty or staff research

Student Research Advisor (if applicable): Dr. Kyna Shelley
Phone: (601) 286-4576
USM Email: kyna.shelley@usm.edu

Funding Agency/Sponsor (if applicable):
Organization:
Grant #: 

List USM affiliated investigators; completion of CITI Common and Human Subject Research Courses is required.

<table>
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<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Project Role</th>
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If other individuals will be involved in data collection, describe their role and their training.

List all Non-USM affiliated investigators.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>Project Role</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe your expertise and qualifications related to this research:
I have completed significant coursework in the disciplines of educational leadership and education research. This academic preparation has equipped me to carry out such research. I have been a Facebook user for five years.
and a Facebook administrator for one year. I have been conducting research on using social media for recruitment of college students for the past five years. I am very familiar with the context in which the study will occur.

SECTION 2: RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Briefly describe the project and its goal(s) in two to three paragraphs.

Recruiting prospective students with conventional methods such as “snail” mail, brochures, catalogs, telephone and fairs was sufficient in the past, but with the technological change in today’s millennial society, colleges and universities may be restructuring the way they market their institution and recruit students. Moving to a twenty-first century method of recruiting requires knowledge and proper usage of such tools as social networking Websites, email, up-to-date and user-friendly Websites, as well as any other technological tool that presents itself in the future in order to reach potential students and stay competitive with other institutions.

A recent search regarding social networking and recruitment yielded only 16 results. Of those, one described a social network recruitment campaign for information technology bachelor studies students at a Norwegian university college who were invited to join a Facebook group related to the subject of interest (Fagerstrom & Ghinea, 2013). Several other studies were about recruiting international students, nursing students in South Africa, student recruitment efforts of the University of Wollongong in Dubai (UOWD), but there was very little information on recruitment of incoming freshman at United States colleges or, specifically, Mississippi community colleges. One article did address an African American president at Philander Smith College, a historically black college who uses Facebook and text messaging to connect with his students. Five years after using social media, Philander Smith College’s reputation is on the rise as well as its retention and graduation rates (Masterson, 2010).

Community colleges in Mississippi have been promised increased funding from the state legislature since 2007. They are seeking an increase in their 2015 budget of $97 million, a 41% increase in order to reach their promised funding that has never been fulfilled. Currently, community colleges receive less state funding per student than K-12 students in Mississippi (Amy, 2013). With decreased funding comes higher tuition rates and lower student enrollment. In order for community colleges in Mississippi to remain competitive in the student recruitment market, they will need to explore alternative methods of recruiting students. This study can benefit the community college administrators, recruiters, and counselors by providing statistical and qualitative information as to how social networking may or may not benefit their efforts.

Are any of the subjects under 18 years of age?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Note: Parental consent is required for participants under the age 18.

Describe subject population, number of subjects to be included, and criteria for selection.

The Participants in this study will be current students at all 15 community colleges in the state of Mississippi. Approval will be requested from the Mississippi Community College Board President’s Council to grant permission to the Vice President of Student Affairs at each community college to send out a mass email to all students. A mass email will also be sent by the Vice President of Student Affairs to the other participants in this study consisting of staff, faculty, and administrators. All participants of the study will be 18 years of age or older. Randomized numbers will be utilized in lieu of names in order to protect the anonymity of the participants.

How will participants be recruited?

☐ Class announcement  ☐ Oral Announcement  ☐ E-mail announcement

☐ Posted campus advertisement  ☐ Television, Radio or Newspaper ad  ☐ Advertising Agency

☐ Other (explain):
For adult subjects, how will you verify that individuals are over 18?
- [ ] Survey or interview
- [ ] No adults will be participating in this research
- [ ] Other (explain):

Indicate consent procedures (check all that apply):
- [ ] Oral presentation
- [X] Information letter
- [ ] Short Consent Form
- [ ] Long Consent Form
- [ ] Assent form (children or subjects with disabilities)
- [ ] Request for waiver of consent
- [ ] Not applicable

Detail procedures for obtaining participants' consent or justify request for waiver. The survey will begin with a consent form that the participant will agree to before continuing. This form will explain the purpose of the study and that all answers will be kept confidential and reported as group data only and that respondents can skip any questions they do not feel comfortable answering. The participants will answer each question before submitting their answers at the end. The participants will be thanked for their participation.

