

The Impact of Technology on a Virtual Campus

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Technology has changed the face of many of our everyday formalities. In addition, technology has drastically evolved over the years to become one of the most utilized tools in the world of education. For instance, you attend a fully functioning, 100% virtual institution.

The advent of virtual campuses has changed the look and feel of collegiate life. For better or for worse, the advantage, and the disadvantage, of the virtual world is that our physical identity, and therefore, our difference, is hidden. This mask allows greater participation from some who might otherwise be held back by the multitude of physical world boundaries.

Establishing identity in a virtual community is key to building relationships with other community members, making students feel more connected to the university as a whole. Social Identity Theory, as stated in “Online Behavior in Virtual Space: An Empirical Study on Helping,” argues that “people classify themselves as belonging to various social categories according to age, gender, socioeconomic status, interests, skills, etc. The underlying assumption of Social Identity Theory is that individuals feel affinity and desires connection with the referent team, which in turn influences their behaviors.”¹

As traditional brick-and-mortars begin to explore virtual options, American Public University and American Military University, fully online universities, understands that there are challenges and successes of working with students at a distance. We strive to create virtual environments to build relationships and to keep the community connected by programs such as our various student organizations, promoting student and/or alumni involvement and engagement, The Quad platform and utilizing social media to bridge this gap. In order to launch this identity, we must not be afraid to display difference, in essence, being “bold without boundaries.”

The revolution in technology over the past few decades has

enabled American Public University and American Military University students, faculty, and staff to form a vibrant on-line community with the shared goal of educating today's and tomorrow's leaders. While it has created opportunities unimaginable a mere twenty years ago, it has also created challenges. Working together as a virtual community, we are creating an exceptional university experience for all our constituents.

Notes

¹Jung-Lung Hsu, Wu-Yuin Hwang, Huang Yueh-Min, and Liu Jui-Jung. "Online Behavior in Virtual Space: An Empirical Study on Helping." *Journal of Educational Technology & Society* 14, no. 1 (2011): 146. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1287032155?accountid=8289>.