



To: Workforce & Continuing Education Program Coordinators and Faculty

From: Michelle Valin, CE Program Coordinator, Health & Public Services

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RE: Opportunities in Web 2.0

Our unit has enjoyed the reputation of being quick to respond to workforce needs by creating new or adapting current programs to meet employers ever changing needs. We rely on our staff to stay current of the trends and technological tools of education and to find experienced and creative faculty to deliver quality products. We also rely on our students to provide constructive feedback in order to maintain that quality. However, we can no longer rely on the web only as place to download information we need for our product; it has become a place where individuals upload their knowledge and opinions to create new content and connect with others who share the same interests. As Kevin Kelly explains in *We are the Web*, this new kind of participation has “developed into an emerging culture based on sharing.” This culture’s collective knowledge creates new paths to educational enlightenment that will expand farther and faster than knowledge obtained by individuals alone.

It is for this reason that I would like you all to strongly consider using the new opportunities Web 2.0 offers such as blogs, YouTube and Wikipedia to enhance the outcomes of your work, whether as a program coordinator or as an instructor. For your consideration, what follows are my thoughts about each media and suggestions for their use in our department at Macomb.

Blogs

Journaling on the web is called Blogging. As a program coordinator creating and selling health and wellness courses, I’m planning to create a blog to promote the value of lifelong learning as it relates to personal health education (a big topic!). In order to build a readership – a common problem even if you are using social networks – I’ll send email blasts to my best customers (students who’ve taken more than one class) inviting them to comment on my weekly posts. I’m looking for insight for new courses as well as critical feedback on our performance as an educational institution. I also encourage my faculty to create a weblog to offer students a more casual insight to their thoughts regarding the subject matter as well as allowing for more discussion outside the classroom.

According to a 2010 report by one of the premier blog libraries, Technorati, “self-expression and sharing expertise lead as bloggers' primary motivations.” So, instead of just delivering a standard curriculum, faculty can use blogs to expound on certain aspects they don't have time for in the classroom. Likewise, blogging allows students to do more than regurgitate information back to their teacher; it allows them to add their previous knowledge to the learning experience.

YouTube

If you are already familiar with YouTube (an online video sharing site) then you know there is a good amount of it that is strictly nonsense...or is it? One way to look at the value of the medium is to see it as Peter Felton does in his article *Visual Literacy*: “images no longer exist to illustrate and entertain. Rather they are becoming central to communication and meaning-making.”

What does this mean for our purposes in Workforce & Continuing Education? Felton maintains there are “four categories of resources essential for visual literacy in higher education: foundations, visual cognition and perception, visual design and teaching visual literacy.” The foundations include giving students formal instruction in information, visual and technical literacy. Are we offering CE courses teach these foundations? No! Our mature students did not grow up knowing how to use the internet and all of its wonderful uses so how about we offer short “How To” demonstrations on YouTube (similar to the online tutoring channel <http://KhanAcademy.org>) to teach these foundations? The idea here is to flip the classroom where the students watch the lecture at home then come to your classroom to practice and engage in the content with you and their classmates. Give the site a look and let's discuss how your curriculum can be enhanced by this medium!

Wikipedia

The online encyclopedia Wikipedia has endured a bad rap from academia since its inception. The problem, critics say, is the credibility of information that is compiled and edited by anyone who has an interest in the subject matter; whether a learned scholar or an amateur hobbyist. However, this example of “crowd sourcing” is a tremendous resource for our students and new research has revealed that Wikipedia's margin of error ranks very closely to that of the Encyclopedia Britannica. Also, they have put in place a professional editing team to oversee and fact check the volunteer editors. Last, Wikipedia has installed a reference desk, similar to that of a traditional library. Even Wikipedia itself states in their article: *Wikipedia Criticisms* that “much of the criticism is based on how they perceive the process of Wikipedia and not the actual quality.”

With this new information in mind, I propose allowing our students to reference Wikipedia as a credible source in their research papers. Also, as subject matter experts, why not

consider adding your voice to the crowd by engaging in the site as a volunteer editor? You never know...you may learn something new!

I hope all of you will take some time to consider these Web 2.0 resources as we begin to plan for fall semester. I am available to help you brainstorm their uses for your programs or courses...please ask!

RESOURCES

Here are a few links to get you started researching the Web 2.0 resources and to encourage your motivation to use them:

Inside Higher Ed's BlogU

http://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/confessions_of_a_community_college_dean

The Chronicle of Higher Education's Blogs

<http://chronicle.com/section/Blogs/164/>

To read more from the Technorati's State of the Blogosphere:

<http://technorati.com/blogging/article/what-topics-and-trends-day-2/#ixzz1PkJikGvg>.

Khan Academy

<http://www.khanacademy.org/>

Wikipedia Reference Desk

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reference_desk