How many interactions will be required with each subject?
- [X] 1
- [ ] 2 - 3
- [ ] 4 - 9
- [ ] 10 or more

Maximum length of each interaction:
- [X] Less than 10 minutes
- [ ] Less than an hour
- [ ] Less than three hours
- [ ] Three hours or more.
- [ ] No direct interaction with subjects

Where will interactions take place? (check all that apply):
- [ ] On campus
- [ ] Off campus
- [X] Online

Indicate means of data collection (check all that apply):
- [ ] Personal interview
- [X] Questionnaire or survey
- [ ] Audio or video recording
- [ ] Behavioral Observation
- [ ] Focus Group Inquiry
- [ ] Other (explain below):

Do any of the following apply to your study?
- [ ] Use of human biological samples
- [ ] Use of physical exercise
- [ ] Medical examinations or procedures
- [ ] Use of drugs or biological products

Give a step by step explanation of human subjects data collection procedures.

The survey will be placed on the web using Qualtrics, a free online survey software and questionnaire tool that allows users to publish surveys and view results in real time. First, the survey will be pilot tested by a small group of current students at the University of Southern Mississippi for the purpose of ensuring that the instrument measures what it is supposed to and that there is consistency across multiple applications. The data will be analyzed to establish validity and loaded into SPSS software to run a Cronbach's Alpha for reliability. The instrument will then be adapted based on the results of these tests. Once the instrument is deemed valid and reliable, a request will be sent to the President's Council of the Mississippi Community College Board to conduct the survey at each of the 15 community colleges in Mississippi. An email will then be sent by the researcher to the President of each community college asking him/her to forward questionnaire by email to the students, faculty, staff, and administrators of his/her college with an invitation to participate in the study.

Does your research involve only the collection of anonymous data?
- [X] Yes  [ ] No

Note: 'Anonymous' means that investigators cannot associate the data with individual subjects and vice versa. Electronic surveys must be conducted via websites that do not link responses to email addresses or other identifiers. Personal interviews are not anonymous.

Does your research involve sensitive information?
- [ ] Yes  [X] No

Note: Sensitive information may include (but is not limited to) information about sexual activity, drug usage, criminal behavior, financial or medical data, and religious views.

Does your research involve hidden video or audio recordings or deception?
- [ ] Yes  [ ] No

Note: Deception includes any information or procedure that misleads a subject intentionally.

SECTION 3: RISKS AND BENEFITS
Indicate all potentially vulnerable subjects involved in the study.

- Children
- Mentally ill patients
- Nursing home patients
- Pregnant females
- Prisoners
- HIV positive individuals
- Other

Detail the methods that will be employed to protect vulnerable subjects.

Note: All research involving prisoners requires compliance with federal regulations pertaining to biomedical and behavioral research involving prisoners as outlined in 45CFR50 Subpart B. Research must be directly relevant to prisoners or prisons (e.g., the effects of incarceration, criminal behavior, prison infrastructures, etc.). Completion of the CITI Research with Prisoners Module is also required.

If your research involves prisoners, explain how it is directly relevant to prisoners or the prison system (check all that apply):

- the causes and/or effects of incarceration
- the process of incarceration
- prisons as institutional structures
- the conditions of prisons or prisoners
- procedures for improving the wellbeing of prisoners
- other (explain):

How will you maintain confidentiality?

- Anonymous data
- Electronic data will be password protected
- Physical data will be locked in a file drawer
- Other (explain):

Describe final disposition of data.

The survey link will be sent out by the researcher from her community college Email account asking for users to participate in the study. The survey will be available for a total of four weeks. After that time, data will be collected and downloaded into SPSS software and analyzed via appropriate statistical measures. The data will be deleted three months after final data of collection.

Describe the methods that will be employed to mitigate any potential risks, inconveniences or discomforts.

