English Language and Composition
Reading Time: 15 minutes
Suggested writing time: 40 minutes
Assignment devised by Eileen Bach 2011
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<u>Directions:</u> The following prompt is based on the accompanying seven sources.

This question requires you to integrate a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. Refer to the sources to support your position; avoid mere paraphrasing or summary. Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument.

Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations.

<u>**Introduction:**</u> As social networking sites gain in popularity, public and private agencies seeking information about individuals have taken advantage of such forums to evaluate candidates for jobs or applicants for admission to colleges and universities. Some have disciplined employees or students for posting material deemed offensive to others in their community.

<u>**Assignment:**</u> Read the following sources (including any introductory information) carefully. Then in an essay that synthesizes at least three of the sources for support, take a position that defends, challenges or qualifies the use of personal information by public or private institutions to determine an individual's entry to, or forced exit from, that institution. Refer to the sources as Source A, Source B, etc. Titles are included for your convenience.

SOURCE A: (Your Facebook Page is Showing)

SOURCE B: (Student Expelled for Blog Postings)

SOURCE C: (Report: Admissions Outreach)

SOURCE D: (University Aide Resigns)

SOURCE E: (Student Quits over UCLA Rant)

SOURCE F: (Harvard Interviewer)

SOURCE G: (Pie Chart)

SOURCE A: Excerpt From "Your Facebook Page is Showing"

By JOHN HECHINGER

College Applicants, Beware: Your Facebook Page Is Showing

High-school seniors already fretting about grades and test scores now have another worry: Will their Facebook or MySpace pages count against them in college admissions?

A new survey of 500 top colleges found that 10% of admissions officers acknowledged looking at social-networking sites to evaluate applicants. Of those colleges making use of the online information, 38% said that what they saw "negatively affected" their views of the applicant. Only a quarter of the schools checking the sites said their views were improved, according to the survey by education company Kaplan, a unit of Washington Post Co.

Some admissions officers said they had rejected students because of material on the sites. Jeff Olson, who heads research for Kaplan's test-preparation division, says one university did so after the student gushed about the school while visiting the campus, then trashed it online. Kaplan promised anonymity to the colleges, of which 320 responded. The company surveyed schools with the most selective admissions.

The vast majority of the colleges surveyed had no policy about when it was appropriate for school officials to look at prospective students' social-networking sites. "We're in the early stage of a new technology," Mr. Olson says. "It's the Wild, Wild West. There are no clear boundaries or limits."

SOURCE B: Student Expelled for Blog Postings

Excerpt from *The Herald Leader* by Brett Barroquerre   March 2009

LOUISVILLE, Ky. -- A woman dismissed from the University of Louisville nursing school because of posts on her personal blog sued Friday, saying her First Amendment rights were violated.

Nina Yoder of Louisville asked U.S. District Judge Charles Simpson to issue an injunction that would allow her to resume classes and graduate in August.

The school dismissed Yoder on March 2, saying in a letter that she violated the school's honor code by posting blog items concerning patient activities and naming the university on her MySpace page. A week later, the university rejected Yoder's written appeal to return to school.

SOURCE C: Report: Admissions Outreach

Excerpt from **REPORT: Facebook Profiles Are Now Part Of 80% Colleges' Admissions Outreach**

Posted by Jackie Cohen on February 25th, 2011 12:06 PM
http://www.allfacebook.com/report-facebook-profiles-are-now-part-of-80-colleges-admissions-decisions-2011-02

We've seen and heard many stories about adults not getting jobs because of their Facebook profiles, so the mere idea that 17-year-olds' activity on the social network could influence their college admissions may seem pretty harsh.

Then again, put yourself in the shoes of the typical college admissions officer, whose decision-making responsibilities get more difficult every year. Competition has crescendoed to peak levels, thanks to 30 years of College Board statistics continuing to show that college educations enable people to earn more money professionally.

A Facebook profile obviously doesn't hold as much weight as grades, test scores, extracurricular activities, teacher recommendations and essays. But when you're looking at a tie between equally talented students, social media content could be the tiebreaker. That makes it critical for the most competitive students to heed the brilliant advice from Student Advisor: Follow the social media feeds of any school one plans to apply to; use blogging tools on Facebook and elsewhere to show off good writing skills; make good use of the privacy settings to limit what college admissions officers might see; and for extra credit, consider uploading a video talking about why you want a particular institution to admit you.

SOURCE D: University Aide Resigns

"University Aide Resigns Over Blog Item" Published: March 19, 2011 The New York Times

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — The University of Colorado Student Government's diversity director resigned over blog items he posted, including one that said "women are not as smart as men."

The director, Matthew Cucchiaro, a graduate student in philosophy, said that the blog, titled "Today's Stupid Human Beings: Women," was "clearly satirical" and that he wrote it before he got the university job.

