Cyberethics, Discourse and Campus Community

Securing the $\text{eCampus}$ 2012

Dartmouth
July 17, 2012
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Goals of Session

- Overview of Case Study of one college’s effort to encourage environments for civil discourse in the cyber world
- Dialogue with participants about opportunities and challenges for higher education in this arena
Cyberethics Defined

code of behavior that governs the Internet and other forms of electronic communication in the "cyberworld."

Source: http://www.socratesinstitute.org/curriculum/cyberethics.html
Background

- Diversity, Discourse, and Liberal Arts Education

- Campus Roots
  - Boredat, Say Any Thing, Facebook postings, MadsVassar blog, RateMyProfessor, College ACB, etc

- Computer Regulations/Discourse
From Vassar
I definitely get a feeling of catharsis when blogging. I think that feeling was actually the reason I started the blog. I felt very ashamed and embarrassed about many of my relationships and sexual encounters at Vassar. The blog was made to kind of cleanse my guilt and secrecy and just laugh at myself.
People often don't use the same thoughtful process in anonymous speech and that's where most harm is found.
Of course there's the potential for verbal abuse, bullying and simply inconsequential or nasty content, but there's also plenty of candid opinions and points of view that ultimately serve us all to broaden our awareness of certain situations, conflicts, etc. within Vassar.
I was very hesitant about starting the site! however because with anonymity can come cruelty. I have many friends who felt personally attacked and abused from some comments made on blogs, especially on CollegeACβ
A site such as [SA] can be harmful if offensive or hateful speech is used and cannot be connected to anyone. As a community, it's important for us to have high standards and ethics for all speech whether in person, online or in print.
Vassar’s computer regulations set clear guidelines in accordance with college regulations to govern conduct on computers (see above). Cyberethics and internet safety are issues that all community members must be aware of to ensure a healthy, safe, and respectful campus environment. Cyberethics codes of responsible and safe online behavior consider the effects of behaviors both on individuals and on groups in our community. Behaviors that create harmful effects include illegal activities, offensive and defaming language, hate speech, postings of private information such as phone numbers and addresses, posting private photos, and anonymous messages that target individual or groups.

Vassar encourages community members to consider and be mindful of potential effects on the individual and the community and to make responsible decisions when engaging in online communication. Certain online behaviors may violate particular college regulations and, when connected to known individuals, can be adjudicated. Other behaviors, however, may fall outside of sanctionable conduct either because they do not violate a college regulation or are anonymous in nature. Nonetheless, when such behaviors are damaging to individuals and community values, those responsible for the actions have an ethical obligation to come forward and engage with others in community restoration and dialogue. Vassar takes pride both in the rights afforded to individual students and, at the same time, in the community responsibility that comes with those rights (see Part A, Student Rights, Privileges and Responsibilities; Part E, Academic Freedom and Responsibility). Vassar is committed to diversity and the creation of inclusive environments. When engaging in any form of communication, members of the college community should be mindful of these values.
Campus Response When Things Go Wrong

CAMPUS LIFE RESPONSE TEAM
QUESTIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

What is our responsibility toward creating environments for civil discourse?

Where is the line between free speech/expression and self- and community responsibility?
Cyberethics Working Group

Maureen Byrne ‘11
Kate Frost ‘11
Maria Hantzopoulos, Assistant Prof. of Educ.
Joanne Long, Dean of Studies