Participants will be assured through the consent letter that their responses will be strictly confidential and no names will be associated with his/her responses. An email will be sent out as a mass email blast with no identifying information sent to the data collector. Participants will click a link inside the email that will take them to an external website for the survey instrument and responses will be submitted anonymously and collected via the Qualtrics program.

Describe any potential benefits subjects may gain as a result of participation.

Participants can take pride in the fact that they had input in helping to increase enrollment at their college through effective uses of social networking for recruitment of prospective students.

List all incentives subjects will receive for their participation.

None

Note: If class credit will be given for participation, describe what other options exist for nonparticipants to receive the same credit.

If individuals are unwilling or unable to complete their participation, how will their incentives be distributed?

- They will still receive all incentives.
- They will be informed that they will receive no incentives.
- They will receive partial incentives (explain):

SECTION 4: CHECKLIST AND AUTHORIZATION
The following documents must be attached to this form:

- CITI Common Course Certificate
- CITI IRB Course Certificate
- Research proposal approval from dissertation or thesis committee (if applicable)
- Study recruitment documents (if applicable)
- Survey questions (if applicable)
- Consent forms (long or short if applicable) and any related documents (such as an oral script or information letter)
- Letter to parents (if applicable)

Instructions for Attaching Documents:

1. Place the cursor where you want the attachment to appear.
2. Select the "Insert" tab at the top of MS Word.
3. Select "Object," located on the far right of the tool bar (PC) or the bottom of the list (MAC).
4. Select the "Create from File" tab and check the box that states "Display as Icon."
5. Browse to the location of your document, and double click on it.
6. Repeat these steps for each document to be attached.

Note for Mac Users: Word for MAC is unable to attach .pdf files, so you will have to first save the CITI certificates or any other .pdf files you intend to attach as a .doc or .rtf file before attaching them. There are several ways to accomplish this. You may use Adobe to open the file and then select "File" and "Save as" and change the file type to an .rtf or .doc format. Alternatively, you may also download or create your own .pdf to .doc application.

![Attach all relevant documents in this section:

CITI Common Course
For USM Graduate Stu.

CITI Researchers,
Faculty, Students, ar

Survey_Wendy
Smith(1).pdf

Instructions for Authorization:

1. Type your name and date in the appropriate box.
2. Graduate students should email the form to their advisors, who should add their name and then send it to department chairs for review. Department chairs should add their name and send the finalized form with all required authorizations to irb@usm.edu.

By typing my name below, I acknowledge that I have read, understood, and approve of the information contained herein.
APPENDIX B

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI) FOR USM GRADUATE STUDENTS

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI)
COMMON COURSE FOR USM GRADUATE STUDENTS CURRICULUM COMPLETION REPORT
Printed on 07/07/2014

Wendy Smith (ID: 2291063)
1008 Timberline Road
Summit
Mississippi 39666
USA

PHONE: (601) 276-2065

EMAIL: Wendy.A.Smith@exglen.usm.edu

INSTITUTION: University of Southern Mississippi

EXPIRATION DATE: 09/23/2016

COMMON COURSE FOR USM GRADUATE STUDENTS:

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For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI Program participating institution or be a paid Independent Learner. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI Program course site is unethical, and may be considered research misconduct by your institution.

Paul Ernstschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Program Course Coordinator
APPENDIX C

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI)

RESEARCHERS, FACULTY, STUDENTS, AND IRM MEMBER’S

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI)
RESEARCHERS, FACULTY, STUDENTS AND IRB MEMBER’S CURRICULUM COMPLETION REPORT
Printed on 07/07/2014

Wendy Smith (ID: 2291083)
1006 Timberline Road
Summit, Mississippi 35666
USA

DEPARTMENT
Higher Education Administration

PHONE
(601) 276-2985

EMAIL
Wendy.A.Smith@eagles.usm.edu

INSTITUTION
University of Southern Mississippi

EXPIRATION DATE
07/08/2019

RESEARCHERS, FACULTY, STUDENTS AND IRB MEMBERS ENGAGING IN RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS RCR:
Researchers, Faculty, Students

