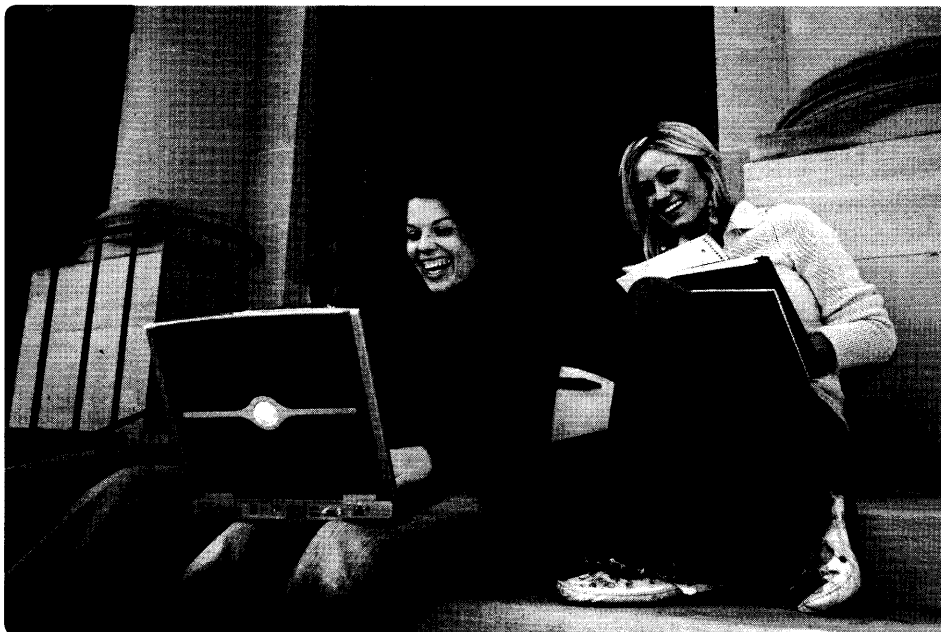


■ readers write

...on MySpace vs. Your Space



I just wanted to share with you my random MySpace experience du jour. I know there are a variety of opinions about the merits of social networking sites like MySpace. I have had an account for over a year now as a way to open another communication channel with my teenage children and my students. It gives my online students some insight into my personality beyond a flat message on a discussion forum. Whether you agree with it or not, the reality is that millennial students use places like MySpace, Facebook, and other similar sites as extension of their communication spaces all the time.

As a parent and as a teacher, I feel it is my obligation to become familiar with how these tools are used and how they work. It presents a wonderful opportunity to educate children/students on the benefits and dangers of online communication, as well as appropriate uses of language in informal (chat) and formal (academic) venues. I find that once students know I have a MySpace page, they feel as comfortable contacting me there as they do through any other avenue.

ACADEMIC RESOURCE

A few weeks ago, I had a random MySpace encounter that has turned into a very cool collaboration. Someone sent me a message there saying that he was looking for interesting people in Ridgecrest (lol...why he came to *my* page *then* still remains a mystery!). After several exchanges, I invited him up to the college, because he is very interested in robotics and has led several high school teams to First Lego League competitions. He has been coming to the class and to the computer science club meetings ever since. This guy is a laser research scientist at the base here in town, holds a PhD in physics and photonics, and has turned into an amazing resource! The students love him. We had a great talk about quantum computing and holographic disk storage the other night (OK, so being interested in

that officially qualifies me as an uber-geek, I know). I am looking forward to working with him on a couple of upcoming projects.

POTENTIAL STUDENT CONTACT

A few nights ago, I was contacted by someone who was searching MySpace for people in her area (SF Bay). She came across the site of one of my Pepperdine students from last year and dropped me a line, because my picture was on his page. She was interested in more information about the program. We have since had several message exchanges and a couple of chats. Maybe she will consider applying to the program now, because it has a real "face" attached and not just a cold Web site. The same thing could apply to people looking for community college contacts!

CONNECTING WITH ALUMNI

One of the features of MySpace is that it shows you when someone new registers and lists any of your schools. When I see that Cerro Coso has new students, for example, I always click the link to see if any of my students are on there. The other day, I clicked on the profile of someone who said they had an AS in Computer Information Systems from Cerro Coso (2000), a BA in Business and CIS from Cal Poly Pomona, and now works in the industry in Chandler, Arizona. I dropped him a line, told him I was CIS faculty here now, and that I was very interested in finding out how well his experience here prepared him for Pomona. We have exchanged several messages talking about his experience in the industry now and about the changes we've since made to the degree program. I told him I was very interested in connecting alumni to current students, and it sounds like he is willing to participate in that activity.

Collaboration, communication, and community... social networking sites can have a lot of offer!

Debby Kilburn, www.myspace.com/debbyk

MySpace has, indeed, invaded my space. I'm the student government advisor at Monterey Peninsula College and I noticed some time ago that my student leaders love MySpace.

The ASMP office has six computers and it's not unusual for four or five of them to be tuned into MySpace at one time. My students find time to talk to their 110th MySpace "friend," while not finding the time to discuss issues with other council members or write committee reports. This is not surprising.

At first, my response was to resist the trend and encourage my students to spend