The Daily Camera reported that Mr. Cucchiaro first posted it under a pseudonym in 2009. He resigned on March 4 after the university received copies of his posts from an anonymous source. A week later, he was reported to have reposted the item on women to stupidhumanbeings.com.

SOURCE E: Student Quits over UCLA Rant

"Student Quits At U.C.L.A. Over Rant" Published: March 19, 2011 The New York Times

LOS ANGELES (AP) —The student who posted an Internet video of her tirade against the Asian population at the University of California, Los Angeles, says that she is leaving the school, despite the university's decision not to discipline her.

In a statement to the campus newspaper, *The Daily Bruin*, the student, Alexandra Wallace, said on Friday that she had chosen to stop attending classes at U.C.L.A. because of what she called "the harassment of my family, the publishing of my personal information, death threats and being ostracized from an entire community" because of her three-minute video.

"In an attempt to produce a humorous YouTube video, I have offended the U.C.L.A. community and the entire Asian culture," she said. "Especially in the wake of the ongoing disaster in Japan, I would do anything to take back my insensitive words. I could write apology letters all day and night, but I know they wouldn't erase the video from your memory, nor would they act to reverse my inappropriate action."

SOURCE F: Harvard Interviewer

A Quora thread this week backs up that theory, especially a post therein by Allison Oster:

As an interviewer for Harvard College, I do occasionally Google students I'm interviewing. So that will turn up FB profiles or anything else that is public. As far as I know, we are not given specific instructions to exclude it.

I think it's always better to be safe than sorry — when you apply to college you spend such a long time crafting an image through your applications and essays that to be careless about your online data is just silly.

That doesn't mean you can't have a FB profile — just make it private if you're going to use it for inside jokes and silly photos. If you happen to write about your volunteer activities and the online business you started, it's fine to leave it up.

*Does a FB profile or a website prejudice me before I meet a candidate?*
Yes. Absolutely.

I try not to let it. But all people are influenced by details and nuances. That's why first impressions are still valuable. That's why it's important to remember to write thank you notes, to dress up for your interview, and to say please and thank you.
If you care about your college career, one of the best things you can do is google yourself, then pull anything off that you wouldn't voluntarily show your parents' friends.

Share Of Social Sharing On The Web
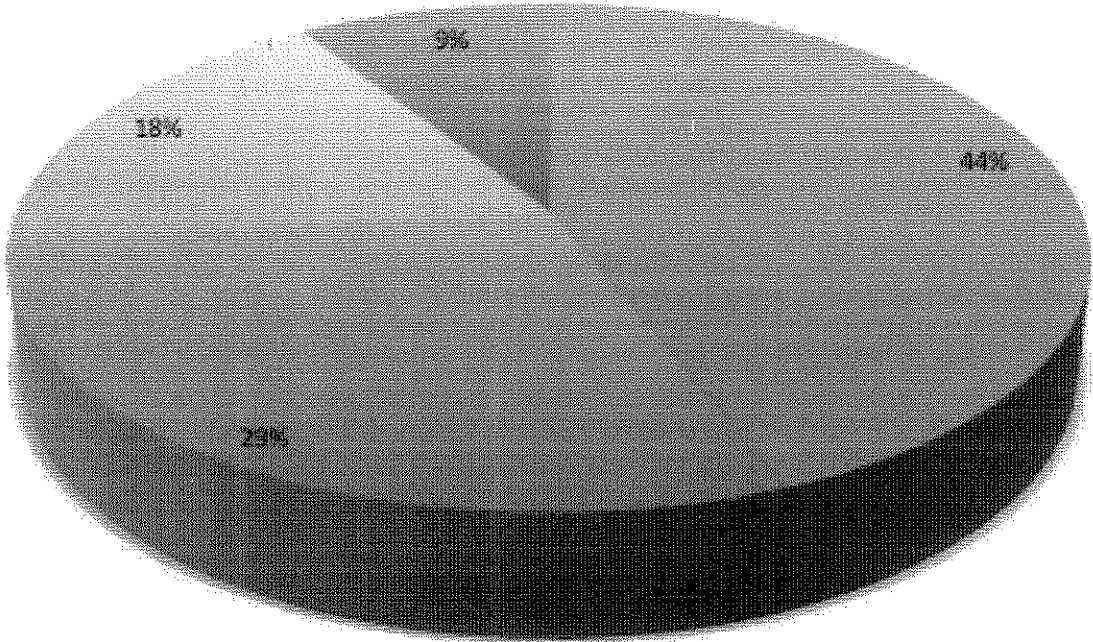
44% = Facebook
29% = Twitter
18% = Yahoo
9% = MySpace