COURSE/STAGE: Stage 1/1

PASSED ON: 07/07/2014

REFERENCE ID: 8111332

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For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI Program participating institution or be a paid Independent Learner. Falsehood information and unauthorized use of the CITI Program course site is unethical, and may be considered research misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Program Course Coordinator
APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
119 College Drive #A147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.3577 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional-review-board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 48), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 15012904
PROJECT TITLE: Recruiting Community College Students with Social Media
PROJECT TYPE: New Project
RESEARCHER(S): Wendy Smith
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education and Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Educational Studies and Research
FUNDING AGENT/SPONSOR: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expected Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 03/03/2018 to 03/03/2018
Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board
APPROVAL TO CONDUCT STATEWIDE RESEARCH ON MACJC INSTITUTIONS

MACJC Research Application Approval
Debra West [dwwest@mccb.edu]

You forwarded the message on 4/9/2015 2:20 PM.

Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2015 1:20 PM
To: [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]

Attachment: Institutional Research Policy (0.4 MB) [Open as Web Page]

Wendy,

Congratulations. This email constitutes your official notice of MACJC approval to move forward with your research. Your next step is to contact the Institutional Research Office at each college to solicit their institution’s participation and ensure you meet any local approval requirements. Attached is a list of the appropriate contacts at each school.

As your study has value to the System, the MACJC respectfully requests an electronic copy or link to your research upon its completion.

Again, congratulations and good luck. Let me know if you have any questions.

Debra West, Ph.D.
Deputy Executive Director | Programs & Accountability
Mississippi Community College Board
3825 Ridgeway Road | Jackson, MS 39211
Phone: 601-312-6521 | Fax: 601-456-6303
www.mccb.edu

The mission of the Mississippi Community College Board is to advance the community college system through coordination, support, leadership, and advocacy.
APPENDIX F

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Wendy S. Smith, a doctoral student in the Doctor of Higher Education Administration program at The University of Southern Mississippi. This research proposes to examine the attitudes and effectiveness of social networking as a communication tool for college recruitment and to explore how perceptions differ based on usage and demographics. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized. The procedure involves completing an on-line questionnaire that will take approximately 30 minutes. Your responses will be confidential and I do not collect identifying information such as your name, e-mail address, or IP address. The survey questions will be about social networking tools and the use of technology in recruiting students. I will do my best to keep your information confidential. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the questionnaires will not contain information that will personally identify you. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Wendy Smith at bwsmith144@bellsouth.net.

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be
directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS  39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

Thanks for your participation!

Electronic Consent:  Please select your choice below.

Clicking on the “agree” button below indicates that you have read the above information, you voluntarily agree to participate, and you are at least 18 years of age.  If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the “disagree” button.

O Agree

O Disagree
APPENDIX G

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

5. How did you hear about the survey?
   a. E-mail
   b. Social Networking Site such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.
   c. Word of Mouth
   d. Other

6. Gender
   a. Male
   b. Female

7. Ethnicity
   a. White
   b. Hispanic
   c. African-American
   d. Native American
   e. Asian/Pacific Islander

8. In what category does your age fall?
   a. 18-29
   b. 30-45
   c. 46-64
   d. Over 64
9. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   a. High School/GED
   b. Some College
   c. 2-Year College Degree (Associates)
   d. 4-Year College Degree (BA/BS)
   e. Master’s Degree
   f. Doctoral Degree
   g. Professional Degree

10. In what year did you receive your highest degree obtained?

11. Present Job Title:
   a. Administrator
   b. Staff Member
   c. Counselor
   d. Faculty Member
   e. Recruiter
   f. Student

12. Do you use social media?
   a. Yes
   b. No

13. Have you ever created your own profile on-line that others can see, like on social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook, or LinkedIn?
   a. Yes
   b. No
14. If yes, which social networking website do you use most often?

