

Global Survey Validates New Student Sensibilities: What It Means for Universities

If you were forced to make a choice, would you want a car or an Internet connection? For 64 percent of the 3000 college students and newly employed college grads around the world who were surveyed in the 2011 [Cisco Connected World Technology Report](#), the answer is life online. In fact, 40 percent said the Internet is more important to them than dating, going out with friends, or listening to music. And not surprisingly, 66 percent said the most important technology in their lives was a mobile device, such as a smartphone or tablet.

How can colleges and universities capitalize on these findings to increase student engagement? For ideas, we caught up with Renee Patton, Cisco's director of public sector education solutions, and Frank Florence, Cisco's senior director of education marketing.

What does students' attachment to the Internet mean to educators?

Frank Florence: This survey validates what many educators have long suspected—that the current generation of students wants to learn in fundamentally different ways. They live in a connected world and don't necessarily relate to textbooks and noninteractive lectures. Technology needs to be an integral part of how we engage students.

About nine in ten students in the survey said they had a Facebook account, with about a third of those students checking their accounts at least five times a day. How can educators turn this to their advantage?

Renee Patton: If we can't find ways to engage students in the learning process, we'll lose them. So if students are using Facebook in lecture halls, rather than being upset about it, we can view it as an opportunity. The larger question is, how can we take advantage of tools like social networking, lecture capture, and virtual field trips to engage students?

What are some examples of using social networking tools for next-generation learning?

Florence: The key is engaging students and making course content relevant. It's estimated that by 2013, there will be twice as many smartphones and tablets as PCs and laptops. It follows that social learning and mobility will be instrumental in preparing the next-generation workforce. For example, a physics professor might integrate an online gaming exercise into the curriculum to explain an equation like $f=ma$. Or a business professor might set up online communities on Cisco Quad™ or Facebook where students can collaborate on team projects or business case development.

Patton: Bringing video into the learning experience is another effective way to engage today's students. Technologies like Cisco TelePresence® and WebEx® make it easy to connect students and experts in different locations and capture lectures for later playback. Cisco Show and Share® makes it easy to share videos, either with the entire campus community or just a specific class. Students can leave comments as they do on YouTube. There's also Cisco TelePresence Synch, which professors and instructors can use to add video calls from multiple locations to interactive whiteboard training sessions.



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What do the influx of mobile devices and the increased use of video mean to campus networks?

Patton: Campus IT teams need to make sure the wireless infrastructure can support the massive influx of personal devices on campus. That's especially important in high-density environments like lecture halls, dorms, and stadiums. It's important to make sure that more devices and more video don't slow performance of other administration, learning, and research applications.

How urgent is it to adapt to students' new habits?

Florence: Nationwide, only 56 percent of college students are graduating on time, if at all. Failing to engage these students is not only an education problem, it also affects these students' lifelong employability, and has larger economic implications because students who don't graduate tend to default on Federal loans. Engaging students on their own terms is a smart approach. It truly can change student outcomes.

To read more about the Cisco Connected World Technology Report, visit: www.cisco.com/go/connectedreport



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