15. Do you have a Facebook account?
   a. Yes
   b. No

16. If yes, what year did you sign up for your Facebook account?

17. On average, how many times do you access your Facebook account each week?
   a. Several times a day
   b. About once a day
   c. Every few days
   d. Once a week or less often
   e. Never

18. How many friends do you have on Facebook?

19. Are you friends with any Mississippi community colleges on Facebook?
   a. Yes
   b. No

20. If yes, how many?
21. For the following questions, are you responding as:

a. Currently enrolled college student
b. Prospective college student
c. Counselor
d. Recruiter
e. Faculty member
f. Staff member
g. Administrator

22. I used Facebook to get information from prospective Mississippi community colleges.

a. Strongly Disagree
b. Disagree
c. Neither Agree nor Disagree
d. Agree
e. Strongly Agree

23. I used Facebook to evaluate prospective Mississippi community colleges.

a. Strongly Disagree
b. Disagree
c. Neither Agree nor Disagree
d. Agree
e. Strongly Agree
24. I used Facebook to compare prospective Mississippi community colleges.
   a. Strongly Disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Neither Agree nor Disagree
   d. Agree
   e. Strongly Agree

25. If I had a question, I would use Facebook to contact a potential college to get an answer.
   a. Strongly Disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Neither Agree nor Disagree
   d. Agree
   e. Strongly Agree

26. College admission offices provide enough information in their Facebook posts for me to make a decision about attending their institution.
   a. Strongly Disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Neither Agree nor Disagree
   d. Agree
   e. Strongly Agree
27. How much did the information from college Facebook accounts impact your decision of which school to attend?
   a. Less than 20%
   b. 21-40%
   c. 41-60%
   d. 61-80%
   e. 81-100%

28. Facebook is an effective tool for colleges to use when communicating with prospective students.
   a. Strongly Disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Neither Agree nor Disagree
   d. Agree
   e. Strongly Agree

29. What percentage of the people you are friends with on Facebook are friends and family?
   a. Less than 20%
   b. 21-40%
   c. 41-60%
   d. 61-80%
   e. 81-100%
30. What percentage of the people you are friends with on Facebook are work related?
   a. Less than 20%
   b. 21-40%
   c. 41-60%
   d. 61-80%
   e. 81-100%

31. What percentage of the people you are friends with on Facebook are education related?
   a. Less than 20%
   b. 21-40%
   c. 41-60%
   d. 61-80%
   e. 81-100%

32. What percentage of the people you are friends with on Facebook are anything other than family and friends, work, or education related?
   a. Less than 20%
   b. 21-40%
   c. 41-60%
   d. 61-80%
   e. 81-100%
33. What percentage of your posts on Facebook is related to family and friends?
   a. Less than 20%
   b. 21-40%
   c. 41-60%
   d. 61-80%
   e. 81-100%

34. What percentage of your posts on Facebook is related to work?
   a. Less than 20%
   b. 21-40%
   c. 41-60%
   d. 61-80%
   e. 81-100%

35. What percentage of your posts on Facebook is related to education?
   a. Less than 20%
   b. 21-40%
   c. 41-60%
   d. 61-80%
   e. 81-100%
36. What percentage of your posts on Facebook is related to anything other than family and friends, work, or education?
   a. Less than 20%
   b. 21-40%
   c. 41-60%
   d. 61-80%
   e. 81-100%

37. What is your opinion of Facebook as a social media tool today and why?

38. What is your opinion of Facebook as a tool for college recruitment today?

39. How do you envision use of Facebook in the next 10 years?

40. How do you envision use of Facebook by colleges in the next 10 years?

41. What department is responsible for developing a Facebook page and uploading news events for the Facebook page?
   a. Administration
   b. Admissions
   c. Athletics
   d. College Departments
   e. Finance
   f. Human Resources

42. Does your college currently have a Facebook page or other social networking page?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I Don’t Know
43. Is your college utilizing social networking for recruitment of students?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I Don’t Know

44. If the answer to the question above is yes, how long has your college used social networking websites?
   a. 1 year
   b. 2 years
   c. 3 years
   d. 4 years
   e. 5 years or more
   f. I Don’t Know

45. Are you encouraged by your supervisor to utilize social networking for recruitment of students?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. N/A

46. Are Facebook or other social networking sites available on campus?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I Don’t Know
REFERENCES


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